

*The Silk Road is as iconic in world history as the Colossus of Rhodes or the Suez Canal. But what was it, exactly? It conjures up a hazy image of a caravan of camels laden with silk on a dusty desert track, reaching from China to Rome.*

The Roman Empire and the Kushan Empire which ruled territory in what is now northern India also benefitted from the commerce created by the route along the Silk Road. Silk Road to China The Silk Road routes included a large network of strategically located trading posts, markets and thoroughfares designed to streamline the transport, exchange, distribution and storage of goods. From Seleucia, routes passed eastward over the Zagros Mountains to the cities of Ecbatana Iran and Merv Turkmenistan , from which additional routes traversed to modern-day Afghanistan and eastward into Mongolia and China. Silk Road routes also led to ports on the Persian Gulf, where goods were then transported up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Routes from these cities also connected to ports along the Mediterranean Sea, from which goods were shipped to cities throughout the Roman Empire and into Europe. Trade along the so-called Silk Road economic belt included fruits and vegetables, livestock, grain, leather and hides, tools, religious objects, artwork, precious stones and metals andâ€”perhaps more importantlyâ€”language, culture, religious beliefs, philosophy and science. Commodities such as paper and gunpowder, both invented by the Chinese during the Han Dynasty, had obvious and lasting impacts on culture and history in the West. They were also among the most-traded items between the East and West. Paper was invented in China during the 3rd century B. The eventual development of the Gutenberg press allowed for the mass production of books and, later, newspaper, which enabled a wider exchange of news and information. Silk Road Spices In addition, the rich spices of the East quickly became popular in the West, and changed cuisine across much of Europe. Similarly, techniques for making glass migrated eastward to China from the Islamic world. The origins of gunpowder are less well known, although there are references to fireworks and firearms in China as early as the s. Historians believe that gunpowder was indeed exported along the Silk Road routes to Europe, where it was further refined for use in cannons in England, France and elsewhere in the s. The nation-states with access to it had obvious advantages in war, and thus the export of gunpowder had an enormous impact on the political history of Europe. Eastward Exploration The Silk Road routes also opened up means of passage for explorers seeking to better understand the culture and geography of the Far East. Venetian explorer Marco Polo famously used the Silk Road to travel from Italy to China, which was then under the control of the Mongolian Empire, where they arrived in Notably, they did not travel by boat, but rather by camel following overland routes. They arrived at Xanadu, the lavish summer palace of the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan. His journeys across the Silk Road became the basis for his book, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, which gave Europeans a better understanding of Asian commerce and culture. Sources List of Rulers of Ancient Greece. Trade between the Romans and the Empires of Asia. *About the Silk Road: The Legacy of the Silk Road*. Edited by Robert B.

**Chapter 2 : The Silk Road: A New History by Valerie Hansen**

*A history of the Silk Road based mainly on the archaeological sources and textual analysis. The book is divided into seven chapters one each for the oasis towns of Niya, Loulan, Kucha, Turfan, Samarkand, Chang'an, Dunhuang, and Khotan.*

For instance, Warwick Ball contends that the maritime spice trade with India and Arabia was far more consequential for the economy of the Roman Empire than the silk trade with China, which at sea was conducted mostly through India and on land was handled by numerous intermediaries such as the Sogdians. Significantly, these mines were not very far from the lapis lazuli and spinel "Balas Ruby" mines in Badakhshan, and, although separated by the formidable Pamir Mountains, routes across them were apparently in use from very early times. This style is particularly reflected in the rectangular belt plaques made of gold and bronze, with other versions in jade and steatite. Scythians accompanied the Assyrian Esarhaddon on his invasion of Egypt, and their distinctive triangular arrowheads have been found as far south as Aswan. These nomadic peoples were dependent upon neighbouring settled populations for a number of important technologies, and in addition to raiding vulnerable settlements for these commodities, they also encouraged long-distance merchants as a source of income through the enforced payment of tariffs. Sogdians played a major role in facilitating trade between China and Central Asia along the Silk Roads as late as the 10th century, their language serving as a lingua franca for Asian trade as far back as the 4th century. By the time of Herodotus c. By having fresh horses and riders ready at each relay, royal couriers could carry messages and traverse the length of the road in nine days, while normal travellers took about three months. The next major step in the development of the Silk Road was the expansion of the Greek empire of Alexander the Great into Central Asia. They continued to expand eastward, especially during the reign of Euthydemus "â€" BCE, who extended his control beyond Alexandria Eschate to Sogdiana. There are indications that he may have led expeditions as far as Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan, leading to the first known contacts between China and the West around BCE. The Greek historian Strabo writes, "they extended their empire even as far as the Seres China and the Phryni. Chinese exploration of Central Asia Main articles: This extension came around BCE, with the embassies of the Han dynasty to Central Asia following the reports of the ambassador Zhang Qian [33] who was originally sent to obtain an alliance with the Yuezhi against the Xiongnu. Zhang Qian visited directly the kingdom of Dayuan in Ferghana, the territories of the Yuezhi in Transoxiana, the Bactrian country of Daxia with its remnants of Greco-Bactrian rule, and Kangju. He also made reports on neighbouring countries that he did not visit, such as Anxi Parthia, Tiaozi Mesopotamia, Shendu Pakistan and the Wusun. Ferghana Dayuan "Great Ionians" and the possessions of Bactria Ta-Hsia and Parthian Empire Anxi are large countries, full of rare things, with a population living in fixed abodes and given to occupations somewhat identical with those of the Chinese people, but with weak armies, and placing great value on the rich produce of China" Hou Hanshu, Later Han History. Others [37] say that Emperor Wu was mainly interested in fighting the Xiongnu and that major trade began only after the Chinese pacified the Hexi Corridor. The soil in China lacked Selenium, a deficiency which contributed to muscular weakness and reduced growth in horses. Even after the construction of the Great Wall, nomads gathered at the gates of the wall to exchange. Soldiers sent to guard the wall were often paid in silk which they traded with the nomads. The Chinese subsequently sent numerous embassies, around ten every year, to these countries and as far as Seleucid Syria. As a rule, rather more than ten such missions went forward in the course of a year, and at the least five or six. These connections marked the beginning of the Silk Road trade network that extended to the Roman Empire. It has been suggested that the Chinese crossbow was transmitted to the Roman world on such occasions, although the Greek gastraphetes provides an alternative origin. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy suggest that in 36 BCE, a "Han expedition into central Asia, west of Jaxartes River, apparently encountered and defeated a contingent of Roman legionaries. Sogdiana modern Bukhara, east of the Oxus River, on the Polytimetus River, was apparently the most easterly penetration ever made by Roman forces in Asia. The margin of Chinese victory appears to have been their crossbows, whose bolts and darts seem easily to have penetrated

Roman shields and armour. Even the rest of the nations of the world which were not subject to the imperial sway were sensible of its grandeur, and looked with reverence to the Roman people, the great conqueror of nations. Thus even Scythians and Sarmatians sent envoys to seek the friendship of Rome. Nay, the Seres came likewise, and the Indians who dwelt beneath the vertical sun, bringing presents of precious stones and pearls and elephants, but thinking all of less moment than the vastness of the journey which they had undertaken, and which they said had occupied four years. In truth it needed but to look at their complexion to see that they were people of another world than ours. Han general Ban Chao led an army of 70,000, mounted infantry and light cavalry troops in the 1st century CE to secure the trade routes, reaching far west to the Tarim basin. Ban Chao expanded his conquests across the Pamirs to the shores of the Caspian Sea and the borders of Parthia. The Silk Roads were a "complex network of trade routes" that gave people the chance to exchange goods and culture. It extended, via ports on the coasts of India and Sri Lanka, all the way to Roman-controlled ports in Roman Egypt and the Nabataean territories on the northeastern coast of the Red Sea. The earliest Roman glassware bowl found in China was unearthed from a Western Han tomb in Guangzhou, dated to the early 1st century BCE, indicating that Roman commercial items were being imported through the South China Sea. Harper asserts that a 2nd or 3rd-century Roman gilt silver plate found in Jingyuan, Gansu, China with a central image of the Greco-Roman god Dionysus resting on a feline creature, most likely came via Greater Iran. The Roman Empire inherited eastern trade routes that were part of the Silk Road from the earlier Hellenistic powers and the Arabs. With control of these trade routes, citizens of the Roman Empire received new luxuries and greater prosperity for the Empire as a whole. Notably, Pliny the Elder knew better. Speaking of the bombyx or silk moth, he wrote in his *Natural Histories* "They weave webs, like spiders, that become a luxurious clothing material for women, called silk. The unification of Central Asia and Northern India within the Kushan Empire in the 1st to 3rd centuries reinforced the role of the powerful merchants from Bactria and Taxila. Byzantine Empire Further information: Byzantine-Mongol alliance Byzantine Greek historian Procopius stated that two Nestorian Christian monks eventually uncovered the way silk was made. From this revelation, monks were sent by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian ruled as spies on the Silk Road from Constantinople to China and back to steal the silkworm eggs, resulting in silk production in the Mediterranean, particularly in Thrace in northern Greece, [70] and giving the Byzantine Empire a monopoly on silk production in medieval Europe. The Tang dynasty along with Turkic allies conquered and subdued Central Asia during the 7th and 8th centuries. The Tang dynasty established a second Pax Sinica, and the Silk Road reached its golden age, whereby Persian and Sogdian merchants benefited from the commerce between East and West. At the same time, the Chinese empire welcomed foreign cultures, making it very cosmopolitan in its urban centres. In addition to the land route, the Tang dynasty also developed the maritime Silk Route. Europeans in Medieval China Caravan on the Silk Road, The Silk Road represents an early phenomenon of political and cultural integration due to inter-regional trade. In its heyday, it sustained an international culture that strung together groups as diverse as the Magyars, Armenians, and Chinese. The Silk Road reached its peak in the west during the time of the Byzantine Empire; in the Nile-Oxus section, from the Sassanid Empire period to the Il Khanate period; and in the Sinitic zone from the Three Kingdoms period to the Yuan dynasty period. Persian Sassanid coins emerged as a means of currency, just as valuable as silk yarn and textiles. They were the main caravan merchants of Central Asia. At this time caravans of Sogdians travelling to Upper Mongolia are mentioned in Chinese sources. They played an equally important religious and cultural role. Part of the data about eastern Asia provided by Muslim geographers of the 10th century actually goes back to Sogdian data of the period and thus shows the survival of links between east and west. However, after the end of the Uighur Empire, Sogdian trade went through a crisis. What mainly issued from Muslim Central Asia was the trade of the Samanids, which resumed the northwestern road leading to the Khazars and the Urals and the northeastern one toward the nearby Turkic tribes. Islamic era and the Silk Road.

### Chapter 3 : The Silk Road - Hardcover - Valerie Hansen - Oxford University Press

*The first complete history of Central Eurasia from ancient times to the present day, Empires of the Silk Road represents a fundamental rethinking of the origins, history, and significance of this major world region.*

I started this very long book back in September of and almost half way through took a lengthy break as there was a chapter missing in my ebook and I had to wait a few months to get a copy from the library. I also needed a break from the many evils of world history. Over my life I have tried to read a number of very thick books that cover the world from the beginning of historical time and have always failed. The books were either 4. The books were either too dense or too dry or did not hold my interest. Yet I knew to read such a book was really important. I had too many gaps in my knowledge and like many of us would fill it in with childhood skewed religious classes or flimsy psychological, sociological and feminist understandings. I needed this so desperately and this book was able to deliver a wealth of knowledge, a bit of depth to my understanding of world economics and politics and power dynamics but also, to be honest, despair on the relentless suffering that most of our fellow beings experience for the majority of their lives and in all time periods although the races, classes and ethnicities all take their turn. What was most appealing about this book to me was that the eye view of whatever is happening in each time period was primarily kept on the area of the world we know as the Silk Roads. The turbulent Middle East and the mysterious lands of Central Asia. Frankopan was able to give these cultures and places more of a voice in their importance as well as contribution to knowledge and culture that most Eurocentric or Far East centric historical books tend to give. I really appreciated this and helped me understand and integrate gaps in understanding in what I knew from my few readings in European, American and Chinese history. Frankopan accomplished quite a feat in being to condense a world history into bite size chunks that layered knowledge onto understanding and at times even illumination as to how we got into the huge mess that is our modern world. Frankopan helped me achieve 3 remarkable results 1. I finally understand, in a limited way, why the Middle East is such a volatile powder keg and its very good and valid reasons for being so. The dirty games that Imperialist regimes have played in this area are immense, cruel and unfathomable. Truly appreciated the contributions to art, music, literature, science and medicine that the peoples of Central Asia and Persia contributed to the world especially in the Dark and Middle Ages in Europe. Solidified my understanding that people and regimes in power are primarily corrupt and yes, evil, sometimes with a lower case -e and sometimes with a capital one. Evil and cruelty has been perpetuated by every regime in power and that control and greed are the primary reasons for this. We are often told that we need to learn from our knowledge of history but I feel it is more likely to help us understand what is inevitable.

### Chapter 4 : Silk Road - HISTORY

*Whenever we speak of the Silk Road, the mind's eye conjures up a single merchant traveling on a camel laden with goods, most likely on his way to Rome. The discovery of multiple artifacts and.*

### Chapter 5 : The Silk Road: A New History | SILK ROADS

*Instead she reveals in detail the life, history, and culture of the different oasis centers of Central Asia, making the latest work by Chinese, Russian, Japanese, and other scholars available to us all. It is a triumph." Gray Tuttle, Columbia University - "Erudite and engaging, this is no romantic tale of the Silk Road. Hansen challenges many of the conventional narratives of the crossroads of Eurasia.*

### Chapter 6 : The Silk Roads by Peter Frankopan review – a frustrating trail | Books | The Guardian

*The Silk Road is as iconic in world history as the Colossus of Rhodes or the Suez Canal. But what was it, exactly? It conjures up a hazy image of a caravan of camels laden with silk on a dusty desert track, reaching from China to Rome.*

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### Chapter 9 : The Silk Roads: A New History of the World by Peter Frankopan

*The Silk Road was a network of trade routes connecting China and the Far East with the Middle East and Europe. Established when the Han Dynasty in China officially opened trade with the West in.*