

Bell Ringer: Underline + annotate for

a) What was it like to travel along the Silk Road?

b) What did travelers need to take with them?

c) What would be revolutionary for a European?

Pegolotti's Merchant Handbook

[First published in the eighteenth century from a manuscript copied in 1471, the Pratica della Mercatura provides important evidence regarding the Eurasian trade ca. 1340, during the period when the "Golden Horde" (the western part of the Mongol Empire) was at its height. The author, Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, worked for the Florentine merchant firm of Bardi. His account is of particular interest for its description of the relative security of trade routes through the territories of the Mongol Empire and the great variety of products available in commercial centers such as Constantinople.]

You may reckon also that from Tana to Sara the road is less safe than on any other part of the journey; and yet even when this part of the road is at its worst, if you are some sixty men in the company you will go as safely as if you were in your own house.

Anyone from Genoa or from Venice, wishing to go to the places above-named, and to make the journey to Cathay, should carry linens with him, and if he visit Organci he will dispose of these well. In Organci he should purchase *sommi* of silver, and with these he should proceed without making any further investment, unless it be some bales of the very finest stuffs which go in small bulk, and cost no more for carriage than coarser stuffs would do.

Merchants who travel this road can ride on horseback or on asses, or mounted in any way that they list to be mounted.

Whatever silver the merchants may carry with them as far as Cathay the lord of Cathay will take from them and put into his treasury. And to merchants who thus bring silver they give that paper money of theirs in exchange. This is of yellow paper, stamped with the seal of the lord aforesaid. And this money is called *balishi*; and with this money you can readily buy silk and all other merchandize that you have a desire to buy. And all the people of the country are bound to receive it. And yet you shall not pay a higher price for your goods because your money is of paper. And of the said paper money there are three kinds, one being worth more than another, according to the value which has been established for each by that lord.

A

Samarkand

Account of a Journey to the West (*Si Yu Lu*), 1219-1224 by Ye-lü Ch'u ts'ai

Introduction: This short abstract is all that remains of a now lost larger work written by Ye-lü Ch'u t'sai, one of Chinghis Khan's officials who accompanied him on the conquest of Persia. Although brief, it provides the reader with a view of the "West" through Eastern eyes including notices of such important Silk Road cities as Samarkand, Bukhara and Balkh. It is also an important source for studying the geography of Central Asia in the Thirteenth century. The account was found by the translator, E. Bretschneider, in an old collection of Chinese reprints.

[p.21] West of O-ta-la more than a thousand li is a large city called Sün-sz'-kan **[Samarkand]**. Western people say that the meaning of this name is "fat," and, as the land there is very fertile, the city received this name. The country there is very rich and populous. They have gold and copper coins, but their coins are not provided with a hole, nor have they rims (as the Chinese copper coins have). Around the city, to an extent of several tens of li, there are everywhere orchards, groves, flower gardens, aqueducts, running springs, square basins, and round ponds, in uninterrupted succession; indeed, Sün-sz'-kan is a delicious place! The water-melons there are as large as a horse's head. Regarding grain and vegetables, however, the shu, the no, and the ta tou are not found there. It does not rain there in summer. People make wine from grapes. There are mulberry trees, but not fit for the breeding of silkworms. All cloths are made of kü-sün. The white colour for cloth is considered as a good omen, whilst black // [p.22] is the mourning colour. Wherefore all clothes seen there are white.

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Hangzhou

The Travels of Marco Polo

Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, a Venetian merchant who may have worked for the Yuan dynasty, the Mongol rulers of China, late 13th century. This excerpt is a description of **Hangzhou**, a southern city that was part of the Yuan empire.

There are within the city ten principal squares or market places, besides innumerable shops along the streets. On the nearer bank ... stand large stone warehouses provided for merchants who arrive from India and other parts with their goods and effects. They are thus situated conveniently close to the market squares. In each of these, three days in every week, from forty to fifty thousand persons come to these markets and supply them with every article that could be desired.

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Baghdad

Ibn Battuta (muslim traveler in the 13th c.) on Baghdad

Thence we travelled to Baghdad, the Abode of Peace and Capital of Islam. Here there are two bridges like that at Hilla on which the people promenade night and day, both men and women. The town has eleven cathedral mosques, eight on the right bank and three on the left, together with very many other mosques and madrasas, only the latter are all in ruins.

The baths at Baghdad are numerous and excellently constructed, most of them being painted with pitch, which has the appearance of black marble. This pitch is brought from a spring between Kufa and Basra, from which it flows continually. It gathers at the sides of the spring like clay and is shovelled up and brought to Baghdad. Each establishment has a large number of private bathrooms, every one of which has also a wash-basin in the corner, with two taps supplying hot and cold water. Every bather is given three towels, one to wear round his waist when he goes in, another to wear round his waist when he comes out, and the third to dry himself with. In no town other than Baghdad have I seen all this elaborate arrangement, though some other towns approach it in this respect.

The western part of Baghdad was the earliest to be built, but it is now for the most part in ruins. In spite of that there remain in it still thirteen quarters, each like a city in itself and possessing two or three baths. The hospital (maristan) is a vast ruined edifice, of which only vestiges remain.

The eastern part has an abundance of bazaars, the largest of which is called the Tuesday bazaar. On this side there are no fruit trees, but all the fruit is brought from the western side, where there are orchards and gardens.

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Constantinople

Ssu-ma Ch'ien (d. c. 85 B.C.E.) Chinese Traveler

From the *Chiu-t'ang-shu*, ch. 198 (written mid-10th Century C.E.), for 618-906 C.E.

The country of Fu-lin [Byzantium], lies above the western sea [Indian Ocean]. In the southeast it borders on Po-si [Persia]. Its territory amounts to over 10,000 *li*. Of cities there are four hundred. Inhabited places are close together. The eaves, pillars, and window-bars of their palaces are frequently made with crystal and opaque glass. There are twelve honorable ministers who conjointly regulate government matters. They ordinarily let a man take a bag and follow the king's carriage. When the people have a complaint they throw a written statement into the bag. When the king comes back to the palace he decides between right and wrong.

The walls of their capital are built of granite, and are of enormous height [the Theodosian triple walls]. The city [**Constantinople**] contains in all over 100,000 households [some 500,000 to 600,000 inhabitants]. In the south it faces the great sea. In the east of the city there is a large gate; its height is over twenty *chang* [over 235 feet]; it is beset with yellow gold [bronze] from top to bottom, and shines at a distance of several *li*. Coming from outside to the royal residence there are three large gates beset with all kinds of rare and precious stones. On the upper floor of the second gate they have suspended a large golden scale, twelve golden balls are suspended from the scale-stick by which the twelve hours of the day are shown. A human figure has been made all of gold of the size of a man standing upright, on whose side, whenever an hour has come, one of the golden balls will drop, the dingling sound of which makes known the divisions of the day without the slightest mistake [a clepsydra].

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The *Tun Huang Lu*--Dunhuang and Its Region in the Late T'ang Period

It is important to realize that location of the main settlement and the name of the town and district changed over time. The first name mentioned, Hsiao-ku is a town about 11 miles northeast of the modern Dunhuang. The author refers to Dunhuang as Sha-ch'eng or by a generic name. Although it tends to refer to a broader administrative district, Sha-chou also came to be used as an equivalent for Dunhuang. In the sixth century, the name Kua-chou was applied and then Ming-sha hsien (referring to the sand dunes described in the text). Beginning in the T'ang period in the seventh century, the name generally was either Dunhuang or Sha-chou; it was under the latter name that Marco Polo knew the city.

The Erh-shih temple, which stood by the roadside, has long been in ruins. Stones from it have been piled up together, and to this spot travellers come with their camels and horses in order to pray for good luck. Going east, you pass into the territory of Kua-chou.

South of the city of Sha-chou, at a distance of 25 *li*, are the Mo-kao caves. The way thither takes you through a stony desert with undulating ground, and when you reach your destination there is a sharp descent into a valley. To the east of this point stands the San-wei Mountain, to the west the Hill of Sounding Sand. In between there is a stream flowing from the south, called the Tang-ch'üan [Tunnel-spring].

In this valley there is a vast number of old Buddhist temples and priests' quarters; there are also some huge bells. At both ends of the valley, north and south, stand temples to the Rulers of the Heavens, and a number of shrines to other gods; the walls are painted with pictures of the Tibetan kings and their retinues.

The whole of the western face of the cliff for a distance of 2 *li*, north and south, has been hewn and chiselled out into a number of lofty and spacious sand-caves containing images and paintings of Buddha. Reckoning cave by cave, the amount of money lavished on them must have been enormous. In front of them pavilions have been erected in several tiers, one above. Some of the temples contain colossal images rising to a height of 160 feet, and the number of smaller shrines is past counting. All are connected with one another by galleries, convenient for the purpose of ceremonial rounds as well as casual sight-seeing.

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A

Merv

Xuanzang on the Silk Road

Xuanzang, a seventh century Buddhist pilgrim, made a historic pilgrimage to India along the Silk Road, one of the longest and oldest trade routes known to mankind. Along with silk and less glamorous articles of trade, the great trans-Asian roads carried ideas and religions which were to prove far more significant than silk. The gentle creed of Buddhism was to revolutionize art and thought not only in China but in Japan and Korea as well. The Lord Buddha had been born in India in BCE 656. Not until 60 or 70 CE were the first Chinese Buddhist communities reported at Loyang. Centuries later, there were so many schools of Buddhism and so many conflicting texts, Xuanzang was clear that he had to go to the source. In 629 CE he set forth to seek "the sacred traces of the Buddha" and to find the true Buddhist scriptures in the land of its birth. His first important stop was in Bactria, part of modern Afghanistan. Balkh was a city of prodigious antiquity which Alexander the Great chose for his home base from 329 to 327 CE. The successors of Alexander and the Kushan kings who succeeded them contributed to the distinctive art which we call Gandharan. Xuanzang stayed a month at the New Monastery there, one of the finest in the Buddhist world, where he admired its relics. After Balkh, he struggled through the treacherous Hindu Kush mountains to reach the valley of Bamiyan (**by the city of Herat and Merv**). It was a station of primary importance on the road from Central Asia to India. The pilgrim visited the colossal Gandharan statues carved in the cliff face. Modern art historians continue to quote his description of a giant Buddha, the largest stone statue in the world, actually 180 feet, a little larger than the pilgrim reported.

To the north-east of the royal city there is a mountain, on the declivity of which is placed a stone figure of Buddha, erect, in height 140 or 150 feet. Its golden hues sparkle on every side, and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness. Thus placed in a completed form as it stands.

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Chang'an/Xian

Xi'an by Chinese poet Dan Gu (14th century)

In the nine markets they set up bazaars,
Their wares separated by type, their shop rows distinctly divided.
There was no room for people to turn their heads,
Or for chariots to wheel about.
People crammed into the city, spilled into the suburbs,
Everywhere streaming into the hundreds of shops.
(Tr. David Knechtges; cited by Xiong, p. 165.)

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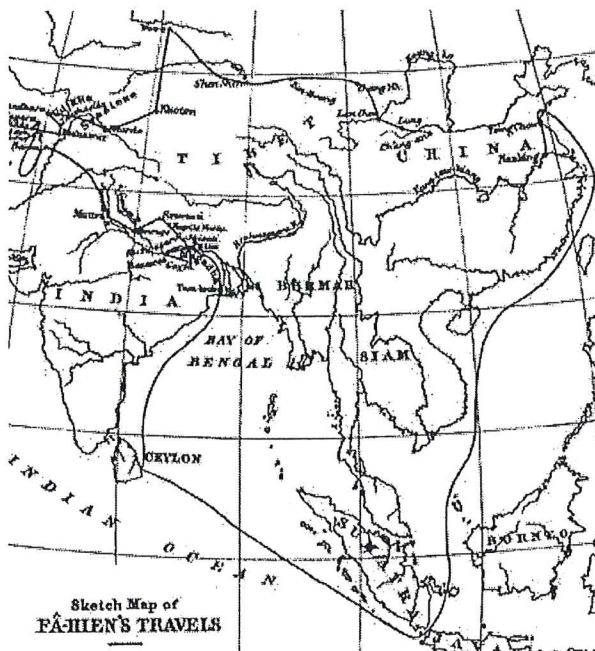
A

Taklamakan Desert

Travels of Fa-Hsien -- Buddhist Pilgrim of Fifth Century

Fa-hsien was one of China's greatest traveler of the fifth century. At age sixty-five he practically walked from central China (AD 399), across the Taklamakan desert, over the Pamir Plateau, and through India down to the mouth of the Ganges, in the county of Tamruk, India. From there he took a ship and returned by sea to his homeland China, sailing via Ceylon and Sumatra, across the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, and finally reaching Chienkang (China), in AD 413. He was bringing with him what he went for---books of the Buddhist canon and images of Buddhist deities.

In AD 414, he recorded his travels in "*Record of Buddhist Countries*" today known as the "Travels of Fa-Hsien". It is an excellent geographic account of his journey along the Silk Roads, and an comprehensive report of the history and customs of Central Asia and India.



Fa-hsien, while traveling through the dangerous Taklamakan desert left us with this account:

"...We journeyed on and reached Tun-huang (Dunhuang) at the end of the Great Wall, where the frontier is held by the military for a distance of eighty le from east to west, and forty le from north to south (one li---is one-third of a mile). Having stayed there for more than a month, the governor of Tun-huang provided us with all the necessary provisions for crossing the desert. We than traveled on with an envoy of a camel train...In this desert there are great many evil spirits and hot winds; those who encounter them perish to a man. There are neither birds above nor beasts below. Gazing on all sides as far as the eye can reach in order to mark the track, no guidance is to be obtained save from the rotting bones of dead men, which point the way."

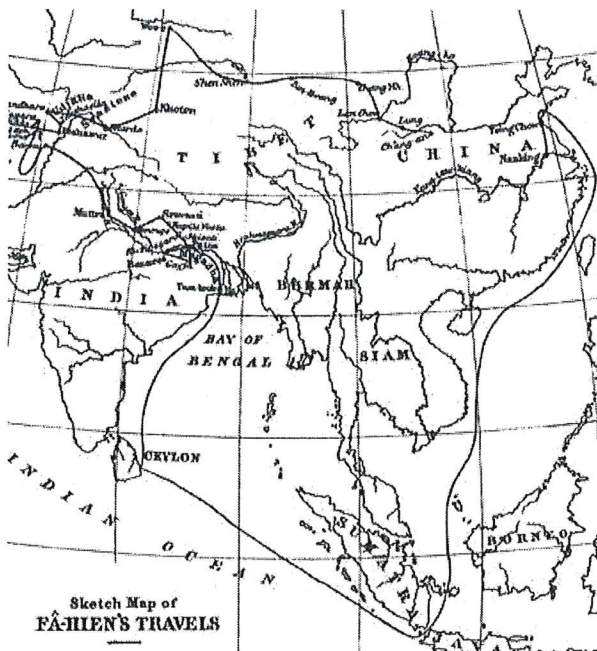
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Gobi Desert

Marco Polo on the Gobi Desert

Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, a Venetian merchant who may have worked for the Yuan dynasty, the Mongol rulers of China, late 13th century. This excerpt is a description of his experience of traveling through the **Gobi Desert**.

"When a man is riding through this desert by night and for some reason -falling asleep or anything else -he gets separated from his companions and wants to rejoin them, he hears spirit voices talking to him as if they were his companions, sometimes even calling him by name. Often these voices lure him away from the path and he never finds it again, and many travelers have got lost and died because of this. Sometimes in the night travelers hear a noise like the clatter of a great company of riders away from the road; if they believe that these are some of their own company and head for the noise, they find themselves in deep trouble when daylight comes and they realize their mistake. There were some who, in crossing the desert, have been a host of men coming towards them and, suspecting that they were robbers, returning, they have gone hopelessly astray....Even by daylight men hear these spirit voices, and often you fancy you are listening to the strains of many instruments, especially drums, and the clash of arms. For this reason bands of travelers make a point of keeping very close together. Before they go to sleep they set up a sign pointing in the direction in which they have to travel, and round the necks of all their beasts they fasten little bells, so that by listening to the sound they may prevent them from straying off the path."

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