

# SILK ROAD

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**SPECIAL FEATURE**

**Paper on the Silk Roads**

**COVER STORY**

**War and Peace on the Silk Roads**

# **SILKROADIA**

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**Cover Photo by Eui-hwan Cho\_ A calligrapher from Samarkand who writes the phrases  
tourists want in calligraphy on paper, Uzbekistan**

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## **Disclaimer**

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Shi-yong Chon

## **SUN's Role in Bringing Peace on the Silk Roads**

**T**he ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and the developments in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of power last year showed once again how vulnerable the human civilization is to wars and conflicts caused often by reasons that can never be justified.

The Silk Roads forfeited its spirit of connectedness, inclusiveness, cooperation and co-prosperity during such times of war and conflict, which is exactly the cases of the regions surrounding Russia, Ukraine and Afghanistan. Considering the two cases, *SILKROADIA* thought it would be time-

ly to devote its Cover Story Section to war and peace on the Silk Roads.

Professor Bahram Amirahmadian, a member of the Scientific Board at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran, Iran, contributed an excellent piece on the theme of War and Peace on the Silk Roads.

Professor Amirahmadian shared his insight on building a “Spatial (Virtual) Silk Roads” to link Asian, European and African countries. He noted that on the new Silk Roads, people can travel around the territories without restrictions, promote peace and prevent war and clashes.

The professor's call comes in perfect line with SUN's plan to launch a Silk Road Network University, a cyber university that links the 81 member universities of SUN. What also deserves readers' attention is his point that countries on the Silk Roads should focus on environmental protection, especially on the maritime Silk Roads, considering that 85 percent of global trade is done by sea routes.

*SILKROADIA* was fortunate to get a contribution from an Afghan intellect who is now living in the U.S. Spozhmai Salma Stanakzai, who formerly worked for the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is now

a visiting scholar at Chapman University in the U.S., a member of SUN. Professor Ron Steiner who teaches law at Chapman and who serves as the English Editor of SILKROADIA arranged the contribution of the former Afghan Foreign Ministry official.

In her article titled “Afghanistan - The Forgotten Heart of the Silk Roads in Asia,” Professor Stanakzai notes that Afghanistan, once the heart of the Silk Roads, is now under full control of Taliban who shocked the world with such acts as destroying the giant Buddha statues of Bamian, which she called “a jewel of Afghan national heritage and a major landmark on the Silk Roads.” Taliban’s brutal repression of the country also heavily affected the education sector, including the two Afghan member universities of SUN -- Herat University Kabul University, where female students face restrictions, including class segregation.

As a way to get the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan out of isolation and revive the Silk Roads, Professor Stanakzai suggested that instead of completely ignoring the Taliban, the international community engage the regime to open the transit routes

through Afghanistan. She noted that it is important that NGOs, aid agencies and UN offices define circumstances under which they will engage with Afghanistan to ensure service delivery, accessibility, and operational safety. The professor added that engaging with the private sector in Afghanistan would not result in formal recognition of the Taliban government.

Professor Stanakzai's argument should serve as a good piece of advice to SUN too, as the Network is working on a plan to help rebuild Ukraine when the Russian aggression ends there and assist member universities and people suffering political repressions in countries like Afghanistan and Myanmar.

A free movement of people, goods, faiths and ideas along the Silk Roads was a driving force of the Eastern and Western civilizations. Considerable part of the routes is now blocked for one reason or another, which calls on organization like SUN to do its utmost to revive the spirit of the routes by promoting civilian exchanges and cooperation and pressuring rogue regimes like the Afghan Taliban and Russia.

Meanwhile, SUN kept on working despite the remaining constraint of the

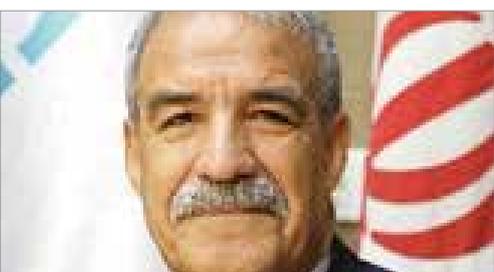
COVID-19 pandemic. It successfully held the Eighth General Assembly and the annual conference of the International Association for Silk Road Studies virtually, as well as the WRICOS, PHOCOS and S-DE-COS, the student contest for writing, photo and speech-debate.

The commitment of Canadian University of Dubai as this year's co-host remains strong and after co-hosting the online GA, it will invite the SUN family to an in-person GA in Dubai in December. CUD and its Vice-Chancellor and President Dr. Karim Chelli deserve a big compliment from the whole SUN family which looks forward to the first in-person gathering in more than three years.

Before the Dubai gathering, SUN will be celebrating the 1600th anniversary of Venice by co-hosting awards ceremony for students' video contest, T-shirt design contest and essay contest in October. The event, co-hosted by the Italian city and Ca'Foscari University of Venice, is yet another proof that SUN's collaboration is reaching out to governments in the Silk Roads countries. SILKROADIA looks forward to witnessing and recording more such events and programs in the future.

**COVER STORY**

# WAR AND PEACE ON THE SILK ROADS



**Bahram Amirahmadian**

**Silk is combed by the leaves of the trees.  
(Virgil, 1884, 267-268).**

**A**fter more than 2,000 years of the flourishing of the ancient roads networks known since the 19th century as the Silk Road, which ceased functioning in the 15th century after the fall of the Mongols Empire, the name of the Silk Road is still mentioned. However, until the middle of the 17th century the networks of the Silk Roads were used more or less to connect Asia and Europe. In fact, the Great Silk Road really was a number of trade and cultural exchange routes connecting the Asian continent to Europe by connecting merchants, traders, pilgrims, monks, and soldiers, as well creating cultural interactions between rural and urban areas from China to the Mediterranean (Elisseeff, 2000).

Today, the name of the Silk Road draws attention to historical, cultural aspects and its political role in establishing relations between nations and governments along the way. The Silk Road, the old China-focused trade road dating back more than 2,000 years, remains

well-known in the world. The Silk Road was a bridge between China and some Asian, European and African countries that played an important role in the material and spiritual developments of Eastern and Western civilizations. China's modern "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) mega-project, along with the American "New Silk Road" (NSR) strategy, claim to pursue general economic and political development, but each pursues it in its own national and vital interests.

It is interesting to note that, in the original network of roads, there was no single power that could dominate all territories along the way and somehow influence the management or dictate the terms of traffic on the roads. China monitored the flow within its sovereign territory and was responsible for the security of convoys, goods, and passengers; Iran and Rome each did the same in their territories. Of course, there were some local governments that were either fluctuating in dependence on this or sometimes possessing a cross-sectional independence. These conditions were implemented during times



*Caravanserai-i-Shah, Qazvin, Eugène Flandin (1840)*

of peace, and during the periodic wars between empires the connection between the caravans and coveys halted and was forced to stop and shut down. Still, during the entire period of peace the Silk Roads were in the interests of all actors.

This road symbolized the cooperation and empathy of the governments and nations of that era, each interacting to benefit from each other's possibilities. In this context, national, regional, and local governments located along the caravan routes, in order to benefit from this connective infrastructure. They obliged themselves to provide security on the sections of the road located in their territory, and, by re-

ceiving the road tax (toll) or the so-called transit tariffs, they earned revenues, partly spent to secure the roads, and the remainder of the wealth left in the hands of the rulers and their exercise of power. In general, it can be said that in the region of the Silk Road, everyone benefited in some way, and all were interested in keeping the connection between China and the Roman Empire as the Silk Road developed.

### **Peace and War and Silk Road Trade**

The name of “Silk Road” is not very old, unlike the actual, historical trade in silk and other commodities and the accompanying economic, cultural, technical, and artistic exchanges; the term was established and introduced many centuries after the abandonment of this commercial caravan highway. Based on their economic, military, commercial and cultural structure and in relation to the military forces at their disposal, the peoples along the multiple routes of this caravan pathway set the terms of the route in order to protect caravans carrying commercial goods, in addition to passengers who were trav-

eling with the caravans. What is clear is that the road has had multiple and multifaceted functions, which have been characterized by both peace and war.

In the peaceful, flourishing period of increased trade exchanges and cultural, socio-economic and political interactions, the civilizations and peoples along the road benefited from these conditions. On the one hand, on the eastern end of the Roads, the ancient civilization of China produced a precious good called silk, which, on the other hand, was purchased by the Roman Empire, which considered silk a commodity as valuable and influential as gold. The governments along the route between China and Rome also benefited from these exchanges, earning revenues by receiving tolls or providing security services to protect convoys and secure commercial goods enroute to their territory. The service sector, including accommodation, warehousing, transportation, securing caravans and commercial property, and the like, led to the flourishing of the cities along related road, especially oasis locations such as Xian, Turpan, Samarkand, Bukhara, and

the civilized and wealthy cities of the time, such as Nishapur, Riga (Rey), Ctesiphon and Palmyra. Silk played a large role in the rise and fall of empires.

The flourishing of the Chinese Empire was made possible by huge revenues from the sale of silk to Rome. By contrast, Rome, by spending so much gold on the silk which it valued as a precious and aristocratic commodity, ultimately contributed to the fall of the empire because, due to the depletion of the treasury, the government failed to finance the maintenance of the Roman Army, which caused its defenses to disintegrate. In the middle of these two silk economy empires was Sassanid Iran, which played the role of intermediary by earning money from transit and sometimes converting raw silk into consumable fabrics, and by securing caravans, which had prepared its army at the borders in order to secure the caravan routes. Due to insecurity and the shift of Iranian territory to the northern plains of the Caspian Sea, the decline in revenues became incapable of funding the army's maintenance on the western borders, which ultimately led to

the fall of the Sassanid Empire against the Arabs invasion in the 7th century CE (AD).

The change of land routes through Pamir and Hindu Kush to the south and the continuation of the Maritime Silk Road route, along with changes in the north route above the Caspian Sea, isolated the former territories of the route and deprived them of access to trade, services and revenues. The wars between Iran and Rome are also somewhat notable in this regard. Later, the emergence of the Mongol Empire in the 12th to 15th centuries CE (AD) again altered the silk road route. After the collapse of that Empire, there came a period of insecurity on the Silk Road due to the emergence of various governments and periodic conflicts, new geographical discoveries, and the establishment of other sea routes, and the glory of the old Silk Road declined.

In the past, the Chinese Empire's wars with the Huns and other nomadic tribes in Central Asia threatened regional peace and caused fluctuations in commodity trading, including silk. In a similar vein, the question now arises among thinkers,

politicians, and economists whether – despite the desires of various governments and nations with internationally recognized borders and different political, economic and social structures – it is still possible to revive something like the Silk Road to link different economies and put different peoples along the old Silk Road in a network of relationships that can lead to a stable peace that prevents conflicts and clashes.

## **Potential and Challenges for China's New Silk Road**

With the introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 by the President of China, it was expected that by reviving the “Belt” (roads and rails economic corridors) and “Road” (maritime routes), countries and nations located along the land and marine Silk Roads would be tied together in a way that would inevitably lead to peace in order to survive and benefit from economic development. China has been in full control of the management of land corridors and maritime roads since the 2013 introduction of the BRI, but this is far from

the concept of the ancient Silk Road, which was overseen by all nations and governments in collective management, each in its territory. In this regard, China plans to spend \$1,000 billion for this purpose and indeed for the political and economic influence of the countries on the path.

Within the framework of the land routes which constitute the BRI, the most important corridor is the “New Eurasia Land Bridge” (NELB), which begins in Xi’an, the capital of the Han and Tang Dynasty, and leads from there to Russia then to Belarus and Poland and onto Germany. Germany is expected to serve as beginning of a vast distribution network throughout the European Union. This route is one of the most important land routes of this initiative. Now, with Russia launching military aggression on Ukrainian soil and western sanctions against Russia and Belarus, the route is virtually blocked at its western connection with Europe. The European Union and two key countries of that connection, Poland and Germany, have sanctioned Russia, and the designation will create an impasse for China’s access to Eu-

rope through this route.

Another options in the Belt and Road initiative by which China might link with Europe is the railroad network called the “China-Central Asia and West Asia Economic Corridor” (CCAWAEC), one of the six land corridors to connect China and Europe, planned to reach Turkey and Europe from China through Central Asia and then Iranian territory. The corridor has not yet been activated and faces difficulties due to the need to pass through multiple countries and cross the borders of countries with different economic and political structures. In these ways, China’s new Silk Road has faced obstacles with the geopolitical changes of the world.

China’s link with Europe is intended to flow eastern China’s ports in the South China Sea, crossing through the Strait of Malacca to the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, then across the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean and Europe; this is labeled the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in the Maritime Routes initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative. This route connects East Asia with South and South-

west Asia, East Africa, and Europe, and is one of the oldest paths for contact in East Asia. However, this route likely brings high risks of U.S.-China confrontations in the South China Sea and the possibility of military conflict between China and the US, along with in Europe and others in the region, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, as well as with Australia, New Zealand, India and other concerned governments.

By creating artificial islands on coral reefs in the South China Sea, China has sought to increase its territorial waters and an exclusive economic zone and expand its maritime military dominance, countering the military presence of the United States and its regional and European allies in this area. Disputes have arisen between China and countries in the region regarding the determination of border lines and the exclusive economic zone, including ownership of the Spratly Archipelago Islands in the South China Sea. Critical tensions between the United States and China over Taiwan have increased the possibility of a military conflict, rais-

ing doubts about the future of peace in the region, and consequently threatens maritime trade exchanges and the flow of energy imports and exports of products. All of this has threatened the possibility of the formation of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road within the framework of the China Belt and Road Initiative.

The Belt and Road Initiative involves numerous investments in Indian Ocean ports and the construction of economic corridors around the Indian subcontinent, a geopolitical project some call the “Pearl Necklace,” which critics compare to the George Kennan “containment” strategy during the Cold War, by which the U.S. drew a political-economic fence around the Soviet Union and its allies. To get out of this bottleneck, India has sought a counterbalance against China with the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others in an “Indo-Pacific Strategy.” This kind of balance of forces impedes the hope of achieving peace and win-win cooperation on the maritime Silk Road.

Along with the introduction of economic

corridors (land routes) and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, China also plans an 'Ice Silk Road' or 'Polar Silk Road' that will use the Arctic Ocean to avoid conflict with the United States and its allies in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, and also avoid the risk of deteriorating conditions in the Middle East. For this purpose, China is preparing to use ports on its east coast and north to access shipping lines into the Arctic Ocean waterway off the coasts of the Russian Federation. These regions always have been difficult to exploit for commercial purposes, but they have the potential to provide access to Europe via shipping lanes which would be shorter and more economically beneficial than traditional routes. In the time before climate change became critical and the melting of polar ice in the Arctic Ocean became so extensive, these lanes could only be exploited for short periods and over short distances, often with the marine transport fleet assisted by icebreakers. Ironically, given that China itself is one of the world's largest producers of greenhouse gasses and has resisted compliance with the Paris summit

resolutions, China has begun to plan for commercial shipping in the northern polar region. This will risk causing irreparable damage to the international environment if it goes through.

Although the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road within the framework of the Belt and Road offered some hope, the future of the restoration of the Maritime Silk Road and the establishment of peace, stability, and economic prosperity among the nations of the region currently are in a cloud of obscurity. In addition, North Korea's future and normalization of conditions in that region face high risks. Therefore, the Silk Road in general and the Belt and Road Initiative in particular currently do not guarantee a bright future for peace within the framework of the Maritime Silk Road.

### **The Role of the Silk Road Universities**

Some political thinkers believe that war is permanent, and peace is temporary. Given that such doubts exist in the current atmosphere among 21st century "realists," what options will the Silk Road University Network have in achieving its aspirations

and how can it help bring peace among the many countries along the Silk Road with the tools and facilities available to it?

To answer this, we need to look at new thinking regarding the concept of the Silk Road. Basically, the Silk Road was founded on trade between east and west. Along the long road between China and the Roman Empire, there were many difficulties and dangers. In the Museum of Turfan in western China, there are writings in Sogdian language from merchants who had written in letters to their families about the difficulty of the road and how little hope they had of returning to their homeland. These letters reflect the hardships of the Silk Road and the fact that there have been dangers lurking along these routes. From the terrifying deserts of Talka Maakan in western China, the Kizil Kum and Kara Kum deserts in Central Asia, the difficult routes in Iran, and the Badia al-Sham desert in Mesopotamia, travel on the road was long and difficult.

Notwithstanding all these obstacles, people and nations were in contact with each other, and this contact continued for

centuries. In the world of that era, governments and cultures traded and a kind of 'global trade initiative' was implemented. Consider the following exchanges, which reflect the importance of this road in times of peace and prosperity:

### The Origin of the Goods Exchanged along the Silk Roads

**China:** silk, fabric, laky objects, spice

**Indochina:** spice, ivory, timber, pearls

**North India:** jewelry, ivory, turtle skin, incense, spices, fabrics, timber

**Southern India:** ivory, marine turtle skin, spice, jewelry, fabric, timber

**Arabia:** spice, slaves, jewel

**Sub-Sahara:** ivory, gold, slaves

**North Africa:** cereals

**Southern Europe:** olive oil, wine, crystal containers, coins

**Western Europe:** silver, tin

**Northern Europe:** slaves, amber

**Asia Minor:** silver, jewelry, timber, wine

In this way, continuity of material-spiritual relations was able to establish

security and peace and prevent war. Scholars from Silk Road Universities can make the case that we in current times need to follow this example.

Another future task of the Silk Road Universities Network (SUN) will be to inform governments and nations of the destructive environmental consequences in the Silk Road area. Remember that 85% of global trade is done by sea routes, given that long-distance maritime routes are more economically beneficial than land routes. For this reason, focus on the land-based Silk Road can play only a very little role in the consideration exchanges between the origin and destination of this long road.

## **Conclusion**

When the ancient Silk Road is raised, the public's mental perception is focused on the historic commercial routes, camels, caravans, commercial cargo and caravanserai, oasis towns and deserts and cities along the way. Among university professors, students and researchers in this field, many have a desire to travel along

the way and field visits and search for ancient works of attraction. Many scientific, research, artistic and cultural works have been published in the field of Silk Road studies. These interests and efforts show that the Silk Road continues to have many attractions and is still alive in the countries along Silk Road, and the name of Silk Road is highlighted on the buildings, squares, crossings, and highways of the region.

As we have seen, the historical lessons of both peace and war should be kept in mind in any consideration of the Chinese BRI, the American “NSR”, Russian “Eurasia”, and any “Eurasianism” that depends on dialogue or clashes among big powers. The nature of exploiting space and place has often been according to the logic of force and power. For this reason, the Silk Road Universities Network is moving towards finding tools and facilities that can foster peaceful thinkers to use a “Spatial Silk Road” (or Virtual Silk Road) to organize cultural and scientific space along the Silk Road to link Asian, European and African governments and nations. Such cultural products and the preparation of the

minds of students of this network in extensive cultural work on the web offer a great possibility.

It is important to note that the modern world became more familiar with the Silk Road through movies and TV series such as “Marco Polo’s Journeys” (American-Italian production) and “The Silk Road” (Japanese-Chinese production) than through any other means. Now that the infrastructure of cyberspace has become available, we can benefit from it. According to Canadian cultural critic Marshall McLuhan, when ‘time’ and ‘space’ coincide, a ‘global village’ is created. Now in the global village, we can create a “Spatial Silk Road” or “Virtual Silk Road” to bring peace and stay away from war.

The Moroccan Ibn Battuta (1369-1304) went through the heart of the maritime Silk to China, and Venetian Marco Polo (1324-1254) traveled to China overland by crossing the countries of the Silk Road. We today can travel these same territories by touring the “global village” along the Virtual Silk Road, reminding people, governments, and nations of the usefulness of

dialogue for peace and prevention of war and clashes by taking advantage of our virtual access to millions of listeners and viewers.

As was written by Ferdowsi, the Persian epic poet who lived from 1019 to 940 BCE, in his masterpiece, *Shahnameh* (QG 115):

Plant the tree of friendship, which bears the fruit of fulfillment;

Uproot the sapling of enmity, which bears countless suffering.

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# China's Belt and Road Initiative Under Challenge to Overcome Conflicts



Alina Ivanova

**T**he countries along the Silk Roads have always relied on an intricate web of connectedness, though with centuries of change in their relationships. The concepts of conflict and peace along such a vast region can seem hard to define, hence, this article will attempt to elucidate the challenges and promises along the Silk Roads as the foundation for peace through one of the most significant modern projects that the world has seen, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with its important economic and political implications. First, one has to look at the premise of the BRI itself re-

garding the Silk Roads region, with its stated pledges and visions. Then, the concrete, real world execution and the challenges faced in the recipient countries by the initiative have to be examined as individual cases. Notably, close attention has to be paid to the complex issues raised by the increasing debt of the involved countries towards China, raising concerns about ‘debt-trap diplomacy’ and rising political pressure concerning social issues. Therefore, these matters raise the question: Is the BRI an answer to the problems faced by the Silk Roads region or another form of conflict between a major power and weaker parties?

### **The BRI and its challenges**

The Road and Belt initiative (BRI) unveiled in 2013 by Xi Jinping has been one of the most ambitious projects of the 21st century, with the promise to “promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multi-tiered and com-

posite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries” (“Belt and Road Initiative”). It is imposing in its sheer size, with 139 to 146 countries having signed up to the BRI as of March 2022 (Wang, C.). The Beijing government’s main aim is to present itself as a champion of a new world built on the investment in ‘economic corridors’ with emerging countries, boosting the global GDP. The enormous hopes of the project perfectly illustrate both the conflicts and their possible resolutions in the Silk Roads regions. Primarily, it represents a concrete way for countries to develop their economies and stabilize themselves economically and socially. However, it could also represent a threat, as many critics have already labelled the BRI as ‘debt-trap diplomacy’ that would escalate into economic imperialism (Wang, K.). Particularly, a surge of concerns has resurfaced with the global disruption caused by the Ukrainian war. Hence, one has to look at the project in its theoretical scope as well as its functional evolution on the ground. The Belt

and Road Initiative mirrors the conflicts and resolutions through its existence as an economic tool for developing countries, building on the historical roots of the Silk Roads.

Ai Wei Wei has described the Belt and Road Initiative as a “counterattack in a global game of chess” (Wei Wei). Others see it as an attempt by the Beijing government to build a new world order; a respectable attempt to engage with a broader vision of the globe and a humane project that both unites and helps its recipients. The project has now exceeded the cost of 1 trillion dollars while not showing any signs of the investments slowing down (Morgan Stanley). This enormous investment has yet to be uniform in its application as countries have faced internal and external conflict due to the commercial nature of the BRI.

For instance, Kyrgyzstan owes more than 40% of its national debt of 5 billion to the Export-Import Bank of China (Eales). That number clearly exceeds any normal economic standard, putting Kyrgyzstan in the category of a “high risk” country for debt distress due to the loans. The project

has become a double-edged sword, bringing emerging countries out of their perilous situation and overdependence on singular exports while simultaneously becoming a severe burden on national interests. The result of the supposed ‘debt-trap diplomacy’ associated with the BRI also is seen in the Kyrgyz government’s refusal to acknowledge the situation with Uyghur re-education camps in China, along with the growth of popular discontent towards the Chinese pressure on the country and distress over labour violations related to the BRI, such as at the Solton-Sary gold mine, operated by the Chinese firm Zhong Ji Mining Company (Putz). This dispute also included allegations that the Chinese mining company was poisoning the environment, which provoked many citizens to engage in popular protest as a counter-measure to protect the region from commercial waste.

Other countries face similar issues, with Kazakhstan reporting altercations between Kazakh workers and Chinese representatives, the latest coming in April 2022. In that incident, almost 100 work-

ers on the construction of a road between two settlements in Kazakhstan's southern Zhambyl region put down their tools overnight, complaining about unequal salaries paid by a Chinese subcontractor and the company, a subsidiary of China Xinxing Construction & Development Co., along with the failure to supply the workers with appropriate and safe work clothes ("Kazakhstan: Labor Unrest"). Kazakh public discontent with China rose to an all-time high with the Central Asia Barometer revealing a 45% somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable opinion towards China in Fall 2021, an almost 30% increase since Spring 2017 (Wood and Baker). These negative attitudes appear to be strongly tied to increasing widespread anger towards China's treatment of indigenous Turkic-speaking communities in Xinjiang (Wood and Baker), an issue that most central Asian governments refuse to address for fear of sabotaging relations with their Chinese counterparts, even when many Kazakh and Kyrgyz citizens have been reported to be amongst those who were sent to the re-education camps.

Khorgos Gateway, a sprawling dry port infrastructure project in Kazakhstan, represents another of the BRI challenges (Standish). Initially, the dry port has been seen as reflecting the immense promise of the BRI. However, it has been riddled with issues ranging from waste to fraud. According to the Chinese Business Journal, cargo containers have been shipped through Kazakhstan empty due to trade imbalance and exporters using empty containers to receive significant subsidies (Standish). The empty containers represent the larger pattern of local entities using the project as a cover for fraud schemes and blatant stealing. Thus, BRI has faced the region's biggest plague, corruption, which prompted the Beijing government to establish a "zero tolerance" for corruption. This came after a string of incidents, including the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor being downscaled amid Pakistan's amassed debt problems (Sharma), and the Malaysian government having to renegotiate its plans for rail projects as well as the cancellation of \$3 billion worth of plans to build new pipelines

following a graft scandal (Park). Similarly, Sri Lanka's inability to repay Chinese loans lead to the government consenting to a 99-year lease on Hambantota port as a form of debt relief to a state-owned Chinese company (Abi-Habib).

### **The BRI and its answers**

However, one cannot discredit the BRI entirely as 'debt-trap diplomacy' or a Chinese grand project failure as it still represents a new path for engagement for the participant countries. The BRI's scale in connecting developing countries to a united 'economic corridor' did enable the growth of sectors that previously were in much need, with power, transport, and telecommunications being extensively developed in regions that were previously in dire need of them (OECD). The project is a crucial factor in developing infrastructure in the Silk Roads region, along with a possible contribution to lifting 8.7 million people from extreme poverty and 34 million from moderate poverty, according to a 2019 study by the World Bank (Maliszewska and Mensbrugge). Therefore, this makes the initi-

ative a possible mechanism for increasing global income and living standards, something generally recognized as requiring a truly herculean effort. Sadly, these results often seem to be overlooked, yet they are crucial in understanding the global scale of the BRI. Hence, while the project has encountered hurdles and apparent professional mismanagement, the expected longevity of the BRI suggests that there is much room for gradual improvement and enhanced risk management (Jones and Hameiri).

The Silk Roads region has to understand that its biggest enemy remains corruption above anything else. The way to achieve lasting equilibrium is to build a solid national foundation where external pressure and circumstances would not compromise popular interests and welfare. The BRI represents a great promise, however, it is hindered by the inability of both China and the recipient countries to manage the project properly. Consequently, the irregularities in its operating environment leaves room for significant mistakes and fraud. What is now essential is for both China

and the recipient governments to engage in coherent and clear planning with an emphasis on transparency between the nations involved. This should be done only after careful consideration by both China and the recipient governments with respect to their responsibility to engage in viable and sustainable projects only after extensive forecasting of economic, social, and ecological impacts. In this way the BRI might build a foundation for a strong and peaceful new Silk Road.

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# Afghanistan - The Forgotten Heart of the Silk Road in Asia



Spozhmai Salma Stanakzai

**H**umans have moved around the globe for as long as they have existed, for reasons as diverse as trade, economy, conflict and disasters, or mere desire for a change and curiosity (de Haas et al, 2019). There are many examples of migration leading to more vibrant and prosperous societies, but the movement of people and goods across the Silk Roads remains one of the greatest engines of innovation and productivity in human history.

Those ancient roads passed through Ar-iana-Afghanistan, full of tales of nomads, warriors, immigrants, monks, priests and



**Bala Hissar, the ancient citadel of Kabul, built in the 5th century CE (AD) (Photo from 1879)**

many other travelers who used to travel across Afghanistan centuries ago. Afghanistan was once a major thoroughfare of the Silk Roads - connecting west to the east - and was also the home of great civilizations. Afghanistan's cultural heritage is a testimony to its diverse history as part of the Silk Roads that bridged the Asian continent, and part of the way migration across the Silk Roads helped many communities develop and thrive.

Scholars have asked whether or not trade and peace have reciprocal effects on each other, i.e., does economic interdependency of communities bring peace and

stability, and does maintaining peaceful relations result in the growth of trade? While still debated, there have been important comparative studies that seem to offer confirmation of a positive reciprocal effect (Hegre et al, 2010). For example, during the height of trade along the Silk Roads, it appears there were relatively fewer wars fought between neighboring nations along the route.

Trade and intentional migration expanded the scope of skills and knowledge and contributed to the integration and harmonizing of different communities along the Silk Roads. Trade among the nations along the Silk Roads caused people to move to other lands to seek and offer opportunities for economic growth, and therefore must have made a positive impact in maintaining the stability of the region and avoiding much violence and conflict.

The recent talks of reviving the Silk Roads also have revived hopes in Afghanistan of becoming economically independent and reducing insecurity. The former President of Afghanistan, Mr. Ashraf Ghani, had stated in 2015 that the country

had invested billions of dollars in roads development in the hope of restoring connections to the region and the world: “The Silk Road was a sophisticated financial system, dispute resolution system with nodal cities. Afghanistan could be the economic hub in the heart of Asia, we are looking at the emerging as Asian continental economy (Xinhua, 2015)”. Many in Afghanistan believed in the initiative as a way to promote regional cooperation in the common fight against terrorism, and as a path toward a peaceful, prosperous and stable Afghanistan that also would have benefited the region and the world at large.

However, now that Afghanistan’s previous government have collapsed the country is back in hands of the Taliban. The same group that back in early 2001 shocked the world with such acts as destroying the giant Buddha statues of Bamian, a jewel of Afghan national heritage and a major landmark on the Silk Roads. Many wonder, can the world engage with the current regime in Afghanistan for the revival of the Silk Roads?

## **The Problem of Rogue Actors for Global Security**

One of the global security dilemmas facing the international community and nation states is how to engage with rogue regimes and non-state actors to ensure stability and prevent spillover effects. With the collapse of the US-backed Afghan government and the rise to power of the Afghan Taliban for the second time, combined with the withdrawal of US forces from the country, a fundamental question facing the international community was whether to engage with the Taliban as a non-state security provider to ensure minimum degree of security and stability to prevent state collapse and the subsequent spillover effects. Some in academic and policy circles argue that the Afghan Taliban have not changed and are harboring global terrorists and pose a significant threat to regional and global peace, and that any recognition would mean normalizing a terror group providing safe havens to other terror groups while enjoying international recognition. They worry this would only embolden other extremist groups to

seek global recognition via brute force. Therefore, these critics believe the Taliban should be sanctioned and isolated until they reform or face an internal revolt.

While the concerns of critics hold merit, history has shown that sidelining and sanctioning the Afghan Taliban in the 1990s resulted in the group's reliance on Al Qaeda and other global terror outfits for financial and technical resources, which eventually paved the way to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. This time around, the international community needs to engage with the Taliban with two purposes in mind: (a) to hopefully encourage the group into a responsible state level actor, and (b) to manage potential humanitarian and security spillover effects from Afghanistan into the region and beyond.

This delicate topic raises three fundamental questions:

1. Should the international community engage with the Taliban for the revival of the Silk Roads?
2. How should we define engagement with the Taliban? What levels of engagement and under what circumstances is

required without recognition?

3. What is the best framework for engagement with the Taliban?

## **Revival of Silk Road through Afghanistan**

Afghanistan sits in the heart of Silk Road; centuries ago, the blue lapis lazuli of Afghanistan would travel all around the world. Today Afghan lapis lazuli and other gems can be seen in the British Museum. “Some of the magnificent wealth of Afghanistan in the Kushan period... were discovered containing goods from all over, including goods from Syria, Egypt, India, Greece, Italy and many other[s]. The volume and variation of the collection bears witness not only to the prosperity of Afghanistan at the time, but how connected it was to many far-flung places in the ancient world” (Omrani, 2010).

Similarly, the revival of Silk Road will help Afghanistan recover economically, and trade and migration will bring Afghanistan out of the current isolation and bring many benefits to the other countries around the world. There would be three

main benefits of opening the transit routes through Afghanistan: enhancing global security, accessing Afghanistan's natural resources, and empowering the Afghan people.

### **Enhancing global security**

Informal and “non-state security providers” such as warlords, local strongmen, and vigilantes have been a constant fact of life through much of Afghanistan's history (Derksen, 2016). Many Afghan rulers relied on regional strongmen and local leaders to govern the country given the harsh geography and vulnerability of the state institutions. In the absence of a strong state, these actors filled an important security and governance vacuum in suburban and rural Afghanistan. The reliance on informal and non-state security providers still is part of the military and security landscape of Afghanistan today. These non-state security providers are illegal or extralegal armed groups, terrorists, and local militias who fill in the critical vacuum left by the Afghan state in ungoverned spaces across the country, where

state security and law enforcement have a merely symbolic role or are non-existent (Kantor, 2012). For example, in modern Afghan history, the Afghan mujahidin rose up to fight against the Soviet occupation of the country, and subsequently the Afghan Taliban rose up, initially against the mujahidin but later Americans. Armed militias are supported by outsider state and non-state actors, and benefit from a conducive domestic environment by an appeal to the local population with the promise of bringing freedom and better law enforcement (Lawrence, 2017).

In geopolitical terms, countries like Afghanistan function as “shatter zones,” defined as “strategically oriented regions that are both deeply divided internally and caught up in the competition between Great Powers of the geostrategic realms” (Cohen, 2015). A good example is the famous British-Russian rivalry over influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia and access to the ports of India, famously referred to as ‘the Great Game’ or ‘Tournament of Shadows.’ The rise of any strong nation-states in any such sphere of influ-

ence and shatter zones are close to impossible given the influences and counter-influences of great powers on their soil.

In our new globalized environment, with nation-states influence winding down and the return of great power politics at the global stage, we have witnessed increased activities in regions such as Afghanistan and the kind of state collapse which is a direct or indirect result of such great power politics. We once again are witnessing state collapse in Afghanistan, as the formal government led by Ashraf Ghani and backed by the United States couldn't stand against the onslaught of the Taliban, a religious-military movement considered to be a terrorist organization. Afghanistan's neighboring states and the international community are left in a delicate position where they lack the resources and will to interfere but at the same time must deal with the consequences of Afghan state collapse. The fundamental question before these states and the broader international community is how to engage with a non-state actor such as the Taliban, who has captured a state through the

barrel of the gun, given the worsening humanitarian crisis and its first and second order security and humanitarian spillover effects on the region and beyond.

As the great 19th century poet Mohammad Allam Iqbal once wrote:

آسیا یک پیکر آب و گل است  
ملت افغان در آن پیکر دل است  
از فساد او فساد آسیا  
در گشاد او گشاد آسیا

*Asia is a body of water and clay,  
Of which the Afghan nation forms the heart.  
The whole of Asia is corrupt,  
If the heart is corrupt,  
Its decline is the decline of Asia;  
Its rise is the rise of Asia.*

By promoting and maintaining peace in Afghanistan, we can promote peace in the region and beyond. But the growing threat of ISIS to the world shows just how challenging this problem can be. Currently the Taliban are the de facto security providers, and they are actively fighting the ISIS in Afghanistan. The world needs to engage

with the Taliban to keep ISIS in check and preserve global peace. The spirit of the Silk Road can show that path forward and hold the current rogue Taliban regime accountable in their fight against ISIS terrorism.

## **Accessing Afghanistan's natural resources**

Afghanistan sits on 2 trillion worth of minerals. Some of those minerals are important for world and can have benefits to the many international stakeholders. The biggest mineral deposits in Afghanistan are of iron and copper, and the country could be a major producer of these commodities.

However, two other major minerals, niobium (used in stainless steel and superconductors) and lithium (critical for modern batteries and industrial glass and ceramics) have been discovered in Afghanistan. Ghazni Province may have lithium deposits as large of those of Bolivia, the country with the world's largest known lithium reserves (Wilson, 2021). Reviving the Silk Road will enable the world to invest in these minerals, and create jobs, boost the Afghan economy, and empower

the Afghan people.

## **Empowering the Afghan people**

Empowering the people of Afghanistan would add tremendous pressure on the Taliban to accept and even bring about change. It is too often ignored that the Taliban don't even represent 25% of the nation. But Afghanistan is a young country, where median age of its population is 16 years old, and the current economic crises pushes many of its youth to join dangerous terroristic groups which can function to export destabilization to the rest of the world.

Opening trade and transit routes through Afghanistan would provide a poor and deprived population with new opportunities. If the people are empowered, the Taliban would gradually lose their hegemonic power. If the international community makes the mistake they did 20 years ago, and leaves Afghanistan by itself in the hands the Taliban, all the past achievements will be lost and the country can become a safe haven for many international

terrorist organizations.

However, to reach out to Afghan youth and empower the Afghan private sector, the international community must engage with the current regime. Unfortunately, the current regime is a classic 'bad actor' in international relations.

### **Bad Actors in International Relations**

In the aftermath of cold war, globalization diffused power and resources in the global system and therefore paved the way for different actors, some good and some bad, to encroach upon the functions which traditionally was performed by nation-states (National Intelligence Council, 2007). Jihadist groups, quintessential bad actors, have been a byproduct of globalization in the post-cold war world (International Crisis Group, 2019; (Freiden, 1999).

The prevalent view of bad actors in international relations is that we should not engage them and instead they should be wiped out militarily or isolated until they reform and become responsible actors. Though this view might hold merit, as they are the de facto rulers and realities in un-

governed spaces, they cannot be ignored and for humanitarian and security purposes we have to deal with them.

## **Engagement with Bad Actors – Conditions and Circumstances**

The prevalent view within the international system is that we need to employ the full power of nation-states, i.e., political, military and economic might, to completely dismantle bad actors and remove them from the international system, but this has not always been successful. In certain cases these groups are the de facto rulers within states which are part of the international system i.e. Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan are recent examples. The governments, aid agencies, and other non-state actors must find ways to deal with these groups for access, daily operations, and the physical security of staff and aid convoys amongst other issues (International Crisis Group, 2019).

The trouble is under what conditions and circumstances it is plausible to engage with groups such as the Taliban, Al Shabab, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

or Ahrar ul Sham to deliver services or discuss safe passage – among other issues – given that the alternative of not engaging with them would mean an unraveling humanitarian catastrophe in the areas they control. To this end, it is important that NGOs, aid agencies and UN offices need to define circumstances under which they will engage with these groups to ensure service delivery, accessibility, and operational safety (McLeod et al, 2016).

Undeniably, the Afghan Taliban have returned to power and are in charge of the country for the second time. They are the de facto rulers of the country and a reality which cannot be ignored or wished away. There also is no prospect of replacing or finding an alternative to the Taliban regime in the immediate future. To manage the ongoing humanitarian crisis and curb spill-over security effects of the US withdrawal, it is imperative to deal with them. However, almost half of their cabinet members are on the UN blacklist and some have US bounties on their heads, so some think dealing with them is tantamount to recognition of a terror state (O’Hanlon et

al., 2021). The dilemma here is to differentiate between the fine line of political recognition and pragmatic engagement for management of a humanitarian crisis and similar diplomatic dealings with the de-facto rulers of a country (Samad, 2021).

Engagement with the Taliban for humanitarian purposes by the states and donor and aid agencies does not mean automatic recognition. Completely ignoring the Taliban, who control almost a hundred percent of the territory of the country, is not a realistic option, so the question is under what conditions and circumstances should the international actors and aid agencies engage with the Taliban? Based on international experience and similar circumstances, such as in Mali and in the experience of the first emirate of the Taliban in 1990s, states and aid agencies, including the United Nations, could engage with the Taliban on political, security, and humanitarian issues, which would not mean their political recognition as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, in attempts to start any Silk Road style projects, outside governments

and investors should engage directly with the Afghan people and private actors. Many private and local business people in Afghanistan are currently looking for the right opportunity to invest in their country, and engaging with this private sector would not result in formal recognition of the Taliban government.

However, there are three fundamental circumstances in which the international community may have to engage directly with the Taliban: (1) Humanitarian access to areas most in need of aid and to vulnerable groups may require engagement with the Taliban regime; (2) Taliban assistance for safe passage and provision of security for the aid workers in rural and remote areas of Afghanistan; and (3) Securing Taliban assistance to aid agencies and other NGOs through local bargains with different stakeholders to secure concessions on women's rights or minorities issues (International Crisis Group, 2019).

### **Levels of Engagement with the Taliban**

The Afghan Taliban is a very heterogeneous and decentralized organization.

Though they try to portray themselves as a highly centralized and disciplined organization, the truth is that the movement is an incoherent organization comprised of various groups fighting under the brand and umbrella of Afghan Taliban (Watkins, 2020). In the periphery, local ground commanders hold more sway than the leadership at the top of the national pyramid. Given this context, it is critical to engage with the Taliban at the right level to be able to gain humanitarian access, secure local bargains and arrange local safe passages and operational security.

Thus, though the Afghan Taliban leadership are often critical for security and diplomatic matters, they hold little sway on the countryside (Giustozzi & Al Aqeedi, 2021). Even though they furnish aid agencies and their staff with immunity letter or instruction letters to their local commanders to arrange security or services, often it falls on deaf ears. Therefore, it is key to engage with the Taliban leadership on political matters but at the same time establish operational contacts in rural Afghanistan with the local Taliban commanders for

humanitarian access and safety. This two-pronged engagement does not equal recognition, but is a pragmatic acknowledgment of what it takes to do business with non-state armed actors who control territory and a population who are entitled to receive services and aid under international humanitarian law.

Engaging just the Taliban leadership without contacts with their ground commanders and rank and file would mean risking operational safety and probably not getting access to remote rural villages. We have seen this in the recent disappearances of human rights activists and local aid workers in Kabul and surrounding provinces, wherein the national Taliban leadership deny any role, but it is likely local commanders have taken matters into their own hand.

## **The Road Forward**

The Afghan Taliban made a decisive come back in August 2021 and today they are the de facto rulers of the country. There is no viable alternative force on the ground and the Taliban control essentially all the

country. Tragically, Afghanistan is plunging into a deep and catastrophic humanitarian crisis with regional and even global ramifications in the form of refugees, extremists, and economic demands. To mitigate these impacts, the world must engage with the Taliban even though it should not formally recognize them. This engagement is for pragmatic and humanitarian reasons and necessary if we are to avoid a disaster in the country. This engagement does not mean recognition of the Taliban regime, but is rather a necessary step to manage the spillover effects of a humanitarian crisis, and potentially to pave the way for political reforms while holding the Taliban accountable on its counterterrorism commitments. But while humanitarian aid is crucial for survival of people, it's not a sustainable model for even the short run.

Afghanistan's neighbors as well as others in the region and world need to take a coherent approach towards the Taliban and send a united message of delivering aid but at the same time acknowledging the need for political reform. Opening the transit pathways, the living legacy of the

ancient Silk Roads, would allow us to create new paths toward working with the private sectors in Afghanistan in ways that can actually empower the people of Afghanistan. We can hope that, as on the Silk Road of the past, commerce and connection can deliver not just material goods, but can also bring peace.

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**SPECIAL FEATURE**

# PAPER ON THE SILK ROADS

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# The Origin of Paper and the Silk Roads

USSUN-HUFS Research & Study Team

**I**n the history of human civilization, “records” have existed everywhere. The delivery of information was the most important element in the development of civilization. A tremendous amount of information has been accumulated in past years, from cave paintings to modern computers, which is a great blessing for human life. Moreover, much of that information is now digitized and exists in various forms in the infinite space of the Internet. We are now in the digital age.

But even in this digital age, there is a central means of transmitting knowledge



**Women take the bark off the steamed mulberry stems in a restored paper mill in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**



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that has remained consistent, namely paper. The USSUN-HUFS Research Team, which explores the glorious moments of civilization on the Silk Roads, has decided on “paper” as the theme for the March issue of the web magazine, exploring the topic primarily in connection with the Silk Road civilizations. In this article, we will discuss the origin, propagation, impact, and future of paper along the Silk Road.

When you think of “paper,” you will think of both “papyrus,” which was in-



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**A worker uses a waterwheel to pound mulberry bark in a restored paper mill in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

vented in Egypt, and “paper,” which was invented in Han China. The paper that our team mainly deals with in this article is Chinese-style paper. The reason we chose paper instead of papyrus is because of the difference in influence, durability, and the regional ubiquity of paper compared to papyrus. In the case of papermaking as invented by Chae-Ryun (also known as Cai Lun or Ts’ai Lun), it has a durability that can last more than 1,000 years (such as Dang era administrative document found in the Turfan area), while papyrus has durability far below that. Papyrus also was only suitable for use mainly in Egypt and its surrounding areas, as the source of pa-



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**A worker makes paper by putting diluted mulberry peel pulp on a screen at a restored paper mill in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

papyrus is a plant called “cellulose papyrus” from the Nile River region. Because of these characteristics, papyrus was gradually pushed out in favor of Chinese paper over time. Human records have existed since ancient times, such as mural paintings of primitive people found in caves, clay tablets of Sumerians, and the scrolls of the Zhou Dynasty. However, these forms of media had a fatal drawback; they are too heavy. A heavy medium meant that multiple units could not be carried, which led to inefficiency in information delivery.

So over time people naturally began to record on clay plates or lighter media, such as bamboo boards, barks, or parch-



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**A pile of mulberry stems, raw materials for paper, at a restored paper mill in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**

ment made from sheep's skins, depending on the region. However, bamboo and parchment still had fatal drawbacks. Bamboo was still heavier than parchment, and the amount of information recorded was small, and parchment was very expensive because it could be obtained only by raising and processing sheep.

Silk, which was used as an alternative to parchment in China, also failed to compensate for the shortcomings of parchment because the raw material was very rare and the manufacturing process was complicated. Then in 105 CE (AD), Chae-Ryun (Cai Lun) of Hunan developed paper as a new medium for delivering information.

For centuries prior to this new invention, bamboo, wood sculptures, and expensive silk surfaces were used for writing and delivering information in China.

After much effort, Chae-Ryun (Cai Lun) was able to invent a light and inexpensive substitute in the form of a scroll. His papermaking was basically done by separating and washing raw materials, grinding them into pulp form, spreading them evenly on a single plate, and drying them. This can be said to be the origin of the paper that we use in modern times.

## **The Spread of Paper by Region**

So, how was the paper invented in China able to spread all over the world? How did the process work? In this section, we will look at the spread of paper along the Silk Road by discussing the spread of paper by region. The process of paper's spread around the world is as follows: After the invention of paper in 105 CE (AD), paper began to spread around the present-day Xinjiang region of China in the second and third centuries. Since then, China's paper-

making technique has had an opportunity to spread to the Islamic world in earnest in the wake of the Talas War between the Tang Dynasty and the Islamic forces. Chinese paper, which began to spread to the Islamic world in the 8th century, arrived in Baghdad, Iraq, Morocco, and other Arab-Islamic countries in the late 8th and early 11th centuries.

Beginning in the middle of the 12th century through the middle of the 16th century, paper spread to European Christian countries such as Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Britain, Switzerland, and Sweden, and by the end of the 17th century, it reached the United States and spread around the world.

This spread of paper to the Silk Roads and its surrounding countries has two great implications in terms of the function of the Silk Roads. First, as paper was traded and propagated through the Silk Roads, the Silk Roads served as a kind of “Paper-Road.” The Silk Roads served as the basis for civilization by providing a network where paper could be transported. Next, it is of great significance that the Silk

Road also served as a catalyst for civilization through the propagation of ideas. A century after the introduction of papermaking, the revival of literature and arts in the Islamic region centered on Baghdad occurred, which also affected the European Renaissance.

In this way, the foundation of “paper” civilization spread around the world along the Silk Roads. The impact of the medium of paper on civilization would be difficult to overstate. One question arises here: In what ways was paper generally accepted in each region, how was it used locally, and in what ways did this new means of communication change the culture?

This article was authored by the **USSUN-HUFS Research & Study Team**, USSUN means the United Students of SUN (the Silk-Road Universities Network) which is the official student body of SUN networking more than 800,000 student of the 80 member universities of SUN across the land and maritime Silk Roads stretching from Portugal to Korea. This article is the result of combined efforts of the Research & Study Team of the USSUN-HUFS which is composed of which represents Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea, at USSUN, the student body of the Silk Road Universities Network. The team members included:

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# **Paper Civilization by Region on the Silk Roads**

USSUN-HUFS Research & Study Team

## **China and the Origins of Paper**

The invention of paper in China hugely influenced the spread of the ability of reading and writing. For example, it dramatically lowered the prices of books, leading to their greater availability. The scribes of the government now had thousands of pages of paper supplied for record keeping, documentation, and writing. Moreover, by the combination of a writing brush, an ink stick, and paper, for 2000 years, painting and writing have played a role as the most important art forms in China.



Picture 1.  
The Han Chinese  
calligraphy

## Paper in the Economy

In addition to writing books and letters, paper has been used since the Han Dynasty to create topographic maps and military maps. They used symbols and color-coding for local features on a fairly accurate scale and represented specific areas as magnified. In addition, it was used as a wrapping paper for sensitive items such as drugs. Very significantly, it was widely used as a wrapping paper for tea. Paper also was used to make hats and even armor, and thin paper was used for windows, paper screens, sheets, curtains, clothes, and mon-



Picture 2. A Part of The Strange Scenery on a Clear River,  
Mi Youren

ey.

Banknotes (paper money) appeared first in the Tang Dynasty. The innovation started with merchants using paper documents. This way of using paper documents was especially preferred by the sellers who traded teas. In the case of the precious gold or silver traders, they were very wary of being in danger while transporting their precious goods. For this reason, they preferred leaving a record on paper in receipts and trade documents. Marco Polo, the merchant of Venice, mentioned paper money in the 13th century in his reports of his journey.

The monetary value of a bill was recognized as if it were made of pure gold and silver through a process by which several executives appointed to each chairman registered their names and signed them.

When this was done regularly, the chief executive printed the scarlet royal seal that was entrusted to him on the paper so that the pattern continues to be stamped.

## **Korea**

Many details are unclear about the spread of paper to the Korean Peninsula. Official records show that there was paper on the Korean Peninsula in 600 CE (AD). However, it is possible that Korea had a unique papermaking technique even before the introduction of papermaking in China, as a substance that looks like a lump of paper was found in a lacquered coffin excavated in an old tomb in Nakrang about 1,000 years earlier. But what is certain is that one of the old documents in Korea, “Beomhandanikyung,” published during the reign of King Gyeongdeok of Silla, and “Daebanggwanbulhwaeumkyung” record that “paper was made by grinding the bark with a millstone.”

In the Goryeo Dynasty, with the thriving of Buddhism, the production of paper developed greatly due to the state’s policy to foster the paper industry. In particular,

Goryeo's paper fans were loved by the Chinese people. The paper of Goryeo was so smooth, tough, and thick because it only used materials from oak trees without using any other lesser inputs.

The Chinese people called it 'Kochi Bell.' In China, Korean paper was also noted as high-quality paper. The "Mobeopyeonhwa-kyoung," which remains the oldest paper in Korea, is designated as National Treasure No. 185, and it is the scripture that had the greatest influence on Buddhism along with the Hwaeomkyoung.

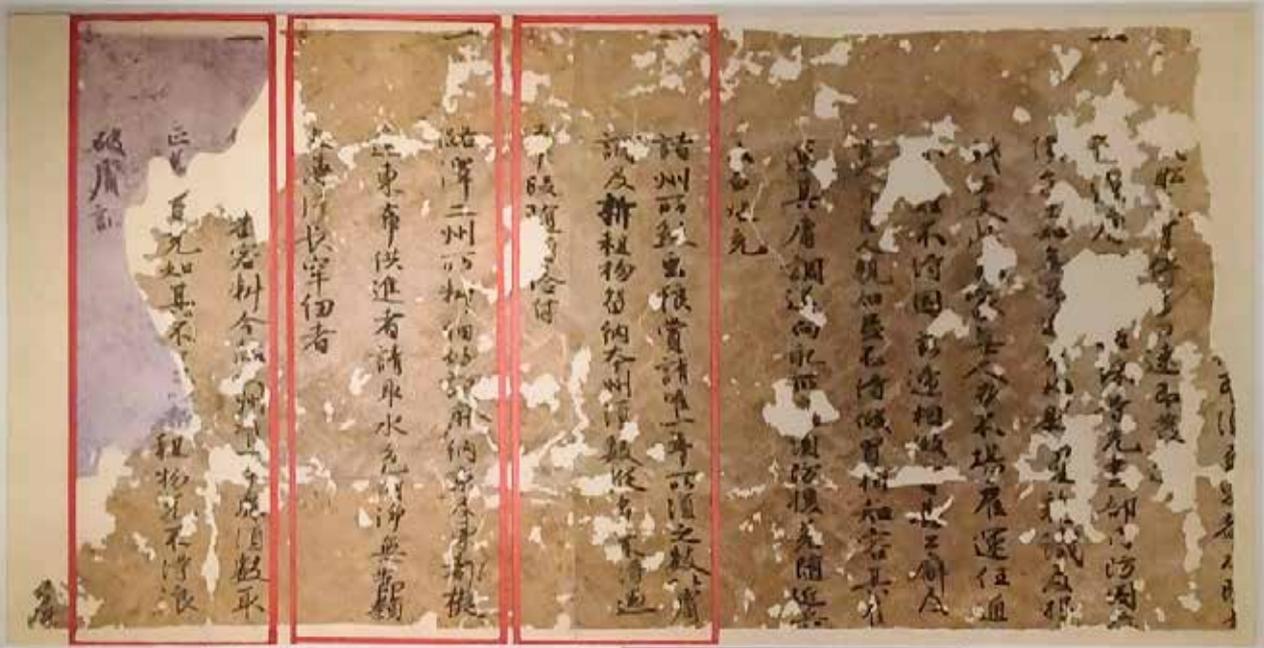
## **Central Asia**

Paper is known to have been invented by Cai Lun around 1-5 CE(AD). We also know that there are paper records from the past found all over the world, including Europe and Asia. So how did paper spread from China to Europe, Asia, and Egypt? You can thank the Silk Road, which served as a trade route between East and West at that time, and throughout Central Asia. There is no record of the use of papermaking technology in Central Asia. However, other records and woodblock prints of the time

show how Central Asia played a role in the spread of paper. Therefore, we would like to investigate how the Silk Road affected the propagation of paper.

According to archaeological records, paper spread earliest along the Silk Road to the Xinjiang region. Paper itself was first traded before paper making technology was introduced, and paper records found in Gaoqiang, Loran, Kusha, Kotan, Dunhuang, and Turpan date back to the third century. Paper technology eventually was introduced to Tibet around 650 and spread from there to India. Tibetans knew how to make paper very effectively at least by the 9th century, and they cultivated the thymelaea plant, which grows well in the Himalayas and was a local plant for paper production.

Since paper was imported into Central Asia before papermaking technology, many cities there had to reuse paper. Turfan, an oasis village on the Silk Road, reused all government documents, contracts, and other documents. A village outside Samarkand even used paper that had already been written in Chinese.



1 "미국 사신에게 지급하는 바를은 여왕에 의지한 것이 밀려한 양말을 정장"과 의상"에서 내어 사용한다. 만일 부족하면 양말로 충당하지 않거나 조에서 일부로 덮어내 줄 수는 없다"

2 "모든 주는 호랑이나 이리들 죽였을 때의 모상 물품으로 1년 직 소의역안(직물)을 (거위)을 (가죽)과 (생조)를 (대)이 덮어내 주어 남겨두도록 한다. 생조를 꿰매서 그만한을 주되 50년을 넘을 수 없으며 그대그에 지급한다."

3 "노주와 대주 두 주에 조로로 부과하는 고금 비는 장안과 낙양으로 보낸다. (하)로 포를 만들어 관상할 때는 맑은 물에 마다가 없는 것으로 두께가 얇고 길이가 길며 색깔이 새말한 것을 골라 보낸다."

Chinese writings from Turpan being shown at a National Museum of Korea exhibition.

Other recordable alternatives were papyrus and parchment. Nevertheless, the reason why China insisted on paper is because of its convenience and durability.

The flow of paper through the Silk Road eventually was interrupted by the transfer of papermaking techniques to other kingdoms, and was facilitated by rulers and religious groups.

Administrative documents of the Tang Dynasty were found in tombs in the Turfan region. Paper seems to have been used in funeral culture in modern Central Asia. The paper wrapped around the body was found to be administrative documents dis-

carded at that time.

## **Middle East**

Before the paper era, parchment was what was used after the era of recording on clay tablets. Parchments were used in many fields, and one that required a lot of paper was the holy text of Islam, the Qu'ran. It was generally believed that the introduction of paper to the Persian region occurred in 751 CE (AD), through Han paper producers being captured as hostages in the Battle of Talas. However, it appears this story is not true. Recent archaeological discoveries prove that before 751 paper had already existed in the cities of Central Asia on the Silk Road. In Panjikent, Tajikistan, papers with Sogdian, Arabic, and Chinese characters have been found. In addition, the development of papermaking techniques seems to have been triggered by merchants and monks who were trading along the Silk Road. But what does seem clear is that papermaking had spread throughout the Mediterranean world in earnest throughout the Islamic world since the 10th century, or after the

Battle of Talas.

According to Ibn Khaldun, a prominent ancient historian and politician in the Islamic world, paper began to replace parchment as the policy of Al-Fadlibn Yahya al-Barmaki, the prime minister of the Abbasid dynasty. With the massive introduction of paper in the public sector, which began in the late 8th century, the collection of private libraries and public libraries increased, blooming into a cultural heyday. Meanwhile, the Islamic world's paper-making techniques generally are believed to have spread to the West along the Silk Road trade route. In other words, due to the exchange between Islamic civilization and Iranian cities in Central Asia, paper had spread throughout the Islamic world, including today's central and western Iran. Meanwhile, the oldest paper-based book in Persian is "al-Abniah 'an Haqaeq al Adwiah", a 10th-century book on medicinal plants written by Abu Mansur Movafaq ibn Ali al-Heravi.

In addition to the paper of Samarkand, that of the Horasan region of Southern Turkey was also famous for its excellent

quality – for example, in the city of Ceyhan in the Horasan region. Even Egyptian officials at the time are believed to have preferred paper produced in Samarkand, in part because Samarkand's paper was cheaper. However, in Persian culture, papermaking was not developed only in these regions. The Mazandaran region of Iran near the Caspian Sea also produced high-quality paper, while the western regions of Iran in the cities of Tabriz, Yazd, and Kerman also produced paper.

The wide promulgation of paper in the Persian world is also referenced in Persian poetry itself. The Persians are a people who still love poetry to this day to the extent that they can be said to be a people of poetry. Manuchehri sang:

Čhenan kārghāhe Samarqand gasht; /  
Zamin az dar-e Balkh tā Khāvarān.

Dar-o bām-o divar-e ān kārghāh; / Čhenan Zengiāne kaghaz geran.

*Looks like the factory of Samarkand became, the land from Bactra to Kavalan.*

*From door to roof to wall of this factory, is filled with expensive paper from Zengian..*

Persian papermaking was further developed by introducing excellent techniques from China during the Rashid Al-Din period. Rashid Al-Din was also the author of *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, the first world-historical work on the history of Islamic space, pre-Islamic dynasties, and the Mongol Empire. Rashid Al-Din wrote a book on very large paper that was nearly 0.5 meters in width with miniature art illustrations. This tendency also influenced the written work of the later dynasties, showing that the concurrent development of papermaking techniques and the development of Persian fine painting. In the case of the Mongolian royal court in particular, large-sized paper was also used to do both calligraphy and artistic painting. Later, Persian papermaking developed further and allowed more refinements in calligraphy and fine art.

The paper industry continued to spread westward, and Baghdad soon matched Samarkand in paper production. The first paper mill in Baghdad was established in 794-795 CE (AD). The prosperity of the paper industry in Baghdad may have been

linked to the fact that the city then was the center of bureaucracy in the Middle East. Paper manufacturers in Baghdad did not significantly change methods or materials used in paper production, but made certain sizes of paper available for specialized tasks. Paper size in modern day papermills in Baghdad have been reduced to two major production sizes: the full Baghdad sheet (about 110cm wide x 73cm high) and the Baghdad half sheet (about 73cm wide x 49cm high)

From Baghdad, the paper manufacturing industry moved to Cairo, Egypt, and the city became a hub of the industry. Loveday said, "Egypt was well suited to the paper industry as the textile industry was established. And by the end of the 10th century A.D., Egypt was famous for paper." The development of the paper industry in Egypt coincided with a decrease in demand that almost ended papyrus production in the city. This fact alone proves that the technology of paper profoundly influenced Middle Eastern society within just a few centuries from its introduction. Arguing in favor of this point, Bloom presented

evidence showing that of documents found originating between 950 to 1050 CE (AD), only 2 sheets of 441 that have been found were papyrus.

In the 9th century, the paper-producing industry also started in Syria, and by the 10th century, its paper was being exported to Egypt and Europe. For many years, it was believed that Syrian manufacturers were the first to apply cotton fiber as an ingredient for pulp, but analysts have discovered that this was not true. They concluded that cotton fibers found in all medieval Arab papers were accidentally introduced through a worn fabric used in pulp. Through Syria, North Africans and Spanish people came to know about paper, and from there, it continued to spread to Europe.

However, a significant problem found in the paper produced in the Arab region at that time was corrosion. This was caused by blue rust from a colorant in paper or used ink. There was no way to prevent pest-related deterioration, and moisture accelerated the problem and made it worse. In addition, as paper manufactur-

ing began to spread throughout Europe, a significant amount of paper was imported into the Middle East. Because of these factors, paper manufacturers in the Arab world were unable to compete with foreign paper in price or quality, and manufacturing could not survive in the region.

Paper adoption in the Middle East can be seen as revolutionary in its impact on the accumulation, delivery, and dissemination of book forms. Indeed, the impact of the new tool for literacy on the economy was groundbreaking. Paper documents facilitated literacy and human capital formation, efficient implementation of long-distance trade, and enforcement of legal and economic transactions.

### **Turkey-Azerbaijan Region**

Paper, which has excellent value as a record keeping tool, quickly replaced papyrus and parchment in Turkey. Turkey is not well known for its papermaking techniques, but it had influence as a terminus of the Silk Road, connecting the West and the East. As Turkey was also the main route of paper's transmission to Europe, it

can be expected that the impact of paper was significant.

The history of paper in Central Asia cannot be explained without considering Islamic culture. Previously, Chinese paper had been introduced to the Arab world, but it did not receive much attention because it was producing its paper at the time. The background of the production of Chinese-style paper in Central Asia in earnest is known to have been passed on to Chinese engineers captured in the Battle of Talas around the 8th century. Samarkand paper, developed in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, is considered the first paper manufactured in the West. Various types of paper production began to be developed, with paper technology spreading to the Middle East and further developing in Baghdad and Damascus. The fact that paper began to attract attention is related to the publishing environment at that time. The heavy parchment and papyrus were gradually replaced by a paper made of fiber pulp, and the Islamic holy text, the Qu'ran, and scholars' literature were the main uses. In particular, the quality of Sa-

markand paper was known to be particularly preferred by scholars.

The status of the paper for Islamic scholars can be confirmed in a letter from Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, the Umayyad caliph, to Muhammad bin Hajim in Medina.

“Trim the tip of the pen, and keep the writing simple so that it’s all on one page. Otherwise, it will harm Muslim treasures.”

The policy of Abbasid Caliph Haruna-Rashid, who ordered the transfer of all official documents from parchment to paper, and Ma’mün, the Caliph of Horasan, who built a so-called House of Wisdom in Baghdad, also promoted the use of paper in Islamic cultures.

Paper was a Muslim heritage for many years, but as the paper industry spread more widely, it began to reach adjacent Europe. Paper was rapidly developed and consumed in Europe as new narrative material. The first records of paper used in Europe are from around the 11th century, but it is known that paper technology was spread and prevalent in earnest in the middle of the 12th century. At that time, there were three main routes to Eu-

rope, but the land route through Istanbul in Turkey and the Balkans was most actively used. Turkey was one of the countries most actively engaged in trading for paper. Learning was an important virtue in Islamic culture, and all books were produced in manuscripts, so the quality of paper was considered very important. Turkish scholars and poets believed that by recording knowledge, culture would develop and their names would be immortalized. The history of records has marked cultural progress in Turkey in the form of paintings and literature.

As the center of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey had numerous cultural achievements as a trading center for Europe and Asia. Ottoman scholars considered it important to produce and record knowledge. As explained earlier, the literature was handwritten and had few copies, but this led to the development of a market for used books in Turkey.

The first records of marketing used books is Orhan Gazi's policy of selling used books at mosques when book markets moved to the capital in the 14th centu-

ry. In 1453, after Sultan Mehmed II occupied Constantinople, he built schools and mosques and required Islamic intellectuals to settle there, and the demand for books soared. Paper mills were established in the Kağıthane and Bursa areas, as well as used bookstores to ensure active distribution. After the formation of the Grand Bazaar in the mid-15th century, paper technicians gathered and records of preferential treatment can be seen, such as placing it in the best location of the bazaar along with major export items. This Ottoman policy influenced not only paper technology but also the development of many related industries.

Evliya Çelebi, a 17th-century writer, has reported on a splendid Ottoman bookstore street.

“...I can see more than 50 bookstores, 300 employees, and countless books. There are numerous students and scholars, and bookbinding technicians such as calligraphers, bookkeepers, abrasive-ists, penknives, and ink manufacturers. Stores are like a row of wooden

bookshelves with goods on the shelves and shopkeepers sit with customers, drinking coffee and tea, or talking. The most valuable books are kept in the cabinet. When the store closes at night, curtains are drawn on it, and soldiers patrol the streets while Kapalı Çarşı [Grand Bazaar] is locked, so there is no need to worry about theft. In fact, there has been only one reported theft so far.”

Turkish culture and arts are already well-known, but it is useful to note how they were often closely related to paper. Paper highlights colorful shades and is easy to put images on, so painting and literature developed in earnest during the Ottoman Empire.

## **Southern Europe**

The history of Greek paper began with the influence of papyrus, the form of paper that originated in ancient Egypt. There were two types of paper in ancient Rome, which occupied the Greek region.

1) Papyrus: Based on a plant that grows

on the Nile River in Egypt, so that Egyptians had monopolized paper for a long time.

2) Parchment: Based on animal skins, especially sheepskins. This kind of paper was invented by King Pergamon of Asia Minor, who wanted to eliminate the Egyptian paper monopoly.

Papyrus is a medium similar to paper used before the invention of true paper; it was made by compressing the stems of plants and spreading them thinly. The scientific name of the papyrus plant is *Cyperus papyrus*, and it was used in ancient Egypt to write various documents. There are various types of usage characters, including the Hieratic, Demotic, Early Arabic, Latin, and Coptic.

So how was Greece able to use papyrus? The answer was trade with Egypt. When papyrus was exported to Greece, it had to pass through the port of Byblos in Phoenicia (now Lebanon). Byblos was an ancient Phoenician port city bordering the Mediterranean Sea and was known to have engaged in trade with other Mediterranean

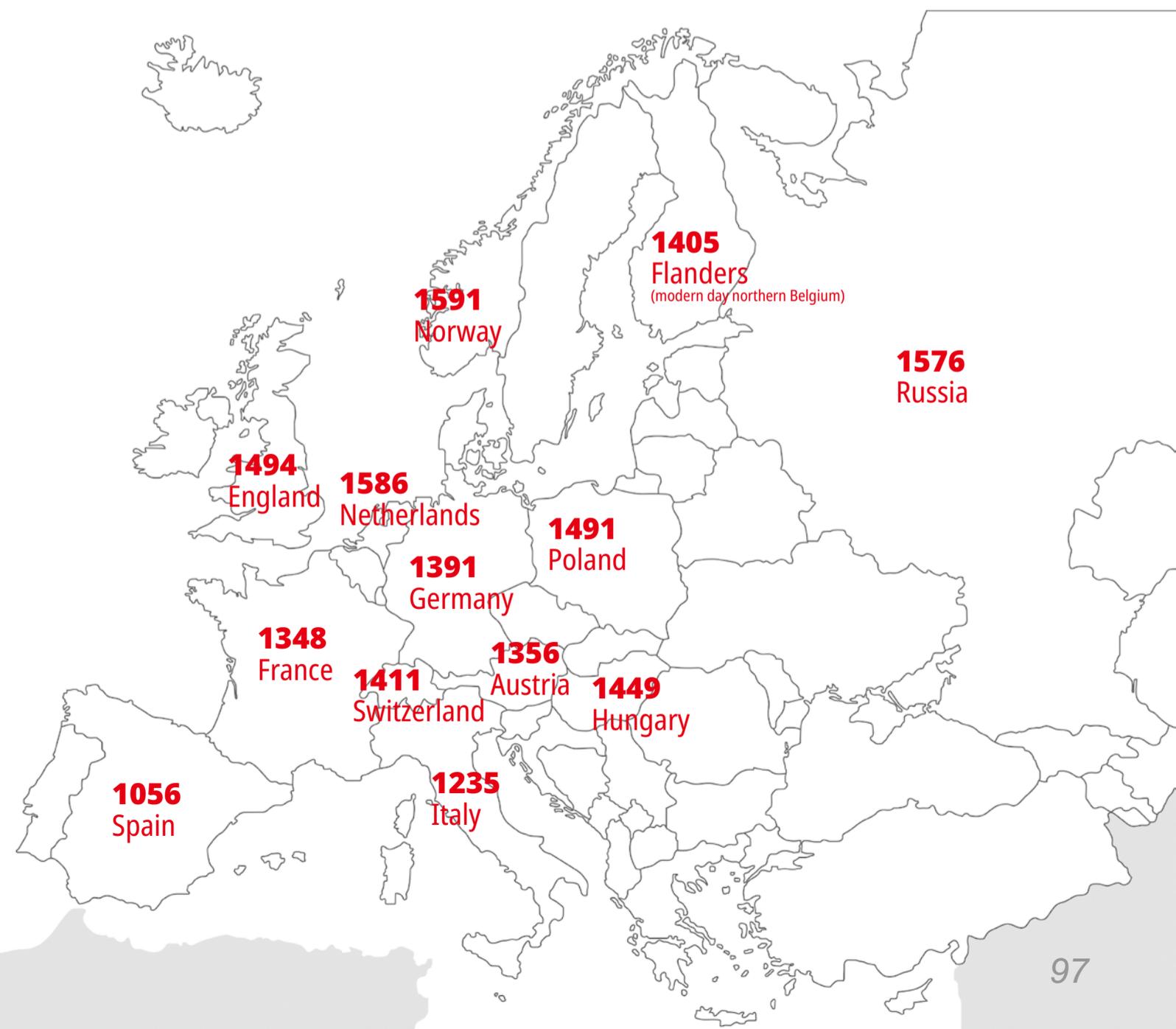
countries, such as Hellas (now Greece), Egypt (especially Alexandria), Libya, Tunisia, and other port cities in the Maghreb region. Because of the importance of this city in trade with Egypt, papyrus was called 'byblos' in Greece, and 'byblos' (βιβλίον) later became the Greek word for 'book,' and the etymology of 'bibliography' and 'Bible.' It is said that the bestseller in human history was by far the Christian Bible; interesting that its name is derived from the Lebanese city of Byblos.

In Greece, papyrus production and processing techniques flourished until the 10th century. They used papyrus materials to create household appliances, clothes, sails, boats, and even artistic ornaments. Papyrus as recording media increased the production of books throughout Greece, greatly helping the Greeks represent the history of the power and wisdom of ancient civilization before all mankind. Books were hard to find in the Greek world until the end of 7th century BCE (BC) before the introduction of papyrus. Before papyrus was imported from Egypt, information transmission within Greece was

very limited because the Greeks wrote on skins, wooden tablets, and hard materials. After the introduction of papyrus, most of the documents were written in Greek with an influence that continued even under the Roman Empire. But as paper spread through the region, papyrus and parchment gradually disappeared.

## Western Europe

At the Paper Museum, you can see a map showing the route of papermaking throughout the world. The following dates note the year where paper propagated to various European countries:



Papermaking technology was passed from country to country, from city to city, from workshop to workshop. The promulgation of the technology can be seen as having a typical “domino effect” pattern. Papermaking techniques spread to Spain and Italy through Syria, and German entrepreneur Ulman Stromer learned papermaking in Italy and hired brothers Marco and Francisco Di Marcia to establish the first paper mill in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1390. Stromer forced his employees to swear to the saints that “they would not teach others how to make paper and make paper only for my successor, or explain, advise, help, or guide anyone who comes to make paper from Italy to Germany.” It is said that the interior structure of the Stromer Paper Mill in the Nuremberg Chronicles would not have been much different from that seen in Jost Amman’s woodblock prints, which are famous for depicting industry at the time. The woodblock prints show a wooden wheel moving a mill, a technician skillfully dipping the mold into a raw material container, and a boy carrying a patch of mash to the drying

room. Only the step of the threaded compressor removing water from the mold and stacking the wet materials on the felt cloth was left out of the picture. This was the basic papermaking process until the paper mill was modernized in the 19th century.

There was a time when the competition for finding plant fibers for making paper intensified. In 1280, paper was already six times cheaper than parchment in Bologna, Italy. It seems that such a low unit price of paper was possible because of the spinning wheel. Jacob Christian Schäffer in the 18th century was the first to discover the possibility of plant fibers that were not commonly used in papermaking. Schäffer's experiment, praised by historian of paper Dard Hunter as a new attempt to expand its possibilities, was published in a six-volume German book called "Experiment of Making Paper Without Rags" between 1765 and 1771. Although the book is written in German, Schäffer wrote in English as a tribute to George III, a patron of the Royal Society of England, for his scientific research.

## **Eastern Europe**

Hungary is one of the countries where paper quickly spread due to the development of German printing houses. Paper began to further develop throughout Europe during the Renaissance when Gutenberg in Germany invented metal printing, and this technology quickly spread throughout Europe. Technology especially became a source of paper development in the 16th century. This led to the establishment of a printing house in Hungary. With the development of printing technology in Hungary, book printing was also widely spread, and various prints were published not only in humanities but also in other fields.

European paper production began to experiment with animal fat added to existing paper to make hard paper that could be used with sharp feather pens. With the development of metal type in Germany in the 14th century, paper was more widely used in Eastern Europe, and paper made of vegetable, wood, and cloth fibers and cloth led to the improvements in typography in the 19th century.

Hungarian paper availability greatly

influenced the spread of pamphlets used in the war between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. The press-strengthened Reformation put the Islamic Ottoman Turks at great risk. German psychologist Göller wrote an analysis of the seriousness of Turkey's threats, and the development of printing presses at that time used paper to convey information, which greatly influenced the war against the Ottomans.

László Biroé was a Hungarian journalist in the 1930s and an indispensable figure in the development of Hungarian newspapers. One day he became dissatisfied with his fountain pen while writing an article because it would leak easily and it took a long time for the ink to dry. To compensate for these shortcomings, he invented the ballpoint in which a small tube was filled with liquid ink and capped with a smooth flowing metal bead at the end. By doing so, the metal bead touched the paper when writing, and the ink could spread to the paper as it rotated, which made writing more convenient.

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, paper pro-

duction developed in Ukraine through important poets and scholars. Various opinions as to who started paper production in Ukraine have been debated, but paper production seemed to have begun in Galicia and Podilia in western Ukraine in the 1840s and 1850s, and paper was also made in eastern Ukraine in the 1970s.

The exact origins of Ukraine's initial adoption of papermaking technology is disputed by authors and historians. According to historian Orest Matsyuk, paper mills in Ukraine existed in the first half of the 16th century. Ukrainian bibliographer Yakim Zapasko points out that the first development of the Ukrainian paper mill in Yanov (Volyn) dates back to 1522. Ivan Vahylevych, a 19th century Ukrainian poet and scholar, wrote that two brothers of a Galician bourgeois family were already involved in the production of cloth paper in the 12th century.

Halych was the capital of the Duchy of Galicia-Bolyn, part of modern day Ukraine, which maintained trade relations with many countries such as Bulgaria, Byzantium, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germa-

ny, Poland, and Lithuania. Arabs, Tatars, Jews, and Italians also gathered in Halych. So it's possible that the Arabs, Italians, or Tatar-Mongolians who conquered Halych in 1241 brought paper there. Unfortunately, however, there is no other documentary evidence for this hypothesis. The archives and libraries of Galicia were destroyed by Tatar-Mongol and other conquerors, and none of the early Ukrainian papers remained. That's why the most that can be said is that the Ukrainian paper industry began to take off in the first half of the 16th century.

Later, in 1799, the paper machine designed by 18th century French inventor Louis Robert began to be used in Ukraine. In the 1840s and 1850s, the paper-making process began in Galicia and Podilia. Later, in eastern Ukraine, this process was further refined in the early 1970s, and steam boilers were used to provide the energy needed to produce paper.

## **Conclusion**

Before the invention of paper, records existed in human civilization, but these

methods were not as efficient. However, records and information transmission have been a factor that cannot be ignored in the development of mankind. Throughout human civilization efforts have been made to improve the efficiency of information delivery. This process reached its highest development as papyrus in Egypt and paper in China. In the end, however, papyrus was eliminated in most areas, leaving only the medium of paper with us today. This media called 'paper,' which constituted a breakthrough in human civilization, spread all over the world along the Silk Road. This road (or roads) served as a catalyst and starting point for the development of human civilization through major bases in Asia and Europe. Our team has come to call this road and its cultures "Paper Roadia." Various civilizations built on the path of paper have shone brilliantly in the political, economic, and socio-cultural achievements of our human history, as can be seen in the cases of the countries discussed above. We've looked at the paper civilization that unfolded in various parts of the Silk Road. What we can see from the prop-

agation of paper through these regions is that the legacy of the Silk Road is still with us. Paper, which is a necessity around the world, first was propagated along ‘paper roads,’ part of the ancient Silk Road, and has continued sparking innovation, down to the modern ballpoint pens that are still in our hands, developed in modern Hungary but still very much a gift of this paper road. In other words, the legacy of the Silk Road is not a thing of the past, nor is it far away. This is the lesson that the Silk-Road we investigated through the ‘paperoadia’ tells us.

This article was authored by the **USSUN-HUFS Research & Study Team**, USSUN means the United Students of SUN (the Silk-Road Universities Network) which is the official student body of SUN networking more than 800,000 student of the 80 member universities of SUN across the land and maritime Silk Roads stretching from Portugal to Korea. This article is the result of combined efforts of the Research & Study Team of the USSUN-HUFS which is composed of which represents Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea, at USSUN, the student body of the Silk Road Universities Network. The team members included:

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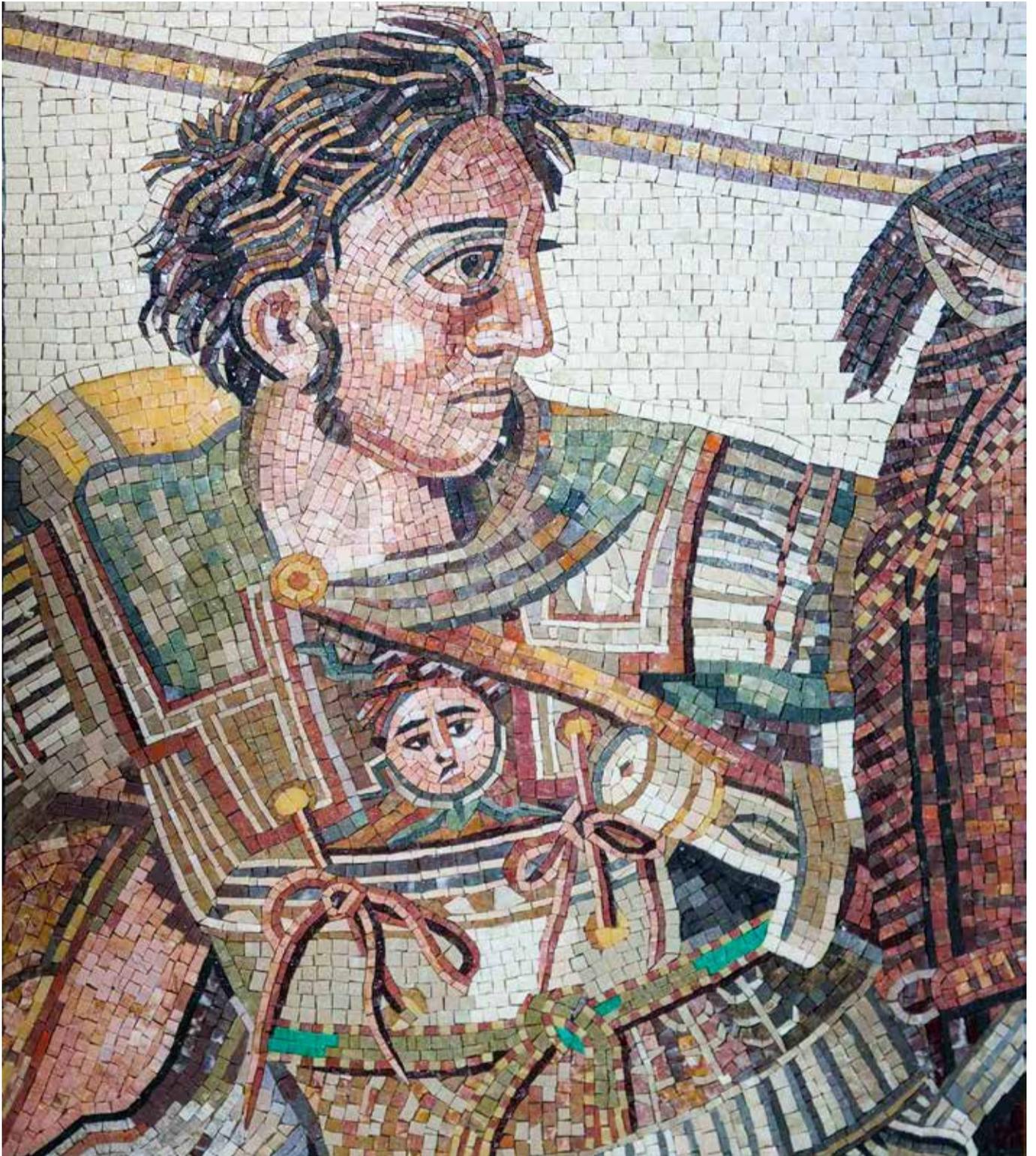
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**Battle of Issus Mosaic, Pompeii**

# Alexander the Great

The Legendary Ruler and Conqueror  
Speaks about His Empire and Life



**Elisabetta Ragagnin and  
Daan van Meel**



**Alexander Sarcophagus, Istanbul**

Alexander III of Macedon, better known as Alexander the Great, was born on 20 or 21 July 356 BC in Pella Macedonia, nowadays Greece, and died on 10 or 11 June 323 BC (aged 32) in Babylon Mesopotamia, present day Iraq. He was the son of King Philip II of Macedon and Olympias of Epirus.

In his childhood, Alexander was tutored by no one else than Aristotle. He was taught subjects like philosophy, poetry, rhetorics, geometry and medicine. There were other Macedonian noblemen attending these sessions, some of which would become kings themselves like Ptolemy and Cassander. It was also during these years

that he started to be passionate about Greek poetry, especially Homer. Alexander's personal favorite was Achilles whom he even took as his role model.

## **Asia Minor**

In 334, Alexander started his campaign against the Persians, crossing the Hellespont and entering Asia. But as a sidestep, he first visited Troy where he brought homage to his Homeric heroes that he in a way also considered his ancestors.

The first large battle was at the river Granicus in May 334 (Biga river in the Çanakkale province in Turkey nowadays), where the Persians took position near the Granicus River to force Alexander to cross its high banks. It was a short but fierce battle, and the outcome was a staggering victory for Alexander's army. During the battle, Alexander was nearly killed by the Persians, but he was saved by Cleitus the Black, who chopped off an arm of one of the attackers.

After the battle, basically the whole of Asia Minor was for grabs for Alexander, and they continued south. Most of the cit-

ies were quick to welcome Alexander and his army, but some resisted like Miletus and Halicarnassus, causing Alexander's army to spend time there making a siege for these cities. Eventually, all cities fell, and Alexander appointed democracies in every city. This, by the way, was different from the Macedonian tradition underlining a more Greek or Panhellenic way of thinking.

In the winter of 334/333, he conquered most of western Asia Minor and eventually arrived in Gordium where a famous oracle had proclaimed that the person who would unwind the so-called Gordian knot, would become ruler of all of Asia. This, of course, intrigued Alexander and he, supposedly, "solved" the mystery by cutting the knot with his sword.

By fall of 333 Alexander's army had progressed to the east and south and was encamped at Myriandrus (now Iskenderun, Turkey) when he heard that King Darius III's enormous Persian army was encamped near the river . This is where one of the most famous battles of all times would take place.

The battle of Issus was a decisive and classic battle that had as an outcome that king Darius III ran away and left his army flee in full rout. Alexander took all Darius' possessions left behind containing many riches; he also captured Darius' family including his wife, daughters, and mother. Alexander treated the family members with respect and later even married Stateira II, one of Darius' daughters.

The battle of Issus marked the beginning of the end of Persian power.

## **Near and Middle East**

Instead of chasing the Persians, Alexander continued south into Syria to make sure he would cut off parts of the empire from the Persians. Most cities came over easily, but some like Tyre and Gaza resisted heavily and caused Alexander to have to fight for longer periods there. In Tyre, this lasted for seven months, and Alexander attacked the island city by creating causeways across the channel and then deploying siege towers with catapults to bomb and burn the city. But the Tyrians managed to destroy the towers by having them burned

in return. Eventually with the aid of a new naval force, he managed to win this siege.

Meanwhile, King Darius was continuously trying to negotiate to get his family back and to settle for truce. Alexander was offered large sums of money and all the lands west of the Euphrates. Parmenio, his senior general said: “I would accept, would I be Alexander”. “I would too, were I Parmenio” was Alexander’s famous response, as Plutarch writes. In short, the negotiations were not very successful.

Alexander reached Egypt in November 332 and was crowned pharaoh there. He spent winter in Egypt and founded the city of Alexandria. He also visited the oracle of the god Amon at Siwah where Alexander was told that his true father was the god Zeus Amon and that he would conquer the world. Starting from this time, Alexander is sometimes depicted with horns like Amon.

## **Persia**

In the summer of 331, Alexander left Egypt and returned North to enter Persia. He planned to go straight to Babylon,



Persepolis and Susa

but when he learned that King Darius had been spotted at Gaugamela, he turned north to look for the Persian king. The plain of Gaugamela (nowadays northern Iraq) was the setting for the battle that was chosen by Darius. Alexander's army was again heavily outnumbered. During the battle, Alexander won by initiating a fake attack that managed to create a hole in the Persian defenses, through which the Macedonians managed to penetrate and make an attack towards Darius himself. This made the king take flight causing the army to panic. Again Alexander won, although King Darius did manage to escape.

After the battle of Gaugamela, Alexander was welcomed and accepted as the new ruler in the capitals and polis. He found unimaginable riches in the treasures there as well, which would do him well

for his future campaigns and to motivate his troops.

In the spring of 330 Alexander returned chasing Darius who had found refuge with Bessus. However, Bessus had Darius killed and made himself king under the name of Artaxerxes IV. Alexander found the body of Darius and sent it to Persepolis for a proper Persian burial with Darius' family.

## **Bactria**

Bessus was on the run, and he went way east to Bactria which would be in modern day Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Bessus kept revolting, however, in the end he was captured by Alexander's army and brought back to Ecbatana where he was executed under the supervision of Darius' brother.

From Samarkand, Alexander moved to the Jaxartes (modern Syrdarya) river and extended into unknown territories even for the Persians, fighting Scythian nomads. In the lands that he captured here he founded another city after himself called Alexander Eschate (the farthest). It took him still until fall of 328 to get rid of all

opposition he found in these parts of the world. Near the so-called Sogdian Rock he captured the daughter of a war lord called Roxana. He fell in love with her on the spot and married her.

Back in Samarkand, an incident occurred that showcases the gap that has been slowly widening between Alexander and many of the Macedonians. During a drunken quarrel, Alexander murdered Cleitus, one of his most trusted generals and the person who saved his life at the Granicus.

## **India**

During the summer of 327 Alexander left Bactria and marched again east towards the end of the world into India, nowadays Pakistan and India. He crossed the Indus River encountering heavy resistance on the way. He also learned that here people fought differently. He managed, however, to adapt, making deals with local chieftains who supplied Alexander with local troops and war elephants for his battles. In return, he gave them protection. In all of India, the army did not just have problems

in battle. The land, rivers and the weather with its constant rain also managed to plunge the moral of Alexander's troops.

Alexander fought and won - although with great difficulties and many casualties - his last great battle against King Porus along the river Hydaspes in July 326. He founded two more cities: one called Alexander Nicaea for celebrating the victory, and the other called Bucephala to commemorate his horse that died during the battle. By the way, King Porus lost, but Alexander was so impressed with him that his territories were reinstated, even expanded, and he became an ally of Alexander.

Alexander wanted to continue east until the end of the world, but his army was not willing anymore and started to resist as we know from Curtius. Alexander therefore agreed to stop advancing and turned back west. They traveled along the Hydaspes and Indus rivers, with half of the troops in ships and half marching down the banks of the rivers. The march was not an easy one and they encountered a lot of resistance. For instance, during the siege of the

citadel of the Mallians, Alexander was hit by an arrow that pierced through his lung when he wanted to show his troops that they should make more progress. It nearly killed Alexander and left him weakened for a long time.

On reaching the delta of the Indus, they explored the area and prepared for their return. Alexander sent a large part of his army back west under Craterus' command. In October 325, they left India when Nearchus sailed west with the fleet, and Alexander traveled overland along the dangerous coast of Baluchistan through the Gedrosian desert.

Alexander's voyage turned out to be disastrous and he lost nearly three quarters of his army due to the severe conditions in the desert and unexpected monsoon floods. At the end though, at the river Amanis in Carmania, nowadays Minab river in Iran, they managed to join Nearchus' fleet which had also suffered severe losses. Of course, there was a new city founded: Alexandria Carmania.

## **Administration**

In the spring of 324, Alexander was back in Susa, the administrative center of the Persian empire. He organized feasts to celebrate the seizure of the Persian empire and, as Arrian writes, also tried to have Macedonians and Persians fuse into a master race by forcing 80 of his officers (Companions) into marrying Persian wives. Alexander and Hephæstion married daughters of Darius (Stateira marrying Alexander). Also, some 10,000 troops married Persian women each of which was given marriage gifts by Alexander. The racial fusion brought more and more friction between Alexander and the Macedonians though. Alexander wanted Persians to be on the same level in the army and administration as Macedonians. Many Macedonians saw this as a threat and there were acts of mutiny. Finally, this was resolved according to Arrian with a famous dramatic speech Alexander held at Opis, near nowadays Baghdad. Its result was that the soldiers asked Alexander for forgiveness and many older or wounded soldiers went back to Macedonia fully paid and with bonuses (according to Arrian and Diodorus

some 10,000 soldiers).

In August 324 Alexander's closest friend Hephaestion died in Ecbatana, and left Alexander in deep mourning with often uncontrollable grief. Hephaestion was cremated and there was a magnificent funeral in Babylon the likes of which the world had not seen before.

## **Death**

Suddenly in June 323, when Alexander was back in Babylon after some smaller campaigns, he was taken ill after a feast. 10 Days later, Alexander died. Supposedly, he was already planning new campaigns, but these would never happen. His reign had lasted less than 13 years.

During one of the many struggles for power after his death, Alexander's body was taken by Ptolemy and moved to Egypt. It was eventually placed in a golden coffin in Alexandria. It is said that his tomb was visited by many (famous) people like Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Augustus and Caligula. The current location of the tomb of Alexander is a mystery.

*SILKROADIA: Your Majesty, your Highness, King of Macedon, Ruler of Greece, Pharaoh of Egypt, Son of God Amon, King of Kings.....*

**Alexander:** Stop, stop, just call me Alexander.

*S: Well, Alexander, first of all, I should confess that I am very excited to meet you face to face. You are more handsome than what I actually thought.*

**A:** Well, you know, this interview is exciting for me as well, as I have never been interviewed before. In my times, interviews like this simply did not exist. Our way of informing people was kind of different. But sorry...please.... go ahead with your first question.

*S: What would have happened if you would have lived longer?*

**A:** If I would have lived longer, well, who knows how the world would have looked like. Maybe the Hellenistic presence

would have been felt till Kamchatka, and my language would have been the Lingua Franca of the Silk Roads, and maybe even of the whole world.

*S: By the way, nice to see that you came to our interview together with Bucephalus, your amazing horse. He is really such a beautiful animal!*

A: Yes, I would not want to spend time without this stout animal. It is worth more than a battalion of pezhetairos, you know, the warriors on foot who were part of the phalanx.

*S: It is truly an impressive animal. And such beautiful blue eyes! We all read about his blue eyes before, but I didn't expect such beauty! Can you tell us something about how you met?*

A: It was as you would say love at first sight from my side. Bucephalus was offered to my father for a very high price. He was still untamed and really wild. I was 12 at the time, and I just had to have it. I man-

aged to convince my father to buy Bucephalus for me if I could tame him. You know, horses can get frightened easily, even by their own shade. So...I spoke to Bucephalus and pointed him towards me with the sun in my back, so that his shadow would not scare him anymore. Then I could mount him, and Bucephalus gave me his trust. That was all that it took: trust from two sides. I am sure that day I convinced my father to believe I was up for bigger things. Yeah, Macedonia was just too tiny for me....

**A:** May I ask you a question?

**S:** *Sure!*

**A:** Why did you actually choose me for this interview?

**S:** *Well, you are one of the most famous persons in all of world history. Your stories are known by virtually anyone and there are many legends related to you in many different cultures. You are even mentioned in various religious texts. On*

*a personal level, my husband and I have always been very intrigued by your life, perseverance, and accomplishments. We have even spent our honeymoon traveling to places that involved your life, your battles, and the silk road.*

**A:** Wow! If I would have lived in this day and age, I for sure would have given you a 'like' on one of those social media platforms.

*S: Thank you Alexander, you are very kind. We have actually already created a profile for you on our exclusive Silk Road Universities Social Exchange Platform where we hope that you can help us with the moderation of the discussions about your life, battles and other related topics. All Silk Road Universities Social Exchange users would be more than thrilled when the real Alexander could finally tell the truth about what really happened but got lost in time. Would you be willing to become a Content Manager on our Silk Road Universities Social Exchange Platform? We really could use your expertise*

*a lot. Last but not least, our Board of Rec-tors would like to offer you an honorary professorship in return for your coopera-tion.*

A: Wow, great idea. That sounds very exciting! I died young, true, too young. But now I have a great opportunity to show the world of today what my life and ac-complishments were like. See you soon, I'll also start a super exclusive group for me and my fellow conquerors called "Rul-ersSupreme" so we can keep in touch eas-ier than we do now. We have a nice group of friends up there with Caesar, Chinggis, Attila, Babur, Timur and Mehmed, just to mention a few.

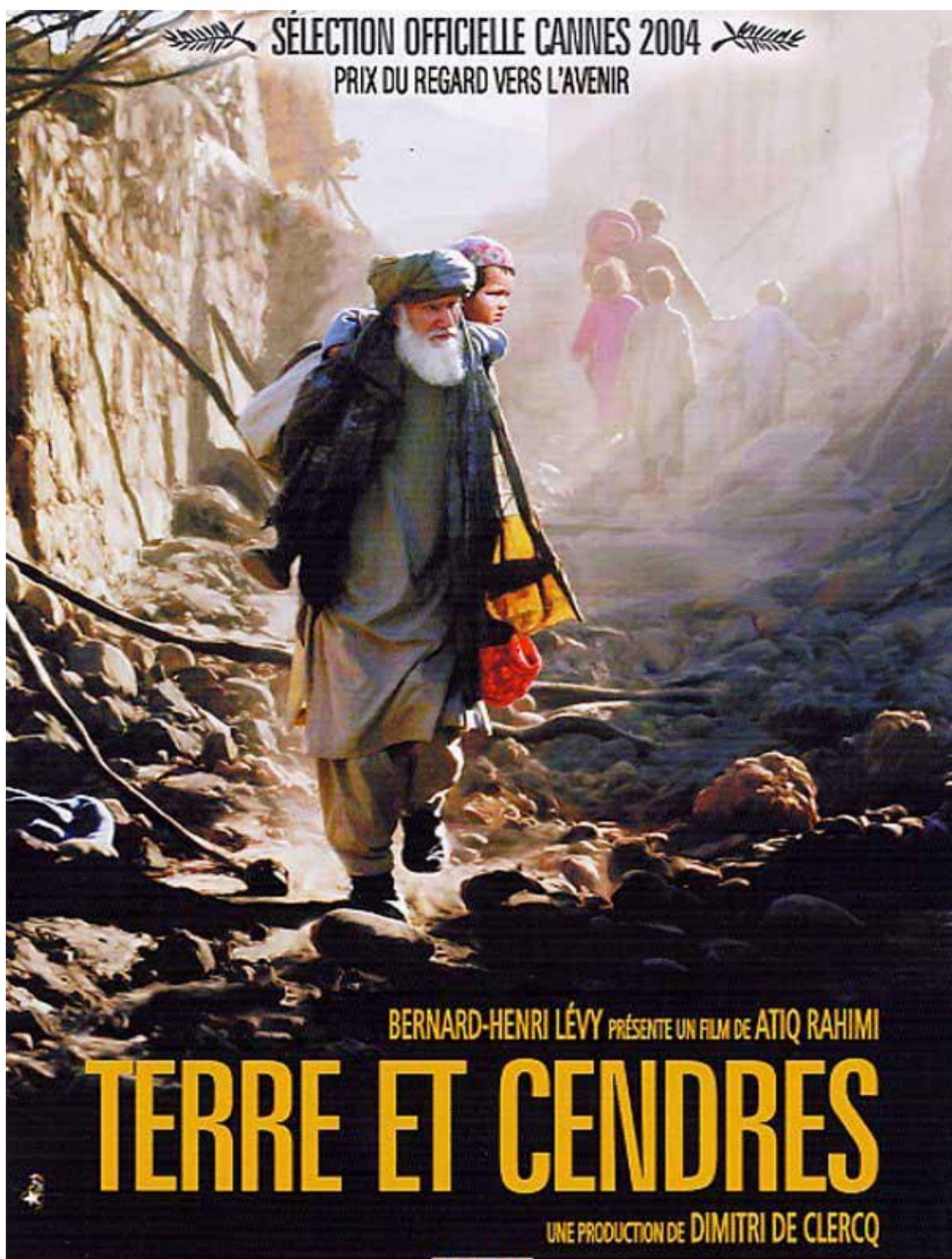
**Elisabetta Ragagnin** - Associate Professor of Turkic and Mongolic studies at the Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice - and her husband, **Daan van Meel**, traveled along the silk road following the traces of Alexander the Great and Marco Polo during their honeymoon for half a year in 2012.

# A Witness to Violence: Atiq Rahim



**Cameron Shirvani Steiner**

“Language is precious thing” to writer/filmmaker Atiq Rahimi, who since the turn of the century has become one of the eminent voices relaying his native Afghanistan to the world (Grey, 2013). The now-French based artist - operating out of his “work den” in the Montparnasse region of south Paris (Grey, 2013) - has assumed the roles of novelist, film director, and even photographer to capture a country and a people struggling under the weight of both external pressure and its socially oppressive traditions. Before we unearth and analyze these works, however, we must



first analyze his own personal history to understand the unique perspectives that shape the stories he tells.

Rahimi was born in the capital city Kabul in 1962; his father was a senior public servant for the then-existing monarchy, and later a staunch royalist following the 1973 coup that established a republic. Ra-



Atiq Rahimi

himi's love affair with France began with his education at the prestigious Franco-Afghan Lycée Esteqlal, where he was notably censured by the youth-led communist committee after giving a talk on the French philosopher Albert Camus (Grey, 2013). Facing personal censorship at home amidst the backdrop of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Rahimi applied for political asylum in France and left his home country in 1985 (Chen, 2020). He studied film at the Sorbonne, and afterwards produced seven documentaries for French television at a Paris-based production company; one of these documentaries centered on Mohammed Zahir Shah, the exiled deposed monarch of Afghanistan (Grey, 2013).

But Rahimi would not receive his proper recognition until the release of his first writing project in 2000. The Dari/Persian novel *Earth and Ashes* (Khakestar-o-khak

in Persian, *Terre et Cendres* in French) narrates a fictional but all-too-realistic story about the way civilian lives become the collateral damage of war. It was an instant bestseller, and with newfound critical recognition, Rahimi returned to Afghanistan in 2002 after the fall of the Taliban and was able to put together a film production of his own screenplay nominee (“Earth and Ashes Movie”). He filmed on location in Afghanistan, including locations in Kabul and in the Panjshir valley, where, sadly, the devastation of the country - both from the Soviets and from America’s recent invasion - offered Rahimi all-too-many perfect locations for filming a story about people living in the devastation of war.

Both the novel and the film tell of the aftermath of the bombing of a village, and reveal Rahimi’s signature technique of telling a large, significant story by means of a small one. After witnessing a bombing that caused the deaths of his wife and daughter-in-law, an elderly man must take his five-year-old grandson, newly deaf from the blasts, to find the man’s son (and the

boy's father) at a mine in a distant town. A road film which features encounters with strangers and the struggles of a difficult journey, the looming tension is the man's worry that the news of so much loss and suffering might finally break the spirit of his already emotionally wounded son.

The film was shown in the "Un Certain Regard" division of the 2004 Cannes Film Festival and later won awards at film festivals in Tehran, Zanzibar, Bratislava, Oslo, and Flanders, as well as the Prix du Regard vers l'Avenir award at Cannes. It became Afghanistan's official submission for Best Foreign Language Film for the 2005 Academy Awards, only the third film from Afghanistan to be submitted, though it was not accepted as a nominee ("Earth and Ashes Movie").

Audiences and critics alike were struck by the quality of the production and acting, but were even more taken with the film's slow, careful pace, one which captured a profound reality about a place in which constant war makes sudden, violent death and suffering almost normal. It is a war film, but the focus is not in its

moments of violence. Instead Rahimi places his attention on the devastation of the lives of ordinary people who are forced to find a way to continue living in the face of injustices for which there will be no remedy.

In his time in Afghanistan after his return in 2002, Rahimi became a senior creative advisor to the country's preeminent media company, Moby Group, which owns and produces Tolo TV and Lemar TV, as well as radio stations, magazines, and music recording companies. That same year, two years before the release of his first film, Rahimi undertook a photography expedition in which he used a primitive box-camera to photograph the damage that war had inflicted upon Kabul. Six of these photographs were acquired by the London's Victoria and Albert Museum as a permanent display of the scars war leaves behind (Grey, 2013). Rahimi also would develop Afghanistan's first television serial, "Raz ha een Khana" (Secrets of this House), which was honored with the Special Award at the Seoul Drama Festival in 2008 ("2008 Seoul Drama Festival").

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FILM FESTIVAL

BASED ON THE  
WORLD FAMOUS NOVEL

Golshifteh Farahani

# The Patience Stone

A film by Atiq Rahimi

A SONY PICTURES CLASSICS RELEASE MICHAEL GENTILE HANI GARI Studio 37 PRESENT GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI "THE PATIENCE STONE" WITH HAMIDREZA JAVAN MASSI MIRONVAL HASSINA RIJICAN CINEMATOGRAPHY THIERRY AGROCAST SETS ERWIN PRIB SOUND DANA FARZANPOUR NOEM HAMPPEL CARO CINZEL EDITING HERBE DE LUZE MUSIC MAX RICHTER LINE PRODUCER PHILIPPE GAUTIER ASSOCIATE PRODUCER LAURINE HEITLER CO PRODUCERS GERHARD MEKNER AND ROMAN PAUL SCREENPLAY JEAN CLAUDE CARRIERE AND ATIQ RAHIMI ADAPTED FROM THE NOVEL "SYNGUE SABOUR, THE PATIENCE STONE" BY ATIQ RAHIMI EDITORS PALL PRODUCED BY MICHAEL GENTILE DIRECTED BY ATIQ RAHIMI THE FILM STUDIO 37 PARTOR FILM COFINANCIE ARTIFRANCE CINEMA JAVAN E-HONOR PRODUCTIONS CO-PRODUCTION INTERNATIONAL SALES LE PACTE STUDIO 37 WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF MINISTERE FRANCAIS DES AFFAIRES ETRANGERES ET EUROPEENNES AND MINISTERE FRANCAIS DE LA CULTURE ET DE LA COMMUNICATION IN ASSOCIATION WITH CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINEMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMEE (CNC) AND FILMFÖRDERUNGSAUSSCHUSS METROENDIGARD BERLIN-BRANDENBURG ARTIFRANCE FONDS SUD CINEMA PROGRAMME DE L'UNION EUROPEENNE MEDIA - DEVELOPPEMENT ET 220 AUDIOVISUEL



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2008 would prove to be a pivotal year for Rahimi's global recognition; he went on to win the prestigious French Prix Goncourt literary prize for his novel Syngué Sabour, translated into English as The Patience Stone (Itzkoff, 2008). And much like

Earth and Ashes, Rahimi would ride the momentum of this honor into directing a film adaptation of his novel, released in 2012 starring acclaimed Iranian actress Golshifteh Farahani.

Rahimi's objective, in both the novel and the film, was to give voice to women who feel themselves to be trapped in silence. The title refers to a Persian myth of a patience stone -- a stone which a person can whisper all their secrets into until it bursts from all the tension it contains (Chen, 2020). Rahimi has his female protagonist talk openly about the truth of her life and her sexuality to her husband, a wounded warrior sent home from battle in a paralyzed coma, who like the stone from the title can only listen to her truth telling. Rahimi again centers the film on the experience of war felt by those on the sidelines as opposed to the immediate violence of the war itself. The film opens with the woman's husband at home, left in a coma as a casualty of combat, and she becomes trapped in the home as the fighters invade her neighborhood, abandoned by almost everyone as she remains with a now im-

mobile and helpless husband she has never loved but for whom she is the only person willing to be responsible.

The film took awards at festivals in Abu Dhabi, Hong Kong, Gijon, and Istanbul, and was selected as Afghanistan's entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2013 Academy Awards, but was not nominated. Golshifteh Farahani was herself nominated for "Most Promising Actress" at the 39th Cesar Awards (the French equivalent of the Academy Awards), a clear symbol of the profound reach of her portrayal of the weight of war and cultural oppression upon an individual.

Rahimi would later return to conflict and its effects in a notably different context, taking on the director role for the film adaptation of the French-language novel *Our Lady of the Nile*. Written by French-Rwandan author Scholastique Mukasonga, it uses the microcosm of a Catholic girls school in 1980, 14 years before the infamous Rwandan genocide. The story is a personal tale of ethnic conflict that seeks to relay a larger thematic understanding of how atrocity fueled by hatred

can form and produce devastating consequences. The film is the first in Rahimi's career that is not an adaptation of one of his own novels, but it is a testament to the confidence of the film's producers to entrust to him stories of this nature. The film was notably featured as the opening film for the "Contemporary World Cinema" section of the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival (Young).

The stories of Atiq Rahimi paint a shared mosaic of people exposed to the cruelest of conditions, struggling to communicate or even to understand others, who suffer both as victims of violence and even as perpetrators. It is a shared theme that Rahimi believes it is essential to capture and reflect. He comments that religion, tradition, and politics all had the same goal: "to forbid people from speaking up... Our problem is not 'to be or not to be,' but 'to say or not to say'" (Grey, 2013). In the face of continued and persistent conflicts, to tell the stories of those who struggle 'to say or not to say' may be more necessary than ever.

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# Pepper: A Cherished Spice on the Silk Roads



**Yu-jin Shim**

**C**an you imagine life without pepper? You can find pepper on the table for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Many foods need some extra spice, and that's exactly what pepper gives. The Silk Roads were most famous for the trading of spices and silk. At one point, pepper was the most expensive of them all, even being used as currency during its heyday. When Visigoths seized Rome in 410 A.D, they demanded peppercorn, the base ingredient of pepper, as ransom (Grout). Nowadays pepper is not valuable as before, but it is still quite important.



### Pepper, the Representative Spice on the Silk Roads.

So when did humanity start using pepper? The peppercorn vine is native to southern India, but today, pepper is grown throughout the world. Archeological evidence of humans using pepper goes back to at least 2000 BCE (Heasman). Some evidence suggests human use of the pepper plant in the ancient Hoà Bình culture in Vietnam as far back as 7000 BCE (Smakousz). Signs indicate pepper trade from India to Egypt, as some peppercorn was found in the nostrils of Ramses the Great when he was mummified (id.). Romans especially liked pepper, 80% of the recipes in cookbooks included the spice (id.z).

Now let us follow the route of pepper

throughout history. After the fall of Rome, Arabs took over the pepper trade. To maintain their monopoly, they kept the source of pepper a secret and created a myth saying that pepper trees were guarded by serpents and the trees had to be burnt in the process of burning them (Boey). However, other traders joined the pepper market, and by the 14th century, Genoa was another strong exporter of pepper, marking 40% of all income from Alexandria being from pepper profits. Pepper entered Venice as well as Barcelona. In 1497, relatively recent times, the King of Portugal sent Vasco de Gama and others to establish the routes sea to find spices, and in the 15th century, the Portuguese took over the spice trade (id.). However, they failed to gain control over the countries producing pepper, and over time the Dutch, then the British Empire took over the pepper trade.

As you can see, the trade of pepper goes all over the world, not just ending along the traditional Silk Roads, but all across Europe and the Western Hemisphere as well. The once highly valuable spice pepper is not just a regular spice, it is full of

rich history and stories from many countries. So, remember, the salt and pepper on your eggs is not just any spice!

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# Ajanta: A Glistening Gem of Indian Cave Art



**Vivek Mohan**

**A**rchaeological sources are generally devoid of any references to sites of worship throughout most parts of ancient India. It was only under Buddhism that architectural monuments containing exquisitely created artefacts with enormous aesthetic value were apparent in viharas (Buddhist monks' living quarters) and stupas (Dome-shaped Buddhist shrine). Huge halls or chaityas and vast venues of worship for big congregations became an intrinsic element of the faith. One such masterpiece relates to that of Ajanta caves.

The Ajanta caves are located on the



Ajanta caves (Photo by Soman CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=340540>)

Waghora river in the Western Ghat region of Sahyadri in north-central Maharashtra. The location of monasteries along trade routes and the abundance of stratified volcanic rocks in Deccan are regarded as significant factors in the formation of these caves. These caves depict the illustrious past, power, and reach of Buddhism, which was supported not only by the monarchs of the Satvahana and Vakataka dynasties, but also by indigenous trading communities. Ajanta's great architecture, ornamental motifs, patronage, and superior craftsmanship were equally lauded by

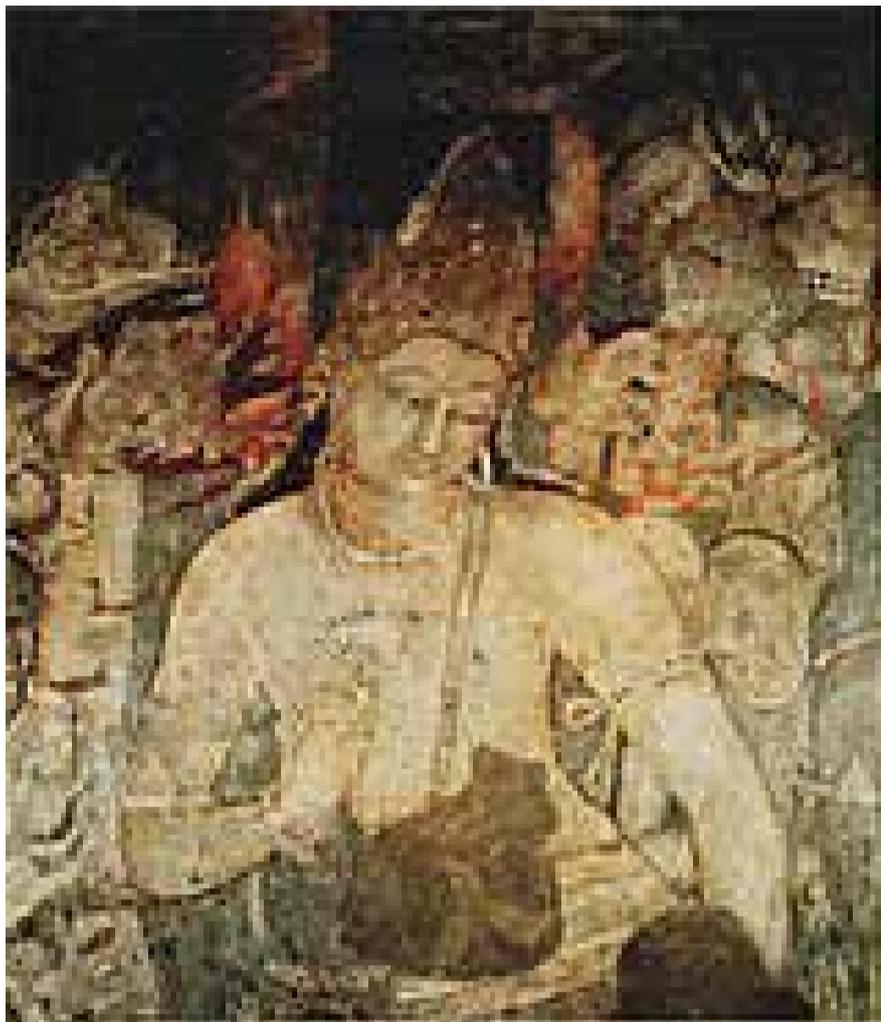
Chinese travelers such as Fa-Hien and Hie-un-Tsang.

Ajanta was re-discovered by chance by a British army officer named John Smith during a hunting excursion in 1819. Because of its socio-religious, cultural, historical, and artistic value, UNESCO designated it as a World Heritage Site in 1983. The famous rock-cut Ajanta caves were chiseled out between the second century BCE and the middle of the seventh century CE (AD) and are themed around both Theravada and Mahayana forms of Buddhism. The Ajanta caves were built to commemorate the life and achievements of the Lord Buddha and Buddhism.

From the earliest specimens of Buddhist cave art and artistic tradition found at Koshambhi, Sanchi, Bharhut, Barabar, and Nagarjuni caves, rock-cut art is believed to have culminated in Ajanta with structures and ornamentation that are far more elaborate, well-planned, and 'richer.' These are, without a doubt, one of the finest existing art clusters of ancient India. The majority of the figures were engraved using a fresco-style painting process with

a red outline, though blue was not employed at all. Each Ajanta cave features wall murals, paintings, and sculpture, albeit some have deteriorated archaeologically. Ajanta caves are classified as viharas (residential complexes or monasteries) or chaitya-griha (chapel, prayer hall with stupa). The caves 8, 9, 10, 13, and 15A belonged to the Theravada sect, whereas the remaining caves were associated with the Mahayana sect. The Ajanta cave paintings illustrate not just well-known incidents in Lord Buddha's life and jataka stories, but also themes from everyday life. (Jataka stories are stories about the Buddha's former lives). These are truly magnificent examples of exceptional ancient Indian wall painting and rock-cut art. These caves were used for learning, debates and deliberations, meditation, and even as a place to live.

Cave 1, known as the 'regal' cave, was built in the fifth century by Vakataka King Harisena and contains one square hall with four aisles leading to fourteen compact chambers. It is a beautiful specimen of Buddhist vihara showcasing jataka



Cave 1,  
Bodhisattava  
Padmapani  
(public domain)

scenes on the pillars and walls, with an impressively realistic pictorial approach. It boasts of a stunning figure of standing Avlokiteshwara (Bodhisattva of boundless compassion), possibly the most revered form of Buddha who suspended his ascension to assist others in attaining nirvana. Avlokiteshwara is shown holding a lotus in his right hand (padampani), which symbolizes spiritual awakening. It was depicted in dvibhanga (double flexion), with a tan body, curly hair, beautifully decorated with a dazzling crown, and other forms of Bodhisattva such as vajrapani (symbolizing Buddha as a protector and guide) and manjusri (a symbol of wisdom). The por-



Cave 2, Main Shrine and Ceiling (By Photo Dharma from Sadao, ThailandCC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58409514>)

trayal of Lord Sect Buddha clearly shows the influence of Greek art

Cave 2 is well-known for its vibrant depictions of powerful female characters and divine beings. Scenes from the Vidhurpan-dita Jataka are painted, as is a discourse between ladies, which symbolizes the virtue of wisdom. A school scene is depicted in a painting on the wall, with the children in the front row paying close attention while others in the back row appeared uninterested. A notable carving represented the goddess Hariti, who became a guardian Goddess of fertility as a result of Buddha's preaching and was no longer



Cave 2, Outside view and main hall with shrine (By Photo Dharma from Sadao, Thailand, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58409514>)

considered a child eater or the demon of chickenpox. In fact, various forms of Bodhisattva illustrate how virtues such as liberal character, forgiveness, magnanimity, veracity, and compassion were developed.

Due to Harisena's death, Cave 3 could not be completed, but Cave 4 was patronized by a wealthy Mathura trader and features a square hall with a colossal image of Lord Buddha surrounded by Bodhisattvas in a preaching posture.

The relief in Cave 17 represents Rahul and Yashodhara greeting Lord Buddha, who is seen holding a begging bowl. Varahdeva, the minister to Vakataka monarch



Cave 10, Exterior view and interior hall (Photo by Shaikh Munir, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21114130>)

Harisena, commissioned this artwork.

Caves 10 and 12 are perhaps the oldest Hinayana chaityas, bearing the names of Vashishthputra Katahadi (Satvahana) and a businessman named Ghanamdada who generously donated for its construction. Cave 10 recounts the story of Shyama Jataka, which talks of a man who dedicated his life to his blind parents.

During the Satvahana period, another small and unpainted cave (Cave 13) was built and utilized as a dormitory. Cave 9 had a congregational place for worship with a stupa but no idol, whereas Chaitya of Cave 10 had a stupa and a circumambu-



Cave 26, Reclining Buddha (Photo by Ms Sarah Welch, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63745737>)

latory path for worship. Cave 16 featured Nandas' conversion, Sujata's devotion, Sravasti's miracle, Maya's intention, and other events. Cave 17 was home to King Upendergupta, who generously funded five Ajanta caves.

Cave 19 is famous for its sculptural grandeur, fully stone chaitya structure, and representation of Buddha in various postures. Similarly, Cave 26 chaitya depicted a similar ground layout, which was brilliantly carved during the Vakataka period. Both caves were built between the fifth and sixth centuries AD and feature magnificent sculptures and ornamentation. It produced the most important and a magnificent 22-foot long image of the Buddha reclining figure, representing scenes from his Mahaparinirvana with the portrayal of the Buddhist demon Mara. The



Cave 26, Entrance and interior hall (Photo by Dey.sandip, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25862598>)

death of Lord Buddha (Mahaparinirvana) depicts imagery of numerous mourners. The reclining Buddha sculpture wonderfully depicted the Buddha figure's serenity, quietude, and amity even at the time of his death.

These rock-cut masterpieces provide us with insight into these ancient periods, expand our understanding of our past, and aid scholars in reconstructing history, particularly in exposing the myth of ancient India's past as being uniformly Hindu. Ajanta paintings reveal certain distinctions in human beings based on facial, color-complexion, and stature. People with small stature, a flat nose, and a dark

complexion, for example, are identified in the paintings as Nagas, the indigenous inhabitants of the Vidarbha region, whereas Aryans were portrayed as fair-skinned and tall in stature. Some Chinese pilgrims wearing conical tiaras were also depicted listening to Lord Buddha's discourses in Cave 17.

The Ajanta paintings mark a watershed moment in the history of Indian cave art. With the rise of the Guptas, there was a proliferation of Hindu faith, which resulted in a significant growth in 'Hindu' architectural activities. Barring a few exceptional cases, patronage for Buddhism decreased gradually. The decline of Vakatakas was another blow for Buddhism in India, which saw a drastic increase in violent attacks against Buddhist adherents and monuments. Today, these caves are a repository of our traditions, art, architecture, and religion, all of which serve as a beacon of harmony and peace for the rest of the world. Unfortunately, despite its status as a UNESCO World Heritage site and its ability to elicit intellectual and popular interest, efforts to preserve it have fallen

far short of expectations.

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# Sigiriya: the Eighth Wonder of the World



**Amali Ranavi Thantrige**

**C**limbing a rock 200 meters in height might not be as difficult as it seems when it is surrounded by nature. Sigiriya (or Sihagiri), a massive natural creation, has become “the 8th wonder of the world” (“Sigiriya–Fortress in the Sky”), reflecting its spectacular wall paintings and advanced irrigation technology used by ancient people to maintain a king’s palace on the top of the rock. This rock got its name ‘Sigiriya,’ meaning ‘Lion Rock’ in Sinhala, because of shape of a giant lion at the gateway entrance of the palace halfway up the rock (id.).



Existing ruins of Kingdom of Sigiriya

Sigiriya is located in Matale District in central Sri Lanka. One of the amazing points of attraction of this rock is its elegant wall art portraying ancient queens of Sri Lanka. These paintings have female figures, often wearing similar costumes and jewelry, as well as having similar facial expressions. Moreover, the walls not only have some beautiful murals of ancient women, but also have some unique scrolls.

Although there are different stories about the origin of Sigiriya, the one that's widely accepted in Sri Lanka is that it used to be the palace of the late King Kasspa. According to the legend of Ravana, the palace on top of the Sigiriya rock was built by Maaya Danaawa, who was an architect working under King Ravana's father. At that time, this place was known as the



Wall painting – Sigiri Bithusituwam

‘Alakamandawa.’ There is some archeological evidence that shows that even before 5000 years ago, this Sigiriya rock was a human habitat (de Silva). However, the widely accepted story goes back to around 473-495 C.E. to the period of King Kassapa (de Silva). Conforming to the Chulawanshya (a historical record of Sri Lanka), it is not a pleasant history. The source said that King Kassapa killed his father to take power and then escaped to Sigiriya rock area to hide from his elder brother. As a result, he ended up building a palace on the top of the 200m rock. Historical facts explained that after the death of King Kassapa, this palace had been used as a Buddhist temple

where monks stayed in 17th and 18th century (Jayatissa). After the period of Kandy Kingdom, information about Sigiriya had not been found until the British colonial era. After discovering Sigiriya in 1831, British archeologists started to examine more about the location, which has laid the foundation for Sigiriya to become a World Heritage Site in recent years (Mendis).

In today's world, one way to understand the connections between religions, cultures, and people is through studying or visiting the remaining historical sites. These sites tell a story about the country's history and that makes it important to preserve any of the remaining historical sites. Sigiriya has opened for the general public, especially for tourism. Although it has brought many positive results such as spreading the story of Sri Lanka and its history, it has also brought some negatives as well, such as some visitors' behaviors causing damage to the paintings of the Sigiriya – aka Sirigi Bithusituwam, and also scrolls – aka Sigiri kurutu gee (Fernando). Due to these various reasons, the number

of paintings have decreased, which has opened the eyes of local authorities to step up to protect this world heritage. Along with the local government, to assure security of the site, UNESCO - one of the leading international organizations - is working under its World Heritage Convention to protect the site from further deterioration (Dissanaike).

Indeed, Sigiriya does not only belong to Sri Lanka as a cultural heritage but it also reflects similar designed (such as at the Ajanta caves in India) and the ancient values at locations along the Maritime Silk Roads. This proves that the Silk Roads have not only linked different trading systems but also cultures, customs, and knowledge from the East to the West. As citizens of the modern world, we all share the responsibility to protect our cultural heritages and ancient values to pass to the next generation by becoming stewards of the modern human Silk Roads.

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# The 19th Century Machete from Madeira Island (a.k.a Braguinha)



Manuel Morais

*The most discussed, the most cherished, the most delicate and the most interesting of the Madeiran instruments: the braguinha. Joyful and bouncy in sound, graceful in shapes that make it a beloved decorative object, it was in the last century the delight of the ladies, perhaps their confidant in happy times and solace in sad times.*

*It lived in the splendor of the salons, heated in the warm laps of romantic girls, listening and passing on the secrets of their yearning hearts in melodies that long fingers of noble hands delicately played. It is still today, [ca. 1937] in certain houses, an evocation, an indelible longing, a remnant of a dream...*

*(Carlos Maria Santos, Tocares e Cantares da Ilha. Estudo do Folclore da Madeira. Funchal: Empreza Madeirense Editora Lda, 1937, p. 33)*

**T**he *Machete* or *Machetinho* from 19th century Madeira – commonly known as *Braguinha* – is a small musical instrument, with a lightly curved figure-eight-shaped body or case, flat or slightly curved front and back, or tapering towards the heel (neck joint); long neck that usually ends in a figure-eight peghead, sloping backwards, with four dorsal pegs. The fretboard, which may or may not be flat with the body top, is chromatically divided by 12 or 17 frets of beaten brass. On the bridge, which is glued to the body top, four holes are opened where buttons or pins are inserted – made of hard wood, African blackwood or bone – with which the strings are attached; on the bridge is also inlaid the nut, made of bone, wood or a metal wire equal to the frets. On the soundboard, the open sound hole is decorated with inlay of several concentric threads of dark wood, or by a very elaborate marquetry of dark or colored woods. It is assembled with four single strings and is tuned as (from low to high): D3 – G3 – B3 – D4. It has a scale length of about 330 mm.



The first reference to the word *Machete* in the unequivocal sense of a musical instrument dates back to 1838, having been mentioned in the travel report of the North American Fanny Anne Burney (1812-1860; Mrs. Wood, by mar-

riage), when she visited Madeira, between the years of 1838-39. In her account, written in diary format, the author states that: “Most Portuguese know how to play the *Machete* by ear (a small instrument, typical of Madeira, I believe)”.

The earliest mention of *Machete* (also known as *Machinho*), in the sense of a musical instrument, is found in the work of Raphael Bluteau, *Vocabulário*, 1716: “*Machete*. Small viola ” (“*Machinho* is also small viola”); “comes from Latin, *macer*, thin, slender”. This small hand-held chordophone, or plucked string instrument, forms part of the large and diverse family of late-16th-century Portuguese hand gui-

tars, being its tiple or descant.

It was thanks to the recent discovery we made in the Island of Madeira of six new handwritten compilations (called “Princípios do Machete”) for the Madeiran machete, two dated from 1843 and four from 1844 and 1845, respectively, that today we can say that this small and peculiar handheld chordophone did not always use the traditional tuning, D3 – G3 – B3 – D4, a tuning that makes it possible to play the entire corpus of the repertoire that reached us between the years 1846 to 1904. However, and according to what is clearly indicated in the sources cited, between the years of 1843 and 1845, the recommended tuning for the Madeiran machete was: D3 – G3 – B3 – E4.

The first known mention of the word machete, this time using the diminutive *machinho*, is found in a long poem (written in Coimbra around 1660) by Gregório de Matos (Salvador, 7-IV-1636 – Recife, 26-XI-1696), which reads: “[...] They raise us with freedom / in games, as in vices, / persuading them, to know / how to play guitar and machinho. [...]”. In Guimarães’ “Regimen-

to para o ofício de violeiros” (Regulation for the craft of luthier), of 1719, the small hand chordophone is mentioned under the designation of “Machinhos de quatro cordas” [doubles?] as well as “Machinhos de cinco cordas”, together with “*Violas* of large brand”, “half *Violas*” and “small *Violas*”. The instrument, in this case already called Machete, is also included – along with *Violas*, *Bandurras*, Harps and *Rabecas* (fiddles) – in the “Rol da tacha do ofício de violeiro”, made in Évora on 30 December 1778. In a collection for *viola* of five courses, which is kept in the General Library of the University of Coimbra (P-Cug M.M.97), an undated manuscript but surely copied at the beginning of the 18th century, the term appears again in the following way: “how to season the *viola* with the *machinho*”. In an 18th century manuscript (ca. 1720) for fiddle by Pedro Lopes Nogueira (P-Ln, M. M. 4824) the tuning of the *machete* serves as the basis for practicing the “scordatura” on the violin: “the third string of the *Rabeca* is tuned by the third string of the *Machinho*” or the “second of the *Rabeca* by the fourth string of *Machinho*”.

ho”, etc. Unfortunately, no *machete* or *machinho* from the 17th or 18th century is to be found today.

To my knowledge, the first mention of the use of a *Machetinho* from Madeira - that is, a much smaller than usual *machete* - dates back to 10 December 1841, when the “skilled *machetista* (machete player)” from Funchal, Cândido Drumond de Vasconcelos (p. 1841 -1875), played it as part of a concert organized by the Philharmonic Society, in the salon on Carreira Street. According to the critic at the time, we learnt that: “[...] The 2nd part began [...] Mr. Drumond then played several pieces in a *machetinho* made by himself, which can be called the refinement of *machetinhos*, and was listened to with the greatest attention and loudly applauded; being the general opinion that Mr. Drumond can hardly find a rival.” Only two *machetinhos* have reached us, the oldest one was built by Rufino Félix de Atouguia or, as it is printed on its label, Rufino Felix d’Athoughuia,

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**Translator note**

in this article, the term *viola* refers to the traditional Portuguese guitar, traditionally smaller and with 5 courses of double strings.

dating from 1848; the other is by our well-known *viola* player, Octaviano João Nunes da Paixão, n.d., ca. 1850. Both have flat fretboards aligned with the body top, divided by 12 frets of beaten brass. The scale length oscillates between ca. 208 and 220 mm. These tiny hand-held chordophones can be seen in the virtual museum “Artur Pestana Andrade”: <http://www.museuapa.com/museu/>

As a curiosity, the beautiful Empress of Austria, Elisabeth (1837-1898), known as Sisi, was twice in Madeira, where, the first time, in November 1860, she posed with her ladies-in-waiting, wielding a *machete* (built by Octaviano João Nunes), having the opportunity to play and study with the “skilled *machetista*”, Cândido Drumond de Vasconcelos (p. 1841-1875). Last but not least, there was the discovery of a set of photographs, dating from 1860, of the three British sisters Alice, Lorina and Edith Liddell, photographed by Lewis Carroll. Two types of *Machete* or *Machetinho* are shown there: two with a fretboard flat with the body top and another with a raised fretboard. Although some Madei-

rans find it difficult to accept that the *Machete* was not an instrument exclusive to the Island of Madeira, many documents, where I include these photographs, are irrefutable proof of this fact: that the small and peculiar hand-held chordophone was played, “enjoyed and abused” outside the “Pearl of the Atlantic”. The three British girls prove this, also noting that they are dressed in embroidered clothes and Madeiran lace, dresses that are worn by the English upper bourgeoisie.

In some instruments built in Madeira, namely by the luthiers José Merceano da Silveira (1900-1970) and Agostinho Menezes (1903-1982), from Funchal, we can read in the printed labels they placed on the instruments, that they were manufacturers of “Violas, Guitars, Mandolins, *Cavaços*”, instead of writing that they made machetes, as the most famous 19th century luthier from Funchal did, Octaviano João Nunes (1812-1874), who called himself “French *Violas* artist, Guitars, *Rabecas*, *Rabecões* and *Machetes*”. Also on the label of the Funchal luthier Manuel Pereira (Funchal, 1831 – Lisbon, October 1889),

who migrated to the mainland in 1870 and had a workshop in Lisbon, we can read: “Manufacturer of *rabecas*, French *violas*, guitars, *cavacos* and *violas braguesas*”. All these luthiers of Madeiran origin, who were active between the years 1870 and 1980, use the term *Cavaco* to designate the small chordophone mentioned above instead of *machete* or *braguinha*. However, I have never met any artisan from Madeira who, on the labels attached to the inside of their chordophones, mentioned that they built *braguinhas*, this word being used only by the common people in Madeira. On the other hand, the designation of *Cavaquinho* only appears systematically registered in Portuguese lexicons from the 1920s onwards. However, it is by the term *Cavaquinho* that our *machete*, *braguinha* or *cavaco* becomes known in Europe from ca. 1900.

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# The Ghost of the Steppe: Saiga

**Diana Auyelbekova**

**T**he saiga antelope, native to the Central Asian steppes, is noteworthy due to its unusual proboscis. “The beast can be considered unique: it appeared 50-70 thousand years ago [in] the era of mammoths and survived to this day” (“Saiga Rescue Exhibition”).

But such a long history does not help them survive in the modern world — the species is considered endangered. Saigas look funny because of their movable proboscis nose, which ends with two large, heart-shaped nostrils. Such a nose helps the saiga to survive at different times of



Photo by Evgeny Polonsky WWF of Russia

the year: in winter it heats the air before letting it into the lungs, and in summer it filters the steppe dust. Males have a bigger nose.

In spring and summer, the saiga are sandy-red with white chest and belly. In autumn, they put on a white fur coat to match the color of snow. Summer fur is short (about 2 cm), and winter fur is dense and long (up to 7 cm”); this wool protects from the wind. The long horns of the male saiga are smoothly curved and translucent with a dark tip; females have no horns.

Saiga lives on the steppes and semi-desert natural areas in a range covering sev-



eral countries, including Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Saigas live in a herd of 40 to 1000 heads, without leaders. Together they graze, go to water, and move around the steppe. Sometimes they are divided into harems, groups of males and young, but they cannot live without a herd for a long time, so they reunite. They communicate with each other with rumbling and mumbling sounds similar to throat singing.

Steppe antelopes lead a wild lifestyle, and they choose locations with solid soil made of stones or clay, so that it is conven-



Reserve “Black Lands” photo by Rostislav Mashin

ient to run. They do not stay in one pasture for a long time and migrate around the area in search of the best food. Because of their lifestyle, they are susceptible to mass die-off events, and in 2015 about 200,000 Saiga antelopes perished due to disease and extreme weather. Fortunately, the population has bounced back, especially in Kazakhstan, and to some extent also in Mongolia and Russia. Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, and Uzbekistan recently agreed on a new joint conservation program to protect the saiga antelope, a unique and living legacy of the Silk Roads region (“New International Conservation Actions”).

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## TRAVEL

# Cluj-Napoca, the Central City of Transylvania and UNTOLD Festival

By Jeong-o Park

**W**ith a history of almost 2,000 years, Cluj-Napoca is one of the top cultural and tourist destinations in Romania, hosting famous music and film festivals such as the Untold Festival and the Tran-

sylvania International Film Festival (TIFF). The Huffington Post emphasized Cluj-Napoca as one of the “12 cities in the world that will shake the art world in the 21st century” and The New York Times called Cluj-Napoca, “an artistic center.” Also, the city has experienced a great economic growth in recent years and received the title of “Economic Capital of Transylvania”, an award offered by Forbes Romania. Because of the continuous development in ICT, Cluj-Napoca is called the Silicon Valley of Eastern Europe. According to Pando Networks, the city has the best internet connection in the European Union and the second-fastest in the world.

Cluj-Napoca’s designation as the European Youth Capital 2015 shows its forward trajectory. The European Commission called it “Europe’s most hospitable city.” In fact, Cluj residents are the most tolerant inhabitants of a city for foreigners who want to move and start a new life in another city. So, the city has a higher measure of life quality than London, Paris, Brussels, Barcelona, and Milan in the Quality of Life Index 2021 by Numbeo. CNN Trav-

el, placed the city on a list of “20 beautiful European cities with hardly any tourists.” The list gives travelers’ alternative options “to travel without having to battle through huge crowds of selfie stick-wielding tourists in the likes of Venice, Paris, and Amsterdam.” CNN said “Cluj-Napoca is often seen as a stop-off for travelers looking for outdoor adventures in the Apuseni Mountains, or those keen to witness Transylvania’s historic sights. But the vast Gothic St. Michael’s Church and the fascinating Brush Factory (Fabrica de Pensule: a working gallery and art space in a former paintbrush factory) are just two attractions that make a longer stay essential. Throw in a thriving café and bar scene and pretty



squares, and Cluj-Napoca has all the trappings of the ideal city break destination.”

According to the European Commission, the Christmas Market in Cluj-Napoca ranked 8th in the list of the most beautiful Christmas Markets in Europe along with the fairs in Vienna, Brussels, Basel, Metz, Budapest, Prague, Gdansk, and others.

## **UNTOLD Festival**

The Untold festival, a representative festival of Cluj-Napoca, was launched in 2015. Although its history is short, the Untold has become one of the largest music festivals in the world. Every year at the end of July, when the festival begins, hundreds of thousands of people from around the world gather to watch the performances of the best musicians in the world. The length of the central stage installed during the 2018 festival was 100 m and 28 m, respectively.

**Jeong-o Park** is a professor of Romanian studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea.



## TRAVEL

# Yogurt: A Healthy Food Popular on the Silk Roads



Jeong-won Yoon

**Y**ogurt, also spelled yoghurt or yoghurt, has an interesting, yet somewhat mysterious history. While we are unsure exactly where the actual food originated from, it is believed that it was in-

vented in Mesopotamia around 5000 BCE. The word itself is believed to have originated from Turkey and is related to the old Turkish word 'rog', which means 'condense' or 'intensify' (Mathews, 159) Cow's milk is most frequently used to make yogurt, but the milk of water buffalo, goats, camels and yaks are used as well. It is produced by first taking milk and heating it, then, allowing it to cool down to 45°C, and finally, allowing the fermentation process to happen in the next 4 to 12 hours at a temperature between 30-45°C (id.).

Yogurt has been with us through history, and especially on the Silk Roads. Indian scripts refer to the health benefits fermented milk products give us (Fisburg and Machado). Also, some believe that the term 'land of milk and honey' is a reference to yogurt, and some ancient traditions attributed Abraham's legendary long life to his habit of consuming yogurt (Mathews, 160). There are records of Genghis Khan feeding his armies yogurt to make them brave (Fisberg and Machado), and it was brought to Western Europe by King Francois of France, who first received the food from

his Turkish allies. At this stage, yogurt was treated as medicine, to treat diarrhea. But before long, people added honey or cinnamon to make it a dessert, and this is where yogurt stands today in many cuisines (id.).

Of the many variations of yogurt along the Silk Roads, the most famous are the Greek, Turkish and Bulgarian yogurts. These are known or thought to be the founding countries of yogurt. However, as yogurt was passed among various the countries, other variations of the popular milk food were created as well.

In India, “dahi” is derived from the word ‘dadhi’, which means ‘sour milk’. This food is often used in Hindu rituals, and sweetened dahi is made by fermenting sweetened milk. Cow’s milk is usually used, but goat or buffalo milk is also used as well, for the fat content (Mathews, 164).

In Iran, ‘mast chekide’ is a type of sour tasting kefir yogurt. It is served mixed with water and an herb mixture called “delal” (Mathews, 165). Appetizers for this food are spinach and eggplant, and spring onions. When summer comes, this is served with cucumbers, peppers, and raisins as a

sort of cold soup. In contrast, ‘ashe-mast’ is a type of warm soup with herbs, spinach and lentils. In the making of both dishes, some water is extracted, and this is used to make kashk, a sour cream sauce (id.).

Yogurt is also popular in Arab countries. ‘Khyar bi laban’ from Lebanon and Syria is a cucumber and yogurt salad. ‘Dovga’ is a yogurt soup with herbs and rice, served both in winter and summer. ‘Jameed’ is from Jordan, a yogurt which is dried and salted. ‘Zabadi’ is yogurt made in Egypt (Mathews, 165).

## **Yogurt, A Joint Result of Various Countries Along the Silk Roads**

Though the word yogurt originated from Turkey, it has many variations along the Silk Roads. As seen in different variations of the dishes, the certain ways yogurt is combined or served faintly resemble each other, and from this, we can guess that there have been constant exchanges among the Silk Roads countries. So, remember that when eating yogurt, this is a joint result of different countries in the past.

## Sources

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**Jeong-won Yoon** studies International Economics and Law at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea.



## TRAVEL

Students perform a traditional Maslenitsa concert at Moscow State Linguistic University.

# Maslenitsa Festival, a Great Event to Celebrate



Alena Shipilova and Yulia Zagudalina

“A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people;” that is what Mahatma Gandhi said concerning national identity. As for Russian culture, its historical roots are rep-

resented in the customs and traditions reflected both in the life of our modern society and in art, covering all its various forms. In this article, we are eager to share some facts about a true pearl of Slavic national culture — the legendary Maslenitsa holiday!

“The history of Maslenitsa dates back to pagan times, when our ancestors would bid farewell to winter and welcome spring. Actually, it is a holiday of a dual origin: pagan and Christian” (Shubnaya). Pre-Christian, pagan peoples would celebrate the vernal equinox (March 21-22) with celebrations of spring and the rebirth of nature and the return of the sun’s warmth. For the later Christians, the holiday came to mark the week before Great Lent, giving everyone a last chance to enjoy food and fun before the fast. “In the eyes of the church Maslenitsa is not just a week of merrymaking, but a whole step-by-step procedure to prepare oneself for a long and exhausting fasting, which, if observed properly, may be a real challenge” (Shubnaya).

The traditions of Maslenitsa are widespread in our modern celebrations. Hard-

ly can anyone find such a great variety of festive activities like we arrange in our country! “In Moscow alone, more than 500 events are planned every year to celebrate the Slavic folk holiday. The main events are set in the city’s parks, museum clusters and estates as well as along pedestrian streets” (56th Parallel, “Maslenitsa”). Moscow authorities organize fairs, performances, and concerts. We enjoy playing the traditional Maslenitsa games, including playful charges on a fortress built from snow. The seventh and final night of Maslenitsa features the burning of “the Maslenitsa scarecrow,” which symbolizes a farewell to winter (Crepe Week”)

Every year at Moscow State Linguistic University we gather those students who are endowed with gifts of singing, dancing, and holding events — they never pass by an intriguing opportunity to organize a traditional Maslenitsa concert, encouraging everybody to become a part of this inimitable atmosphere of unity and common interests. That is to say nothing about the star attraction — making and eating the most delicious and beloved blinis that rep-



Maslenitsa (1916), by B.M. Kustodiev

resent an essential part of Maslenitsa in every family. A relative, but not a clone, of pancakes or crepes, blinis are served with myriad of sweet fillings and toppings like raspberry jam, honey, or sweet condensed milk, or else with more savory accompaniments like black or red caviar, minced meat with fried onions, fried cabbage, mushrooms, onion sauté in sour cream, and smoked or marinated salmon (“All You Need to Know about Russian Blinis”).

Maslenitsa has also made its way into the visual arts, such as the painting “Maslenitsa” by the Russian painter B.M. Kustodiev (1878-1927). “All actions in the picture take place on the main square of a

provincial town. In the foreground there are people riding in a painted sleigh pulled by a pair of festively decorated horses with bells and an arc with bells” (“Description of the painting by Boris Kustodiev”) We can see many smiles on cold, red cheeks as people stroll through the town’s fair, complete with a merry-go-round.

In literature, Russian writer A.N. Ostrovsky (1823-1886) even used a proverb that literally says “It is not always Maslenitsa for a cat” as a title for his play. In English it means something like “Life is not a bed of roses.” That is what expresses how merry and jolly this holiday is.

We would also like to mention that the beauty and vitality of this magnificent week is represented in a very popular Russian film, “The Barber of Siberia” (N. Mikhalkov, dir., 1998), where we can see a scene of Maslenitsa celebration of the 19th century. In the film, an American woman visitor is escorted to the festival on a Thursday, the day of the celebration set aside for games and competitions, including rough fistfights!

As you can see, Maslenitsa plays a great

role in Slavic culture. May this celebration now become close and familiar for our foreign readers, contributing to universal unity!

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**Alena Shipilova** is a professor teaching German as well as German-Russian Translation and Interpreting (T&I) at Moscow State Linguistic University, Russia.

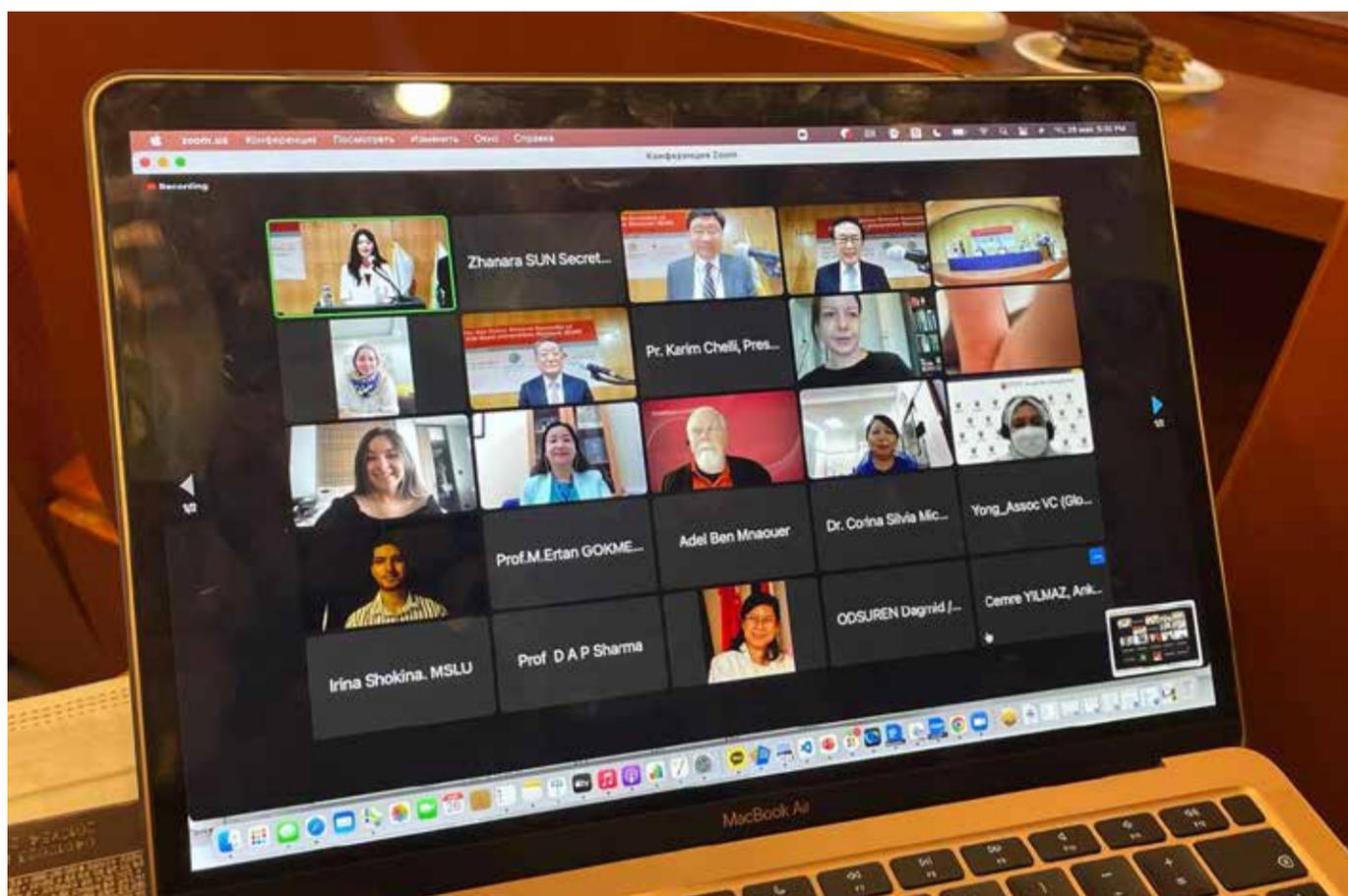
**Yulia Zagudalina** studies Translation and Interpreting at Moscow State Linguistic University, Russia.

# SUN NEWS



## The 8th General Assembly of SUN

The 8th General Assembly of the Silk Road Universities Network (SUN), co-hosted by the Canadian University of Dubai (CUD) and Hankyong University of Foreign Studies, took place virtually on May 26-27, 2022. The General Assembly was held online due to the



### Virtual GA co-hosted by CUD, SUN and HUFs

COVID-19 pandemic. . Representatives from a total of 21 universities in 18 countries attended the General Assembly (9 in Asia, 3 in the Middle East, 8 in Europe and 1 in U.S.).

On the first day, the Secretary-General of SUN Prof. Emeritus Sungdon Hwang gave a progress report and introduced Prof. Adel Ben Mnouer of the Canadian University of Dubai as the new President of the International Association for Silk-Road Studies (IASS) and requested him to address the assembly. The annual financial statement 2021-22 and the audit report 2021-22 of SUN was presented by the Treasurer Prof. Jeong O Park (HUFs), and the Auditor Prof. M. Burkitbayev (Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan). The opening ceremony was moderated by Heeyeong Cristina Kim , a student of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. Shatha Alzarouni, a student

of Canadian University Dubai, moderated the second day of the meeting.

On the second day, UPSUN and USSUN held their respective workshops. The Secretary-General proposed to confer the Permanent Honorary Chair status to HUFS. The participating representatives unanimously agreed to the proposal.

The assembly decided to postpone the election of the next Chair University of SUN until the offline General Assembly 2022 to be held in Dubai. The next President of USSUN will also be elected in Dubai. Until then, HUFS agreed to take the temporary 2nd term as chair university (Chairman: HUFS President Jeongwoon Park).

During the UPSUN workshop, Secretary-General Sungdon Hwang proposed to open shared course work for students of SUN member universities. One such course could be 'Introduction to the Silk Road Network University Studies'. Professor Ertan Gokmen of Ankara University, Turkey, agreed to head the relevant committee. Secretary-General Hwang also proposed to start a Recovery Program when the Ukraine-Russia War ends, in which students of member universities of SUN can help Ukraine recover from the war. The General Assembly welcomed his proposal.

In the USSUN workshop, there was a prog-

ress report and a briefing about next year's activities.

As a co-host of the 8th General Assembly, Prof. Karim Chelli, (Vice-Chancellor and President of the Canadian University of Dubai), addressed the meeting, giving a report on the latest events, and conveyed sincere thanks to the participants. Prof. Chelli invited SUN members to the in-person 8th General Assembly in Dubai to be held in late 2022.

Grand Prize Winning Photo of PHOCOS 2021, taken in Siena, Piazza del Campo, Italy. Photo by Iaria Fosaro, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy

The 7th Photo Contest of SUN  
**PHOCOS 2022**

**Theme of the Contest**  
**FIGHTING COVID-19 ON THE SILK ROADS**

**MOBILE PHONE PHOTO CONTEST**

Submission due: November 15, 2021  
[www.sun-silkroadsia.org](http://www.sun-silkroadsia.org)

**SCHEDULE OF CONTEST**  
 Submission Date: November 15, 2021  
 Result Announcement: November 23, 2021

**ELIGIBILITY**  
 Students from member universities of Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN)  
 \*Students of non-member universities are eligible for application, but no additional award other than certificate will be given.

**HOW TO APPLY**  
 Fill out the entry form available on the website of SUN ([www.sun-silkroadsia.org](http://www.sun-silkroadsia.org)).

**PRIZE & PRIVILEGE**  
**Grand prize (1 Awardee)**  
 Certificate and invitation to the 8th General Assembly of SUN and the award ceremony to be held at Canadian University Dubai, UAE with full coverage of the cost for round-trip flights, accommodations (hotel and meals), and the official culture tour by organizer.  
**Excellence award (2 Awardees)**  
 The same as for Grand Prize mentioned above except that the recipients of this award are supposed to take care of the cost for flight by themselves.  
**Special Selection (5 Awardees)**  
 The same as for Grand Prize mentioned above except that the recipients of this award are supposed to take care of the cost for flight by themselves.  
**Selection (10 Awardees)**  
 Certificate of merit  
 All of the award-winning photos will be published in a booklet and displayed in the exhibition during the General Assembly as well as at the digital exhibition gallery in the website of SUN for a year.  
 \*The prize may be adjusted accordingly in case of insufficiency of fund and extension of COVID-19.

Hosted by SILK-ROAD UNIVERSITIES NETWORK  
 Organized by UNITED STUDENTS OF SILK-ROAD UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

**WRICOS 2022**

**THE 6th WRITING CONTEST OF SUN**  
 Silk-Road Universities Network

**PURPOSE**  
 To include linguistic diversity along the Silk Roads.

**THEME**  
**Poem: My Hometown: What does your hometown mean to you?**  
 (Participants Write in consideration of the similarities and uniqueness of the Silk Roads' cities.)  
**Essay: 1. My Hometown: What does your hometown mean to you?**  
**2. Students' Perspectives on the Era of AI and Big Data: Opportunities & Challenges**

**SUBMISSION DUE**  
 August 31, 2022

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS**  
 October 10, 2022

**HOW TO APPLY**  
 Fill out the application form on the website of SUN ([www.sun-silkroadsia.org](http://www.sun-silkroadsia.org)).

**PRIZE & PRIVILEGE**  
**Grand Prize: 1 awardee for poems and 1 more for essays respectively.**  
 Certificate and invitation to the 8th General Assembly of SUN and the award ceremony to be held at Canadian University Dubai, Dubai, UAE with full coverage of the cost for round-trip flights, accommodations (hotel and meals), and the official culture tour by the organizer.  
**Award of Excellence: 2 awardees for poems and 2 more for essays.**  
 The same as for Grand Prize mentioned above except that the recipients of this award are supposed to take care of the cost for flight by themselves.  
**Award of Selection: 7 awardees for poems and 7 more for essays.**  
 The same as for award of excellence mentioned above except that the organizer will provide only the official culture tour and meals for the recipients of this award.  
 \* Subject to change depending on the situation of COVID-19 and other unexpected events.

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**SUBMISSION DUE AUGUST 31, 2022 (EXTENDED)**

Hosted by SILK-ROAD UNIVERSITIES NETWORK  
 Organized by UNITED STUDENTS OF SILK-ROAD UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

# 2022 WRICOS, PHOCOS, S-DECOS

These three contests, which help SUN become a network committed to the flourishing of culture, will be accepting entries until August 31st, 2022. The themes of the respective contests are “Fighting Against COVID-19 on the Silk Roads”, “My Hometown”, and “Student’s Perspectives in the Era of AI and Big data: Opportunities and Challenges”. Further information on the contests is available on the SUN website.

**THEME**  
**STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES IN THE ERA OF AI AND BIG DATA: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**  
 (Applicants are highly encouraged to create their own topic under this theme)

**THE 3RD S-DECOS, 2021**  
 SPEECH AND DEBATE CONTEST OF SUN

Due to the prevalence of COVID-19, the contest is open to speeches only.

**How to Participate**  
 Submit the recorded speech (or video language via our official website <http://www.sun-silkroadsia.org/submitwracos2021/>) along with the written manuscript in English and native language or send it to [sunofficialwracos@gmail.com](mailto:sunofficialwracos@gmail.com).  
 Duration of the speech: 5-10 min.

**Eligibility of participants**  
 Students of member universities (before only) in the member universities for all the homologous and non-member universities.  
 \* There might be some limitation in some of awards.

**Submission Deadline**  
 August 31st, 2021

**Awards**  
 1st place (1 student): 1st prize + certificate of award and the invitation for the 8th General Assembly of SUN with full awards.  
 2nd place (2 students): 2nd prize + certificate of award and the invitation for the 8th General Assembly of SUN.  
 3rd place (3 students): 3rd prize + certificate of merit.  
 Special Selection (2 students): The certificate of the award will be presented.  
 Other 8th General Assembly will be held at Canadian University Dubai, Dubai, UAE from November 20th to December 2nd, 2021.  
 An official certificate of participation will be presented for the rest of the participants.

For detailed information visit <http://www.sun-silkroadsia.org/submitwracos2021/>  
 For inquiries: [sunofficialwracos@gmail.com](mailto:sunofficialwracos@gmail.com)

# IASS 2022

The 7th Annual International Conference of the International Association for Silk Road Studies (IASS) was organized by the president of IASS, Professor Adel Mnaouer of Canadian University Dubai (President: Dr. Karim Chelli). The event brought together the top figures and leading voices in tech, AI & Big Data, social sciences, and arts and humanities.

This Annual International Academic Conference of IASS marked the 7th in a series of conferences on Land and Maritime Silk Road studies. The series of the IASS annual conferences started in Gyeongju, Korea (IASS 2015). After its initiation, consequent conferences were held in Dunhuang, China (IASS 2016); Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (IASS 2017); Gyeongju, Korea (IASS 2018); Moscow, Russia (IASS 2019); and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (IASS 2021). The high standards, quality, and impact of the IASS conferences have been highly recognized by the world's relevant academic communities.

The 7th annual IASS conference took place online, due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Its theme was “The Role of Higher Education in the Era of Artificial Intelligence and Big data: Challenges and Opportunities.” The

conference was held in a series of online weekly meetings, which had continued for 4 months, starting from February 22, 2022 and ending on June 28, 2022.



## Conference Schedule

### **Week #1 (Feb. 22, Tue)**

Opening Speeches (4\*5min)

Showcase (1\*30 min)

Keynote Speaker (1\*60 min)

### **Week #2 (Mar. 1, Tue)**

**AI & BD in Management of Business & Wealth**

Showcase Session (30 min)

Industry Panel Discussion (60 min)

### **Week #3 (Mar. 8, Tue)**

**AI & BD in Management of Business & Wealth**

Paper Presentations

### **Week #4 (Mar. 15, Tue)**

**AI & BD in Government Administration & legal services**

Showcase Session (30 min)

Industry Panel Discussion (60 min)

### **Week #5 (Mar. 22, Tue)**

**AI & BD in Government Administration & legal Services**

Paper Presentations

## **Week #6 (Apr. 5, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Education**

Showcase Session (30 min)

Industry Panel Discussion (60 min)

## **Week #7 (Apr. 12, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Education**

Paper Presentations

## **Week #8 (Apr. 19, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Language, Communication & Broadcasting**

Showcase Session (30 min)

Panel Discussion (60 min)

## **Week #9 (Apr. 26, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Language, Communication & Broadcasting**

Paper Presentations

## **Week #10 (May. 10, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Medical Practices & Health**

Showcase Session (30 min)

Industry Panel Discussion (60 min)

## **Week #11 (May. 17, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Medical Practices & Health**

Paper Presentations

## **Week #12 (May. 24, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Architecture, Design, Art & Literature**

Showcase Session (30 min)

Industry Panel Discussion (60 min)

## **Week #13 (Jun. 7, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Architecture, Design, Art & Literature**

Paper Presentations

## **Week #14 (Jun. 14, Tue)**

### **Annual Workshop: Comparing Government Administration in the Silk Roads Countries**

Theme: How to select & manage government officials?

Panel Discussion (90min)

## **Week #15 (Jun. 28, Tue)**

### **AI & BD in Life Environments, Sports & Entertainment**

Showcase Session (30 min)

Panel Discussion (60 min)

# Celebration of the 1600th anniversary of Venice

To celebrate the 1600th anniversary of Venice, an iconic city of the Silk Roads, Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Rector: Professor Tizian Lippiello) and the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) have agreed to co-host the following three contests. The 3 contests are – (1) video contest, (2) T-shirt design contest, and (3) essay contest – each with different themes. The prize winners will be invited to the awards ceremony to be held in Venice.

For more detailed information regarding themes and other details of the contests, please refer to the guidelines available on the official websites of SUN.



## JOIN US! to celebrate the 1600th anniversary of Venice, an iconic city of the Silk Roads

### VIDEO CONTEST

**THEME** Either of the following two themes:

● **Video message by student(s) for celebrating the 1600th Anniversary of Venice**

Participants are encouraged to highlight in their video message the importance of Venice in the history of the Silk Roads and lessons that can be learned from the history of Venice for sustainable development of civilization.

● **Water as a Key Condition for Sustainability of Civilization**

This theme is selected to signify the history and nature of the city of Venice as an exemplary case of utilization of water surrounding the islands of Venice for coping with diverse challenges from within and outside, enhancing opportunities of being connected globally, and sustaining and enriching her existence as civilization. This does not mean that the video should deal with the case of Venice only. Any video is welcome insofar as it reveals the value of water as a key element for sustainability of civilization in other specific countries or in general without any national specificity.

**ELIGIBILITY** Students of member universities of SUN as well as students who are majoring in video communication or film at non-SUN member universities all over the world. Students may participate in this contest as individuals as well as a team. There is no restriction on the number of members in each team.

**ENTRY LIMIT PER PARTICIPANT** One (1)

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE** May 31, 2022

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS** July 31, 2022

**SUBMISSION TO** sunofficial.video@gmail.com

**PRIZE & PRIVILEGE** The three best videos will be awarded. Certificate of official recognition will be issued to all those who participate in the contest. Each of the three prize-winners (one representative student if the prize winner is a team) will be invited to a special event celebrating the 1600th Anniversary of Venice in which the awards ceremony is to be held. The event is scheduled to be held in Venice from October 10 to 12, 2022. Accommodation (hotel & meals) will be borne by the organizer who will also provide each invitee with €300 for air travel.

**GENRE & STYLE** No restriction at all. Documentary, drama, dialogue, & etc.

**RECORDING MEDIA** No restriction at all. Digital camera, Cell phone, etc.

**FILE FORMAT** AVI or MP4

**VIDEO RUNNING TIME** Maximum of 5 minutes for the video message celebrating the 1600th anniversary of Venice and maximum of 15 minutes for the video presenting water as a key condition for sustainability of civilization.

Note: All the contents must be original and copyright free.

**CONTACT**

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www.sun-silkroadia.org



### T-SHIRTS CONTEST

**THEME** Either of the following four themes:

● **The 1600th Anniversary of the City of Venice**

● **The City of Venice itself**

● **The Silk Roads**

● **Marco Polo**

Any pattern design such as drawing, painting, letters, symbols, or whatever else is welcome that signifies

**ELIGIBILITY** Students of member universities of SUN as well as students who are majoring in video communication or film at non-SUN member universities all over the world. Students may participate in this contest as individuals as well as a team. There is no restriction on the number of members in each team.

**TYPE & SIZE** The design is to be presented on a typical T-shirt with short sleeves and round-neck. No restriction on the size of T-shirt.

**COLOR** No restriction either on the color of the T-shirt and the pattern design or on the number of colors.

**POSITION OF DESIGN** No restriction at all. The applicant can express the design on any part of the T-shirt: front, back, chest, sleeve, and etc.

**ENTRY LIMIT PER PARTICIPANT** Three (3)

**ELIGIBILITY** Students of member universities of SUN as well as students majoring in arts, design, or fashion at non-SUN member universities. They can participate individually as well as a team composed of several students.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE** May 31, 2022

**SUBMISSION TO** sunofficial.video@gmail.com

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS** July 31, 2022

**PRIZE & PRIVILEGE** The best three pieces of work will be awarded. A certificate of official recognition will be issued to all those who participate in the contest. Each of the three prize-winners (one representative student if the prize winner is a team) will be invited to a special event celebrating the 1600th Anniversary of Venice in which the awards ceremony is to be held. The event is scheduled to be held in Venice from October 10 to 12, 2022. Accommodation (hotel & meals) for this period will be borne by the organizer, who will also provide each invitee with €300 for air travel.

Note: All the contents must be original and copyright free.

**CONTACT**

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### ESSAY CONTEST

**THEME**

● **Masks and glass art crafts of Venice**

Masks and glass art crafts of Venice are unique and have earned wide international fame for a long time. Masks and glass art crafts are universal as almost all people around the world have maintained their own traditional masks and glass art crafts. As a way of celebrating the 1600th anniversary of Venice, we would like to highlight the reputation of Venice in masks and glass art by inviting students of member universities of the Silk-Road Universities Network to write a short essay that introduces their own traditional masks or glass art crafts focusing on the origin, history, value, meaning, artful beauty, method of production, materials, and so on. It is recommended, not required, that the essay highlight the linkage between the masks and the glass crafts of the writer's own country and those of Venice. Discussion of similarities and differences between these is also welcome, albeit not required.

**ELIGIBILITY** Students of member universities of SUN only

**LANGUAGE** Writer's own native language with translation in English if the writer's native language is not English.

**LENGTH** Short essay with a maximum of 10,000 characters. Photos, figures, and tables attached are not counted in measuring the length of essay. They are recommended rather than restricted.

**FORMAT**

-Software: MS Word

-Font: 12pt. Times New Roman

-Spacing: Double-Spaced

-Margins: One-inch margin at all side of the pages

-Title: There needs to be a proper essay title format, centered and above the first line of the essay of the same font and size as the essay itself.

-Indentation: 0.5 / Left margin for each paragraph; use TAB key.

-Page Numbering: Top left corner of the page. Include your last name.

**ENTRY LIMIT PER PARTICIPANT** One (1)

**ELIGIBILITY** Students of member universities of SUN as well as students majoring in arts, design, or fashion at non-SUN member universities. They can participate individually as well as a team composed of several students.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE** May 31, 2022

**SUBMISSION TO** sunofficial.video@gmail.com

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS** July 31, 2022

**PRIZE & PRIVILEGE** The three best essays will be awarded. Certificate of official recognition will be issued to the prize-winners. A special privilege will be given to the prize-winning writers. Each of the three prize-winners will be invited to a special event celebrating the 1600th Anniversary of Venice in which the award ceremony for this contest is to be held. The event is scheduled to be held in Venice from October 10 to 12, 2022. The cost for accommodation (hotel & meals) will be borne by the organizer, who will also provide each invitee with €300 for air travel.

Note: All the contents must be original and copyright free.

**CONTACT**

Tel +82-2-2173-3581  
sunofficial0822@gmail.com



VIDEO CONTEST

T-SHIRTS CONTEST

ESSAY CONTEST

# USSUN NEWS

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## The USSUN Workshop

The USSUN workshop was held on the second day of the 8th General Assembly online in parallel with the UPSUN workshop.

USSUN began the session by remembering the Afghan and Ukraine victims of the recent conflicts in the two countries, which have member universities of SUN.

The workshop had planned to elect new USSUN President and Vice President, but participants unanimously agreed to hold the election in the next USSUN meeting to be held along with the next General Assembly of SUN in Dubai.

## USSUN of 2022

Despite the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, USSUN continued its journey toward peace. One of the most remarkable activities of USSUN in the first half of 2022 was that it issued the Peace Statement on Russia-Ukraine

crisis in February. The statement was drafted by by USSUN-HUFS students.

Another notable activity was collecting videos from students of the Silk-Road universities to share their experiences related to education during the pandemic. More than 30 students sent their ideas and comments to USSUN. You can check the videos on the USSUN official Instagram, or at <http://www.sun-silkroadia>

USSUN also celebrated Nowruz, which is a holiday marking the arrival of spring. The holiday is celebrated in more than 10 countries in Central Asia and the Middle East, including Iran. Students of SUN sent their warmest congratulatory remarks and those messages were played in the New Year's feasts of many official organizations such as UNESCO and ECO region Universities.

# NEWS FROM MEMBER UNIVERSITIES

## Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS)

**Student life in campus comes back to normal, various sports activities resume**

The campus, which had been dormant due to COVID-19, has been expanding into a spring festival in May. Various sports events that have been canceled since 2019 due to COVID-19 are reviving the campus.

Students' participation in indoor and out-





door sports events such as the Korea Foreign University weekend soccer tournament, organized by the Central Club Foreign University Football Club, the Korea Foreign University Basketball Festival, co-hosted by the Central Campus Club and HUFSPORTS, and the Western Language Department were held on campus.

## **Simultaneous interpretation of South Korea's 20th Presidential Inauguration by the faculty of the University's Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation**





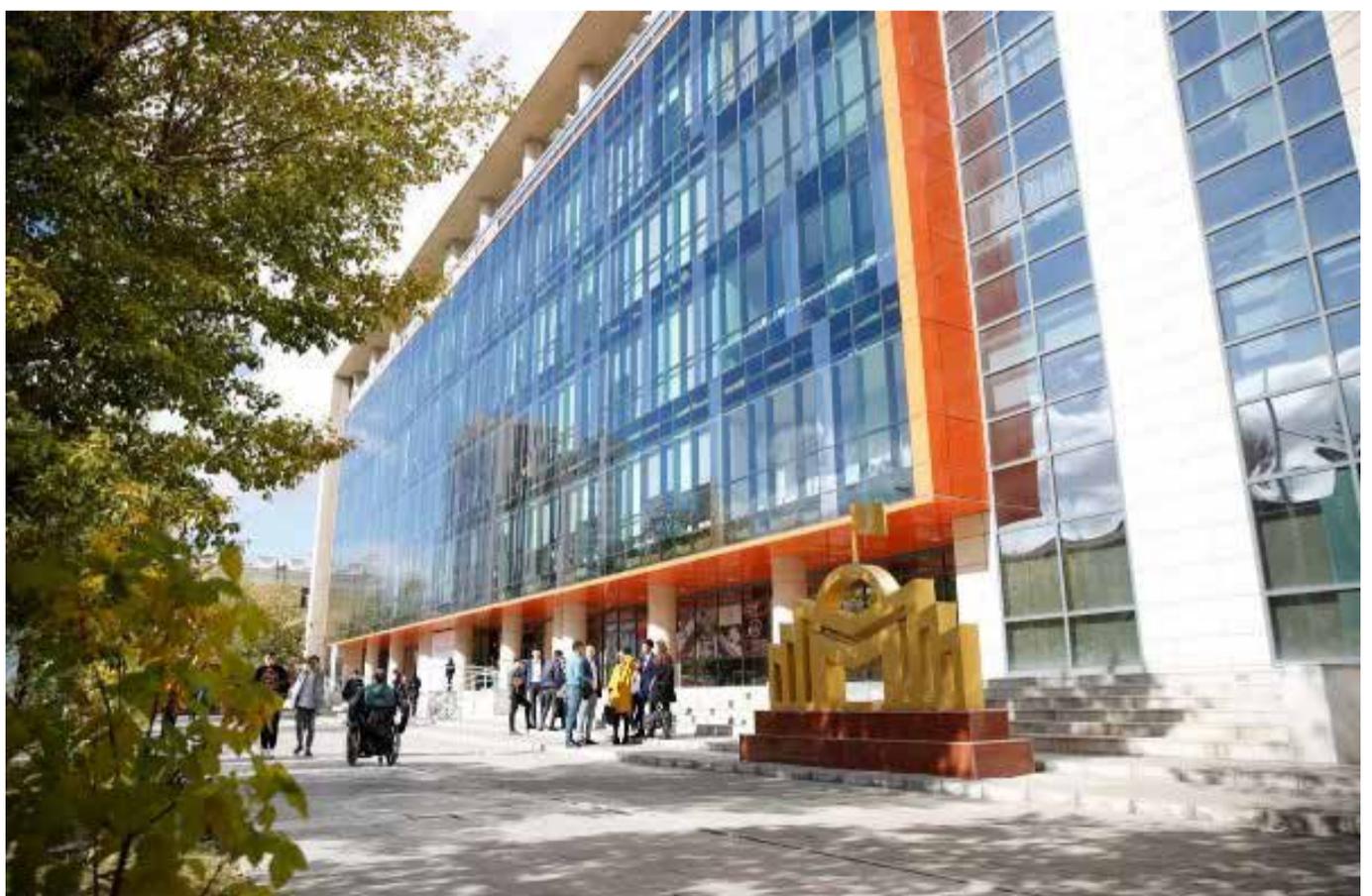
Our University's Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation (Director Lim Hyang-ok) provided a simultaneous interpretation service for the 20th Presidential Inauguration ceremony held in front of the National Assembly building on 10 May 2022. The Graduate School of Interpretation and Translation, which was in charge of simultaneous interpretation in a total of six languages (English, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, French and Arabic) at the inauguration ceremony, has been recognized as the nation's No. 1 interpreter and translator training institution.

# National University of Mongolia (NUM)

## NUM celebrates 80th anniversary of establishment



The first Higher Education Institution in Mongolia, National University of Mongolia, was established in 1942 in Ulaanbaatar, in the midst of World War II. In its 80 year history, over 100,000 alumni have been educated from all over the country and overseas, and they have been playing a leading role in the political, socioeconomic, and cultural life of the nation and region, as well as in education and science. Also, NUM has made a significant contribution to the progress of a higher education system in Mon-



golia and establishment of six new universities in Mongolia.

Today, NUM is pursuing a vision to become a “research university at global level” based on a strong liberal arts tradition. During this time, international collaboration and partnerships have been important in the development of the University’s teaching and research.

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## **Moscow State Linguistic University**

### **International Youth Forum “Friendship of Peoples”**

On 19 March 2022, MSLU hosted the International Youth Forum “Friendship of Peoples”, organized jointly by the Youth Wing of the Council of the Kyrgyz Diaspora and the Moscow State Linguistic University. The Forum was attended by representatives of the Russian Federation State Duma, the embassies of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan, individuals from the younger generation from the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek diasporas, MSLU academic staff and University students who master the language and culture of the CIS countries. The Forum discussed various issues of practical work and interaction of the younger generation in the fields of economy,

education, culture, legislation and migration policy of the Commonwealth countries.

## **Nuremberg Tribunals: History Lessons for Present and Future**

On 27 April 2022, MSLU students presented a brilliant performance “Nuremberg Tribunals: History Lessons for the Present and Future”. The roles of judges, witnesses, prosecutors, defenders, defendants, and escorts were performed by the students of the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting and the Faculty of the German Language, and the creative team included professors and International Department employees.

This was an extraordinary example of the synthesis of the educational linguistic process and acting work within the framework of the All-Russian educational project “Without Term of Limitation.”

The Nuremberg Tribunals became the first legal precedent in history for the jurisdiction over senior government officials. Maximum openness through a multilingual process was made possible thanks to the unprecedented work of interpreters and translators. It was as well one of the first experiences of simultaneous interpreting in the world. Among the interpreters and translators, whose names will forever remain in history, were graduates and

teachers of the Moscow foreign language institute (now MSLU).

## Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

### First International Conference on “Silk Road Sustainable Tourism Development and Cultural Heritage”

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in collaboration with International Experts for Research Enrichment and Knowledge Exchange, organized the first International Conference on “Silk Road Sustainable Tourism Development and Cultural Heritage”, from 22 to 24 November 2021. In line with the outcomes of efforts of the European Interdisciplinary Silk Road Tourism Centre in AUTh, the conference discussed sustainable tourism development opportunities along the world-renowned Silk Road, a symbol of intercultural dialogue between East and West for centuries, and raised awareness of the necessity to conserve and protect Silk Road



heritage. The second Silk Road Sustainable Tourism Development and Cultural Heritage Conference was held at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 21-23 June 2023.

## **AUTh's collaboration with Harvard University's Center for Hellenic Studies (CHS) in the context of AUTh's initiative for supporting its Ukrainian students**

A letter from Dr. Mark Schiefsky, Grove Professor of the Classics at Harvard University, highlighted the similarities in the support initiatives for Ukrainian students between the two AUTh and Harvard, and pointed out the willingness of CHS to contribute to AUTh's efforts to sup-



port the Ukrainian students. In the context of this contribution, three initiatives are being promoted, as follows:

- 1) A donation from the Center for Hellenic Studies to the relevant Special Research Fund Account (Greek abbreviation: ΕΛΚΕ), for AUTh to offer the amount in the form of scholarships to Ukrainian students who have expressed a relevant interest and need.
- 2) A joint invitation from the Center for Hellenic Studies and the International Olym-

pic Academy for the participation of 10 Ukrainian undergraduate students of AUTh in the annual Symposium co-organized by the two institutions from 12 to 15 July 2022 in Olympia. The symposium organizers will cover all travel, accommodation, and meal expenses of the students.

3) An invitation of AUTh's Ukrainian post-graduate students, who have joined the support program of the University, to visit to Nafplio during this fall season and make use of the Center's unique digital library to support their research. The Center will cover all travel, accommodation, and meal expenses of the students.

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## **Canadian University Dubai (CUD)**

### **Governor General of Canada visits Canadian University Dubai**

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, has made an official visit to Canadian University Dubai (CUD) as part of a working trip to the Middle East. Speaking to an audience of faculty, students, and members of the Canadian community in the UAE, Her Excellency shared her



insights on a range of themes, including Inuit culture, climate change, and gender equality. She was joined in the trip by her spouse, His Excellency Whit Grant Fraser, C.C.

Welcoming Their Excellencies to the University, CUD Chancellor, Mr. Buti Saeed Al Ghandi remarked, “Our ambition at CUD remains to grow and strengthen our international networks, to help us make an ever-increasing contribution to building the regional knowledge economy, and it is with great pride that we do so in the name of both the UAE and Canada.”

During the event, Their Excellencies toured the exhibition, ‘Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit: Art, Architecture, and Traditional Knowledge’, which is staged by McGill University and currently installed at CUD’s HUB Building Incubator Zone.

As part of the visit, students from the University’s Bachelor of Communications in Journalism program were also given the unique

opportunity to engage with His Excellency Mr. Fraser, who is a renowned author and storyteller. During the session, His Excellency discussed his extensive journalistic career, during which he reported from all four corners of Canada, and he then went on to answer questions from students about the future challenges of the journalism industry.

The visit to CUD was part of an official trip to the region, which also sees Their Excellencies meet with heads of state and senior leaders in the UAE and other GCC countries.

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## **Universiti Malaya**

### **UM researchers develop first face mask sterilising machine in Malaysia**

A group of researchers from Universiti Malaya have developed a face mask Ultraviolet C (UVC) sterilizing machine, to address personal protective equipment (PPE) shortage issues. The group, which comprises physicians and researchers from Universiti Malaya Medical Centre (PPUM) engineering faculty worked together to design the machine.

The chief researcher for the project, Dr. Mohd Ridha Muhammad, said “The machine, which is designed with nine boxes made of

Quartz glass, resembles a microwave set that allows used face masks to be decontaminated from viruses including Covid-19, which would allow sterilized face masks to be re-used. Dr. Ridha, who is also Senior Lecturer in UM's Faculty of Engineering—Mechanical Engineering Department, said the process of sterilizing face masks using the machine would only take around seven minutes to complete.

Following this invention, UM's Faculty of Medicine's Head of the Department of Community Medicine and Prevention, Professor Dr. Victor Hoe Chee Wai Abdullah, said such innovations are much needed as the country is still combating and curbing the spread of Covid-19.

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## **British University in Dubai (BUiD)**

### **TEDx talks at the BUiD**

The University organized its second year of TEDx talks on 2 March 2022 with the theme, 'The new normal or future normal? What did we learn in the past two years?' Six distinguished speakers shared their personal experiences and perspectives; the line-up of speakers was expanded this year to include students.

In his talk about the future of teaching, 'The Ego and the (K)Id', Professor Christopher Hill



discussed what role the learner should play in higher education. In his talk ‘Should we quit social media?’, Dr Joe Hazzam noted that social media platforms will continue to emerge in the future, and asked that before we connect, we need to question if these connections are valuable, trustworthy, durable and safe? Dr Solomon David told us in his talk, ‘Education 4.0 – are we ready for it?’, that the only way forward to face an uncertain future in education is to design and deliver forward learning curricula.

### **BUID’s participation at EXPO 2020**

BUID, in collaboration with Heriot-Watt University Dubai and University of Birmingham Dubai, participated in STEM activities at the UK Pavilion at EXPO 2020, where the three universities showcased the best of British higher education. Staff demonstrated their expertise in the areas of artificial intelligence, robotics, and engineering. The day was framed by the world’s leading air display team, the Royal Air Force Red Arrows, who visited the universities’ activities and

interacted with visitors. Following the activities, the Red Arrows put on an astonishing display over Expo 2020, featuring some of their famous maneuvers and death-defying feats.

The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and IT and a group of BUiD's postgraduate students participated in a workshop about sustainability at the Italian pavilion, where BUiD students shared their ideas on sustainability and urban design with several professors and PhD researchers from the Department of Architecture, University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy.



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## University of Coimbra

**University of Coimbra is the most sustainable higher education institution in Portugal and the 26th in the world**

For the third consecutive year, the University of Coimbra (UC) is considered the most sustainable higher education institution in Portugal and the 26th in the world, according to the fourth edition of the Times Higher Education



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Impact Rankings 2022, released on 27 April 2022. With a total score of 94.1 out of 100, the UC was the institution with the best overall performance in Portugal in meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The UC obtained its better rating at SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructures (99.9 out of 100), being considered the fourth best university in the world in fulfilling this objective, which values the role of universities in promoting innovation and meeting industry needs.

## **“Asia and Europe: Dialogues” Lecture Series**

The lecture series “Asia and Europe: Dialogues” is, for the second year running, a cultural activity funded by the Eurasia Foundation (from Asia) and organized by the Sino-Lusophone Academy of the University of Coimbra. It fol-

lows the first edition held between February and May of 2021, under the theme “Asian and European-Lusophone Civilization”, with the renewed aim of stimulating academic and cultural dialogue between Asia, Europe and the Lusophone World.

From 17 February until 26 May 2022, the University of Coimbra hosted (online and in-person) 15 lectures by professors from Portugal, South Korea, Spain, China, United Kingdom, Italy, Brazil, Cape Verde, and Japan to broaden the cultural horizon of the academic community and to deepen the interdisciplinary dialogue that crosses areas of study such as literature, law, culture, medicine, pharmacy, history, economics, education, sociology, international relations, among others.



## Write for us

**SILKROADIA** is the official webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN). We have more than 800,000 subscribers including professors, researchers, students, presidents, rectors, and chancellors of universities & research institutions located along the land and maritime Silk Roads. We welcome your articles and images on any of the topics related to the Silk Roads. The topics are those mentioned below but not limited to:

**Culture on the Silk Roads:** religion, local cuisine, artwork, jewelry, toys, pottery, dance, music, musical instruments, traditional / contemporary dress, types of dwelling, festivals, rituals, weddings, funerals, taboos.

**Heritage on the Silk Roads:** archaeological / historical heritage sites, literature, paintings, statues and sculptures.

**Travel on the Silk Roads:** natural wonders, markets, hotels, caravanserais, transportation.

**Any interesting and diverse stories** about people, places and events in your area, including the life of ordinary people and interview.

\*All articles and images shall be original and not infringe upon copyright rules. The working language is English and contributors' contact information must be included.

Please send to [sunwebzine@gmail.com](mailto:sunwebzine@gmail.com)



## SILKROADIA seeks student reporters

**SILKROADIA** is looking for students who are willing to write articles about the Silk Roads and other topics of their interest.

### What SUN student reporters do?

- Report Silk Roads-related activities and events in their country
- Report important activities and events in their university
- Work on articles or images as requested by the SUN Secretariat

### Qualifications

Students of the member universities of SUN

Must be fluent in English

Must send at least two writing samples in English to [sunwebzine@gmail.com](mailto:sunwebzine@gmail.com)

SUN student reporters are usually expected to work for one semester.

### What they get

Articles and images published on SUN webzine and website.

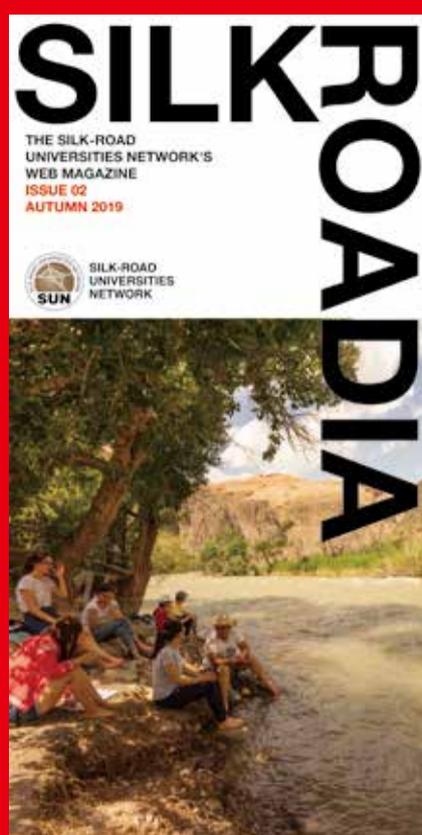
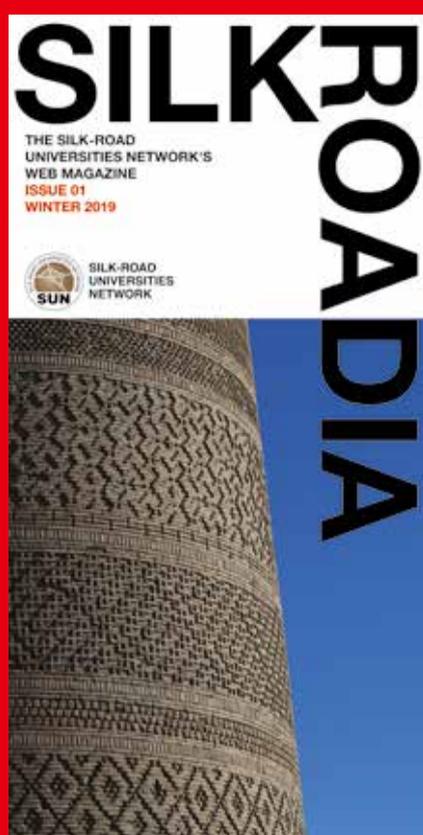
Receives the official certificate from SUN

The student, who is annually selected as the best reporter by the SUN secretariat, will be invited to attend the annual General Assembly of SUN with full coverage of the air travel and accommodations.

### How to apply

Click the link below for the google form of application:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeI6Bps3q05KUx1FdvZfJcl5W-g4x-lo8eLVBDfFjuhdaARo3Ag/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1>



# Advertise on **SILKROADIA**

**The official webzine of SUN  
to carry advertisements from  
next issue**

**SILKROADIA**, the official webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network, is a biannual publication which was launched in 2019. All the editions published so far are available at the SUN website.

As the official publication of SUN, **SILKROADIA** aims to serve as an effective medium of communications among the SUN Family members and between SUN and the outside world.

In order to fulfill its mission, **SILKROADIA** features a variety of interesting, informative and insightful articles and images, most of them provided by professors and students of the SUN member universities and institutes. The contents vary from in-depth academic articles and com-

mentaries authored by experts to easy-to-enjoy stories on heritage and travel on the Silk Roads. We are proud of having published genuinely original contents – like the imaginary interview which highlighted people like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, the legendary travelers and adventurers who are identified with the ancient Silk Roads.

Such an abundance of interesting contents on **SILKROADIA** draws a lot of readers from around the world. The webzine already boasts of a regular audience of about 800,000 people, including the faculty members and students of the 82 member universities and institutes in 65 cities of 28 countries along the Silk Roads. This is one of the reasons we began thinking about the potential of **SILKROADIA** as a potential place for advertisements.

Carrying advertisements on **SILKROADIA** has two objectives: First, advertisement revenue will certainly help SUN stand on its own financially, which has become more urgent in the wake of the ceasing of support from the Gyeongsangbuk-do Provincial Government. Second, advertisements on **SILKROADIA** will help the webzine raise its standard to a higher level. Good publications draw good advertisers and a genuinely popular publication cannot go without advertisements.

It is against this backdrop that **SILKROADIA** will carry advertisements from the next issue, which is expected to be published around June 2021. The first potential advertisers could be member universities and institutes of SUN who wish to promote their academic programs, exchange of students and other international programs and events. The advertisement pages of course will be open to those outside SUN, including educational associations, organizations and companies.

Details, including the rates and formats, will be released soon, which will be delivered to member universities and institutes and outside organizations through the official communication channel of the SUN Secretariat and **SILKROADIA**.

We expect active support from SUN members. Thank you.

### **Ad rates (tentative)**

<b>Page size</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Submission due</b>
Full page	USD 500	TBA
1/2 page	USD 300	TBA
1/4 page	USD 200	TBA