

Asian Studies 201 THE SILK ROAD

Joseph Adler

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Fall 2012

Tuesday 7:00-10:00

Treleaven Seminar Room

Office hours: MWF 3-4, T 2-4

and by appointment

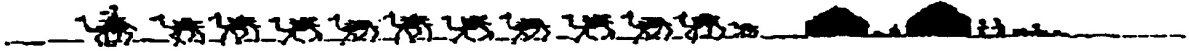
- [Silk Road links](#)
- [Buddhism links](#)
- [Bibliography](#)
- [Paper format guide](#)
- [Paper criteria](#)
- [Moodle](#)

"The Silk Road" is a rather misleading term coined in 1877 by the German geologist Ferdinand von Richthofen. What it actually refers to is a vast network of trade routes that connected East, South, and Southeast Asia with the Mediterranean region, North Africa, and Europe. While travel and migration along these routes date back to prehistoric times and of course continue today, communication via the land routes across the Eurasian continent primarily flourished from the 2nd century BCE through the 15th century CE, most notably linking China with western Asia and the Mediterranean region. And while silk was one of the major products transported from China to the West as far back as the Roman Empire, the trade, especially in such other luxury goods as spices (from India) and gemstones (from western Asia), was active in both directions. Along with the trade in material goods, the Silk Road was the medium for cultural exchange. One of the prime examples of this was the spread of Buddhism from India into Afghanistan, China, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia. As an extensive and many-layered system of economic and cultural exchange, the Silk Road can therefore be considered a premodern example of what today we call globalization.

This seminar will survey the history of economic and cultural exchange along the Silk Road from prehistoric times to the present day. We will specifically examine geographic factors, the various ethnicities and empires that contributed to Silk Road history, the exchange of goods and technologies, the religions of the Silk Road, and the spread of artistic traditions across Asia. The general aims will be to enable students to think critically about Asia (or Eurasia) in a more holistic way, to understand the interconnections of our various academic disciplines, and to appreciate some of the rich cultural heritages and exchanges that have contributed to our world. No prerequisites.

Reading:

- Xinru Liu and Lynda Norene Shaffer, *Connections Across Eurasia: Transportation, Communication, and Cultural Exchange on the Silk Roads*
- Tansen Sen and Victor H. Mair, *Traditional China in Asian and World History*
- Peter B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*
- Richard C. Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*
- Readings on **Moodle**: You must print these out and bring them to class when they are being discussed.



Requirements and grading:

1. **Participation** (20% of course grade). The success of a seminar depends on the active participation of all members. Attendance at all meetings is required, unless you have a legitimate excuse *and* inform me about it beforehand. You are expected to have read *all* the assigned material and to participate *every week* in seminar discussion.
2. **Three short papers** (6-8 pages, plus bibliography) and oral reports (15% each). The oral report will count 1/4 of the grade and will be done in teams. You must come to my office to discuss your report by 4:00 on the Friday before the report. The papers will be due by 4:00 the Friday following the report. You must follow the [Paper Format Guide](#), and no electronic submissions will be accepted. See also the [Paper criteria](#).
3. **Two map quizzes** (5% each).
4. **Term paper** (10-15 pages, plus bibliography, 25%), following the [Paper Format Guide](#). Due Friday, Dec. 21, 4:30 p.m., in my office. No electronic submissions will be accepted.

Notes:

- Personal computers are not allowed in class, except when you are giving a presentation. Readings that are online must be printed out and brought to class. This is because I want you to engage with the readings by marking them up with notes. Cellphones, of course, must be turned completely off.
- If you have a disability that will affect your work or participation in this class, please contact Erin Salva, Coordinator of Disability Services, at 427-5453 or salvae@kenyon.edu, *and* speak to me individually, early in the semester, about the arrangements you will need.

Schedule

- 1 Sep 4 **Introduction**
Film: "The Mysterious Mummies of China" (PBS Nova)

- 2 Sept 11 **Thinking about Eurasia:
 Cultural ecology;
 Nomadic pastoralism**



Eurasia

Reading:

- Liu & Shaffer, *Connections Across Eurasia*: Preface, Introduction
- Golden, *Central Asia*, Introduction, ch. 1
- **Moodle:**
 - Philip Bowring, "What Is Asia?"
 - Daniel C. Waugh, "The Silk Roads and Eurasian Geography" (Silk Road Seattle)
 - Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, pp. 16-31
 - Maps (handout)

- 3 Sept 18 **China and Inner Asia**

Reading:

- Sen & Mair, *Traditional China in Asian and World History* (entire)

- 4 Sept 25 **Early kingdoms and empires (Chinese, Xiongnu, Yuezhi);
 Han Wudi and Zhang Qian**

Reading:

- Liu & Shaffer, ch. 1
- Golden, ch. 2
- Foltz, chs. 1, 2
- **Moodle:**
 - David Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, vol. 1, ch. 8 ("The Hsiung-nu Empire")
 - Sima Qian, "Account of the Xiongnu" and "Account of Dayuan" (from *Shiji*): skim these chapters



The Xiongnu chieftan, Maodun

5 Oct 2 **The Kushan Empire; The spread of Buddhism into Central Asia**

Reading:

- Liu & Shaffer, ch. 2
- Foltz, ch. 3
- **Moodle:**
 - Christian, *History of Russia*, ch. 9 (Kushan and others)
 - Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, eds., *The World of Buddhism: Introduction* (Gombrich), ch. 3 (von Hinüber)
 - Jason Neelis, "Buddhism and Trade" (Silk Road Seattle)

6 Oct 9 **Buddhist pilgrims on the Silk Road; Trade networks; The Sogdians**

Reading:

- Liu & Shaffer, chs. 3-4
- **Moodle:**
 - "Travelers on the Silk Road" (Silk Road Foundation)
 - Fa-hsien [Faxian], *Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, excerpt 1 (Silk Road Seattle)
 - Xuanzang, *Record of the Western Regions*, book 1 (Silk Road Seattle)
 - Judith A. Lerner, "The Merchant Empire of the Sogdians"
 - Nicholas Sims-Williams, trans., "Ancient Sogdian Letters"



Buddhist pilgrim

7 Oct 16 **Trade and technology transfers (silk, jade, paper, printing); Tang and Song China**

Reading (Moodle):

- Jonathan Tucker: Summaries of trade goods and technologies carried on the Silk Road
- "History of Silk" (Silk Road Foundation)
- Carol Michaelson, "Jade and the Silk Road: Trade and Tribute in the First Millenium"
- Jonathan M. Bloom, "Silk Road or Paper Road?"
- Thomas Christensen, "Gutenberg and the Koreans: Did East Asian Printing Traditions Influence the European Renaissance?" (8 sections; keep hitting "continue" until the end)
- Valerie Hansen, "The Cosmopolitan Terminus of the Silk Road" (Chang'an)
- Jacques Gernet, "The Civilization of the Chinese 'Renaissance'"



The earliest extant book printed with moveable metal type (1377).

8 Oct 21 **Turks, Uighurs, and Islam on the Silk Road**

Reading:

- Golden, ch. 3-5
- Liu & Shaffer, ch. 5-6
- Foltz, ch. 5



Uighur princesses

9 Oct 30 **Dunhuang and Art on the Silk Road**

Reading:

- **Moodle:**
 - Roderick Whitfield, "Dunhuang: Introduction"
 - Valerie Hansen, "The Time Capsule of Silk Road History: The Dunhuang Caves," pp. 178-197
 - Connie Chin, "Monuments in the Desert: A Note on Economic and Social Roots of the Development of Buddhism Along the Silk Road" (Silk Road Foundation)
 - Annette L. Juliano, "Buddhist Art in Northwest China"
 - Stanley K. Abe, "Art and Practice in a Fifth-Century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temple"

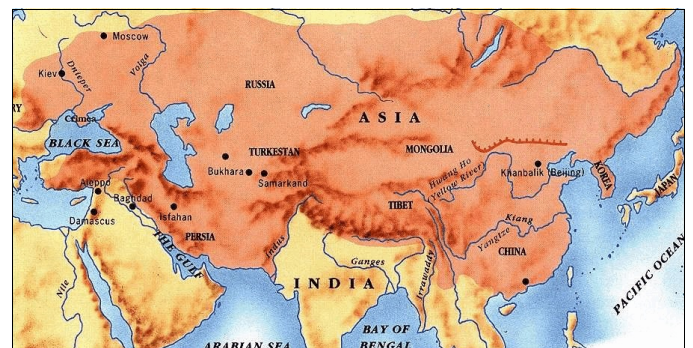


The Mogao Caves (Dunhuang)

10 Nov 6 **The Mongol Empire**

Reading:

- Liu & Shaffer, ch. 7
- Foltz, ch. 6
- **Moodle:**
 - Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History*, chs. 4, 7, 8, 10



11 Nov 13 **Marco Polo and other travelers**

Reading:

- **Moodle:**
 - Travelers on the Silk Road (Silk Road Foundation) (again)
 - John Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World*, chs. 1, 2, 8
 - Marco Polo, *The Travels* (excerpt)
 - Jonathan Spence, "The Worlds of Marco Polo"
 - Lauren Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*, 8-29



Marco Polo in Mongol dress

<< Thanksgiving Break >>

12 Nov 27 **Other Silk Road religions: Christianity, Manichaeism, Judaism, shamanism**

Reading:

- Foltz, ch. 4
- **Moodle:**
 - Michael Pollak, "The Beginnings of Judaism in China"
 - Peter Zieme, "Religions of the Turks in the Pre-Islamic Period"
 - Köçümkulkizi and Waugh, "Religion" (Silk Road Seattle)



Model of the Kaifeng synagogue

13 Dec 4 **Asia and Europe: The rediscovery of Dunhuang The "Great Game" Current geo-politics of Xinjiang**

Reading:

- **Moodle:**
 - Valerie Hansen, "The Time Capsule of Silk Road History: The Dunhuang Caves," pp. 167-177
 - Watson, "Prestigious Peregrinations: British Travellers in Central Asia c. 1830-1914"
 - Frances Wood, "The Great Game and the Silk Road"
 - James Millward and Peter Perdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century"



Paul Pelliot examining manuscripts in the Library Cave at Dunhuang (1908).

14 Dec 11 **Film: "The Story of the Weeping Camel"**

- [Website](#) (National Geographic)

Final papers due Friday, Dec. 21, 4:30 p.m.
in my office (properly formatted and stapled).



First section of the world's oldest dated printed book (868 C.E.):
the Diamond Sutra found at Dunhuang, China.