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21H.580 From the Silk Road to the Great Game: China, Russia, and Central Eurasia
Fall 2003

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Fall 2008
M, W: 1:00-2:30 p.m.
Instructor: Ian Chapman

21H.580 From the Silk Road to the Great Game: China, Russia, and Central Eurasia

This subject examines interactions across the Eurasian continent between Russians, Chinese, Mongolian nomads, and oasis dwellers during the last millennium and a half as empires rose and religions, trade, and war flowed forth continuously across this vast space. Britain and Russia competed for power over Eurasia in the "Great Game" of geopolitics in the 19th century, just as China, Russia, and others did in the 20th century. Today, the fall of the Soviet Union and China's reforms have opened up new opportunities for cultural interaction. Topics include the religious traditions of Central Asian Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, and Confucianism; caravans and travelers like Polo and Rabban Sauma [the first Chinese to travel to the West]; and nomadic conquest and imperialist competition, past and present. Source materials include primary documents, travelogues, films, and music.

Requirements

*** Enjoy the ride**

What's more painful—three months on a flea-infested camel, or a pile of readings and assignments? Think of it this way: take in desert vistas and court intrigues, without the risk of sunstroke or disembowelment. A good deal?

*** Class participation (30%)**

Do the readings, come to class, join the debate.

*** Forum postings (15%)**

In lieu of independent response papers on readings, I will ask you each to contribute to a weekly online discussion on the readings and related issues (not required in weeks of assignments or tests). This will be in the Forum section of the course website. Each person should make at least one substantial and formally composed contribution (of, say, around three paragraphs), *before the day on which a reading is discussed*. You may also contribute shorter, more informal comments as the discussion gets rolling.

*** Mid-term and final tests (20%)**

There will be 2 short tests during class on basic geography, persons, and events.

*** Final paper project (35%)**

Grade includes bibliography and outline (5%, due 10/16), oral presentation, and the paper itself (25%, due 12/8).

A Note on Plagiarism: Using someone else's work without acknowledgment is plagiarism. If you are guilty of this, you will at the least get a failing grade on the paper, and at worst fail the course and be taken to the Committee on Discipline. Later, I will give you more detailed instructions on how to cite sources and how to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

Readings

At the MIT Bookstore and on Reserve

- Barfield, Thomas J. *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. Cambridge, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
- Boulnois, Luce. *Silk Road: Monks, Warriors and Merchants on the Silk Road*. Odyssey Publications, 2004.
- Hopkirk, Peter. *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*. New York: Kodansha International, 1992.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. Penguin Classics, 1987.
- Liu, Xinru. *The Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Interactions in Eurasia*. Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1998.
- Polo, Marco; trans. by Aldo Ricci. *The Travels of Marco Polo*. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007.
- Rossabi, Morris. *Khubilai Khan: His Life And Times*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Rossabi, Morris. *Modern Mongolia: From Khans to Commissars to Capitalists*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005
- Rudelson, Justin J. *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism Along China's Silk Road*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Whitfield, Susan. *Life along the Silk Road*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

On course website

see list at end of syllabus

Schedule

1: Introduction: Central Eurasia in World Systems and Civilizations

Sep 3 (Wed.)

Introduction and discussion.

2. Corpses and Chariots: Mummies, Horses and the rise of Nomadism

Sep. 8 (Mon.)

- Victor H. Mair. "Mummies of the Tarim Basin" 28-35 (course website)
Anthony, Telegin and Brown, "The Origin of Horseback Riding" (course website)
Anthony and Vinogradov, "Birth of the Chariot" 36-41 (course website)

Sep. 10 (Wed.)

- David W. Anthony, "Shards of Speech" (course website)
Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 1-31

3. The Rise of the Silk Route Trade; Han, Xiongnu, and Roman Empires

Sep. 15 (Mon.)

Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Interaction*

Herrlee G. Creel, "The Role of the Horse in Chinese History" 160-186 (course website)
Peter C. Perdue, "The Economy of the Silk Road" 491-493 (course website)

Sep. 17 (Wed.)

Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 32-84

Boulnois, *Silk Road: Monks, Warriors and Merchants on the Silk Road*, 33-97

[Sep. 22 (Mon.): Holiday]

4. Religions along the Silk Routes: Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Shamanism

Sep. 24 (Wed.)

Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*, 37-109 (course website, and on Reserve)

Sep. 29 (Mon.)

Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*, 111-144 (course website, and on Reserve)

Boulnois, *Silk Road*, 209-34

5. Life and Art on the Silk Road: Dunhuang and other oasis caches

Oct. 1 (Wed.)

Roderick Whitfield et al, *Cave Temples of Mogao*

Susan Whitfield, *Life along the Silk Road*, 1-75

Oct. 6 (Mon.)

Susan Whitfield, *Life along the Silk Road*, 75-154

Victor H. Mair, "Dunhuang as a Funnel for Central Asian Nomads into China" 143-163

Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 131-163

6. Caravans and Conquest: Kubilai Khan, Marco Polo, Rabban Sauma

Oct. 8 (Wed.)

Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives," 11-50 (course website)

Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life And Times*: 115-205

[Oct. 13 (Mon.): Holiday]

Oct. 15 (Wed.)

Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*: ch. 18-71: 45- 248

7. Ming China and the Rise of Muscovy

Oct. 20 (Mon.)

Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 229-65

MID-TERM TEST

Oct. 22 (Wed.)

Morris Rossabi, "The 'Decline' of the Central Asian Caravan Trade," 81-102 (course website).

Khodarkovsky, "Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects," in Brower and Lazzerini, 9-26 (course website)

8. Manchu conquest of Central Asia; Russian and Mongolian negotiations

Oct. 27 (Mon.)

Peter Perdue, "Fate and Fortune in Central Eurasian Warfare: Three Qing Emperors and their Mongol Rivals" (course website)

Oct. 29 (Wed.)

Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 266-303

Slezkine, "Naturalists vs. Nations: Eighteenth Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity," in Brower and Lazzerini, 27-57 [course website]

Film, Museum visit

Nov. 3 (Mon.)

Film: *The Silk Road*

Paper proposal due

Nov. 7 (Fri.)?

Visit to Boston MFA (time and day to be discussed)

[Nov. 10 (Mon): holiday]

9. The Nineteenth Century Great Game: Britain, Russia, and China

Nov. 12 (Wed.)

Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 57-68, 77-108, 165-87, 295-338, 430-64, 502-24

Nov. 17 (Mon.)

Brower, "Islam and Ethnicity," in Brower and Lazzerini, 115-137 (course website)

Kipling, *Kim*

10. Twentieth Century Explorers and Looters: Aurel Stein, et. al.

Nov. 19 (Wed.)

Bonavia, *The Silk Road* (course website)

Boulnois, *Silk Road: Monks, Warriors and Merchants on the Silk Road*, 399-423.

Nov. 24 (Mon.)

Work-in-progress research presentations

11. Soviet Rule in Central Asia; Mongolia From Communism to Reform

Nov. 26 (Wed.)

Rossabi, *Modern Mongolia*: 1-80

McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*, 162-66 (course website)

12. Xinjiang and Islam in China

Dec. 1 (Mon.)

Rudelson, *Oasis Identities* (also on course website): Introduction, Chs. 4, 6, 7

Gladney, *Muslim Chinese* (course website), Chs. 1, 3, 4

Dec. 3 (Wed.)

Starr, ed., *Xinjiang*, chs. 3, 4, 12 (course website)

Nicolas Becquelin, "Chinese Hold on Xinjiang: Means and Strengths" (course website)

FINAL TEST (in class)

13. Central Asia in the contemporary cultural imagination

Dec. 8 (Mon.)

Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God*, 85-130, 260-87 (course website)

Orville Schell, *Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood*, pp. 31-84, 137-161, 182-221, 241-48, 284-316.

Dec. 10 (Wed.)

Goodman, "The politics of the West: equality, nation-building, and colonisation" (course website)

Crombe, "Tibet between Tibetans and Chinese migrants" (course website)

FINAL PAPER due FRI. DEC. 12

COURSE WEBSITE READINGS

Victor H. Mair, "Mummies of the Tarim Basin," *Archaeology*, 1995, vol. 48, no.2, pp. 28-35.

David Anthony, Dimitry Y. Telegin, Dorcas Brown. "The origin of horseback riding." *Scientific American* vol. 265 no.6, December 1991.

David W. Anthony, Nikolai B. Vinogradov. "Birth of the Chariot." *Archaeology* 1995 March-April, pp. 36-41.

David W. Anthony, "Shards of Speech". *The Sciences*, 1996.

- Herrlee G. Creel, "The Role of the Horse in Chinese History," Creel, *What is Taoism: and Other Studies in Chinese Cultural History*, pp. 160-186. Chicago, 1970
- Peter C. Perdue, "The Economy of the Silk Road," in Joel Mokyr, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History*, vol. 4, pp. 491-493. Online: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?entry=t168.e0678&srn=1&ssid=560911314#FIRSTHIT>
- Victor H. Mair, "Dunhuang as a Funnel for Central Asian Nomads into China," in Gary Seaman, ed., *Ecology and Empire: Nomads in the Cultural Evolution of the Old World*, pp. 143-163 .
- Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 46, No. 1 (1986), pp. 11-50.
- Morris Rossabi, "The 'Decline' of the Central Asian Caravan Trade," in Gary Seaman, ed., *Ecology and Empire: Nomads in the Cultural Evolution of the Old World*, pp. 81-102.
- Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia*, pp. 25-84, 161-200
- John R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*, pp. 162-66.
- "Then Came the Locusts: A Chinese Region Reels," *New York Times*, September 25, 2001.
- Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethic Nationalism in the People Republic*, pp. 1-63, 117-201.
- Nicolas Becquelin, "Chinese hold on Xinjiang: Strengths and Limits," in François Godement, ed., *La Chine et son Occident. China and its Western Frontier*, Les Cahiers de l'Asie, IFRI, Paris, 2002.
- Theodore Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God: Musical Travels in Central Asia (and Queens, New York)*, Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 85-130, 260-87.
- Orville Schell, *Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood*, pp. 31-84, 137-161, 182-221, 241-48, 284-316.
- David S.G. Goodman, "The politics of the West: equality, nation-building, and colonisation." *Provincial China*, vol. 7.2, 2002, pp. 127-150.
- Xavier Crombe, "Tibet between Tibetans and Chinese migrants," in François Godement, ed., *China and its Western Frontier* (Paris: Centre IFRI, 2002): 111-138.
- Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*, excerpts
- Michael Khodarkovsky, "Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects: Constructing Christian Identity in Early Modern Russia," in Brower and Lazzarini, 9-26
- Peter Perdue, "Fate and Fortune in Central Eurasian Warfare: Three Qing Emperors and their Mongol Rivals", in Nicola di Cosmo, ed., *Warfare in Inner Asian History* (Leiden: Brill): 369-404.
- S. Frederick Starr, ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2004), excerpts.

Internet Sources

www.depts.washington.edu/uwch/silkroad : Silk road project with texts, art, maps:
~/texts/texts.html : excerpts from writings about Silk Road [NB Sogdian letters]

<http://www.silkroadfoundation.org/toc/index.html> : Silkroad Foundation: maps, articles, etc.

www.ecai.org : Berkeley Electronic Cultural Atlas: animated maps, etc.

<http://www.oxuscom.com/cahist1.htm>: “Major Events Relevant to Central Asian History”

Please feel to search for other sources, and let me know what you find!