

Editors' Note

Welcome to the June issue of *Acta Via Serica*.

The papers featured in this issue center around the theme of “carpet weaving.” We have meticulously curated a diverse range of perspectives, encompassing fields such as archaeology, art history, and the international trade routes of the Silk Road. Specifically, this issue brings together a special selection of authors who collectively focus on civilizational exchanges through a variety of mediums, including carpets, myth-making, ethnic group production of identity through craftsmanship, and historical records.

Building upon our previous exploration of “textiles” in the 2022 issues of our journal, this thematic continuation aims to provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter. We hope that by continuously delving into similar topics, we can further enrich our knowledge and insights in this field.

We begin our journey with Reyhane Mirabootalebi, who provides a rich fieldwork-based account of Senneh Gelim, centering on the Iranian-Kurdish women weavers who keep the tradition alive in an article entitled, *Senneh Gelim: The Magnificent Living Carpet Tradition of Iranian Kurdish Women*. Mirabootalebi traces the craft of Senneh Gelim, including its functions and meanings, explaining how these have changed over time as well as giving voice to the women weavers who are often silenced during the process of production.

Next, Aigul Ageleuova explores the nomadic production of carpets in Kazakhstan, revealing not only the technical aspects of carpet-weaving, but also the symbolic meanings hidden within the threads of the carpet making process. The author conveys its links to myths, rites and rituals in a paper entitled, *Carpet Weaving on the Territory of Kazakhstan as a Reflection of the Traditional Worldview of Nomads*.

Moving into the realm of historical records, Jin Han Jeong investigates three medieval travellers' logs from three religious backgrounds, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam to explore customs related to carpets. In a paper, entitled, *Indirect Edification through Trans-Eurasian Travelogues: Focus on the Episodes of Carpets in the Journeys of Different Religions*, Jeong explores the observations of Faxian, the Chinese Buddhist monk, Marco Polo, and ibn Battuta in relation to practices involving the use of carpets.

Shifting our focus to Mongolia, Munkhtsetseg Bayanzul teaches us about carpet production processes complete with images captured in the research fieldwork process, offering rare insights to traditional Mongolian carpet techniques. In her article, *Xiongnu*

Carpeting Traditions and Pattern Designs, Bayanzul suggests that traditional felt carpet techniques have had a significant impact of carpet development in the Mongolian context.

Next, Binafsha Nodir, in her article, *Qiz-gilam: A Unique Example of Carpet Weaving by Semi-Nomadic Uzbeks in the Southern Regions of Uzbekistan* explains how the Kungrats production of carpet weaving, specifically qiz-gilam symbolizes historical and cultural civilizational exchanges amongst Central Asian peoples.

Finally, Alfred J. Andrea provides a fascinating account of John of Plano's fact-finding mission, that led him to the Mongols via the Silk Road's new "Grasslands" Route. The paper, *John of Plano Carpini, Papal Diplomat and Spy along the Silk Road* delves into the historical facts about this mission, according to the author, outlines an account of the first known Western European party to reach East Asia using a land route.

This issue also includes six book reviews, evaluating the latest updates in the field of Silk Road Studies.

Nina Miholjic Ivkovic reviews the title, *Iran Rising: The Survival and Future of the Islamic Republic* by Amin Saikal followed by Kristof Szitar's review of *The Persian Prison Poem: Sovereignty and the Political Imagination* by Rebecca Ruth Gould. Filippo Costa Buranelli offers a review of the title, *Turkestan and the Rise of Eurasian Empires: A Study of Politics and Invented Traditions* by Ali Anooshahr whilst Joseph Tse-Hei Lee reviews *The Maritime Silk Road and Cultural Communication Between and the West* by Yan Chen. Next, Jonathan Ouellet evaluates the title, *A History of the Second Türk Empire (ca. 682–745 AD)* by Hao Chen. Finally, Nosirkhon Qodirov reviews the title, *Analysing Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy: Regime Neo-Eurasianism in the Nazarbaev Era* by Luca Anceschi.

The publication of this issue is the culmination of collective efforts from numerous individuals. It all began with the original ideas and experiences of the authors, but it is crucial to acknowledge the invaluable role played by our esteemed peer reviewers. Their constructive criticism and the authors' receptive attitude towards it resulted in a spirited exchange, which ultimately contributed to the creation of this intellectual production. Our editorial team takes great pride in having successfully navigated this process, culminating in the completion of this work with a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. The next issue of *Acta Via Serica* will be published in December 2023 and we invite contributions from researchers and scholars invested in the field of Silk Road Studies from all over the world.

Editorial Committee