

Editors' Note

We are thrilled to present an engaging collection comprising seven outstanding research papers and two insightful book review articles in this issue, offering a more diverse range of topics than ever before. The richness within these contributions emanates from their focus on distinct facets within their respective fields, spanning a vast temporal spectrum from prehistory to contemporary times and encompassing individual regions to global domains.

In her paper, Shirin Melikova conducts a thorough examination of Ganja-Gazakh-type carpets from the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum collection. Critiquing the Western approach to carpet studies, Melikova delves into the art from the perspective of the Turkic groups responsible for producing the Ganja-Gazakh-type carpets.

Rzger Abdulkarim Abdula provides a fieldwork-based investigation of the astronomical observatory founded around the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Graw, Northern Iraq. Abdula explains how the calendar produced in this observatory impacted the daily lives of local inhabitants, presenting the observatory as an integral part of Kurdish cultural heritage.

Recent laboratory studies of plants, minerals, and human remains have significantly advanced our understanding of multidirectional exchanges in the pre- and protohistory of Eurasia. Henri-Paul Francfort introduces these studies in his paper, focusing on early long-distance transportation of plants and minerals, the Indo-European issue, and Achaemenid finds in the steppe world. Francfort questions whether the concept of the “Silk Road” should be replaced with a more comprehensive “Eurasian History” multidisciplinary concept.

Nan-A Lee's essay explores the depiction of the bubonic plague in Orhan Pamuk's latest novel, “Nights of Plague.” Lee provides intriguing details about how this description reflects the historical reality of the Silk Road serving as a conduit for the transmission of epidemics from China to the West.

Sitta von Reden draws attention to the utility of the concept or metaphor of the Silk Road in understanding transregional connectivity and social change in Iron Age Southeast Asia. Expressing doubts about the value of the Silk Road as an analytical framework, Reden argues that local elites, rather than the Silk Road, were the most dynamic actors in social transformation in Southeast Asia.

Erika Erzsébet Vörös examines the role that maritime figures played in cultural exchanges between Korea, China, and Japan in the context of the Avalokitesvara faith. Vörös's work

demonstrates that Silla seafarers inherited and continued the traditional relationship between commerce and Buddhism, extending the maritime Silk Road to the “East Asian Mediterranean.”

What happened to the Silk Road after the dissolution of the Mongol Empire? Joo-Yup Lee addresses this question from a non-Eurocentric perspective, demonstrating that, from the standpoint of various Mongol successor states maintaining trade relations with each other or with Southeast Asia, the Silk Road did not collapse during the post-Mongol period.

This issue holds special significance due to the diverse array of topics covered and their scholarly depth. However, navigating these intricacies involves a meticulous editorial process. While editorial work is inherently challenging, the investment becomes truly rewarding when dedicated to refining and presenting contributions of this caliber. With these results, I would like to share the joy of the harvest with our former Managing Editor, Lee Jimin, who exhibited a sacrificial spirit of service. I would also like to express gratitude to Farrah Sheikh for her dedicated work as an assistant editor for the past two years and wish her success in her new endeavor.

Special appreciation goes to Copy Editor Warren Parsons for consistently upholding a high standard of professionalism. Concurrently, I extend sincere thanks to our Associate Editor Moshen Joshanloo, responsible not only for the book review section but also for helping manage the journal. Above all, I express my profound gratitude to President Synn Ilhi, the publisher of this journal. With his unwavering support, our journal has just passed through the period of initial formation. We all hope that *Acta Via Serica* will soon authentically experience and sustain “the period of mature brilliance.”

Editor-in-chief
Tschung-Sun Kim