



The Role Of The Ustrushana Region In Transregional And Cultural Relations On The Great Silk Road

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ABSTRACT

This article shows the cultural, political and trade relations and interaction of Ustrushona and the development of the Great Silk Road at the height of its prosperity, and the political, cultural and trade relations of Central Asia and other regions also gained importance. passed.

Keywords:

Ustrushona, China, Sugdiyana, Development, Great Silk Road, Culture, Politics, Cultural relations, Political relations, Transregional communication.

Introduction.

In today's developed world, many scholars from various countries consider it essential to scientifically study their nation's history, its contribution to world culture, and its connections with other countries during ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary periods. This includes examining cultural integration, the exchange of achievements in science, technology, and innovation, as well as the mutual influence of spiritual culture, religious beliefs, customs, and rituals. Central Asia plays a significant role in these interactions and processes.

Since ancient times, particularly from the late antique period, Central Asian goods, art, and architectural monuments have been found across a vast territory stretching from

Rome to China. Researchers have extensively studied descriptions of major trade routes in historical and geographical chronicles, as well as in Chinese and Arabic-Persian works. However, certain aspects remain underexplored, such as specific branches of the Silk Road, the origins of the cities and settlements along these routes, their importance to the Silk Road, and the mechanisms of their trade, economic, and cultural influence.

Recent research materials show that during ancient times and the early Middle Ages, the primary trade and exchange direction for Central Asia was China.

Literature review.

During the years of independence, extensive and in-depth archaeological research

by scholars such as Y. F. Buryakov, A. A. Gritsina, and M. Pardayev has contributed significantly to studying the history of Ustrushana, its role at the crossroads of the Silk Road, its cultural interactions, and its material culture. Y. F. Buryakov examined the cities of the Syrdarya region, focusing on the economic and ethnocultural relations between Chach and Ustrushana [1:69-82, 11]. The ancient administrative centers of Ustrushana were partly studied through archaeological expeditions led by L. M. Sverchkov [2:12, 12]. A. A. Gritsina's numerous studies focused on the history of statehood in the region [3:36, 14]. Her archaeological team conducted excavations at dozens of major sites in the Jizzakh region [4:51, 13].

Renowned linguist V. P. Yaylenko, based on some linguistic evidence, hypothesized that early trade relations between Sogd, Bactria, and China existed as early as the 4th–3rd centuries BCE [5:24-25, 14,15]. Archaeological findings also support this claim. For instance, some researchers believe that the Chinese court's interest in states located west of China during the 2nd–1st centuries BCE was driven by the influence of four major ancient empires: Rome, Parthia, the Kushan Empire, and the Han Dynasty.

The widespread nature of economic relations during that period is evidenced by the discovery of "Wu Zhu" type Roman and Chinese coins in the Ferghana Valley and the Sughd region of present-day Tajikistan. In 1947, excavations at the Shirinsoy burial mounds uncovered Chinese coins, bronze mirrors, and a copper cauldron inscribed with Han-era Chinese writing among accidental finds. "Wu Zhu" type Chinese coins were also discovered in the 9th Dahma in Kurkat, and a similar coin was found in Grave No. 1 at the Shirinsoy burial site by V. F. Gaydukevich in 1943. This find was dated by the researcher to the early decades of the 1st century CE. It is known that 15 coins of this type were discovered in the Ferghana Valley. One of these coins was found in 1982 at the Langari Khojiyon burial site in the village of Chorku in the Isfara district.

As previously noted, the Sogdians established trade-agricultural colonies along

the Silk Road as early as the 3rd century BCE in regions such as Semirechye, Jungaria, Eastern Turkestan, and in cities like Chang'an, Dunhuang, Turfan, Khotan, and others in Eastern Turkestan. In the 1980s, Japanese Sinologist Yutaka Yoshida discovered a legal document written in the Sogdian language in the Chinese city of Urumqi. This document was created in Chinanchkand or the city of Chang'an, the eastern capital of the Chinese Empire, and indicates that only Sogdian merchants resided in this city. The document discusses the purchase of a slave, with the buyer identified as Chinese.

Research methodology.

In the research process, comparative, systematic analysis, descriptive, historical, and historical-comparative analysis methods were employed.

Analysis and results.

Due to historical relations, the conditions created along the Silk Road and the emergence of an economic corridor served as tools for the integration of urban culture and economic craftsmanship. The creation and functioning of this unique economic corridor were significantly influenced by the inhabitants of Ustrushana and Sughd. Notably, the Sogdians held a prominent position along the Silk Road. Greater Sughd, including Ustrushana and the city of Khujand, was a vital link connecting the East and the West. Historical information from written sources and archaeological findings indicate the existence of towns and villages along this international route that fulfilled cultural, economic, and trade functions. However, as noted by V. A. Livshits, there are no direct written records confirming trade contacts between the Sogdians and the Chinese. Similarly, there is no written evidence of direct relations between the inhabitants of Ustrushana and China.

As previously mentioned, Ustrushana was part of various states at different times, including Sughd, Bactria, the Turkic Khaganate, and the Hephthalite Empire. Particularly in the early medieval period, Ustrushana, which was part of Samarkand Sughd and Bactria, emerged as an independent domain and later as a state. This suggests that Ustrushana actively

participated in the cultural and economic relations between Sughd and China, as the roads from Sughd to Ferghana and China passed through Ustrushana's territory.

The Sogdian merchants effectively controlled a significant portion of international caravan trade and, at the same time, acted as carriers of new cultural achievements. They facilitated the spread of trade and urban lifestyle skills among ethnic Tatars and Turkic peoples. In 630, the famous Chinese traveler Xuanzang visited several Sogdian cities in the Suyab River valley. In his diary, he wrote:

"Traveling more than 500 li northwest of the Transparent Lake (Issyk-Kul) through the Ustrushana region, we reached Suy-e, which is now the city of Suyab. The city spans a circumference of 6-7 li. It is inhabited by merchants and Hu (Sogdians) from various countries. The people wear woven and woolen clothing. To the west of Suy-e are several separate cities, each with its own elder."

Xuanzang also noted that in addition to trade, the Sogdians were actively engaged in agriculture.

In the 1st and 2nd centuries, the Roman Empire joined the East-West international trade network. Collections of Roman coins are found in museums across Central Asia. According to the renowned numismatist E.V. Zeimal, Roman coins from emperors such as Vespasian (69–79 CE), Hadrian (117–138 CE), Domitian (81–96 CE), and Trajan (98–117 CE) frequently appear in the numismatic markets of Central Asia.

Local historian A.M. Brodsky discovered a small hoard of Roman coins in the late 19th century along a caravan route near Issyk-Kul's shores leading to China. Another well-documented Roman coin, a sestertius of Nero, was found in 1954 in Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya region, in the ancient city of Khayrabadtepa in Angor district [6:125-127].

In addition, a hoard of Roman denarii was discovered in the 1920s in Mujum village, Gonchi district, Tajikistan. This treasure was unearthed by a local doctor, A.A. Tarin, and contained nearly 300 silver Roman coins. Unfortunately, only 19 of these coins have survived to this day and are preserved in the

Eastern Department of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. The Mujum finds are dated to the 2nd century CE.

Later, Sogdian merchants took the initiative in trade. They settled in many trade centers, and trade was conducted even through the Northern Caucasus region. Silk trade from Sogdiana to Byzantium peaked in the 7th-8th centuries. Along the route to Byzantium, silk fabrics were transported via Ustrushana, Dunhuang, Turfan, Kucha, Kashgar, Chach, Fergana, Khojand, Bundon, Samarkand, and Bukhara.

In addition to silk, gold ingots were traded along the way, which local jewelers used to craft ornaments. Narshakhi wrote that zandanachi silk fabrics were exported to Syria, Egypt, and Rome. Zandanachi textiles have also been found in several cities across Europe.

Turfan was another Sogdian city located in East Turkestan. The inhabitants of this city were so prosperous that they supplied not only the population of the Tang Empire but also the nomads of East Turkestan with grain and fabrics. According to information from the Chinese chronicle Tang Shu, Turfan had two markets: one near the city's western gate and the other near the eastern gate. In trade with the steppes, woolen fabrics, various handicraft, and agricultural products played a significant role. In exchange for these goods, horses and raw materials—primarily wool, leather, and hides necessary for handicraft production—were obtained from the nomadic Turkic tribes.

The Manas epic of the Kyrgyz mentions over 30 types of fabrics, 12 of which are silk. In addition to fabrics, the epic also provides information about various precious stones transported along the Great Silk Road. Gold is mentioned in Turkic-Mongolian, Persian-Tajik, and Chinese languages in the Manas. For instance, the term "shanshuur" refers to "gold ingots," while silver ingots were called "jambi." These ingots were used as currency. Furthermore, the Manas epic references cities and villages along the Great Silk Road, including Ak-Beshim, Alay, Altay, Andijan, Arpa, Artish-Baliq (modern-day Balkh in northern Afghanistan), Badakhshan, Barkol, Bariskan, Gobi-Shamu (the Gobi Desert), Darhan, Jarken

(Yarkand), Ili, Kashgar, Karatengin, Kara-Shaar, Maral-Bashi, Lop (Lake Lop Nur), Orkhon, Margilan, Samarkand, Talas, Tashkent, Tibet, Chatir Kool, Chuy, Turfan, Fergana, Edil (Volga River), Irtish (Irtys River), and others[3:75]. The Manas also mentions several monetary units under Chinese terms such as "shanshuur" and "jambi"[7:84-85].

The northern and southern branches of the Great Silk Road, which passed through Fergana and Chach, converged at the "Ilon O'tdi" pass in Ustrushana. According to M. Paradaev, the ancient early medieval district of Feknan and the city of Jizzakh in Ustrushana served as key hubs for trade and monetary exchanges in this contact zone[8:90]. Since ancient times, Jizzakh has been home to numerous rabats and caravanserais. One of these, known as Khudaysar, is said in some sources to have been built by the heir Haydar al-Afshin.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This oasis, being a dry and moderate region, holds significant historical and cultural importance. The Ustrushana oasis encompasses the following key aspects:

1. Transregional Connections:

Ustrushana has long been an important point along transregional routes. Its geological features, water resources, and natural connections shaped these interactions.

2. Cultural Relations:

Although a moderate region, Ustrushana's cultural ties between contemporary and historical cultures are unique. This area is known for its ancient fortresses, distinctive art, and rich literary heritage.

3. Social Interactions:

Ustrushana serves as a nexus of social relations between nomadic and settled populations. It reflects the cultural and social exchanges among the people living in this region.

The transregional, cultural, and social interactions of the Ustrushana region are closely tied to its historical significance and natural features. The cultural exchanges, historical monuments, and social dynamics

among the region's inhabitants make Ustrushana a distinctive part of Uzbekistan's unique regions, reflecting its historical and natural connections.

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