

## The Overland and Maritime Silk Routes in the Post-Mongol World

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Trade along the Silk Routes reached its zenith during the *Pax Mongolica*, a period of relative stability in Eurasia that was created by the Mongol empire in the 13th and 14th centuries. It is generally believed that the Silk Routes declined after the disintegration of the Mongol empire in the second half of the 14th century and that they fell into disuse after the 1453 Ottoman conquest of Constantinople as the Europeans sought alternative maritime routes to Asia. This paper examines the aftermath of the Mongol-era overland and maritime Silk Routes from a non-Eurocentric perspective. Seen from the standpoint of various successors to the Mongol empire, such as the Timurid empire, the Mughal empire, the Uzbek khanate, the Ottoman empire, Manchu Qing, and Russia, the overland and maritime Silk Routes did not really collapse or sharply decline during the post-Mongol period. These Mongol successor states maintained close and thriving overland trade relations with each other or some important maritime trade relations with Southeast Asia. It may be argued that the Silk Routes in the post-Mongol world functioned rather independently of European seaborne commerce.

**Keywords:** Silk Routes, Silk Road, Mongol empire, *Pax Mongolica*, Yuan Dynasty, Timurid empire, Mughal empire, Uzbek khanate, Ottoman empire, Manchu Qing, Russian empire

## Introduction

Historically, the protection of the Silk Routes by the nomadic empires enabled the trans-Eurasian transmission of goods and ideas, which in turn impacted the intellectual development of Eurasia.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon reached its historic peak during the *Pax Mongolica*, or Mongol Peace, a period of relative stability and peace under the Mongol empire that lasted for much of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The *Pax Mongolica* facilitated the exchange and movement of goods, people, and ideas along the overland and maritime Silk Routes and beyond. Importantly, these interactions stimulated the intellectual and commercial changes that, in the long run, resulted in the emergence of the modern world.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally believed that the trade on the Silk Routes sharply declined as the trade routes lost their security following the disintegration of the Mongol empire in the second half of the fourteenth century and that the Silk Routes fell into disuse as the Europeans sought alternative maritime routes to Asia after the 1453 Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. Therefore, from a Eurocentric viewpoint, the latter half of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries have been characterized as the Age of Discovery. However, such an understanding of the Silk Routes has been questioned and challenged by Morris Rossabi, who concluded in his article “The ‘Decline’ of the Central Asian Caravan Trade” that “seaborne commerce, as is commonly assumed, [did not] spell the doom of overland trade across Eurasia.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Scott C. Levi also argued that “early modern Central Asians became more tightly linked to the global economy” thanks to the increased trade between Uzbek Central Asia and Mughal India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

This paper aims to examine the aftermath of the Mongol-era Silk Routes from a non-Eurocentric perspective. More specifically, it will look into the trade activities along the overland and maritime Silk Routes from the standpoint of the Mongol successors in Central, West, and South Asia, and beyond. After briefly discussing the unique aspects of the Mongol-era Silk Routes, this paper will examine the trade activities of the Mongol successor states, such as the Timurid and Mughal empires, the Uzbek khanate, and the Ottoman empire, among others, along the overland and maritime Silk Routes. Such an examination will offer a more comprehensive picture of the history of the Silk Routes.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper uses the name “Silk Routes” rather than “Silk Road” since the former more accurately reflects the fact that the Silk Road was made up of more than one single route from East to West.

<sup>2</sup> David Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia, and Mongolia*, vol. 1, *Inner Eurasia from Prehistory to the Mongol Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 426.

<sup>3</sup> Morris Rossabi, “The ‘Decline’ of the Central Asian Caravan Trade,” *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, ed. James Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 370.

<sup>4</sup> Scott Cameron Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis: a Connected History of 18th-Century Central Asia* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 86.

## The Silk Routes and the *Pax Mongolica*

In this age of global interaction and economic interdependence, the Mongol empire, which was the largest contiguous empire in history that united much of Eurasia, and the Silk Road (Silk Routes), which was a series of intersecting trading networks across Eurasia, are two of the topics that are drawing increasing attention of historians. The former contributed to the emergence of the modern world,<sup>5</sup> while the latter enabled the exchange of goods and ideas between West and East over the span of almost two millennia. As a matter of fact, the Mongol empire and the Silk Road are topics that complement each other. One should bear in mind that the Silk Road reached its historic apogee under the Mongol empire thanks to the Mongols' promotion of commerce and trade. In turn, the transmission of goods, people, and ideas along the Silk Road on an unprecedented scale during the Mongol period stimulated the intellectual and commercial changes that eventually led to the advent of the modern world.

The Silk Routes were first established during the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) of the Han Dynasty and reached a golden age during the Tang Dynasty (618–907). During the Mongol period, all the trade routes across Central Eurasia and beyond were brought under a single political authority. As a result, direct trade relations between China, Central Asia, Iran, and eastern Europe were established for the first time in history and goods, people, and information moved along the overland and maritime Silk Routes at unprecedented speed and quantity. Importantly, Ilkhanid Iran and Yuan China established and maintained direct trade relations through the maritime, as well as overland, Silk Routes.

The flourishing of the Silk Routes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was not a simple by-product of the political unification of much of Eurasia under Mongol leadership. It was a direct product of the Mongols' commercial policies. From the earliest times, nomads recognized and appreciated the importance of trade. The Mongol rulers were great promoters of trade and commerce. One of the many examples of Mongol sponsorship of trade is a *yarlyk* (edict) issued by the Mongol ruler of the Ulus of Jochi, Möngke-Temür (r. 1266–1280). In c. 1270, he sent the following edict to Yaroslav Yaroslavovich (r. 1263–1271), Grand Prince of Vladimir, urging the protection of foreign merchants in his domain:

Give passage to foreign merchants (*gosti*) in your territory (*volost*). From Prince Yaroslav to the people of Riga, and to the older ones and to the young, and who trade, and to everyone: your passage is unrestricted in my territory ... the merchant has an unhindered

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to Christian's work cited above, see Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquest in World History* (London: Reaktion Book, 2012), 106; Timothy May argues that "the Mongol empire may be viewed as a catalyst for change from the pre-modern era to the modern era." See Timothy May, "The Mongol Empire in World History," *World History Connected* 5, no. 2 (2008). <https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/5.2/may.html>; Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Crown, 2004). Although Weatherford's book contains factual errors and often relies on speculations, his general narrative on the connection between the Mongols and the emergence of modern Europe has been positively received by Timothy May. Change to: See, "May on Weatherford, 'Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World,'" H-World, March, 2005, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/20292/reviews/21076/may-weatherford-genghis-khan-and-making-modern-world>.

passage through my territory.<sup>6</sup>

The Mongols also organized and protected merchants known as *ortoq*, or “partner.” The Mongol states and aristocrats provided them with capital, which reduced the risk of failed caravans. As a result, the *ortoq* merchants were able to engage in long-distance trade. Furthermore, the Mongols linked their empire together with a chain of postal stations known as *jam* (*yam* in Turkic). These posts, built about every 33 to 45 kilometers, provided food and new horses for messengers and travelers and therefore made long-distance communication and travel in the empire faster and safer. Some merchants such as Marco Polo (c. 1254–1324), the famous Venetian merchant and traveler, also benefited from this postal system.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of the Mongols’ policies, the Mongol period saw, for the first time in history, the advent of transcontinental and transoceanic travels. Some of the travelers, whose names are known to us, include Marco Polo, whose *Le Devisement du Monde*, known in English as *The Travels of Marco Polo*, became a best-seller in the pre-Gutenberg age, Odoric of Pordenone (c. 1286–1331), a Franciscan friar who journeyed to China and back and wrote the travelogue known as *The Travels of Odoric*, Ibn Baṭūṭah (d. 1377), the Moroccan traveler who made an extensive tour around the Mongol states in the first half of the fourteenth century and wrote the *Rihlah* [Journey], and Wang Dayuan (before 1311–after 1350), a Chinese merchant who sailed to the Southeast Asian areas and the Indian Ocean and composed the *Daoyi zhibilue* 島夷誌略 [A brief account of island barbarians].<sup>8</sup> Their travelogues, among others, made important contributions to the geographical knowledge of the time.

Another important consequence of the Mongols’ commercial policies was economic prosperity, especially along the trade routes in the Mongol empire. Although the Mongol conquests were initially destructive, many regions in the Mongol empire experienced economic revival and became prosperous commercial zones thanks to the Mongols’ fostering of international trade.<sup>9</sup> Contemporary accounts testify to the economic prosperity of major Mongol cities. For instance, Odoric describes the Ilkhanid Mongol capitals Tabriz and Sultaniya, which he visited on his way to China, as prospering cities as follows:

From that country I passed to Tauris [Tabriz], a great city and a royal ... And this is a nobler city and a better for merchandise than any other which at this day existeth in the

<sup>6</sup> *Gramoty Velikogo Novgoroda i Pskova* [The Charters of Novgorod the Great and Pskov], ed. S. N. Valk (Moscow-Leningrad: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1949), 57. See also Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 118.

<sup>7</sup> For Marco Polo’s description of *jam*, see A. C. Moule and Paul Pelliot, *Marco Polo: The Description of the World* (London: Routledge, 1938), 243–47.

<sup>8</sup> This paper is not concerned with whether these travelers actually visited all the places they mention in their travelogues. It values the travels of their possible informants.

<sup>9</sup> In the fourteenth century, Muscovite Russia also benefited from the commercial policies of the Ulus of Jochi. The international trade that the Mongols fostered resulted in Muscovy’s economic recovery and growth in the fourteenth century. For a discussion of this topic, see Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols*, 108–32; Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (London: Tauris, 1987), 80–86.

world. For there is not on the face of the earth any kind of provision, or any species of goods, but you will find great store thereof at Tauris. It is admirable for situation, and so opulent a city that you would scarcely believe the things to be found there; for the whole world, almost, hath dealings with that city for merchandise. And the Christians will tell you that the emperor there hath more revenue from that one city than the king of France hath from his whole realm ... Departing from this city of Tauris, I travelled for ten days, and reached a certain city called Soldania [Sultaniya], in which dwelleth the emperor of the Persians in the summer season. But in the winter he goeth to a certain other place [called Axam] which is on the sea called the Sea of Bacue. This city (of Soldania) is a great one, and a cool place, with an excellent supply of water, and many costly wares are brought thither for sale.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Ibn Baṭūṭa describes Sarai (Sarai-Berke), the capital of the Ulus of Jochi (better known as the Golden Horde), as a prospering city in his *Riḥlah* as follows:

Sarai is among the most beautiful cities, and its size is very large; it is located in a plain and overflows with inhabitants; it has beautiful markets and wide streets ... There are thirteen main mosques there for Friday prayers; one of these belongs to the Chafiites. As for the other mosques, they are very numerous. Sarai is inhabited by individuals of several nations ... Each nation lives in a separate district, where it has its markets. Traders and foreigners from the two Iraqs, Egypt, Syria, etc. live in a district that is surrounded by a wall, in order to preserve the wealth of the merchants.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, the Silk Routes reached their historic peak under the Mongol empire thanks to the Mongols' promotion of commerce and trade. As a result of the Mongols' policies, many regions of the Mongol empire along the trade routes experienced economic prosperity.

## **The Overland and Maritime Trade Activities of Mongol Successor States**

What happened to the Silk Routes after the dissolution of the Mongol empire in the second half of the fourteenth century? While seeking an answer to this question, one may also ask, "What happened to the Mongol empire?" To use Arthur N. Waldron's words, the Mongol empire "did not shatter, but rather slowly separated into successor states, in India, Persia, Russia, and the Middle East."<sup>12</sup> The Mongol successor states include the Timurid and Mughal

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<sup>10</sup> *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. 2, Odoric of Pordenone, trans. and ed. Sir Henry Yule (London: Hakluyt Society, 1913; repr., London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 102–5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa, *Voyages d'Ibn Battoutah: Texte arabe, accompagné d'une traduction, par C. Defrémery et le dr. B. R. Sanguinetti* [Voyages of Ibn Battuta], 4 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1877-1893), vol. 2, 446-48 (text and trans.).

<sup>12</sup> Arthur N. Waldron also views "the pan-Eurasian Mongol empires and their historical consequences" as the

empires, the Uzbek, Kazakh, and Crimean khanates, and the Northern Yuan, among others. These Mongol successor states were either ruled by descendants of Chinggis Khan (r. 1206–1227) or Mongol tribal leaders, who honored the Mongol political traditions. Importantly, the nomads of these states who were descended from the army units of Chinggis Khan identified themselves as Mongols or Mongol descendants and were viewed as such by their contemporaries.<sup>13</sup> A number of historians also consider the Ottoman, Russian, and Manchu Qing empires as Mongol successor states. Notably, the renowned historian of the Mongol empire Timothy May views the early Ottoman empire and pre-seventeenth-century Russia (Muscovy) as Mongol successors since they had distinct ties to the Mongols and used Mongol aspects of governance to establish their legitimacy.<sup>14</sup> Hidehiro Okada, a Japanese historian of the Mongol empire and Central Asia, and James A. Millward are among the historians who characterize the Manchu Qing and Russian empires as successors to the Mongol empire.<sup>15</sup>

What then happened to the Silk Routes after the dissolution of the Mongol empire? In short, trade along the Silk Routes declined, especially with the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) in 1368. However, as several Mongol successor states rose to power in various parts of Eurasia and promoted commerce and trade, many parts of the overland and maritime Silk Routes revived and flourished, at least on the regional level.<sup>16</sup>

## The Timurid Empire

The Timurid empire (1370–1507) was a Mongol successor state, which ruled much of Central Asia from the late fourteenth century to the late fifteenth century. It was founded by Temür (r. 1370–1405), who was a member of the Mongol Barlas (Barulas) tribe that had come to Central Asia with Chaghatay Khan (d. 1242), son of Chinggis Khan, in the thirteenth century. The nomads of the Timurid empire, descended from the army units given to Chaghatay Khan by Chinggis Khan, identified themselves as Chaghatay and Mongol.<sup>17</sup>

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cause of “the real beginnings of much of modern history.” Arthur N. Waldron, introduction to *The Mongol Period: History of the Muslim World*, by B. Spuler (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1994), vii, xxiii. In this paper, the Mongol empire refers to the four Chinggisid khanates or *uluses* that were established by 1260.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion of their Mongol identity, see Joo-Yup Lee, “Some Remarks on the Turkicization of the Mongols in Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Qipchaq Steppe,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 71, no. 2 (2018): 121–44; Joo-Yup Lee, “Turkic Identity in Mongol and Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Qipchaq Steppe,” *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, edited by David Ludden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.443>.

<sup>14</sup> May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History*, 85–86.

<sup>15</sup> Hidehiro Okada, “China as a Successor State to the Mongol Empire,” *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 270; James A. Millward, *The Silk Road: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 37–38.

<sup>16</sup> This paper also acknowledges that these trade routes were not solely limited to post-Mongol states. Maritime trade in the Indian Ocean had a long history predating the Mongol empire and continued to thrive during and after the fragmentation of the Mongol empire.

<sup>17</sup> On their Mongol identity, see Joo-Yup Lee, “The Timurid View of the Mongols: An Examination of the Mongol Identity of the Timurids,” *Iran Namag* 6, nos. 3–4 (2021): 200–16. The Timurids are also described

Temür was a great conqueror who reunified the western half of the former Mongol empire. At the turn of the fifteenth century, his empire stretched from Anatolia in the west to Xinjiang in the east. Like his Chinggisid Mongol predecessors, Temür promoted international trade. Perhaps, the letter that he is said to have sent to Charles VI (r. 1380–1422), king of France, in 1403, is a good example that mirrors his positive view of trade. This letter contains the following passage:

Further, your merchants should be sent this way, as we will respect and honor them here. And [when] our merchants come that way, they, too, should be respected and honoured. And no one should oppress them, because the world is prosperous with merchants. What else can I say?<sup>18</sup>

Temür also maintained the *jam* postal system in his realm to make long-distance communication and travel faster and safer. Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo (d. 1412), the Castilian diplomat who visited the court of Temür in 1403, writes about the *jam* relay stations between Tabriz, capital of the former Ilkhanate, and Temür's capital Samarqand as follows:

It is to be noted that from Tabriz all the distance to Samarqand Timur has established relays of horses kept ready at command so that his messengers may ride on his missions night and day without let or hindrance. The post-houses have been built at intervals of a day's journey apart, or sometimes of half a day's journey. In some post-houses a hundred horses will be found, in others only fifty, while in a few there may be as many as two hundred: and thus the high road all the way to Samarqand is served.<sup>19</sup>

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as Mongol descendants in the *Mingshi* [History of the Ming Dynasty]. This official Chinese history (*zhengshi*) writes as follows: “[Chinggis Khan] mopped up and pacified the Western Regions (西域) and appointed kings and royal son-in-laws (駙馬) as their rulers. The name *Samaerban* (撒馬兒罕) [Samarqand] came into existence when he changed the former name of the state into a Mongolian one ... In the later years of the Yuan Dynasty, the royal son-in-law (駙馬) Temür became its king ... After the royal son-in-law of the Yuan Dynasty Temür became the ruler of Samarqand, he again sent his son Shahrukh (沙哈魯) to conquer Herat (哈烈). (元太祖蕩平西域, 盡以諸王·駙馬爲之君長. 易前代國名以蒙古語, 始有撒馬兒罕之名 ... 元末爲之王者, 駙馬帖木兒也 ... 元駙馬帖木兒既君撒馬兒罕 又遣其子沙哈魯據哈烈). Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi* [History of the Ming Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 332.8597, 8609.

<sup>18</sup> “Dīgar mībāyad ki bāzargānān-i shumā rā bidīn ṭaraf fristāda shavad, ki īnjāyghā īshān-rā mu‘azzaz va mukarram sāzīm. Va nīz bāzargānān-i mā bidān ṭaraf rujū‘ sāzand, īshān-rā nīz mu‘azzaz va mukarram sāzand. Va bar īshān kasī zūr va ziyādatī nakunad, zīrā duniyā bi-bāzargānān ābādānast. Ziyādat chi ibrām nimāyam?” Lettre de Tamerlan à Charles VI, roi de France, pour l’engager à envoyer des marchands en Orient. Original en langue persane daté du 30 juillet 1402. [http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/caran\\_fr?ACTION=RETROUVER&FIELD\\_98=MOTS%2dMAT&VALUE\\_98=%20commerce%20&NUMBER=11&GRP=0&REQ=%28%28commerce%29%20%3aMOTS%2dMAT%20%29&USURNAME=nobody&USRPWD=4%24%2534P&SPEC=1&SYN=1&IMLY=&MAX1=1&MAX2=1&MAX3=100&DOM=All](http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/caran_fr?ACTION=RETROUVER&FIELD_98=MOTS%2dMAT&VALUE_98=%20commerce%20&NUMBER=11&GRP=0&REQ=%28%28commerce%29%20%3aMOTS%2dMAT%20%29&USURNAME=nobody&USRPWD=4%24%2534P&SPEC=1&SYN=1&IMLY=&MAX1=1&MAX2=1&MAX3=100&DOM=All). It has been argued that this letter was a medieval forgery. See Abolala Soudavar, “The Concepts of ‘al-Aqdamo Aṣaḥḥ’ and ‘Yaḥīn-e Sābeq’, and the Problem of Semi-fakes,” *Studia Iranica* 28, no. 2 (1999): 258–60. Still, it may reflect the contemporary view of Temür’s positive attitude toward trade.

<sup>19</sup> Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane: 1403-1406* (London: Routledge, 2005), 83.

Thanks to Temür's protection of trade and travel routes, the Silk Routes between West Asia and Central Asia revived and prospered in his empire. Consequently, the major (trading) cities in his empire prospered economically. Clavijo gives the following first-hand account of Tabriz, Sultaniya, Hormuz, and Samarqand:

Throughout the city [Tabriz] there are fine roadways with open spaces well laid out: and round these are seen many great buildings and houses, each with its main doorway facing the square. Such are the caravanserais: and within are constructed separate apartments and shops with offices that are planned for various uses. Leaving these caravanserais you pass into the market streets where goods of all kinds are sold: such as silk stuffs and cotton cloths, crapes, taffetas, raw silk and jewelry: for in these shops wares of every kind may be found. There is indeed an immense concourse of merchants and merchandise here ... Tabriz is indeed a very mighty city rich in goods and abounding in wealth, for commerce daily flourishes here ... Sultáníyah [Sultaniya] is a very populous city, but not so great as Tabriz: though it is a more important centre of exchange for merchants and their goods. In the months especially of June, July and August each year great caravans of camels with merchandise arrive here—they use this word “Caravan” for what with us would be any large company of beasts of burden. The city then is in a state of great commotion, and immense are the customs dues that accrue to the Treasury. Thus every year Sultáníyah is visited by numerous merchants from Lesser India who bring with them all kinds of spiceries ... The lands round Shíráz [lie to the southward of Khurásán and beyond is] the great city of Ormuz which of old was counted as of Lesser India, but at the present day is included in the dominions of Timur. From this port there is brought to Sultáníyah great quantity of pearls also many precious stones; for these are carried to Ormuz from Cathay by sea. The ships go up in ten days to this port [of Ormuz by the river Míno] after leaving the waters of the Persian Gulf which is the sea that here borders the lands of Persia ... from Ormuz these commodities are dispersed in export to all parts of the western world ... The richness and abundance of this great capital [Samarqand] and its district is such as is indeed a wonder to behold ... Further this land of Samarqand is not alone rich in food stuffs but also in manufactures, such as factories of silk both the kinds called Zaytúmí and Kincobs, also crapes, taffetas and the stuffs we call Tercenals in Spain, which are all produced here in great numbers ... Thus trade has always been fostered by Timur with the view of making his capital the noblest of cities ... The markets of Samarqand further are amply stored with merchandise imported from distant and foreign countries. From Russia and Tartary come leathers and linens, from Cathay silk stuffs that are the finest in the whole world, and of these the best are those that are plain without embroideries ... The goods that are imported to Samarqand from Cathay indeed are of the richest and most precious of all those brought thither from foreign parts, for the craftsmen of Cathay are reputed to be the



most skillful by far beyond those of any other nation ...<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the Timurid empire maintained a trade relationship with India via maritime trade routes. According to Ali Anooshahr, Central Asia traded with South Asia primarily by sea, not by land, in the fifteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Hormuz then served as a major port city from which ships sailed to India. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, a historian and envoy sent to the Indian kingdom of Vijayanagar by Shahrukh (r. 1405–47), son and successor of Temür, offers the following account of Hormuz, which he visited in 1442:

Hormuz, which they call Jarun, is a port in the midst of the sea, “with no equal on the face of the earth.” Merchants from the seven climes—Egypt, Syria, Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Arabian and Persian Iraq, Fars, Khurasan, Transoxiana, Turkistan, the Qipchaq Steppe, the Qalmaq regions, and all the lands of the Orient, China, and Khan Baliq—all come to that port, and seafaring men, from Indo-China, Java, Bengal, Ceylon, the cities of Zirbad [Malaysia], Tennaserim, Sumatra, Siam, and the Maldiv Islands to the realm of Malibar, Abyssinia and Zanzibar, the ports of Vijayanagar, Gulbarga, Gujarat and Cambay, the coast of the Arabian peninsula to Aden, Jiddah and Yanbu‘ bring to that town precious and rare commodities which are made glittering by the sun, moon and clouds and which can be transported across the sea. Travelers from everywhere in the world come there, and everything they bring for exchange for what they want can be found without much search in that town. They deal both in cash and in barter, and the divanis take a tenth of everything except gold and silver.<sup>22</sup>

According to the Timurid historian Khvandamir, Ulugh Beg (r. 1447–1449), son of Shahrukh, himself invested in the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. Khvandamir writes as follows:

Ulugbeg Kürägän, during his successful time as sultan, had handed over to a merchant a large sum for the merchant to invest and return the profit to the treasury. After some time the ship of the merchant’s life sank in the sea of annihilation, and Ulughbeg coveted the merchant’s estate.<sup>23</sup>

In sum, first-hand accounts show that the Timurids encouraged trade, which in turn brought

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<sup>20</sup> Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane*, 81–82, 84–86, 150–51.

<sup>21</sup> Ali Anooshahr, “The Arghūn State in Qandahar and the New World Economy, 1479–1522,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 66 (2023): 477.

<sup>22</sup> W. M. Thackston, *A Century of Princes: Sources on Timurid History and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1989), 300.

<sup>23</sup> Ghiyas al-Din b. Humam al-Din al-Husaini Khvandamir, *Tārīkh-i Ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār-i afrād-i bashar*, 4 vols., ed. Jalal al-Din Huma’i (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Khayyam, 1362/1984), 4:37; and Ghiyas al-Din b. Humam al-Din al-Husaini Khvandamir, *Ḥabībū’s-siyar: Tome Three*, 2 pts., trans. W. M. Thackston, *Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures* 24 (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1994), 2:371. Also, see Anooshahr, “The Arghūn State in Qandahar and the New World Economy,” 477–78.

economic prosperity to the empire. Furthermore, Timurid Central Asia was economically linked to India via maritime trade routes.

## The Mughal Empire

Trade between Central Asia and India continued under the Timurid dynasty of India, the Mughal empire (1526–1858), which ruled over much of the Indian subcontinent from 1526 until the mid-eighteenth century. The Mughal empire was founded by Babur (r. 1483–1530), a descendant of Temür on his paternal side and of Chinggis Khan on his maternal side, after the Timurids had been ousted from Central Asia by the Uzbeks in the early sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The Mughal empire flourished during the reigns of Akbar (r. 1556–1605), the third Mughal emperor, and his three immediate heirs, becoming one of the early modern Islamic empires along with the Ottoman and Safavid empires. Under their patronage, the overland trade between India and Central Asia and the maritime trade between India and Southeast Asia flourished from the middle of the sixteenth century.

Major Indian exports to Central Asia, which was being ruled by the Uzbeks, included cotton textiles, dyes, rice, spices, and others. In turn, the most important Central Asian merchandise that the Mughals imported were horses and other livestock.<sup>25</sup> The Mughals needed Central Asian horses to equip their cavalry. According to the seventeenth-century French traveler Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the Uzbeks sold more than sixty thousand horses to the Mughals every year.<sup>26</sup> The main agents of the trade between Uzbek Central Asia and Mughal India were the Indian merchants from Multan. In the seventeenth century, these Multani Indian merchants were engaged in the caravan trade across Central Asia and beyond, as far as Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>27</sup>

The Mughal empire also began trading with Southeast Asia after Akbar conquered all of northern India from Gujarat in the west to Bengal in the east. Akbar's conquest of the Sultanate of Gujarat in 1572 and Bengal in 1575 gave the Mughals access to the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, respectively, and hence opportunity for trade with Southeast Asians, among others. The Mughals exported textiles and other things to Southeast Asia and imported spices, some metals, minerals, woods, and elephants from the latter.<sup>28</sup> In this maritime trade, Surat in Gujarat served as the main gateway to the Indian Ocean.<sup>29</sup> It has been

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<sup>24</sup> The Timurids of India also identified themselves as Mongols. Notably, Abū al-Faẓl (d. 1602), court historian of the Mughal empire, states in his history of Akbar (r. 1556–1605) that the Timurids (of Central Asia and India) belonged to the Mongol people. Abu'l-Fazl, *The History of Akbar*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 198, 200, 212 (text), 199, 201, 213 (trans.).

<sup>25</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 84.

<sup>26</sup> Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, trans. V. Ball, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1889), 1:92.

<sup>27</sup> Scott C. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550-1900* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 178.

<sup>28</sup> Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 89.

<sup>29</sup> Surat and Khambat (Cambay) in Gujarat had already served as intermediary trading ports between the Ottoman

argued that merchants from Gujarat contributed to the development of west-bound pepper trade from Aceh, a Muslim sultanate at the northern end of Sumatra that rose to power in the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> The Mughal empire also traded with Southeast Asia via its ports in Bengal. For instance, the Mughal governor of Bengal Sa'id Khan sent his own trading ships to Aceh from Bengal.<sup>31</sup> The Mughals also imported fruits such as mangoes and bananas from Myanmar through its ports in Bengal.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps, the most interesting merchandise that the Mughal empire imported from Southeast Asia were elephants. According to Tavernier, while the elephants of Ceylon were most highly esteemed, elephants from Aceh, Siam, Pegu, and Buthan, among others, were also imported to India.<sup>33</sup> Notably, Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–1658), the Mughal emperor who is celebrated for his construction of the Taj Mahal mausoleum complex in Agra for his wife Mumtāz Maḥal, issued the following *farman* (imperial order), in which he urged the protection of merchants who import elephants from Southeast Asia:

Let the commanders, revenue collectors, jagirdars and zamindars, [in all territories] from the world-traversing Imperial camp to the imperial frontiers know that, Mir Salih, master of a ship from Achi (Achin) having come to this Court, the asylum of kings, petitioned to the Emperor through the principal officers of the world-sovereign's court that the merchants who purchase goods from the paradise-like (country of Hindustan) voyage to the ports of Zerbad (south-east Asia) and from there purchasing elephants, carry them to Hindustan by way of the port of Machhilipatam (Masulipatam) and Hughly and ports in the area of the province of Bengal, and desire that they bring the elephants to the imperial court, suffer on the route harassment the hands of the officers in charge of the routes on account of payment of Zakat (transit duty). They hope that a fate-determining farman (Imperial order) be issued in regard to this matter, so that they bring elephants to the Court with ease of mind. An obedience exacting farman is therefore issued that hereafter at the time of [their] going or coming, none should collect anything from them by way of zakat rahdari (road-toll) nor harass them, so that they may bring the elephants with ease of mind.<sup>34</sup>

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empire and Aceh before becoming Mughal ports. Interestingly, the Safavid envoys who visited Siam (Thailand) in the 1680s were able to return to Iran using a ship owned by a merchant from Surat in 1687. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Southeast Asia as Seen from Mughal India: Tahir Muhammad's 'Immaculate Garden' (ca. 1600)," *Archipel* 70 (2005): 234.

<sup>30</sup> Charles R. Boxer argues that "the development of Atjeh's spice-trade with the Red Sea was largely, perhaps mainly, due to the initiative and cooperation of the Gujaratis." Charles R. Boxer, "A Note on Portuguese Reactions to the Revival of the Red Sea Spice Trade and the Rise of Atjeh, 1540-1600," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 428; Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Southeast Asia as Seen from Mughal India," 211.

<sup>31</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Southeast Asia as Seen from Mughal India," 228–29.

<sup>32</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Southeast Asia as Seen from Mughal India," 222.

<sup>33</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, 2:317.

<sup>34</sup> Kalpana Rani Jayas, "Mughal Documents on Achin and Its Trade with India," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 63 (2002): 1094.

## The Uzbek Khanate

The Uzbek state that traded with the Mughals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was another Mongol successor state, founded by Chinggis Khan's descendant Muḥammad Shībānī Khan (r. 1500–1510), who expelled the Timurids from Central Asia in the early sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup> As an offshoot of the Ulus of Jochi (better known as the Golden Horde), it ruled many of the Central Asian oases from the early sixteenth century until the Russian conquest of the region in the 1860s.

Like the Mughals, the Uzbeks promoted trade. The greatest Uzbek ruler ‘Abdallāh Khan II (r. 1583–98), who was a contemporary of Akbar, was well known for constructing caravanserais, and bridges, among others, to foster trade. Anthony Jenkinson, a sixteenth-century English merchant and traveler who visited the Uzbek state in 1558, describes ‘Abdallāh Khan's capital Bukhara as follows:

This Boghar [Bukhara] is situated in the lowest part of all the land, walled about with a high wall of earth, with divers gates into the same: it is divided into three partitions, whereof two parts are the king's, and the third part is for the merchants and markets, and every science hath their dwelling and market by themselves. The city is very great, and the houses for the most part of earth, but there are also many houses, temples and monuments of store sumptuously built, and gilt, and specially bathstoves so artificially built, that the like thereof is not in the world: the manner where of is too long to rehearse ...<sup>36</sup>

The main trading partner of the Uzbek state was the Mughal empire. The Uzbek merchandise exported to India included fresh and dried fruit, precious stones, textiles, and horses, among others. The most important Uzbek exports were horses, which were sold by tens of thousands each year to India.<sup>37</sup> According to Levi, the trade between Uzbek Central Asia and Timurid/Mughal India made early modern Central Asia “more closely [linked] to the Indian Ocean economy than ever before.”<sup>38</sup> The Uzbek state also traded with the Russian empire.<sup>39</sup> Uzbek merchants also played an intermediary role by re-selling Indian cotton textiles to Siberia.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In modern scholarly literature, the name *Uzbek* is associated with the state of the Chinggisid ruler Abū al-Khair Khan (r. 1428–1468) and the modern Uzbeks. However, during the post-Mongol period, *Uzbek* was a new name of the Jochid *ulus* (people) of the Qipchaq Steppe, who began to be called *Uzbeks* after the reign of Uzbek Khan (r. 1313–1341), under whom the Ulus of Jochi reached its zenith and became a Muslim state.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Delmar Morgan and Charles Henry Coote, eds., *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and Other Englishmen, with Some Account of the First Intercourse of the English with Russia and Central Asia By Way Of the Caspian Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81–83.

<sup>37</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 84.

<sup>38</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 76.

<sup>39</sup> The interactions between the two occurred primarily in Central Asia's northern regions and Siberia. Additionally, the relationship between the Uzbeks and the Russians was often marked by conflict and competition, primarily as Russian expansion into Central Asia increased in subsequent centuries.

<sup>40</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 107. According to Levi, the Uzbek state also traded with Safavid Iran even though

In the early eighteenth century, a new Uzbek state known as the Khanate of Khoqand (1709–1876) was founded in the Ferghana Valley, a fertile region between the Tian Shan Mountains in the north and the Gissar-Alay Mountains in the south. This Uzbek state established a “tribute”-trade relationship with the Qing Dynasty. Khoqand sent embassies to China and offered “tribute.” In return, the Qing offered “gifts” to Uzbek embassies.<sup>41</sup> The Khanate of Khoqand also traded with Russia. Khoqand exported tea, rhubarb, and raw cotton, among others, and imported silver, treated leather, furs, and manufactured goods in return.<sup>42</sup>

The Khanate of Khoqand flourished in the nineteenth century as a result of its overland trade. The American diplomat Eugene Schuyler (d. 1890), who visited Khoqand in 1873 describes it as a flourishing city as follows:

Khokand is a modern town, not more than a hundred years old, and therefore has wider streets, and is more spacious than most Asiatic towns. It is nearly square in form, and contains I am told 500 mosques, which, with the average of thirty houses to each parish, would give a population of 75,000,—as it seems to me a fair estimate, although many more inhabitants could be accommodated within the walls of the town. From the roof of the caravanserai we may see the whole city spread out before us, and not only the city but the Khanate as well. Immediately around us are the broad flat clay roofs of the bazaar, most of the streets even being covered, so as to allow an easy promenade from one end to the other ... To the left are the beautiful façade and portal of the Khan’s palace, glittering in all the brightness of its fresh tiles, blue, yellow, and green, for it has but lately been built ... The chief bazaar at Khokand is by far the best built that I saw in Central Asia, —very regular, with all the streets crossing one another at right angles, and with many of the shops built of burned brick ... There are two bazaar days in the week, Thursday and Sunday. The trade seems to be very large.<sup>43</sup>

## The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman empire (1299–1922) was one of the largest and most powerful empires in history. During its heyday in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, the Ottoman empire conquered much of southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.<sup>44</sup>

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the two sides were often at war with each other. Importantly, the Uzbek-Safavid trade linked Central Asian and Iranian markets to the Ottoman Mediterranean market. Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 80.

<sup>41</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 92.

<sup>42</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 95.

<sup>43</sup> Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja*, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1877), 2:11–14.

<sup>44</sup> Although the Ottoman empire was not a direct successor to the Mongol empire, it was influenced by the latter in its formative period. On this topic, see Rudi Paul Lindner, “How Mongol Were the Early Ottomans?” *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 282–89; Baki

The Ottoman empire became a major player in the Indian Ocean trade in the sixteenth century, along with Portugal, after conquering the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt and the northern half of the Red Sea in 1517, and securing a gateway to the Indian Ocean.<sup>45</sup> The Ottoman empire then started to trade with India and Southeast Asia. Their trade and diplomatic relations with the latter began when the sultanate of Aceh contacted the Ottomans to establish a military and commercial alliance against the Portuguese, who were trying to monopolize the spice trade in the Indian Ocean. The most important commodity that the Ottomans imported from Southeast Asia was pepper from Aceh.

Importantly, it has been argued that, in the late sixteenth century, the amount of Acehnese pepper exported to Jeddah surpassed that which reached Lisbon via the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>46</sup> The Ottomans continued to import pepper and other spices from Southeast Asia via the Red Sea in the seventeenth century. In return, the Ottomans exported carpets, horses, coffee, weapons, and textiles, among others.<sup>47</sup> The most important Ottoman exports to Southeast Asia were gunsmiths and gun technology. Ottoman military experts helped cast cannons in Southeast Asian states including Aceh, Siam, and Burma.<sup>48</sup> In the late seventeenth century, an Ottoman from Bursa even became governor of Bangkok.<sup>49</sup>

## The Qing and Russian Empires

The Qing Dynasty (1636–1912), founded by the Manchus, a Tungusic people from Manchuria (modern-day northeastern China), was an empire that ruled over Manchuria, Mongolia, China proper, Tibet, and East Turkistan (modern-day Xinjiang) until 1912. The Russian empire, a state that grew out of the Grand Duchy of Moscow, or Muscovy, was the largest contiguous country in modern times, which stretched from the Baltic Sea and eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>50</sup> In the course of the seventeenth century, the Russian empire advanced across Siberia reaching modern-day Buryatia, while the Qing conquered the Northern Yuan

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Tezcan, “The Memory of the Mongols in Early Ottoman Historiography,” *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future*, ed. by Erdem Cipa and Emine Fetvacı (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 23–38.

<sup>45</sup> For more on this topic, see Andrew C. Hess, “The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 1 (1973): 55–76.

<sup>46</sup> Boxer, “Portuguese Reactions to the Revival of the Red Sea Spice Trade,” 426.

<sup>47</sup> On the economic relationship between the Ottomans and Southeast Asia, see A. C. S. Peacock, “The Economic Relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Southeast Asia in the Seventeenth Century,” *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia*, ed. Andrew Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 63–88.

<sup>48</sup> A. C. S. Peacock, “The Ottoman Empire and the Indian Ocean,” *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, ed. David Ludden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

<sup>49</sup> A. C. S. Peacock, “The Ottomans and Siam, c. 1500-1800,” *The Ottoman Empire and The Kingdom of Siam Through the Ages*, ed. İsmail Hakkı Kadi (Bangkok, Institute of Asian Studies, 2017), 17–19.

<sup>50</sup> Although these two empires were not “direct successors” to the Mongol empire, they were, in their formative period, influenced by the Mongol empire like the Ottoman empire. For a brief but critical discussion of this topic, see Millward, *The Silk Road*, 37–38.

state (1388–1691) of Mongolia. The two imperial powers became involved in border clashes, which resulted in the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) and the Treaty of Kiakhtha (1727). These two treaties stimulated official border trade between Russia and China during the eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Russian merchants purchased cotton, silk, tea, tobacco, and rhubarb in China and sold fur, leather, and European manufactured goods, among others.<sup>52</sup> Importantly, it has been argued that, because of this thriving Russian-Qing trade in the eighteenth century, “there was no early modern decline in the overland transportation of Chinese merchandise to Europe—at least in terms of the northern caravan routes” to use Levi’s words.<sup>53</sup>

## Ming China

The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) was a Chinese state that ousted the Mongols from China in 1368 and restored native Chinese rule that lasted until the Manchu Qing conquest of China in 1644. The Ming Dynasty was not a Mongol successor state. It maintained an anti-Mongol stance throughout its history.<sup>54</sup> However, it may be argued that the blue-and-white porcelain, which was one of the most popular Ming Chinese exports, and Zheng He, the Chinese admiral who commanded several naval expeditions (1405–1433) to the “Western Oceans” (Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and East Africa), were two of the by-products of Mongol rule. First, blue-and-white porcelain came into existence in the Yuan court-sponsored kilns when cobalt imported from the Middle East was used to decorate Chinese porcelain.<sup>55</sup> Second, Zheng He was a member of the *semuren*, that is, the various groups of people from Central and Western Asia whom the Mongols used to rule the conquered Chinese.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Zheng He’s maritime voyages benefited from the geographical knowledge accumulated through the maritime activities of the Mongol period. For instance, it is said that Wang Dayuan’s *Daoyi zhibi* served as a useful source of information when Zheng He organized his naval expeditions. Whether or not the *Daoyi zhibi* was actually utilized by Zheng He’s fleet at least it benefited Ma Huan, the Chinese voyager who took part in Zheng He’s

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<sup>51</sup> Rossabi, “The ‘Decline’ of the Central Asian Caravan Trade,” 368.

<sup>52</sup> Clifford M. Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin: Russia’s Trade with China and Its Setting, 1727–1805* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 344–60.

<sup>53</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 89; Rossabi, “The ‘Decline’ of the Central Asian Caravan Trade,” 368.

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of the (limited) Mongol influences on Ming China, see Morris Rossabi, “Notes on Mongol Influences on the Ming Dynasty,” *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Singapore: ISEAS, 2013), 200–23.

<sup>55</sup> François Louis, “The Yuan Synthesis: Chinese Influence on the Mongol Culture (1271–1368),” *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire*, ed. William W. Fitzhugh, Morris Rossabi, and William Honeychurch (Washington, D.C.: Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institution, 2013), 227.

<sup>56</sup> A Chinese study of the Y-chromosomes of Zheng He’s modern descendants revealed that Zheng He belonged to haplogroup L1a-M76, a lineage that is mainly found in eastern Iran, southern Pakistan, and India. Chuan-Chao Wang, Ling-Xiang Wang, Manfei Zhang, Dali Yao, Li Jin, and Hui Li, “Present Y Chromosomes Support the Persian Ancestry of Sayyid Ajjal Shams al-Din Omar and Eminent Navigator Zheng He,” *arXiv* 1-5 (2013): <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1310.5466>.

maritime voyages as an interpreter and composed the *Yingya Shenglan* [The overall survey of the ocean's shores]. In this work that offers a detailed description of Zheng He's voyages, Ma Huan comments on the *Daoyi zhibilue* as follows:-

I once looked at (a book called) *A Record of the Islands and Their Barbarians* [Daoyi zhibilue], which recorded variations of season and of climate, and differences in topography and in peoples. I was surprised and said 'How can there be such dissimilarities in the world? ... After that I knew that the statements in *A Record of the Islands and Their Barbarians* were no fabrications, and that even greater wonders existed.<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

From the second half of the fourteenth century onwards, the Mongol empire "slowly separated into successor states, in India, Persia, Russia, and the Middle East" to use Waldron's words.<sup>58</sup> These successor states included, on the one hand, the Timurid empire, the Mughal empire, and the Uzbek khanate, among others, which were direct successors to the Mongols, and, on the other, the Ottoman, Russian, and Manchu Qing empires, which were non-Mongol Eurasian empires. Importantly, all these Mongol successor states promoted commerce and trade. As a result, many parts of the overland and maritime Silk Routes revived and flourished, at least on the regional level during the post-Mongol period.

The Timurid empire, which stretched from Anatolia in the west to Xinjiang in the east at its height, promoted domestic and foreign trade. As a result, the Silk Routes between Central Asia and West Asia and beyond revived at the turn of the fifteenth century and the major (trading) cities of the empire such as Tabriz, Sultaniya, Hormuz, and Samarqand flourished. The Timurids also traded with India via maritime trade routes, with Hormuz being the gateway to the Indian Ocean.

From the mid-sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, the Timurids of India, the Mughals, established and maintained trade relations with Uzbek Central Asia via overland routes. The principal Central Asian export was horses, which numbered in the tens of thousands each year. The trade between Uzbek Central Asia and Timurid/Mughal India linked early modern Central Asia to the Indian Ocean economy.<sup>59</sup> The Mughals also began trading with Southeast Asia via maritime routes after conquering Gujarat and Bengal in the second half of the sixteenth century. The Mughals imported elephants, among others, from Southeast Asia. The Indian merchants from Gujarat contributed to the development of west-bound pepper trade

<sup>57</sup> “餘昔觀島夷志，載天時氣候之別，地理人物之異，慨然嘆曰：普天下何若是之不同耶！… 然後知島夷志所著者不誣，而尤有大可奇怪者焉。” Ma Huan 馬歡, *Yingya Shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽 [The overall survey of the ocean's shores], Introduction, accessed August 24, 2023, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=566144>; This English translation is from Ma Huan, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan, The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores (1433)*, trans. J.V.G. Mills (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1970), 69–70.

<sup>58</sup> Waldron, introduction to *The Mongol Period*, vii.

<sup>59</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 76.



from Aceh.

The Ottomans became a major player in the Indian Ocean trade in the sixteenth century after conquering the northern half of the Red Sea in 1517 and securing a gateway to the Indian Ocean. They traded with Southeast Asia and imported pepper from Aceh. Importantly, the volume of pepper from Aceh imported to the Ottoman Red Sea ports surpassed that which reached Lisbon via the Cape of Good Hope by the late sixteenth century. Ottoman exports to Southeast Asia included gunsmiths and technology, among others.

The Uzbeks of Central Asia not only traded with Mughal India but also with the Russian empire. Their major exports were, again, horses and other livestock. Uzbek merchants also played an intermediary role by re-selling Indian cotton textiles and other commodities to Siberia. In the late eighteenth century, the Khanate of Khoqand, a new Uzbek state centered in the Ferghana Valley, established a profitable “tribute”-trade relationship with Qing China.

The Qing Dynasty and the Russian empire concluded the Treaties of Nerchinsk (1689) and the Treaty of Kiakhta (1727) after being involved in border skirmishes with each other. These two treaties greatly facilitated official border trade between Russia and China, marking a significant development in the region's history. It has been argued that, thanks to this thriving Russian-Qing trade, the transportation of Chinese goods to Europe (at least through the northern trade routes) did not really decline in the early modern era.<sup>60</sup>

In sum, seen from the standpoint of the Mongol successor states, the overland and maritime Silk Routes did not really collapse or sharply decline during the post-Mongol period. They had certainly become less prominent and substantial compared to the previous periods. However, various Mongol successor states maintained close and thriving overland trade relations with each other or some important maritime trade relations with Southeast Asia.

This paper did not intend to conduct an exhaustive study of the overland and maritime Silk Routes in the post-Mongol world. It attempted to offer a broad picture of the post-Mongol-era Silk Routes from a non-Eurocentric perspective. In the process, it has shown that the growth and decline of the Silk Routes in the post-Mongol world were rather affected by the political stability of and the relationship between various Mongol successor states. The influence of European seaborne commerce did affect global trade patterns but the Silk Routes persisted as important trade networks, albeit with varying levels of significance in different regions.

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<sup>60</sup> Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis*, 89; Rossabi, “The ‘Decline’ of the Central Asian Caravan Trade,” 368.

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