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The Great Silk Road. An important factor in the development of the peoples of Central Asia

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Abstract: This article examines the establishment of the Great Silk Road and the resulting globalization processes, which played a significant role in the overall development of the peoples of Central Asia. The article presents information on the establishment of the Great Silk Road and the preceding processes of trade relations between East and West, North and South. The progressive aspects of globalization in the Central Asian region during that period are examined. Based on research and relevant sources, the role of the Great Silk Road was identified not only as a trade route but also as a platform for the exchange of cultures, technologies, and new scientific ideas. In conclusion, the perspective of modern globalization is examined.
Keywords: The Great Silk Road, globalization, Central Asia, intercultural relations, trade routes, technology exchange, meeting of civilizations.

Introduction

In this article titled "Globalization and the Great Silk Road," the author examines globalization processes from a historical-philosophical perspective, as well as its impact on the development of science and culture among the peoples of Central Asia. The article notes that even before the emergence of the Great Silk Road, trade and economic relations existed between the ancient states of Central Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean basin, and India. Such relations stemmed from the economic, social, and cultural needs of the states in these regions, serving as an objective necessity for their development. Researching these aspects enables a broader and deeper understanding of globalization processes that began in antiquity. Furthermore, in this article, the author relies on the research of world-renowned and influential scholars who dedicated their works to studying the era of the Great Silk Road.

Methods

The globalization process during the era of the Great Silk Road under our study and its progressive impact on the development of the peoples of Central Asia are based on the economic, social, and cultural exchange, mutual interaction, and mutual enrichment of the peoples participating in this process. Consequently, the research methods applied to this problem are dialectical, sociological, and axiological. In this study, the author relies on the analysis and synthesis of global processes that took place during the Great Silk Road era, which are necessary to obtain objective assessments of those global processes.

Results and discussion

Reviewing the history of globalization, we become convinced that its roots extend deep into the centuries. Of course, in ancient times, it did not encompass such a broad scale as we observe today. In antiquity, the initial globalization processes began in the 3rd–2nd millennia BC due to trade and economic relations between Central Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean basin, and India. This route was named the "Lapis Lazuli Road." Why was it named so? Because lapis lazuli, which was considered precious for those regions and extracted from the Pamir Mountains, was supplied from Central Asia to Iran and Mesopotamia, and subsequently to Egypt. Alongside the

"Lapis Lazuli Road," the "Jade Road" also formed, connecting the cities of Yarkand and Khotan in Eastern Turkestan.

According to Professor O. Kobzeva, during that period, caravan routes interconnected many countries of the Eurasian continent, though they had not yet reached China [1]. Later, namely in the 2nd century BC, over a span of 17 centuries, the Great Silk Road began to take shape, playing a crucial role in trade and economic relations between East and West. It is noteworthy that the term "Great Silk Road" was first used in 1877 by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in his work titled China.

The Great Silk Road possessed distinctive features: first, it was considered the longest trade route in human history; second, it started from the ancient capital of China, the city of Chang'an, and ended in Valencia, Spain. The length of this route totaled 7,000 kilometers, passing through Central Asia. The primary commodity was silk, as only China possessed the technology for producing silk, and this product was highly valued in European countries, especially in the Roman Empire. Merchants did not traverse the entire route from end to end; the Central Asia region served as a hub where other merchants purchased goods from them and continued along the way.

At the same time, the Great Silk Road began to play an important role in globalization processes, and thanks to it, the military sphere developed rapidly, given that gunpowder produced in China was the second most important commodity after silk.

The history of the Great Silk Road consists of several periods. It achieved its heyday in the 5th–8th centuries AD following the establishment of the Turkic Khaganate. The second period is associated with the Arab Caliphate, during which trade routes with China, India, Byzantium, and European countries were established. This route passed through Bukhara and Khorezm, creating favorable conditions for the development of these territories. The third period corresponds to the time of the Mongol conquest. However, despite this complex period, the Silk Road did not cease its operations; on the contrary, it was further encouraged by the Mongols, who exacted a certain tribute from merchants. The fourth period is associated with the Timurid Empire. It blocked the northern routes, forcing caravans to travel from China to the Middle East via another route—through the state of Movarounnahr founded by Amir Timur.

French historian Étienne de la Vaissière, in his book Commerce et artisans dans le Turkestan occidental, emphasizes that the Central Asian cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva served as the main trade centers between East and West [1].As a result of archaeological excavations conducted by American archaeologist Fredrik Hiebert, it was determined that Central Asian cities possessed a developed trade infrastructure. For instance, during excavations in the city of Merv (Turkmenistan), caravanserais, trading centers, and craft workshops built in the 3rd–4th centuries AD were discovered [2].

American researchers Jovid Jalilov and Anatoly Khazanov note that as a result of globalization processes during the Great Silk Road era, global communication networks formed among merchants and travelers who traded along this route. Indeed, through these networks, not only goods, but also the exchange of culture and knowledge took place [3].

At the same time, as scholar V. Shmelev notes, one of the crucial aspects of globalization along this route was the development of trade systems. This system ensured the conclusion of international trade agreements; the creation of a system of guarantees for the trust of trade partners; and the formation of an interregional currency-credit system. Furthermore, caravanserais, trading centers (which later transformed into small and large cities), and other infrastructure facilities were constructed along the trade routes [4].

Aside from silk and gunpowder, the primary goods transported via the Great Silk Road included Chinese porcelain, tea, paper, spices, precious stones, animals, carpets, and many other products. At the same time, the "Silk Road" played an important role in the economic development of the countries it connected. Through the exchange of ideas and knowledge in various fields of art

and science along this route, the exchange and mutual assimilation of the cultures of various peoples took place. Moreover, as a result of globalization processes, various religions spread. For instance, religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Judaism became widespread in the territory of present-day Uzbekistan. Numerous religions existed along this trade route, coexisting peacefully until the 14th century. During this period, the rulers of the region's states allowed freedom of religion and protected human rights. I would also like to particularly highlight the positive changes that occurred in the development of the peoples who lived along the Great Silk Road. First, the globalization process influenced new technologies, such as paper production (Samarkand paper, which is still produced by some master craftsmen today), the spread of sericulture technology (in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan), and the dissemination of gunpowder as necessary elements for various military needs. Second, thanks to the Great Silk Road—and consequently, the globalization of the participants in this trade and economic rapprochement—prominent scholars, artists, poets, and musicians of Late Antiquity (3rd–8th centuries), the European Middle Ages (4th–14th centuries), and the European Renaissance (13th–16th centuries) emerged. In Central Asia, during the 9th–12th and 14th–15th centuries, a scientific and cultural rise occurred due to the Great Silk Road, giving rise to the period known as the Eastern Renaissance. This period presented new scientific knowledge to the world thanks to the genius of local peoples who were thirsty for acquiring scientific knowledge and subsequently achieved immense successes in various fields of science, thereby enriching the treasury of world culture. The uniqueness of the Eastern Renaissance compared to the Western one is that it encompassed a longer historical period in the territory of Central Asia than the Western Renaissance. The achievements of representatives of the Eastern Renaissance such as Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Biruni, Avicenna, Al-Farabi, Mirzo Ulughbek, and others occupy an important place in the development of European Renaissance science.

Canadian researcher Richard Foltz, in his work Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization (published in Uzbek translation as Markaziy Osiyoda madaniyatlararo muloqot), notes the thirst for knowledge among the prominent scholars of the Eastern Renaissance. In this work, he particularly emphasizes the ability of the peoples of Central Asia to assimilate and recreate various cultures [5]. Japanese historian Takashi Matsukawa, in his research work, notes the tolerance of the peoples of Central Asia toward various religions: "In Central Asia, various religious beliefs (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam) coexisted peacefully side by side. For instance, Buddhist temples, Christian churches, and Muslim mosques operated simultaneously in the city of Samarkand."This evidence once again demonstrates the progressive significance of globalization during the era of the Great Silk Road.The rapid globalization triggered by the Great Silk Road exerted a positive impact on the development of the peoples of Central Asia as a result of extensive cultural, scientific, and technological exchanges among peoples located far from one another. Consequently, new technologies and styles emerged in architecture, fine arts developed, entirely new genres appeared in music and literature, and, overall, language and writing, pedagogy, and education were perfected.

Conclusion

Thus, as a result of intense globalization processes driven by trade, economic, cultural, scientific, and philosophical exchanges, the Great Silk Road played an important progressive role in the exchange of new technologies, scientific ideas, and knowledge.Speaking of contemporary globalization processes, it should be emphasized that they encompass not only economic spheres, but also the political, social, and spiritual-moral aspects of the lives of people inhabiting a single planet. Therefore, all global problems accumulated in the 20th century actively participate in the planetary-scale globalization process of the 21st century.Globalization does not proceed in a unilateral manner. The dialectics of development does not accept uniformity; hence, its consequences can also be diverse. This process, like any process, possesses its positive and negative

sides, especially at a time when a bipolar world has been replaced by a unipolar one, and major powers are competing for mutual leadership.

The most important positive aspects of contemporary globalization are as follows:

- the intensification of competition, which stimulates the spread of new technologies among countries with varying levels of development;
- the emergence of the opportunity to mobilize more substantial financial resources, as investors can utilize much broader financial instruments in expanding markets;
- the creation of a foundation for solving common humanitarian problems, such as ecological, demographic, and energy challenges.

It must be remembered that globalization is not the unification and mutual merger of peoples, but rather the rapid rapprochement and mutual assimilation of individual elements of scientific-technical progress, science, and culture. A concerning aspect of globalization in the modern world is that its benefits are distributed unevenly between developed and developing countries. This particularly applies to the spiritual sphere, where the youth of developing countries adopt many aspects of Western culture that contradict the culture and spirituality of their own peoples. At the same time, the unjust distribution of the blessings of globalization creates the risk of conflicts at the regional, national, and international levels. In this process, while rapidly developing countries are joining the ranks of wealthy nations, poor countries are falling increasingly behind. As a result, contemporary globalization leads to the deepening of disparities and the emergence of a new model of the world—the 20:80 world, meaning the emergence of a society where 80 percent of all resources are controlled by the "golden billion," which constitutes only one-fifth of the planet's population.

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