



## The Great Silk Road as Cultural Phenomena

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### Abstract

The Great Silk Road phenomenon is a proof of that nomad culture has a high degree of creativity in the way of relating to news and cultural exchange. As the main worth added into the world civilization by Kazakh nation and their ancestors we can include: a) Nomads extended human environment as well as they could reclaim desert and semi-desert lands harmonically; b) the Eurasian nomads served as a history accelerator (Veber A.), their migration processes were the reason of formation of new civilizations (Indian, Iranian, the kingdom of Hun, Arab caliphate etc.); c) Early Turks and the Turks served as connection of West and East by the great Silk Road and other communicational ways and they were the reason of their communication; d) in the world civilization ancestors of Kazakh were one of the first who begun utilizing artifacts as trousers, sword, yurt(nomads tend), horse carriage, metalworking, gold and silver ware; e) the system of general ideology of Turks was an important form of supernatural human unanimity and coherence; f) valuable traditional viewpoints of Kazakh people as being of human, realizing of universe as a bright world, being in the harmony with other people and the space, being kind to old men and children are take the main place in the present spirituality and morality (Orkeniyet, 2005).

**Keywords:** The great silk road, Interview, West, East, Cultural heritage, Globalization.

### 1. Introduction

From the time of formation of human being the troublous matters for sober-minded person are cultural connection and attitude to other people. In many theoretical conceptions and international documents cultural connection shown as idea, action, appearance, situation, condition connected to the first original nature of human being. Human beings are the only creatures in the world that can determine forms of communications. That is why he cannot live without it. It has been known that even in ancient time's basis of communications were superior to other types of cultures. If we will have a look to the past and the present of cultural historical process, we can note that two types of cultures stand head and shoulders above other ones: a) interaction and b) intercommunication. Interaction is usual to the cultural historical period of existing of varied different ethno cultural formations. Properly speaking culture can develop and exist only through interaction and exchange. Cultural exchange and welfarism of the civilization along the Great Silk Way is a positive demonstration to it.

These attitudes are very important for Kazakhstan which is opened to cultural intercommunication and civilizing exchanges. Cultural intercommunication and reciprocal crossing along the Great Silk Road are not benefits of antiquity at all; it is very important even on a new era of the third millennium. The future of Kazakhstan will develop by these criteria's and it is important matter in the field of culture in our country.

As M.M.Bakhtin says: "A culture reveals itself deeper and fully only when coming across another culture". A concept is unfolded when coming across another concept: there starts a dialogue (conversation) between them that reveals their relationship and component" (Bakhtin, 2002). However the influence of cultures on each other do not limit only with dialogical connection. For instance, each of the cultures which got into communication on the Great Silk Road did not only strive to develop what they had but also by building a creative synthesis and understanding tried to enhance themselves.

### 2. Purposes of Cultural Programs in Kazakhstan

The key objective of the Kazakh national culture that is now at the threshold of the 21st century is the formation of the ability to withstand the development of the current monocentral global expansion.

The process of globalization requires the formation of national values of human kind since only the creative culture can meet the tactical aspirations and requirements of high globalization strategy.

In human history there is a set of examples of cultural development. For example, the philosophy of Thales, the history of Herodotus, Hippocratic medicine, sculptural art, lyrics, poetry, and other areas are the fruits of the Hellenistic culture that was born on the Mediterranean coast and was originally a dialogic one. On the way of its development the ancient Hellenistic culture became acquainted with the three parts of the world - Asia, Europe and Africa, that means the frontier of development was not only moving towards and from Europe, as well as the Silk Road linking China and Central Asia, the Arab Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire was not only a commercial vein, it was a period of great poetry, the subsequent development of the eastern philosophical thought and science, that confirms the development of Silk Road culture and creativeness during 500 years.

The research topic is also related to a state program. In recent years the Republic of Kazakhstan has reached big achievements in economic and cultural development and occupies a prominent place among the nations. Since the question of the national-cultural dialogue is vital for contemporary philosophers and for the basis of philosophy, it also does not leave indifferent the Kazakh philosophers either. The relevance of the phenomenon makes it to consider the cultures of the Silk Road from a scientific point of view. Program "Cultural Heritage" established with the support of the First President Nursultan Nazarbayev, gives an opportunity to cover a lot of existing issues related to renaissance of the old. This is a testimony of our country's commitment to the world civilization. The concept of human development is not just a regular attribute to achieve goals by a man, but on the contrary, it was headed for the political, social and economic processes in the target framework. There was prepared an important national report on the effectiveness of the strategic documents "Kazakhstan-2030", "Kazakhstan-2050" – the strategies of humankind development, oriented at improvement of health care, education, poverty reduction, and other national, regional, planning and specific spheres program adopted in Kazakhstan.

The program "National Heritage", created with the direct participation of literary, cultural and scientific figures of the Republic can be regarded as the beginning of the modernization of the spiritual state of the national culture of an independent country. "The world is living in an age of globalization - it stepped into the era of new opportunities for the development and creation which have not been previously possible. One of the features of globalization is a desire to unite the world and sharing of the values and norms of behavior. However though globalization has expanded its borders, any nation will not give up its historical, spiritual and cultural roots.

To this day there are historical and geographic relationships between the peoples of the East and the West, Europe and Asia. If Europe and the West are the growing parts of the world that seeks to advance and perfection, the East and Asia are the regions with a stagnated development. These concepts are accepted without a doubt by the West both as historical and geographical axioms. But if there is no West, there is no the developed East, if there is no Europe, there is no civilized Asia, so it is very challenging to find a compromise.

As it was proved by the facts of Great Silk Road history, Europe - Asia, East-West are the conceived conditional interconnected parts. Every fact of merging and synthesis requires accurate historical analysis. We can never abandon an inborn desire to know the best of centuries - old of human achievement, of self-respect, of success and happiness, the absence of it is comparable with the death, and it is more precious than life, as without it all the life of civilization is impossible. Having returned to the scene of history, completing its mission, nothing can help haggard people, and the East and the West are indifferent to its fate and even the location. Making such a conclusion, we can say with confidence that our country is fortunate.

We are familiar with the analysis of the first reflections of civilization and the theory of its development through the work of Arnold Toynbee, Spengler, Danilevsky and others. There is no certain border and a clear point of the start and collapse of civilizations. People identify themselves differently. As a result the composition and form of civilization changes over time. Cultures influence and absorb each other. You can completely agree with this statement of Hannington, since by the major social, economic and political changes in relationships, trade, culture, social consciousness of the Great Silk Road found a continuous development and have had a strong influence on the East and the West, Europe and Asia. In the culture of the Silk Road there was also a Muslim renaissance. Culture and philosophy developed by eastern scientists give information on the blossoming of science and its followers, depicts the picture of civilization. The East with its inherent slowness after the era of the Renaissance began to excel. The Europe which just liberated from the medieval religious oppression found an inexhaustible treasure of knowledge and innovations coming from the East, Europeans studied it with their usual Western swiftness and developed their own philosophy. The new philosophy was the philosophy of the new century. Thus the philosophy of the new development is not ancient. The new philosophy is the transformation of Eastern thought to the West. The purpose of this example is not set the East and the West against each other but rather to defend them from diverse statements. Cultural studies scholar Zh.Mutalipov says: "The East and the West can be compared and placed on a par but it is correct to put against each other, as the East and

the West are two of the world's origins, the two spiritual foundations, two substances, two worlds. For this reason rather than to dwell on old stereotypes and attitudes it is better to think of making a contribution to the development of culture. The birth hearth of the world culture was the East and we should remember that. - (Mutalipov, 2002a). Glorifying the historical status of the East and the Great Silk Road it is said: "the Great Silk Road is famous not only for the 2000 years of history but also for its enormous contribution to the development of human culture thus giving a birth to unique phenomenon and civilization (Mutalipov, 2002b).

History has many examples of the positive intersection of cultures that developed individual cultural areas. The culture of the Great Silk Road in comparison with other cultures was very influential and had a stupendous effect on the world history. Traditions, particularly peculiar way of thinking in ancient Greece lurked in agonistic, i.e. in competitive and secret spirit. Polis democracy influenced the formation of dialectical thinking. Trade relations with other countries and sea travel broadened the horizons of the ancient Greeks. They adopted alphabet from the Phoenicians, the Chaldean-Babylonian astral teaching, art and rich mythology of Egypt, the Iranian ethical idea, recognized the wisdom of the esoteric teachings of the ancient East, gathering all that the Ancient Greece laid the foundation for the future of the European culture. Not only human, but also a national historical memory is formed on the choice, leaving only the memories which are necessary erasing everything that does not need to be kept. Apparently for this reason today Europeans do not want to recognize the Muslim nations as their first historical teachers. "Some people believe that only the European, Greco-Roman culture is the only path to a common universal humanity. As a result there are a lot of discussions a lot on the cultural influence of the West to the East, whereas the influence of the East to the West is mentioned superficially. In goo faith the Renaissance roots hark back not only to the ancient world but also to the East and certainly to the Arab-Muslim culture. Nobody can deny the fact that the West would not be able to keep their Greek Rome heritage especially the philosophy of European medieval church if it had not been kept by great Arab Iranian figures.

Cultural development is not only a process to move forward. This process is a continuous synthesis of old and new, of history and heritage crossing each other. Cultural generalization does not deny the influence of cultures on each other and their relationship. Cultural horizons are immense. Our Central Asian region is the center of the intersection of several religions and cultures. The main reason for this is that the Great Silk Road lies across its territory. The Great Silk Road is a crossroads and place for a dialogue of great cultures and religions.

Together with Buddhism through the Silk Road in the 5th century Christianity as Nestorians also penetrated into the territory of Kazakhstan. Only by the VIII-IX centuries after the establishment of Islam in the Kazakh land Nestorianism and Buddhism were superseded. Nothing is lost without a trace and for this reason the history affected the determination of Kazakhstan as a region for a dialogue. It is no exaggeration to say that such features of the Kazakh people as openness, endurance, hospitality are the result of convergence spiritually rich ancient heritages. Interactions, the cult of collectivism have formed a culture unlike any other cultures with such characteristic as hospitality and openness. In the process of communication Kazakhs do not attach much importance to their position it is more important for them emotionally to woo an interlocutor. For Kazakhs it is essential to reach an understanding and friendly relations through communication in every dialogue, in every process of communication.

### **3. Dialogue of Cultures of the East and West**

The Silk Road has affected not only the relations between the East and the West but also is considered to be a sample of bringing the cultural dialogue to life in general. Not only the traditions and customs of various medieval cultures were involved into that communication process but modern culture hasn't been left behind too. In human society there emerged a variety of methods and means of communication, storage and dissemination of information; we witness how the history of humankind is undergoing great changes. All that is provoked and closely connected with the above mentioned factors and technological progress. Since ancient times, keeping its individualism the humankind now is experiencing globalization. This means that this process requires a human communication skills and ability. For that we need to get rid of the American-Europeanism, Afro-centrism, which only recognize their values and their culture absolutism, compassionating on others.

According to an estimate A.Kulsariyeva who thoroughly investigated this issue the concept of "dialogism" is navigator to the better future, because the word "dialogue" has become commonly used in recent years. It is mentioned more often in political programs, research papers, discussions on the topic of educational system etc. In today's culture the concept of dialogism (the phenomenon) has attracted much attention in the social and civil sphere, the main reason for this is the fact that the dialogue has become a tool in solving problems arising in these areas. Especially now in this ever changing world the dialogue helps to solve political, religious and cultural confrontations peacefully (Kulsariyeva, 2000a).

We live in the age of cultural and ideological paradigms change, this process can be called "conceptual revolution". Its aim is to go beyond the traditional and modernist discourse and to form of a new dialogic principle.

What is the dialogue? The definition given by A.Kulsariyevym says: "the etymological roots of the word "dialogue" are found in Greek word "dialego" - a conversation between two people, the process of communication. Since ancient times we come across a variety of references representing a dialogue. Up to this day the word dialogue has been interpreted as exchange of views and thoughts of two characters of literal writing.

The notion of the word has expanded considerably. Due to the significant impact of the dialogue it is recognized as a form of human culture. Thus it becomes understandable how linguistic term penetrated into other fields. The concept of dialogue in itself is dialogic! (Kulsariyeva, 2000b).

Each dialogue is a method of understanding, communication and phenomenon of human life. The main feature of the dialogue is focus on communication. Entering into dialogue is the real human value. As Bakhtin said: "The essence of man (internal and external) is composed entirely of dialogue". To communicate means to live. Man was created with an inborn instinct of need in communication and can unlock his or her potential only in the communication process, i.e. to create and explore together (Bakhtin, 1979).

Dialogue is the foundation of human interaction. The concept of the dialogue is the idea of different minds, different cultural worlds clash. Each culture is individual and it cannot be taken over totally by another culture, because each of them is unique. Firstly the world of dialogue is looking for similarities in both parties of communication, secondary consciousness of its uniqueness which cannot be replaced. This means that the dialogue is only possible if its participants have the same position and equally valuable information to exchange.

The new program of dialogic discourse of humanitarism is directly connected to the heritage of Bakhtin (1895-1975) which is a phenomenon based on hermeneutic trends of traditional "philosophy of dialogue", especially on works of F. Rosenzweig, F. Ebner, M. Buber, K. Levitt and others.

Nowadays there have been developed two directions of dialogism: the formation of a true pluralism, ensuring equality of all forms of culture and the formation of universal global anti-totalitarian culture (Kulsariyeva, 2000c).

In today's time the future of civilization of the whole planet can be predicted to be common. In other words it will pave the way to re-create class division, the poor "Third World" will remain poor, wealthy people and prosperous nations will go on on launching wars with each other and to magnify their capital gains and the countries with low cost of living are the post-Soviet countries. The President of Kazakhstan expressed his opinion on this theory: "... The current development of the world does not mean a global victory of westernization. Worldwide the model of liberal schematism is not seen as a mere coincidence and luck of western historical figures but as an invaluable and unique historical experience of Western European countries and the civilization of North America (Nazarbayev, 1996).

In the 20th century the development and a culture were two-based: Striving of ethnocultures to isolate themselves and the further expansion of the world cultural environment.

As the main value of new civilization UNESCO proclaimed the "Free Culture" agenda. Let's draw our attention to the first steps towards the development of this agenda performance: Presented in 1998 in Paris the UNESCO Declaration on "Sustainable development" revealed the main critical objectives:

- to review the military superiority power and structure on pressure tactic, the concept of economic development through the exploitation of the weaks. Currently the main task for the world culture is social development, social justice and the eradication of poverty.

- with the purpose to solve the problems of ruthless confrontations in the world it is necessary to reduce the economic gap between nations and countries, to increase the participation of developing countries in the global economy.

- to ensure full participation of all social groups in the development process, to involve governmental and nongovernmental organizations in world cultural problems solvation.

- in order to form a stable social environment great attention is paid to the timely identification of the potential causes of crisis and internal problems of confrontations, it is essential not to allow the problems and crisis to take place again.

- as a result of sustainable development the corruption has reduced. As proved by the history of developing countries and among them the countries which gained independence, the main cause of poverty is the development of corruption in the highest echelons of power;

- development paradigm should include in the list of its targets the anticipation of crises and the way out from them, the growth index of humanity, equality of men and women, poverty reduction and economic problems.



- the problem of poverty cannot be solved without considering it on the government level, the above requirements will help to increase the activity of the poor class and to develop social justice (Ghabitov, 2000).

Historically conditioned cultural philosophical problem is the problem of unity of human civilization much discussed in cultural studies. This problem has not only cultural but also an important social value. It involves all types of nations on the planet. This demonstrates that the modern doctrine of universal human culture has been a subject for study since ancient times.

As a method of ambivalent culture of human existence the culture has two controversial features. On the one hand every culture seeks to protect itself from alien influence, to preserve its integrity and validity. On the other hand, the cultural dialogue is an exchange of artifacts, information and universal way to learn more. By revealing all great historical facts the second feature is becoming dominant. It is represented not only by the process of modern totalitarian and inclusive globalization but also through incongruous metostructural original form and cultural exchanges.

The transitional route of the Silk Road proves its high cultural status among different ethnic and cultural systems of higher rank. Reaching a peak of development and formation certain communities undergo the regress. In this situation the community which reached its cultural peak, whatever level of development and complexity it possess, has an impact on others and by experiencing the influence from the outside it undergoes a test, even the most complex one by its structural mechanism when coming across simple phenomenon gets involved into the process of interaction. The phenomenon can be influenced by the culture and become a part of it losing its peculiarity.

The historical Silk Road equivalents are the route laying from the Greeks to the Varangians, the interaction of the Mediterranean countries, arterials connecting China and India, the transitional routes between East and West Asia etc. But only the Silk Road with its universality was able to gain a degree of metacultural one. The prototype of this phenomenon includes the types of communication linking the Far East and Central Asia by exchange of precious stones and metals, handcrafts and exotic goods, common cultural artifacts. Spacious times of the Silk Road culture are dated back in the VI-IX centuries. During this period being transported from China to the West the silk possessed a value of foreign currency, whereas from reverse direction came spiritual teachings, world religions and art. Along the Silk Road there evolved an urban culture with a high level of civilization.

Another characteristics of the Silk Road of the phenomenon is associated with the recognition of a high level of Muslim culture. As it was mentioned by academician A.Nysanbaev: "From 8 to 18 centuries such cities as Bagdad and Bukhara, Samarkand and Herat, Reid, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz would not have achieve that degree of prosperity without the immense influence and the contribution of Islamic culture. In all these cities crafts and art, science, literature, architecture and calligraphy were especially developed, that was a sign of the Islamic culture. Since the Silk Road linked the Caliphate, China, Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, it had a big influence on trade and cultural relations of Europe and Asia having an impact on geographical role of the Kazakh land on trade as well as cultural relations between East and West. The Great Silk Road went through the land which gave a birth to famous Al-Farabi. Through Iran to the Mediterranean countries from China there was a caravan route to transport silk and paper, gold and incense from India, horses and fur from Central Asia. Caravans laden with goods went along the territory of modern Kazakhstan and nomadic herders had also taken an active part in the exchange of cultural values. Cities like Syganak, Sauran, Taraz, Iassy, Balasugun, Otyrar were built on the caravan routes, these ancient cities are known by the world for their high culture and prominent figures such as al-Farabi, Dulati, Yassau, Balasugun. The Silk Road made a great contribution into cultural progress and the development of civilization.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Silk Road was the point of interaction for the Turk nation. It turned out to be the ancient caravan route linking Asia and Europe, the cultural traditions of East and the West civilizations, religions, dissemination of scientific and technological achievements. Since a large part of the Silk Road laid through Central Asia, at that time the prestige of the Eastern culture was very high. As the only trade route, the Silk Road was a big achievement of world civilization. Currently following the footsteps of the Great Silk Road there was built a railway line as the new Eurasian Continental Bridge, linking Eastern China through Central Asian countries with Western Europe. Commissioned in September 1990, the route between the stations "Druzhba" and "Alashankou" had given the opportunity to China and other South East Asian countries to get an access route to Europe through Kazakhstan. Nowadays Kazakhstan political strategy and gained special cultural position create a prospective to restore the Great Silk Road.

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