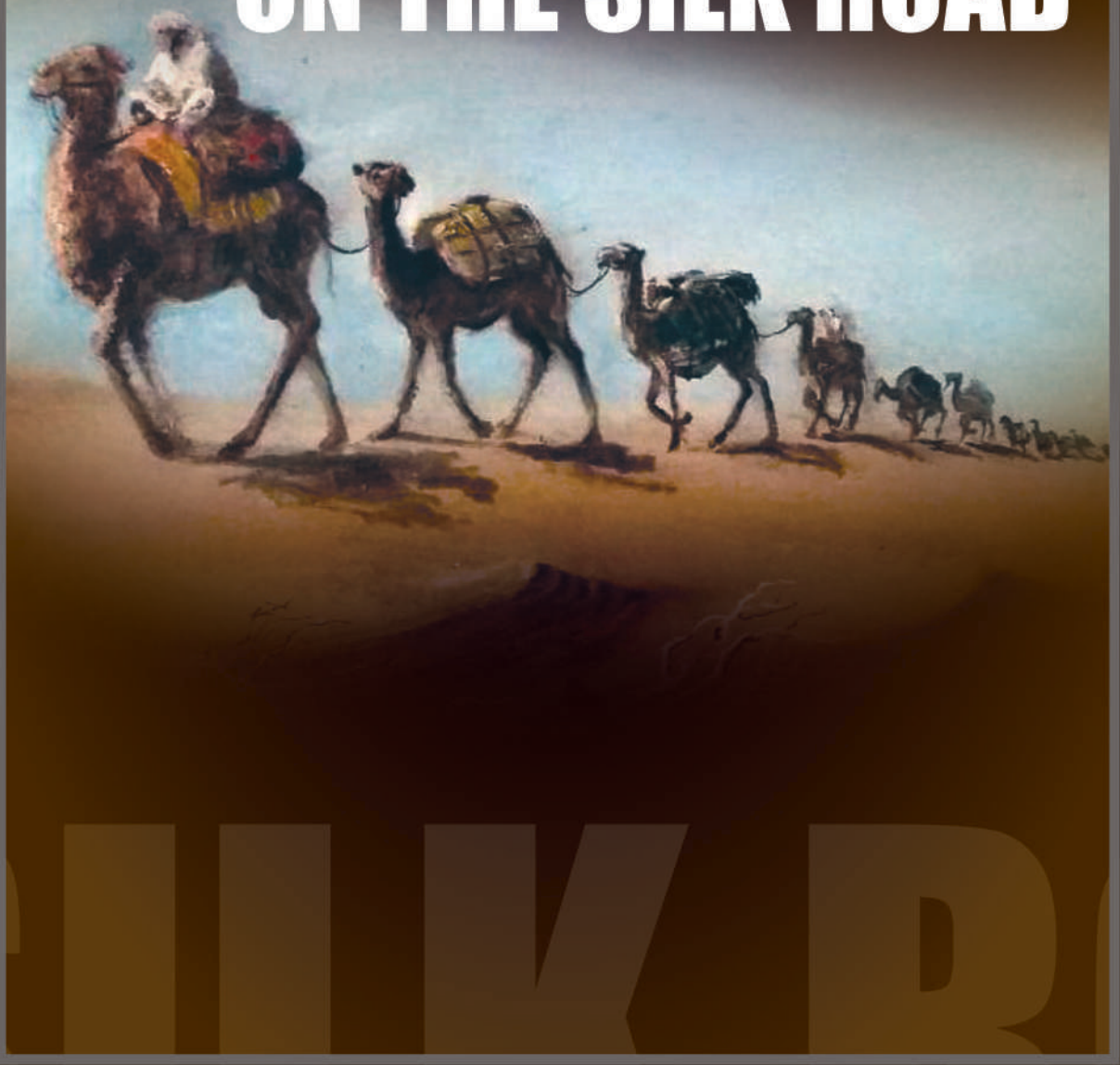
IMPACT OF ISLAM
ON THE SILK ROAD



Impact of Islam on the Silk Road

Authors:

Masoud Bayat

Associate Professor, University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran

Ali Salarishadi

Associate Professor, University of Urmia, Urmia, Iran

Translator:

Mahdi Nasiri

Assistant Professor University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran

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Project director: Dmitriy Voyakin
Authors: Masoud Bayat, Ali Salarishadi
Translator: Mahdi Nasiri

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The study focuses on the role of Islam in flourishing and advancement of the Great Silk Road. Source works of Islamic authors, presented in the publication, contain data on geography, history of the region and route network of Islamic states. It describes cities and distances between them, offering a comprehensive overview of the global routes.

The publication is intended for specialists and a wide audience interested in the history of Central Asia.

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On the cover: V.V. Khalimanov's picture 'The Caravan'

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Chapter One: Generalities and Considerations of Silk Road

A. Exploring Silk Road Resources

There is neither explicit nor implicit mention of Silk Road in Islamic resources including historical texts, Masalik and Mamalik[1], Buldan[2], etc. However, authors of these resources have occasionally referred to main and caravan routes, trade areas, and goods of various districts in particular order and chronology. If Islamic texts were not available, it would not be possible to provide a brief history of Silk Road. Each Islamic resource involving geography, local history, and route networks of Islamic countries has described distances and settlements that can present a whole picture of world roads. If these information and descriptions are generalized to routes and roads, world road puzzle will be completed. In these resources, there are numerous references to regional and commercial transactions, trade caravans as well as most traded goods and products. Accordingly, due to the abundance of texts written concerning Masalik, Mamalik, and Buldan, in what follows some of the most important resources are introduced in order not to extend the discussion.

Hudud-al Alam (10th century) is one of the most interesting resources in recognizing goods and commercial routes related to Silk Road. This book describes some parts of the northern Silk Road (Russia, Volga, and Kiev). Reports of this resource are so precise that as Haussig stated there is 100 percent conformity between them and the archeological excavations (p.55). Author of *Hudud-al Alam* was from Jowzjan[3]

[1] Roads and Kingdoms

[2] Countries

[3] Sometimes spelled as Jawzjan or Jozjan

(around Balkh) known as trade crossroad. This book was considered as one of the most significant resources of the above-mentioned district. Information that is presented in this resource regarding some long-distance areas such as Egypt is in complete agreement with other resources. The most remarkable feature of this book is its economic and commercial approach.

Another resource is Ahmad ibn Fadln's *Travel Report*. He was the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir's ambassador in Slavic lands extended in the west from Iran, Khorasan, Khwarazm, Oghuz land, tribes in Khwarazm, Khazaria, and Volga to Slavic lands. Therefore, ibn Fadln's *Travel Report* is one of the greatest accounts of the northern Silk Road which provides novel information and detailed description of its commercial and economic status. It is worth mentioning that ibn Fadln was sent to this region as an ambassador at the request of Slavic king. Probably, due to the insecurity of Caucasus routes, ibn Fadln and his associates went to Slavic lands from the east route through the Central Asia crossing Khwarazm from the northern part of the Caspian Sea (Ibn Fadln, 1977, p.57). During his mission, ibn Fadln travelled to Hulwan, Hamadan, Saveh, Ray, Damghan, Gorgan, Amol, Jeihoon, Bukhara, Khwarazm, Oghuz land, Khazaria, Volga, and Slavic lands in Safar[1], 309 A.H./ 921 A.D. (ibid. 59). His accounts are extremely significant since they give deep insights into the commercial routes and their recognition. He also presents a report of traded goods in Volga and the Bulgarian district (ibid. pp. 97, 101). On various occasions, he reports on routes, commerce, and goods traded along the roads (pp. 71, 72, 93).

Tuhfa al-Albab and Nokhbah al-Aajaab authored by Abu Hamed Muhammad ibn Abdul Rahim Gharnati is another pretty good resource

[1] Safar is the second month of the Islamic calendar.

for recognizing more about a part of Silk Road. He provides interesting information about commercial and economic condition of different areas traveling through Andalusia to the Western Asia (Gharnati, 1993, p. 26). Although some information in this book was drawn from oral sources, there are good reports on monetary and commercial matters (see, p.144). He traveled to many regions of India, Volga, Bulgaria, Egypt, Iran, etc. and obtained interesting information regarding products, goods, trade, and so forth (see, pp. 45, 46, 79, 83, 138).

Moreover, *Diwan Lughat al-Turk*[1] written by Mahmud Kashgari is another appropriate resource to learn more about Silk Road and related issues due to the author's deep understanding of Central Asian traditions as well as its economic and commercial situation (Kashgari, 2006, pp. 222-503, 223-503). In this book, numerous economic, commercial, and monetary terms are explained. Haussig, asserted that both *Hudud-al Alam* and Kashgari's *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* were written on the advice of traders and merchants (p. 102). If so, significance of these two books can be realized.

Silsilat al-Tawarikh is another well-known book written by a Muslim sailor, Sulayman ibn Abi Karimeh. This resource is mostly a sort of report on maritime roads. If the reports are precise, one of the most important descriptions of India, notably China, and their economic life can be achieved. Sulayman ibn Abi Karimeh also points to coins, state of trade in China, merchandise, and other issues such as clothing (Sirafi Merchant, Sulayman, p.69). Along the same line, Masudi in his book, titled *Muruj al- Dhahab and Ma'adin al-Jawahir*[2], provides numerous accounts of different areas including India and China which are similar

[1] Compendium of the Turkic dialects

[2] The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems

to those presented in *Silsilat al-Tawarikh*. Apparently, Masudi used *Silsilat al-Tawarikh* in writing his own book (Masudi, Vol. 1, p. 130).

Concerning general trade, industry, and goods, there are a lot of important resources. Authors of these texts were mostly travelers who had been to lots of Islamic lands and in some cases surrounding areas and neighborhoods. They provide field reports obtained through observation, interview, and local resources.

One of these travelers is Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Shams al-Din al-Maqdisi author of *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim*[1] in 375 A.H./ 985 A.D. He was born in Jerusalem, Palestine which is mentioned in his book. Most of this book's information is based on the author's own observations (De Goeje's introduction, Vol. 1, 1983). Owing to the fact that *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim* was written based on the author's own research and studies, it can be regarded as one of the original resources in Masalik and Mamalik. The author's economic point of view concerning commercial, financial, and economic issues, industry as well as other related matters is noteworthy. As an instance in this regard, he provides a general overview of each region including trade, economy, tax, roads, and products. As further illustration, talking about Pars province, Maqdisi describes its traditions, buildings, history, trade, wonders, geographical location, traits, government, Kharaj[2], weight measurements, cities distances in addition to introducing different regions (see, pp. 651, 652-598).

These items show Maqdisi's attention to trade. He used similar methods to write about other regions as well. Accordingly, this book has great

[1] The Best Divisions for Knowledge of Regions

[2] Kharaj is a type of individual Islamic tax on agricultural land and its produce developed under Islamic law.

significance in issues related to economy, trade, goods, and products and is regarded as one of the most important resources in recognizing countries.

Another similar book is *Surat al-Ardh*[1] written by ibn Hawqal. Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Hawqal Baghdadi was a prominent Arab geographer and traveler. It seems that he had two main purposes (recognizing and studying different regions as well as trade) for travelling to remote parts. Following past and current authors' works such as Istakhri and Jayhani and travelling to different places add to the originality and novelty of his book. He was contemporary with al-Magdisi. In the second half of the fourth century, he started travelling and probably wrote his book around 367 A.H./ 977 A.D. (Ibn Hawqal, 1988, p.12). He was deeply interested in economic, financial, and commercial issues. Possibly, his job, i.e. trade, had particular impact on his attitude. Compared to other resources, his book and its content have special cohesion and coherence. He used to travel to capital cities, main areas, small but important cities and then villages, respectively. In His book, ibn Hawqal talks mostly about his observations (pp. 95, 195). He also makes specific comparison between states and regions in terms of their products and goods (p. 194) which shows his mastery of different regions of that era. Another important point is his particular attention to distances and routes (p. 52).

Istakhri's *Masalik al-Mamalik* is one of the oldest resources that can be considered as a reference for other authors. Compared with the aforementioned two resources, this book has a long history. This book has had a particular impact on later texts and played an exemplary role for others. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Mohammad al-Farsi al-Istakhri also

[1] The Shape of the Earth

known as Karkhi (died around 346 A.H./ 957 A.D.) was from Iranian city of Istakhr, Fars. He first wrote *Suwar al-Aqalim*, then completed it based on which *Masalik al-Mamalik* was written. Apparently, the core idea for writing this book was taken from Abu Zayad ibn Sahl Balkhi's *Suwar al-Aqalim* (Istakhri, 1990, Iraj Afshar's introduction, Vol. 9, see also Reza, 2001, Vol. 9, p.149).

Other resources such as Jayhani's *Ashkal al-Alam*, Ibn Rustah's *Al-Alag al-Nafisa*, Yaqubi's *Al-Buldan*, Nasir Khusraw's *Safarnameh*[1], Qudama ibn Jafar's *Al-Kharaj, The Travels* of Benjamin, Yaqut al-Hamaw's *Mujam al-Buldan*[2] and Qazwini's *Athar al-Bilad* provide precious information about commerce, routes, and different regions' products of that era. They are regarded as the main and fundamental resources in knowing more about Silk Road.

In addition to the resources that are indicated above, a number of researches have been carried out in the form of books, essays, and conferences. However, it is not possible to name all of them because of their abundance and variety. Although these texts and resources are very valuable, it is necessary to notice some points. First, owing to the length of Silk Road, authors from different regions believed that they have the right to highlight their own homeland and consider it as an important part of this road. This approach has led to the second feature of these texts which is the exaggeration caused as a result of extreme attention to local areas. Third point deals with the integration of the main route of Silk Road and the other side roads. As a result, many byways were considered as a significant part of Silk Road. Referring to other texts and references, some authors have not kept faithfulness and precision. Sometimes, they

[1] Book of Travels

[2] Dictionary of the Countries

have modified the content of their works in a way that is different from what the author means. Nevertheless, Frank and Bravindston's *Silk Road* and Hans Wilhelm Haussig's *The History of Central Asia and Silk Road* have great significance and reliability taking into account that they have rarely mentioned their research resources. On one hand, Haussig scarcely states his references, and on the other hand a kind of orientation to Europe and particular attention to this area can be seen in his texts.

B. Silk Road: Myth or Reality

The question is: Was there a route called Silk Road in reality? Was it made up by the contemporary man's mind who wanted to make a meaning and purposeful case using dispersed trade and commerce of the ancient world and asserted that Silk Road connects the East and West in terms of commerce? Is not there any exaggeration concerning the nature and functions of Silk Road? Occasionally it is referred to as if it were the main artery for commercial and industrial world of that era and life was impossible without it. Were past generations familiar with Silk Road even briefly? Do people, merchants and historical governments, as today, have a vague idea of its functions and other related issues?

As far as the survey was concerned, it is crystal clear that people in different regions along Silk Road did not have a proper idea of their surrounding areas. Therefore, how can we believe that there was a continuous road with functions that are defined today? It looks that there has been a lot of exaggeration to the extent that some contemporary authors have analyzed the formation of some governments and their measurements in line with this road. Furthermore, in some cases in the depths of history, they have tried to associate some side roads with Silk Road. The excitement for exaggeration was so intense that some authors

have considered any villages or unknown cities along Silk Road as parts of this route. Others have named maritime route that connects East Asia, India, and China to the West Asia and Africa 'Maritime Silk Road'. As an example, the Achaemenid Royal Road in Iran was considered to be along Silk Road and one of the first attempts to recognize it. However, this road whose definition and function are not clear was a regional, political, administrative, and less-travelled route which didn't connect specific demographic poles (Reza, 1987, pp. 234-235). Enayatollah Reza states, "There is still no great awareness of sideways in the Achaemenid period. Taking this issue into consideration, there is no doubt that sideways were connected in a huge and major route network. Silk Road cannot be separated from sideways. Certainly, large Silk Road was connected to other sideways in some areas" (1985, Vol. 1, Book 5, p. 592). There are not a few claims concerning Silk Road. Some declare, "The Achaemenid campaigns and conquests led to opening up commercial, pilgrimage, and tourism road which is called Silk Road today" (Afshar Sistani, 2012, p. 5). If any routes including sideways leading to dirt roads and seasonal byways were called Silk Road, there would be no further function and nature for Silk Road. Obviously, the road with such significance should be dubbed an international road. Now it should be asked what the features of an international road are? Does Silk Road have these characteristics?

If Silk Road were a world route, there would be a common global recognition or written documents which could prove the existence of a road with this name and function whose nature is definitely clear. If Silk Road had commercial purposes, which is mostly known for it, the existence of world commerce in that historical period must be surveyed. Was there any world commerce? What were its characteristics? World

goods? International trade (trade based on convention)? In other words, any international phenomenon requires its own international solutions, specifications, and requirements. Has such process occurred? As far as the present study is concerned, the answers to the above questions are often negative, and none of these items, such as goods, money, and regulations have global aspect. Most of them are more regional and local and at least one of the above issues is not raised at global level or even in multiple regions. Traditional history of the past world tended to be localistic. Meanwhile, only some essential goods like spice, pepper, salt, and silk were regarded as world luxury goods obtained in most areas over time and were not limited to specific regions. To put it another way, there are some exaggerations about Silk Road, and consequently descriptions of world trade are not correct and real. World trade has been formed continuously and slowly throughout the history which is not related to Silk Road. If Silk Road is considered as the only world commercial route, what should we call commercial roads in Andalusia, North Africa, Egypt, the East, and the West of Africa, relations in Mediterranean Basin and Egypt with Arabian Peninsula, Yemen, India, East Asia, and China which are not related to Silk Road?

Silk Road is formed through joined areas and their relations as connected loops. Therefore, in a route from China to Europe, there was no specific region exclusively called Silk Road, or there is no document or sign that it is said to be Silk Road. In other words, Silk Road is more abstract which is formed through connection of route networks from China to Europe in a way that people of that era could not imagine.

It is necessary to pay attention to some examples of the forks in this road to explain the above-mentioned issue. In this regard, the Chinese Royal Road reached Turpan (Turfan) and then forked. In Kashgar, this road

forked into some parts reaching Khorasan and Transoxiana[1]. In Transoxiana, it forked into four directions like crossroads. Such forks were occurred in every city of Khorasan like Merv, Balkh, Nishapur towards India, Sistan, Kerman, Ray, Gorgan, and so forth. The same situation was ocurred in Ray, Hamadan, and the cities of Iraq and Levant. Khwarazm Road extended to Oghuz land, from Oghuz land to Russia and the northern and eastern part of the Caspian Sea, through sea to the western part and Khazaria. In Khazaria, there were some specific forks. It extended to Azerbaijan in the south, Russia in the north, the Black Sea Basin in the southwest, and Ukraine in the west. The same situation was taken placed in Russia and Ukraine. Now the question is: Which fork is Silk Road? The explicit answer is none of them. It is not correct to consider Silk Road as a distinct line like a railroad extended from China to Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. The nature of land roads is that there are some disconnections, forks, two-way and three-way junctions, crossroads, etc.

It seems that we should pay more attention to this issue and not overstate in this regard. Moreover, we should not justify everything in the ancient world including regional trades, local and indigenous goods, regional and local money, commerce along Silk Road in international terms. International roads with the characteristics that claimants believe in did not exist in past.

C. Silk Road: Origins and Objectives

The route known as Silk Road is a new name for an ancient way to the antiquity of ancient civilizations of humanity. It seems that Ferdinand

[1] known in Arabic sources as Ma Wara an-Nahr

von Richthofen, the German geographer, coined this name for the first name. The reason behind choosing this name is that he believed the most expensive and important product that constantly crossed the road was silk. However, Myung correctly pointed out that although silk was important, it should not be exaggerated that the road was affected by this issue (ibid, p. 24).

Human's familiarity with silk, its production, and making process has a long history which has been a story, myth, and fable due to its value. Stories of Silk Road are related to the aristocratic class in which queens, princes, princesses, and emperors have played significant role showing the importance of silk for this group. There is an interesting story about how silk has been discovered, prepared, and produced. One day Xilingshi[1], the legendary Chinese empress, was in her garden when she picked some cocoons from a mulberry tree, and accidentally dropped one into her hot tea. When she pulled it out, she found it unwound into one long filament. Therefore, human discovered one of the important secrets of the nature. Since then, human has not let silkworm and cocoon go to use as the best cloth and introduce it as an aristocratic and global commodity. After the Chinese, the Japanese were the second tried to make and produce silk. Undoubtedly, they learned it from the Chinese who have been familiar with silk production since 5000 years ago. Compared to the Chinese, others have achieved this knowledge several centuries later. On the other hand, since silk was a valuable commodity produced in a remote area like China, it was full of mystery for other parts of the world. Owing to this fact, everybody in that era attempted to get the formula of this aristocratic commodity, which led to international spy stories. It was said that the Justinian, Byzantine emperor (about 550

[1] also known as Xi Lingshi

A.D.), sent two monks to China as spies. They brought several silkworms in the cylinder on their return. There are numerous stories about silk and its production in other regions in various resources (about some of these stories: Rouhi Uighur Kashgari, 1964, p. 36; Shahab, 1965, p. 235). If the recent story is true, it shows how slow silk distribution was. Despite the long history of silk production in China, it entered other regions with great delays. On the other hand, it is not necessary to complicate its distribution and justify it in a conspiratorial and spying term. This transfer has happened naturally and commonly. For instance, in the eighth century, the Japanese monks brought seeds of tea from China to Japan. Since then, tea planting has become common in that country. The same situation is true about silk.

Muslim historians have reported the technology of silk production as a result of friendly and targeted cooperation. Yaqubi has stated the arrival of industries and Chinese products to Babylon and Rome in this way, "The king of China sent some people to Babylon and ‘Anema’ of the Roman Empire on his behalf to find out the wisdom and industry there. He sent the Chinese industry, silk clothes, goods, and exported tools with them and asked them to bring every beautiful art and industry from Babylon and Rome, and learn their religious rules well. So, for the first time, the Chinese goods were transported for trade because the kings found the Chinese goods beautiful and admired them. They made ships and sent merchandise to China. Furthermore, foreign merchants came to China for the first time" (Yaqubi, 223/1).

Regardless of these stories, silk became a global commodity, and others began to follow the Chinese to produce it. But their silk never had the quality of the Chinese one. Another important issue is how to make, manufacture, and distribute silk technology in the world, which is

confusing. However, it is certain that China has been a cradle of silk. Rouhi Uighur Kashgari writes in his discussion of how the silk is distributed, "Undoubtedly, silk first arrived Hotan, then Kashmir, India, Iran, and other regions of the Central Asia" (ibid. p. 36). Certainly, wasting time is by no means an easy task and neither an essential requirement.

Silk Road and its history are both controversial issues. Some believe that Herodotus has mentioned the northern route of Silk Road (Haussig, p. 38) which is of course an exaggeration, and undoubtedly, Herodotus' purpose is not what Haussig says. In our opinion, we must believe in the existence of a set of roads called Silk (or any other nickname) that exactly connects the neighborhoods to the region and the region to other areas like a network .

The origin of Silk Road is from Chang'an in China, today known as Xi'an. Chang'an was considered a large capital which had great population centuries ago. The route was extended to the northwest of China through Vay valley. The Chinese called this part of route "Royal Road" passing through the valleys covered with berry trees which was adequately protected and controlled. China as the origin of Silk Road played a pivotal role in using this route. Mentioning China, Masudi believes that the Chinese were the founders of international commerce by shipbuilding and commercial development (Masudi, 1996, p. 131).

This way reached China's Huang Tuan which was actually located in Kansu state. Kansu was a special business and road center. The state of Kansu was somehow the business center of China, especially in the north and northwest, and most of the trade and commerce, especially the northern half, and even the central part of China, took place there. This

state was the gateway of China to the west and considered as customs for exporting the Chinese goods.

The road forked in two directions reaching Annecy. The first road was toward the northwest passing through Tarim Basin. The second road went to the south and southwest passing through the foothills of the Kunlun Mountains to the Taklamakan desert and then going to Pamir, passing through the Miran castle and the lake Loop, and then through Chirchin, Shan-shan, Hotan and Yarkant, and reached Syr Darya and Amu Darya Rivers and eventually ended up in Kashgar. The northern road led to the Turpan. Turpan was one of the most important commercial and cultural centers of Silk Road, and for a period of time was the southern capital of the Oghuz Turks and one of the trade centers of Manichaeism. After Turpan, the road went to Kerala then to the north extending in two parallel directions (north and south) with plenty of sharp bends reaching together at Kashgar. Therefore, Kashgar was an important city on Silk Road and a huge trading house as well as wharf. The north and south roads joined together in Kashgar, and entered the place called Berjesnki. Berjenski was the intersection of the Chinese commercial caravans and those coming from the West. So Kashgar was a very important place at the end and beginning of two roads. From there, the route extended to Balkh, then to Merv, Nishapur, Ray, Hamadan, Dinavar, Iraq and its various cities, including Baghdad, and then from different provinces, to the Damascus, Palestine, Egypt and the Mediterranean Basin, from there to the southern coasts of Europe and the rest of this continent. There was also a route from the Amu Darya, some cities of Sogdia, including Samarkand and Bukhara, to Khwarazm, from there to Volga and the Anatolia, the Black Sea, and Balkans, and sometimes from the eastern ports of the Caspian Sea to the western ports

like Baku, and from there through the Caucasus and Armenia went to Anatolia and Europe. In some cases, this road led from Ray to Zanjan, and Tabriz to Anatolia. (See more descriptions of Silk Road: Frank and Bravindston, p. 22).

Human's needs have led to the formation of global roads whose routes covered the old world from China to North Africa, Europe, North Europe, and Russia. Silk Road is one of them which can be defined within the domain of old roads. Regardless of people's awareness of a route called Silk Road, this road was naturally formed through the connection of various regions between the East and West. The main reason behind the formation of this Road was the need of various human societies to one another throughout history to make life better and easier. This ancient route not only circulated goods and products, but also exchanged the cultures, customs, trends, and so forth. Silk Road was a world road with a silk symbol linking the West and East. Commercial goods, science, technology, industry, and human culture have been shared on this route (see, Frank and Bravindston, p.22; Karimi, 2011, 9/222).

Although research indicates that Silk Road was opened up in the second half of the first century B.C. by Emperor Wu of Western Han and his commander Chang-Ch'ien, it was formed gradually over time. Therefore, setting exact time and date for the establishment of Silk Road is not so close to reality, but to some extent it can be said that in the first century B.C. the Road changed from a mono-regional state into a multi-regional road which later extended to the west of China.

The need of the Chinese to communicate with the western part of their land has played an important role in expanding this road and transforming it into a larger one. In the meantime, the Han dynasty of

China has played an important role in determining the route and directions of Silk Road to the West. The Han dynasty coincided with Kushan, Parthian, and the Roman Empire. These governments were located in the western part of China to Europe. The Chinese Han dynasty ruled over China in between 206 A.C. to 220 B.C., for about 400 years. The dynasty made a lot of efforts to identify its neighboring areas, including the western regions of China, the Central Asia, and have relation with them.

Nevertheless, the rise and development of Silk Road occurred in the Tang dynasty between the years of 618-907 A.D. coincided with the first three centuries of Islam. Unlike other former Chinese dynasties, the Tangs were not so isolated and intended to identify different regions (Gerald, 1989, p.367). Evidence also confirms that in the time of Tang, the situation in China was almost good and its population increased dramatically reaching 80 million people which was the highly populated area compared with other parts of the world (ibid, 349). But meeting the needs of both urban and rural population as well as artisans forced China to search in the west for the export and import of goods, products, and raw materials. The Tang era and the early Islamic centuries were the world's busiest and most traded periods that greatly affected Silk Road. In this situation, Silk Road rose to its peak during which besides agricultural products, seeds, and even domestic animals, dozens of different goods such as perfume, glass, gold, silver and other valuable metal coins, stones, clothes, paper, Chinese cosmetics, gunpowder, compass, etc. were generally exchanged.

Silk Road has a very strong cultural, ritual, and even artistic aspect. This cultural and artistic aspect was shaped at the same time with Silk Road. Buddhist missionaries, for example, followed precisely the direction of

the exchange of goods and took steps along that way to China. In the case of artistic and decorative aspects, they gave another usage to Silk Road. Buddhism entered China during the Han dynasty. Since Buddhism dealt with the masses of people, each place could be used for missionary works. So, on the road, the caves were chosen and decorated with various types of arts and decorative techniques like temples. For the first time, Buddhist missionaries and followers selected Kesirzing Cave in Xinjiang as a temple, and then went to Dong Hwang in Kansu. These areas were part of the royal road and main route of Silk Road in China (see, Leishchak, 1998, pp. 258, 264; about the influence of Buddhism as the oldest religion in China.). Silk Road was partly a road of tolerance. Therefore, most religions and rituals such as Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam had a strong and visible presence on Silk Road each of which tended to propagate their religion and faith with their own method.

D. Recognizing Different Areas of Silk Road from One Another

First, people in the eastern, western, and middle part of Silk Road had a vague, exaggerated or even imaginary idea of one another. For example, the inhabitants of the Central Asia and Khorasan, who were somewhat close to China, did not have a clear-cut view of China. They vaguely and doubtfully named those areas Hota, Hotan, China, and Indochina. Even though in the Mongol period, there were more interactions between China and many other areas, Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah did not have a clear idea of China and its neighborhoods (Rashid al-Din Fazlullah, 2006, pp. 1-2). Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah complained

about distance and lack of inquiry and analysis since it was thought that the province of China is different from Hota. It turned out that both were the same with different names. He mentioned that there is another southward province in the east, called Indochina meaning the Great China, by the Indians. The province of China is about one tenth of it (ibid. p. 2). It seems that compared to the early Islamic centuries, and even Tabari, Masudi and Sulayman ibn Abi Karimeh's works, there was less information about China in this historical period.

Apparently Khwaja received information from the representatives of the Chinese Mongol living in the court of Ilkhanate, which was very incomplete. At least, his information on Kandahar is surprising (ibid., P. 2). Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fadlullah states, "There is another province in the southwest of Hatay called Daylyv, Qrajang by Mongols and the Kandehar by the Indians. And we know it as Kandahar located between India and Tibet" (ibid.). Khwaja's writing shows the fact that even in the Mongol era, there was no proper understanding of the eastern and neighboring regions of Iran. This description of Khwaja about Kandahar is somewhat weird. Perhaps he would mean Kandahar in the northwest of India. However, at least, there is no reference to the famous city of Kandahar that the reader will notice. It demonstrates little information of Mongol era from the eastern countries, which is thought to be more carefully considered, according to the Mongol Empire inclusion in these regions.

But the author of *Hudud al-Alam*, who had more information about China due to living in the vicinity of this area, writes about Hotan, "It is located between two rivers. People there are wild and cannibal" (Hudud al-Alam, 1984, pp. 63-62). Although he was living in Jowzjan province

which is somewhat close to China and its surroundings, this citation shows the author's lack of knowledge.

Haussig also believes that the Central Asians did not have a clear picture of China (Haussig, p. 216). This suggests that there was not much direct relation between these neighboring regions. Maybe the travelers and historians such as Sulayman ibn Abi Karimeh and Masudi get more information on China by sea rather than land (see Masudi, ibid, p. 1/130; Sulayman ibn Abi Karimeh -Sulayman, 2002, p. 56). Basically, due to many problems, such as the existence of groups, tribes, and different sovereignty, it was not possible to communicate directly with China. For example, it has never been mentioned that Greek, Romanian, or Russian caravans have gone to China. For instance, Oghuz merchants in the Huang Tuan border were waiting for the Chinese goods. Accordingly, China's neighbors were buying goods from China and transferring them to other areas (Haussig, p. 217). But apparently the Chinese got better and more accurate information from the western parts of Silk Road in the first century.

Based on historical resources and reports along with recent researches, emperor Wu of Han (157-187 B.C.) sent his commander, Chang-Ch'ien, to the west in order to recognize Silk Road route. He continued his journey to Turkestan and sent his envoys to other areas. He was commissioned to go to the Balkh Province (Ta-hia, Macedonian residents of Balkh) to convince Yueh-Chih to enter into an alliance with China to attack Hiung-nus. Defeating Hiung-nus, they could have contact with neighboring regions, and trade caravans could pass. After 10 years in captivity, Chang-Ch'ien managed to escape and continued his journey to Fergana (Tuva, Tuvan), Kang-kiu in Samarkand, and Balkh respectively. He returned to China in 126 B.C. and suggested a

direct way from the Western China to Balkh based on his own observations. Opening this way, they could make use of these regions' various goods and products. After several years, this commander again followed the same mission in 115-119 B.C. According to the Chinese resources, his second trip was very effective in recognizing and opening Silk Road (Mazaheri, p. 595). Overall, his reports include information such as distances, neighboring regions, their location related to China, governments of cities, goods, products, population, markets, armies, and so forth which were very significant for the Chinese and helped them recognizing western neighbors of China. Nevertheless, it took two centuries for the Chinese caravans to reach one of the western neighbors, Korasan (Gharib, 1987, p. 255; Frank and Bravindston, p. 12).

On his return, Chang-Ch'ien, who escaped from Hiung-nus' captivity in 126 B.C., suggested a direct way from the Western China to Balkh passing through the following areas:

- Fergana with 70 small and big allied cities, urban population who were farmers, various crops such as wheat, rice as well as grapes, fine horses, fortified cities and houses, over one hundred thousand population and archers, in the southern west side of Hiung-nus and the western part of Huns.
- The nomadic Wusun's land with ten thousand archers ready to fight in the northern east of Fergana.
- Bukhara (Yuezhi/ Vaejah) with one to two hundred thousand archers in the west of Fergana, the north of river Vay.
- Ta-hia lands in the south of Amu Darya, southwest of Fergana, with fortified cities and houses, one million population who were merchants, different goods available in the markets of the capital city. India was located in the southeast of this region.

- Parthian land (Annecy, Arsacids, and Parthia) in the eastern bank of Amu Darya, west of Kushan emperor with one hundred big and small fortified cities full of large markets, traders, silver coins with portraits of kings, urban population growing rice and grapes.
- Yuezhi lands (Tajiks in Turkestan) in the west of Fergana, north of Syr Darya, having warm and humid climate in the west of Parthian land, great population who were farmers growing rice (quoted by Karimi, 2006, p. 226).

Chang-Ch'ien sent his envoys to Fergana, Samarkand, Balkh, Parthia, India, Sind, Bukhara, and other neighboring areas. In the following years, they returned with the products of these lands. The king of China used to organize trades with Western China personally since 115 B.C. Around 105 B.C. or 115 B.C., the Chinese opened the west trade and caravan route seeking rare products and goods of the Western China (e.g. green and white jade, lapis, colorful glasses, and strong horses), and advanced to the middle Asia. Apparently, this was the first Chinese caravan reaching the borders of Khorasan (Parthia) (Gharib, 1987, p. 255 & Frank and Bravindston, p. 12). Since then, the Chinese became more sensitive to this route and decided to establish some organizations for its administration and security around 105 B.C. (Mazaheri, 1994, p. 601).

About Chang-Ch'ien's journeys and reports, it is necessary to pay attention to some points as further supplementary explanations. First, he was pursuing political and military affairs more and seeking an alliance to confront the Hiung-nus. Second, although the provided information was important for the Chinese, it was not enough. On the other hand, the Chinese had access to such information and researches while their neighbors did not have much information about China and other central

regions. Third, paying attention to this information, one can see a number of reports concerning archers and lancers, i.e. the warriors of cities and lands, reflecting a military commander's attitude. Although interesting information was provided about the economic and commercial condition of various regions, they could not be considered as the main reasons of his mission. To sum up, his reports are more or less exaggerated. For instance, how is it possible to justify one to two hundred thousand archers in Bukhara? Why was it necessary to have these archers? If there were two hundred archers, it would outnumber the population which is not believable. Furthermore, his other statistics on the population of cities and regions are also exaggerated. However, despite the Chinese efforts, the other neighboring areas, especially in the West, where the route passed, did not try to recognize it.

Therefore, there was sort of unawareness in these regions. Except for the situation and requirements of that era, it seems that there would be other tangible reasons for this lack of awareness. What are these reasons? In other words, in spite of the economic and commercial benefits that this recognition had, why is there a sort of reluctance in recognizing this route fast and in a tangible way? Evidently, major factors in this regard had economic and political roots.

Initially, the needs of the ancient people were somewhat limited and more reliant on domestic and local products and goods to be met. They were satisfied with this situation. Therefore, in the old world, consumerism was not intense like today and it can be regarded as one of the factors behind slowness of recognition and commerce. Second, the problem was the Chinese themselves. China needed this route more than other regions due to its area, economic power as well as vast population, but its benefits did not allow to open the doors to other countries. Of

course due to adventurous and peaceless tribes, they were right to some extent. Nomadic and adventurous neighbors of the northwest were major threats to the Chinese. Steppe nomads (Mongolia and Turkestan) from Juvans, Huns, Tatars, Turks, Mongols tribes, and others were not regarded as good neighbors for China and often considered dangerous for them. Owing to this fact, China avoided open relations to some extent. Building the Great Wall of China can manifest this issue (on the historical relations of the Chinese with these tribes and peoples, Saunders, 1993, p. 28). Moreover, the Chinese did not like to provide others with their own inventions and excavations because of economic profit or maybe jealousy to some extent and tried to conceal them from curious eyes. For instance, they attempted hard to keep silk production procedure as a secret so that others could not achieve it. Their efforts were successful for centuries and silk merchants from all over the world, including Rome, were not aware of it (Franconianstone, 1997, pp. 154-156). We should not attribute all shortcomings to the Chinese since they did their best. Their neighbors not only refused to try but also created obstacles. In this regard, Haussig rightly mentioned that neighbors of China themselves were barriers to recognizing others. In fact, they were middlemen buying goods and even exporting them to China. Accordingly, they did not let others to have direct relation with China (Haussig, p. 217). In those days, merchants' interests required them to move their products locally and ignore remote areas. More importantly, besides regional profits, these obstacles and nuisances were sometimes created internationally by emperors and other great powers. Particularly, governments in the middle parts of Silk Road protected their intermediary role heavily and did not allow the East (China) and West (Europe) to know each other. For example, in the first century A.D.,

China attempted to recognize, the Roman Empire, Tutsin's territory so a Chinese officer named Canning was sent to the Roman Empire and the Mediterranean Sea to learn more about the routes. But Parthians who had intermediary roles set barriers to his exploration and did not show him the way to Rome. They led him to the Persian Gulf instead of the Mediterranean Sea (Mazaheri, 1993, pp. 598). As a result, political and economic interests as well as nativism hampered more recognition. But eventually, these obstacles and deceptions were not fruitful due to the power of economic interest and necessity of obviating human needs.

E. History of Relations on Silk Road before Islam

Perhaps, at first, the Chinese and to some extent the Romans struggled to recognize the commercial and industrial groups in the remote areas of their world. Silk Road became meaningful at its both ends, i.e. China and Europe, which were the origin and the destination of this route. Accordingly, compared to others, the Chinese and Europeans tried to know each other as much as possible. They often faced barriers since route was long and settlements were dangerous. In the Achaemenid era and the coinciding period in China, two parts did not know each other. "Although the Chinese always recorded history and their land was known as the heaven of historians, the Achaemenids and Chinese dynasty were not aware of each other and there is no mention of their familiarity in any historical reports" (Khalilipour , 2017, p. 60). Additionally, according to a scholar named Defina, "The Sogdian merchants for the first time talked about Iran on their trip through Silk Road to China" (ibidi, p. 64).

As stated, the Chinese did their best but governments along Silk Road attempted to prevent direct relations between the two ends due to their

own interests. On Hanshu inscription it is written that the Roman emperor sought to send ambassadors to China, however, the Parthians demanded the monopoly of the Chinese silk trade. Therefore, the relation between China and Rome did not come to an end. In the Chinese resource Hoeshou (History of Han Dynasty), it is written that Datsin (Rome) was located in the western part of the sea known as the West Sea (the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea). The Roman emperor decided to send an ambassador to China but the Parthians wanted to buy silk from the Chinese and sell it to people in Datsin. To do so, they closed the road and did not allow anyone to pass. In 166 A.D. Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor, sent an expedition with various gifts to China. After that, the commercial relations between China and Rome started directly. The Parthians attempted to keep these two main customers away from each other. In this case, they would not know the real price of goods and products (Mazaheri, 1993, pp. 592-598; Gerald, 1989, pp. 219-220). For three centuries, in spite of the Chinese numerous attempts, the Parthians refused to guide the Chinese expedition because of their interests and fear of close ties between the East and West. How were the Achaemenid routes considered as the first attempts to recognize Silk Road and dominate it? Furthermore, the Achaemenids were not aware of the existence of China.

Why did not the existential nature of Silk Road rely more on the east (China) and the west (Europe and the Mediterranean Sea)? Why did these two parts try to know each other well while others were setting barriers? The answer is that the economic power of these ends created different necessities connecting them to each other. They tried to obviate these needs through relations. Meanwhile, the middle parts of the China did not have economic and financial power. That is why, by discovering

maritime routes in the modern era (from the sixteenth century onwards), Silk Road became sluggish and was forgotten to some extent. It implies that the nature of Silk Road depended more on the existence of its two eastern and western poles. It is no exaggeration to say that others in between these two poles only had intermediary roles which were not sometimes played appropriately. Perhaps, in this historic era, the rise of Islam made middle parts, the third pole of Silk Road completing its real and natural puzzle. The reason was that the advent of Islam led to the prosperity of the middle part. In this period, the middle parts (the Islamic world) bolstered Silk Road before the Mongol Invasion and released it from hardship. It will be discussed in the next sections.

Now, in what follows a question arises: Why were China and Europe which were the influential and permanent players in Silk Road important? Undoubtedly, the growth of commerce depends on specific conditions without which it is not possible to have particular view and prospect. Why commerce develop or become unsuccessful relies on many factors. First, economic power and talent, material facilities as well as industrial growth are the prerequisites of commerce and its development. Second condition deals with quality, type, and livelihood. Finally, population is important which has direct relation with the previous two items. It means that regardless of the first two condition, total number of people is available. These three interwoven factors can lead to the success or failure of commerce.

Now, in line with the above discussion, only the third condition, i.e. population, is dealt with since it is the average of the first two conditions. Where was the most populated area along Silk Road? In other words, how was population distributed throughout the world, particularly along Silk Road? Where were the dense and privileged population distributed

in? Although calculating the population estimates is not an easy task especially in the distant past, there are some statistics and estimates in the west and east, particularly China and Europe (A brief summary of the population estimates in different parts of the world, see Homayoun, Bi-ta, Population quarterly, p.3). However, there were no figures and statistics in many parts of the world. This issue is highly remarkable in the middle parts of Silk Road where there was rural and tribal population. However, two criteria can be used to estimate the past population. Current population itself can be a criterion or prospect of the past population. Or at least, the very first statistics can be used as a benchmark for comparing two distant points in the history of a region. However, the current demographic policies must be taken into consideration. As an instance, China and Iran with the population of about one billion and half and 80 million respectively can be taken to the depth of history. China's population was twenty times larger than that of Iran. When China had 20 million people, Iran's population was one million. Similarly, nowadays, China's population is several times larger than that of the Middle East which is the middle ring of Silk Road. It is worth mentioning that the same trend can be applied to the past population. Another populous area in the history has been Europe. Although, today, Europe and even some other parts experience negative population growth because of new demographic policies and other issues, there is no doubt that it had large population in past. It goes without saying that these two areas were the main poles of products concerning agriculture. Regardless of other condition, population will be focused on since it is the main factor taking economic and material issues and talents of a region into account. Aside from the above discussion, fortunately, recent studies have been carried out on population estimates which confirm population density in China

and Europe. Fitzgerald has provided various statistics and figures on China's population in different periods based on Chinese resources. In 1083 A.D. / 478 A.H. the population of China was about ninety million (Gerald, p. 438). Since the fifteenth century, Colin McEvedy the author of *The Atlas of World Population History* has estimated population in different parts of the world based on comparison which can serve as a guide to learn more about past. In his first estimates of population, McEvedy has attempted to provide the number of population and identify the most populous areas, namely China, IOndia, and Europe. Based on his reports, about 80 percent of the world's population was concentrated in these three regions (McEvedy, 2007, p. 444). The next populous areas are Japan and Russia. In the middle regions of the Earth, including Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, population density is low. Along the banks of the Nile population is centralized. The Tigris, Euphrates, and the Anatolia in Iraq are the next populated areas. In this report, Iran's population is very scattered and decentralized from Kabul to Mesopotamia (ibid, p. 310). According to McEvedy's first estimates of population in 1483 A.D. / 887 A. H. (coinciding the Aq Qoyunlu), population of China, India, Europe, and Japan was 120, 110, 73, and 15 million respectively. At the same time, the population of Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, Anatolia, Egypt, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula was less than 40 million. From the west of North Africa, i.e. Morocco, to Central Asia, population was much lower than three populated areas including China, Europe, and India. In 1643 A.D. / 1053 A.H. (coinciding the Safavid dynasty), this population changed in this way: China 170, India 130, Europe 100, and Japan 20 million showing remarkable increase. Meanwhile, population from Central Asia to North Africa including Iran does not change noticeably (ibid, p. 311). But in

1815, the beginning of the nineteenth century, population of China, India, Europe, and Japan increased to 320, 190, 200, and 30 million respectively while the population of the broader region from North Africa to Central Asia was estimated to be 45 million changing slightly. Throughout these periods, population of Iran (including Afghanistan and Turkmenistan) increased to 10 million which is subtle (McEvedy, pp. 444-445). However, it is worth reminding that the aforementioned population estimates is not related to our discussion directly since it is for the period after the Mongol invasion, in the Safavid to Qajar dynasties. If we go back in time, the same figures can be obtained. The murder and massacre of the Mongols should not be overlooked at all which affected the population of Central Asia, Iran, and Iraq. It should be noted that Mongol massacre was far larger than the Chinese.

Undoubtedly, population in China, India, and India was centralized in the east and Europe in the west. These two poles' attempts led to the commercial growth and opening of Silk Road. The aforementioned population demonstrates the economic and commercial power as well as industrial and semi-industrial products of these regions compared to the other areas. Therefore, based on the provided introduction, nature of Silk Road relied on the relations and endeavors of these two areas.

For the sake of subject matter, a definition of Silk Road should be provided in terms of time and location. It seems that the origin of Silk Road dates back to the first century A.D. when the first Chinese trade caravan reached the borders of Khorasan (Gharib, 1987, p. 255; Frank and Bravindston, p. 12). It should be stated that the Chinese were the first who attempted to have relations with the Central Asia, Rome, and Europe. As Masudi highlighted, the Chinese tried hard to have land and maritime relations (vol. 1, p. 130). In fact, their efforts did not come to

results since the seventh century A.D. (the early second century A.H.). In other words, it did not appear to be an international and transregional issue since China had a part of Silk Road and commercial relations and Rome had the another end of it. Meanwhile, the middle parts of Silk Road refused to try to recognize the other regions, but also set some barriers. Of course, it had numerous economic, political, etc. reasons. The economic factor must be taken very seriously. For example, the economic power of Rome in the Anatolian and Mediterranean regions, and China, was far stronger than the Parthian, Achaemenian, Sasanian or Central Asian tribal territories. Therefore, the middle ring of Silk Road forming the bridge between Rome (Europe) and the East (China) did not earnestly engage in international trades, or they might not need it. As an instance, the Romans' needs and attempts to get silk was not comparable with the poor areas of the Western and Central Asia. Anyway, the Chinese could not pass the Central Asia. Eventually, in the sixth century A.D. Turkish Empire was founded and dominated Sogdia and the Central Asia. In the meantime, the Byzantine Empire tried to have relations with the Turks and Sogdian rulers in order to pass through the Sassanid territory. However, their success did not last too long because the Turks were defeated by the Chinese once again (Saunders, the same: p. 32 onwards). Tang dynasty could weaken the Turks' power and go to the West (East Turkistan). But, advent of Islam was the main obstacle to the progress of the Chinese in the Central Asia. Accordingly, the western Turks could escape from the Chines army's attack. Apparently, the Muslim army stopped the Chinese advance in 133 A.H. / 750 A.D. (ibn al-Athir: 9/83). The Muslims and Chinese on one hand, the Byzantines and Europeans on the other hand became neighbors. Following the

changes occurred along Silk Road, we reach Islamic era which will be discussed in details in the next chapters.

Chapter Two: Silk Road in Islamic Era

Introduction

The role and impact of Islam on Silk Road can be surveyed from various dimensions. Apparently, in order to get a better picture and perspective of the discussion, it is necessary to consider the following items:

1. Islam was founded in a mercantile environment, the commercial city of Mecca. Moreover, the founder of Islam was a merchant and trader himself. His Sahababs[1] and caliphs were also merchants or had jobs that were related to commerce and trade. Therefore, they knew trade and commercial situations well. As a result, commerce was important for them manifested in their actions and commands.

2. Urbanization flourished in the Islamic period, and subsequently several cities were established in a short time. Some cities such as Baghdad, Basra, Cairo, Kairouan, and Shiraz became metropolis, and cities such as Ray, Balkh, Merv, Nishapur, Damascus, Isfahan, Bukhara, Samarkand, etc. developed tremendously. Urbanization cannot survive without urban commodities, products, and artifacts, therefore, undoubtedly, these cities with their great population needed thriving commerce and trade.

3. Islam with its great unprecedented empire united a part of the world through which a larger part of long Silk Road passed.

4. Muslims showed lots of efforts and curiosity in recognizing different regions inside and outside of their own world. It seems that commerce was one of their reasons to explore and recognize other areas. Teschner believes that besides political expansion of Islam and religion, amazing

[1] The companions

growth of commercial activities was one of the reasons for writing and publishing geographical texts (1997, p. 30). Referring to *Silsilat al-Tawarikh,* Teschner claims that this book shows the merchants' intense scientific interest (ibid, p. 34). Haussig asserted that both *Hudud-al Alam* and Kashgari's *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* were written on the advice of traders and merchants. If so, profound impact of commerce in those days can be shown (Wat, 1983, p. 35).

In the first step, Islam could eliminate the intruding and threatening powers from the main East and West commercial routes, including Silk Road. Accordingly, with the advent and rise of Islam, it is possible to talk about the generalities of Silk Road since during this period, Silk Road was confined to the three major powers, i.e. China, Islam, and Byzantine Empire. Since then, Silk Road had its obvious functions and became lucrative. The main Silk Road was formed on regular basis with high traffic and transportation during this period of time. If Silk Road exists, its rise and prosperity should be related to this historic time. In spite of several claims concerning the positive role of the Mongol Empire in the growth of Silk Road, it might develop remarkably from the early second century to the early seventh century A.H. (thirteenth century A.D.). After the Mongol invasion, this trend was interrupted. At first glance, it may seem that the foundation of global Mongol Empire boosted the commerce. But, the Mongol's policy was not in line with the development of commerce and industry due to some reasons. Among these reasons, their social structure and livelihood based on animal husbandry and nomadism were regarded as the main barriers. The Mongol tribes refused to abandon nomadism while commercial prosperity was dependent upon urbanization. Everyone who has the least knowledge of the Mongol invasion and its consequences will realize that

they not only destroyed urbanization in some regions such as Khorasan, Transoxiana, Iraq, and the Northern China but also refused to rebuild them after attacks because they were unable to make these areas and cities habitable again. Moreover, the urban population was destroyed and could not be easily restored. As Mostofi writes, "If one thousand year passes, justice fills everywhere, and nothing bad happens, these cities never gain their former population again" (2003, p. 582). It goes without saying that Mostofi lived in Ilkhani era which indicates that the Ilkhanates were not influential in the process of rebuilding. However, it is worth mentioning that they lifestyle and livelihood were not in line with urbanization. Additionally, the Mongols, particularly multitudes of Ulus that clashed with each other, created sort of constant insecurity which posed serious threat to the commercial growth and development. Clashes among Jochi Ulus, Chagatai, and Ilkhanate created particular insecurity along Silk Road. All of the abovementioned issues and other cases which cannot be stated here show that trade and commerce could not thrive in the Mongol era (for more information on the impact of the Mongol invasion on the economic and social conditions see: Petrozhevsky: 1988, pp. 456, 461, 470). With the Mongol invasion, the Silk Road suffered a severe decline. Nevertheless, some like Bartold believe in the growth and development of Silk Road in the Mongol era and their empire (Bartold, 1988, pp. 1, 150, 151). This claim can seriously cause doubt and denial. In the Mongol era and the subsequent periods, Silk Road lost its prosperity which is neglected in this text since it is not related to the discussion. In the late Middle Ages, the Age of Discovery[1] in Europe as well as the ever-growing development of the maritime routes since the beginning of the sixteenth century A.D. (tenth

[1] The Age of Exploration

century A.H.), Silk Road was forgotten. The reason was that the world's two population poles, i.e. China and Europe, followed their commercial relations and activities through maritime routes which were advantageous for them. When these two poles, two ends of Silk Road, left the network, Silk Road practically lost its useful function and joined history forever. As a result, the heyday and golden age of Silk Road through all ups and downs of the world history were during the seven centuries of Islamic period and empire. Given the above, it is possible to set several historical stages for Silk Road:

1. The age of formation - from the first century to the seventh century A.D.: Silk Road seems to have been formed since the first century A.D. However, some have referred to one century before Christ. Although from the first century to the seventh century (the rise of Islam), attempts were made from two ends of the road, i.e. China and Europe (Rome and Byzantne) to have further relations, each faced obstacles. Rome and Byzantine were confronting the Parthian, Seleucid, and Sassanid empires and China was struggling with various tribes, including the Turks. The Byzantine alliance with Turks was in the same direction. Anushiruwan attempted to occupy Yemen in order to put pressure on the Roman Empire not on the borders of Rome but miles away in Yemen. Apparently there was no way to get rid of these obstacles and destructions. Myeong, a Chinese researcher, believes that real Silk Road was opened during Wu Empire of Han Dynasty in second century B.C. When Emperor Wu sent his commander, Chang-Ch'ien, to unite Yueh-Chih against Huns, he traveled to the north of Afghanistan which is the heart of the Central Asia. Perhaps his mission was the first regular attempt

(ibid, 32). Undoubtedly, like other routes and ways, Silk Road which was formed slowly and gradually does not have particular foundation date.

2. The age of growth and prosperity - from the seventh century to the thirteenth century A.D.: Considering what was mentioned earlier, the advent of Islam took away most of the obstacles of Silk Road, created special unity at least in part of the world, and separated trade from politics. Moreover, Islamic sovereignty prevented its dominions to erect barriers on the way of trade and commerce, because there are no reports of this period regarding the confrontation of Muslim sovereignty or Islamic governments with trade. On the other hand, the great number of Muslim governments boosted commerce in some cases. In addition, Muslims made great efforts to recognize and discover universe more (Teschner, p. 30). Since Islam was a missionary religion, it inevitably sought to develop its territory in various ways. This is what led Muslims to discover the world those days. Totally, Silk Road had great traffic in Islamic era because of various reasons which will be discussed later. It also experienced one of the most important periods of prosperity at least before the Mongol invasion which was unprecedented in its history. There is no doubt that this period is Silk Road's age of growth and development, however, the reasons which led to this fact are debatable. Myeong believes that, "Transaction between the East and West peaked in the seventh and eighth century" due to the wealth, ability, and the degree of civilization of Tang and Sui Empires (ibid, p. 24). Although the role of China cannot be denied and ignored, it is not fair to attribute the prosperity of Silk

Road only to Tang and Sui Dynasties. Paying close attention, one can understand that these two centuries coincided with the early Islamic centuries. Islamic sovereignty had created appropriate and safe condition for making connections between the East and West, therefore, Tang and Sui Dynasties could succeed in gaining commercial prosperity. On the other hand, the rise of the Islamic world raised the level of demand in the world, which provided the opportunity for the Chinese to improve. Therefore, the heyday of Silk Road was meaningless without the role of Islam.

3. The age of decline and collapse: Silk Road ebbed or even collapsed after the Mongol invasion and the Europeans' Age of Discovery in the sixteenth century. Myeong stated that Silk Road lost its significance since the fifteenth century. He provided the following three factors for this decline:
    1. Discovering maritime routes: It was not necessary for Europe and China to travel through the broad continents.
    2. The death of Amir Timur, constant political instability as well as cultural and economic recession in the Central Asia: This region could no longer play its intermediary role between the East and West.
    3. In 1424, the Emperor Yonglu of the Ming Dynasty decided to close the northwestern borders of China (ibid, 24). If this researcher's claims are true, discovering maritime routes should be considered as the main reason. Other items that he has listed should be considered as subtopics.

Nonetheless, some European scholars have provided negative evaluation of the role and impact of Islam on Silk Road. According to Henri Pieron, Belgian historian, victory of the Arabs and emergence of the caliphate

disrupted the economic relations between the East and Western Europe which were stable during the ancient times and separated these two great regions (Belyayev, reza, p. 75). Although some scholars have considered parts of these claims to be true, Bartold has proved the weakness of such claims which are filled with exaggeration and bias. Others believe that Islam prevented commerce by putting pressure on the Mediterranean Basin and Anatolia which made it a government reluctant to have commerce and urban system that even stopped Europe's development (about two opposing views, on the impact of Islam on positive or negative trade with Europe, see: Samaran: 1997, pp. 108-110). It seems that such views should be looked at with doubt and suspicion. Perhaps the European collapse, even if true, occurred due to different reasons such as domestic problems and the inability to adapt to the world trading system. Moreover, the Europeans were dubious and suspicious about the commercial Silk Road from the early days and attempted to find other alternative routes to Silk Road due to their own interests.

Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan's measures to mint a coin was considered as enmity by the Eastern Roman Empire to the extent that they attacked his territory (Lewis, 1990, p. 73). If the above issues are discussed in a cohesive study with historical references, one can carefully and precisely explain the role of Islam, which had the great and main part of Silk Road, in this route's development and prosperity.

A. The Role of Islam in Removing the Historical Obstacles by Creating a United Government in the Middle and Western Part

Initially, based on the writings of Haussig, a western scholar and expert in commerce and roads, aforementioned claims regarding the negative impact of Islam on international trade can be criticized and denied. He writes, "Victory of Islam created a novel situation for Silk Road and a

turning point in its history. Occupying Syria and Egypt, Islam ruled over the relations along the southern and maritime road which were the legacy of the Eastern Roman Empire. With the obedience of Mesopotamia and Iran, the Arabs succeeded the Sassanid Empire and extended their empire up to Alexander's realm by occupying the northwest of India and Central Asia (Haussig, Vol. 2, p. 30). Bernard Lewis has highlighted this view with a seriousness that the advent of Islam not only ended the long-lasting conflicts between Iran and Rome but also created a unified governmental and commercial system that connected the Central Asia to the Mediterranean Basin for the first time since Alexander's Empire (Lewis, p. 68).

Therefore, the main routes of Silk Road and Advieh were available for the Muslims. Haussig believes that only the northern route extended from the south of Russia to the north of China were not under their control (p. 37). Haussig's opinion is not correct since the Muslims had control over the main part of this route. For example, the Samanids, Seljuqs, Khwarazmians, etc. ruled over the Khwarazm and Central Asian routes. The spread of Islam led to the prosperity and credit of the western part of the Silk Road (ibid., p. 58). The Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, which dominated the vast region of Central Asia, Iraq, Levant, and Iran, credited the western part of Silk Road. In other words, this part of Silk Road became rich and busy with variety of economic and financial demands which were unprecedented. Major cities with great economic power were founded in this region and the presence of the royal court in line with other issues added to its significance, which was matchless in the history. Now, this area was at the heart of the Islamic Empire, or even the Islamic world, with various routes crossing this region because of religious, administrative, and military reasons. Consequently, it became

extremely important. The rise of Islam and its territorial acquisitions had particular impacts on the functions of Silk Road. The Muslim conquests in the Central Asia (751 A.D. / 133 A.H.) marked a key milestone in the history of Silk Road. This year, the Chinese were defeated by the Muslims which cost them too much. This decisive victory exerted a great influence on China's history and took the Chinese away from the Central Asia. Moreover, the most important consequence of this battle was the familiarity of the Muslims with paper. Muslims learned this technique from the Chinese captives. This familiarity greatly influenced the industrial and cultural relations of that day from Turkestan to Europe.

On the other hand, after this battle, the Muslims became more specialized in the production of high-quality silk which was exclusive to China. Now, the Chinese captives trained the Muslims how to raise silkworms and harvest cocoons. Soon, high quality silk was produced all over the Islamic regions from Merv to other parts. This high quality silk entered Europe through al-Andalus[1] to Sicily (Frank, Irene, Brownstone, David, 1989, p. 252). In the second and third centuries A.H., Silk Road became more prosperous. It can be said with certainty that Islam globalized the trade and commerce those days and expanded merchandise in a vast territory from China to Europe. The reason was that Islamic Empire was in the middle of the world and had relations with broad areas from Asia to the Mediterranean Basin, North Africa and parts of Anatolia in a positive way. This wide territorial unity was consolidated by ideological strength and had particular prosperity and growth. The foundation of big cities, dynamic relations within the Islamic world, including pilgrimage to the Ka'bah a well as sightseeing, religious, scientific, educational, and expedition trips created conditions which added to the significance of

[1] Muslim Spain

routes and commerce, particularly. Pigou Luskaia confirms this claim stating that, "Iran's economy was generally simple and natural before the Arab conquest" (1999, p. 365). Nevertheless, Bartold states that urban life expanded and grew in the early Islamic centuries after the end of the Sasanian Empire showing the differences before and after Islam (1997, p. 35). On the other hand, referring to *Spirit of Wisdom*[1] and *Letter of Tansar*, Pigou Luskaia presents the hostile and negative attitudes toward the artisan class in the Samanid Empire (Pigou Luskaia, 378), which shows that important part of commerce was neglected before Islam.

Based on what was mentioned earlier, Silk Road, as a major international trade route in the ancient world, was connected from China to Central Asia, Iran, West Asia, and the Mediterranean Basin. This important road was one of two trade routes connecting the ancient world to the present. Although this route is known as Silk Road based on Richton's, a German scholar, efforts, silk is merely its symbol. All the needs and requirements of the old world, which could not be produced in a region such as agricultural products, seeds, seedlings, fruits, cattle, military weapons, luxury goods, and cultural products, were exchanged along this road. The busiest trade routes of the old world, i.e. Silk Road and Advieh, were located in the west of Asia extended from India to Yemen, Saudi Arabia, particularly Hejaz, and the Mediterranean coasts.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Islam, Islamic Empire, and subsequently Islamic governments globalized and modernized commerce and put an end to the economic discord among the dispersed regions. The geographical location of Islam accelerated commerce and the related trends. Occupation of the middle part of the world and foundation of the large empire from Morocco and Andalusia to the

[1] Minu-ye Xeræd

Central Asia as well as Azerbaijan to Yemen and the south of Egypt made a single community in a broad part of the world in those days. Even when the political and territorial unity unravelled, ideological integrity, which was essential and effective, filled the gap to some extent. It should be noted that in the history of Islam up to the present era, there were no specific rigid borders between the Islamic governments due to their fluid nature to the extent that one can cautiously say that there were no real borders between them. Therefore, in practice, there was no specific controlled border even in a large part of the Muslim world. This fact was definitely true until the Mongol invasion. Other factors leading to the economic growth were the establishment of the lasting security that Islamic governments had, kind of mental and psychological security formed as a result of ideological unity as well as ethical and religious discipline. Except for banditry which is indispensable even in today's world, particular commercial security was established. Therefore, great unity was created from Andalusia and Morocco to the Central Asia. Accordingly, no one was alienated, and all were the members of Ummah. This economic and commercial unity obviated the various interwoven demands of the society and exerted remarkable influence on the world trade and roads, especially Silk Road.

B. Positive Attitudes towards Islam: Historical and Economic Frameworks, Opportunity for Silk Road's Growth

Islam was formed in a commercial area. The magnanimous messenger of this religion was a merchant before revelation. Accordingly, Islam extended from a commercial environment through international trade route, i.e. Silk Road and Advieh. The expansion of Islam towards Levant, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, etc. caused Muslims to have access to another international highway called Silk Road. Now, based on the mentioned

situation, did the rise of Islam create an opportunity for the international commerce, particularly Silk Road? Could Islam provide suitable conditions for others to make use of the world routes based on the measures that had been taken? Did Islam deal a death blow to Silk Road and refuse to help its growth through threat and indifference? Did Islam help the world commerce? Are there any cases to pay attention to commerce in the world of Islam based on its nature? Were the occupation and domination of Silk Road and Advieh enough for Islam to have an approach in line with commerce? Did Islam provide the context and condition to make the most of Silk Road and trade assuming the existence of the mentioned approach? Now, following issues will be elucidated in line with the aforementioned discussion to answer the questions and shed some light on Islam's attitude towards trade and related theoretical and practical measures.

As mentioned earlier, Islam originated in a commercial region, and its messenger was a merchant. Therefore, Muslims were familiar with commerce and trade both mentally and intellectually. Moreover, there are numerous Quranic verses and hadith on trade and merchandise. For instance in *The Cow* it is stated that, "God has permitted trafficking, and forbidden usury" (verse, 257). In other verses it is mentioned that trade should not distract people from remembrance of God which shows the significance of commerce. "… are men whom neither commerce nor trafficking diverts from the remembrance of God and to perform the prayer, and to pay the alms, fearing a day when hearts and eyes shall be turned about…" (The Light, verse, 37). In Mecca, commerce and trade was so significant that a verse was revealed in this regard showing the opposition side's attitude, " ask: “What sort of a messenger is it that eats food and walks about in the markets?..." (Al-Furqan, verse, 7). On the

other hand, there are several hadith by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) describing trade, its quality as well as terms and conditions of purchase. As the Prophet stated, "The truthful and honest merchant is associated with the Prophets, the upright, and the martyrs". Abu Hamid al-Ghazali puts particular emphasis on this hadith (1986, p. 257). He quotes from the Prophet Muhammad, "90 percent of people's aliment comes from trade", which highlights the significance of commerce. Ghazali has a detailed discussion on trade in *The Alchemy of Happiness*[1] and devoted the third principle (commerce and trade) of the second chapter (transactions) to this issue (ibid, 256-293). Moreover, most of the Prophet's Sahabahs, especially immigrants, were merchants. The first caliphate was also engaged in commerce. He used to go to the Mirbad Market near Basra before the rise of Islam (Afghani, p. 175). The Prophet's Sahabahs including Abu Bakr, Uthman, Zubayr, Sa'ad ibn al-Rabi al-Ansari, Sa'd bin Ayat al-Mo'uzen, Munqidh ibn Amro, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf, Al-Bara' ibn `Azib, and the others were traders. Salman Farsi and other Sahabahs were artisans or working in the market of Medina (on the list of Sahabahs' occupations: ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari, 2011, p. 319). Medina's drapery market had particular reputation during the Prophet Muhammad's time (Baladhuri, p. 22). Numerous goods and products, including saffron, ambergris, and musk were abundantly available in this market. This market was later expanded to the extent that Uthman, the third caliphate, assigned Harith ibd Hakam as the inspector of the market (ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari, p. 112). Islamic leaders had deep-rooted familiarity with trade, therefore, in most cases had positive as well as inspiring attitude towards

[1] The Kimiya-yi Sa'adat

commerce. After Baalbek[1] was conquered, Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah put emphasis on the freedom of commerce in a treaty based on which "Roman merchants can travel to any lands which made peace with us" (Baladhuri, p. 187). In addition to these issues, the Arabian Peninsula was a dry and arid land without any permanent or even seasonal rivers. The lack of fertile lands in this region forced people to trade in order to make ends meet. Of course, despite the lack of extensive agriculture, the existence of a part of Advieh passing through the western part of Peninsula and Hejaz had complementary role in the Arabs' approach to commerce.

Islam was founded in an urban environment with commercial attitude, i.e. Mecca. Although Mecca was one of the oldest cities in the world, it was a commercial city based on its economic and occupational nature. The Quraysh[2] highlights the significance of commerce and indicates that people in Mecca traded with the North, namely Levant, the Mediterranean Basin and Yemen, i.e. the entrance of Advieh (Quran, the Quraysh). Therefore, if Advieh and Silk Road existed, the Arabs in Peninsula and Mecca had both direct and indirect relations. It shows that Mecca was naturally located along the international trade route. On the other hand, Islam rose and expanded from cities and propagated in Mecca. In Medina, Islamic government was founded. At least, Islam created several metropolises in the middle ages. Following the spread of Islam and establishment of a single global government from the Central Asia and Sindh to Andalusia, the Muslims had access to the main part of Silk Road and even major part of Advieh, which led to the commercial growth because the world of Islam, particularly big cities, could not

[1] also known as Balbec, Baalbec or Baalbeck

[2] the 106th chapter of the Qur'an

survive without trade. Historical, jurisprudential, and literary texts as well as Islamic legends show the growth and prosperity of commerce. A plethora of texts, from reality to myth, that are written about merchants depicts commercial development (One Thousand and One Nights). Jurisprudential texts also discuss issues related to commerce in great details demonstrating Islam's interest in trade.

Despite common, popular or even historical knowledge, Islam was not established in a remote area among helpless and miserable Arabs. Although such claims may seem true at first glance, they are not correct and justifiable in a fair and reasonable argument. The Arabian Peninsula was not dominated by the current and previous powers, and no rulers or dynasties from Alexander to the Sassanids and Romans could rule over this area. However, it does not mean that they were deprived of other aspects of social life, including trade or were not familiar with it. Taking this view into consideration, the Arabian Peninsula in general and Hejaz in particular were not isolated but formed a major part of the world trade road. This route was idiomatically known as Advieh linking the southern China and the Indian subcontinent to the Mediterranean Basin and Europe. Accordingly, Hejaz was at the heart of the world trade routes and part of the Arabs', including people of Hejaz's, income and concern dealt with this network of roads.

Therefore, Islam emerged in a relatively commercial area. Peninsula is a geographical unit, all over which economic, cultural, social, and livelihood conditions are not the same. Owing to this fact, Hejaz and somewhat coastal regions of the west and south of Saudi Arabia were different. However, the Arabian Island did not lack trade roads, and two major trade routes passed this area from the early periods. One extended from Hadhramaut to Bahrain and the Mediterranean, and another was

Yemen route to Hejaz passing through Mecca to Levant and Egypt (Amin, Vol. 1, p. 28). Quoting from Plinius, Haussig considers the peninsula as an old commercial ring (Haussig, 2015, p. 128).

Additionally, Islam was founded in Hejaz and Mecca. As a result, it has commercial origin. Based on the anecdotes (Ahmad ibn Zahir: 1997, p. 1 onwards) and even history, Mecca is one of the oldest cities of the world affected by many incidents and events associated with prophets like Abraham and Ishmael, and its history has been full of ups and downs (ibn Rustah, pp. 35-39). What is more, most people of Mecca were merchants which made it different from other cities of Hejaz. Since the sixth century A.D., some changes occurred in Yemen. The Yemenis were long engaged in trade; they transferred Hadhramaut's products, including incense, as well as the imported goods from India to Levant and Egypt. Later, trade was in the hands of people of Hejaz who bought Yemenis' products and goods and exported them to Levant and Egypt. Ibn Rustah's descriptions of the seas among Aden, India, and China show the commercial traffic of this maritime road. There were some commercial relations between Hejaz and Iran (Amin, Vol. 1, p. 28). Although the Red Sea, which was occasionally controlled by the Romans, was available, coastal road of the west of peninsula passing through Mecca was the safe route (Amin, Vol. 1, p. 28). Based on evidence, the Iranians and Romans had commercial branch in Mecca (ibid). Ibn al-Athir refers to the plunder of Khosrow's II caravans moving from Yemen by the tribe of Banu Tamim (Ibn Athir, Vol. 5, p. 137). Local rulers of Al-Hirah, including Al-Mundhir I ibn al-Nu'man, annually sent a caravan carrying perfume, precious fabrics, and fragrant medicine to the Souk Okadh for sale (Ibn Athir, Vol. 6, p. 102). Some Ayyam al-Arabs[1] like Yom al-Sefghah took

[1] Title used to refer to the conflicts among the Arab tribes

place because some men from the tribe of Tamim looted the Yemini trade caravan in Najd which was going to the court of Khosrow II (Ibn Athir, Vol. 6, p. 106). It seems that the Sassanid court sent trade caravans carrying perfume, fabrics, and other precious goods to Yemen and more probably Hejaz (ibid). This commercial circumstance had created special condition for Hejaz and Mecca. Besides, wealthy noble class appeared to exist that had kind of financial, social, and security discipline. Taha Hussein believes that the Meccans did not believe in idolatry but slyly used it as a means of trade. They were worshipping idols just because of trade and their emphasis on idolatry had no reason except commercial benefits. He also adds people of Mecca had broad relations with the neighboring regions (Hussein, p. 15). Compared to other occupations, they were engaged in trade and had no other proprieties (ibid, p. 16). Taha Hussein's claims are in agreement with historical evidence due to the fact that when the Prophet Muhammad went to Medina and established his state, the Quraysh were busy merchandising without any concern regardless of their conflicts with the Prophet. They did not attempt to settle the conflicts, and when their caravans were returning from Levant, the battle of Badr took place (Ibn Khaldun, Vol. 1, p. 410). Taha Hussein appropriately compare Mecca with other commercial cities of the Mediterranean Basin, including Phoenician cities (p. 16). He classify the Meccans into three groups based on wealth and trade (ibid). Agricultural activities of Ta'if was supplementary to the Meccan commerce and trade. Meanwhile, other residents except for the Quraysh and Arabs were engaged in merchandising (ibid). Hilf al-Fudul was created by the Meccans, including the Prophet Muhammed, to establish fair commercial dealing. Based on this alliance, the people of Ta'if had to follow commercial rules and did not accept any extortion and chaos

easily. It shows that the residents of this city were ready to create order and safety. Therefore, they tried to behave like people living in civilized areas or commercial ports. Without such behavior it was not possible to trade. Mecca was a city-state based on trade and discipline governed by various descendants in its history. There are many verses in Quran about the safety and even food security of Mecca in form of the Prophet's prayers verifying the above mentioned issues. For instance, in the Chapter of Abraham it is stated that, "Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House…" (verse 37). In the history of Islam, even during the Prophet Muhammad's time who challenged the Meccans beliefs, nothing could disturb peace and tranquility of this city. The Meccans tried to dissuade and tempt the Prophet Muhammd talking deceptively and greedily based on their commercial personalities. It is interesting that they attempted to put him under pressure economically which resulted in one of the oldest economic sanctions in the old world showing their awareness of the decisive influence of economy. It is one of the most prominent examples of the economic sanctions in the old world that used economy as a means to defeat the opponent. On the other hand, these people are referred to as merchants in the Quraysh, the 106th chapter of Qur'an, who were trading between the northern (Levant) and southern (Yemen) regions. Philologists have translated the word "Quraysh" as trade and commerce (Amin, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30).

It is important to indicate the Arab markets, particularly Souk Okadh, which show the existence of powerful, strong, and up-to-date regional commerce in Mecca as the core, Hejaz. Souk Okadh was a very famous market that needs no further introduction and description. It was the largest market three days away from Mecca and one day away from

Ta'if. As far as time is concerned, this market was active during the Hajj season, i.e. from the beginning of the lunar month of Dul Qaada for 20 days. Then, the second and third rank markets, namely Majna and Dilmajaz, were established (Arzaghi, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 150; Ibn Athir, Vol. 6, p. 105). Later, pilgrims would head to Mecca for Hajj. So, first trade, then pilgrimage. Interestingly, the fact that the market was near Ta'if and belonged to this city shows that it was a regional market. These markets did not belong to the Quraysh; in fact, they were public. Souk Okadh was located in a broad area to meet the numerous people's needs. It seems that it was an active market which cannot be considered as an ordinary market. It was international to some extent. Except for the Arabs from Hejaz and the Arabian Peninsula, others from Levant and Iraq would go there. For example, al-Mundhir ibn al-Numan sent a commercial caravan to Souk Okadh for sale each year (Alhassani, 1416, Vol. 1, p. 29). This market was not merely limited to trade and merchandise. It was a place for participation in poetry competitions, choosing entertainment, boasting, obtaining knowledge, meeting new people, and holding annual Arab gatherings.

Later, these numerous functions, which occasionally resulted in the great famous battles among the Arabs, turned Souk Okadh to the market of war and violence. This fact demonstrates the various and even opposite functions of Souk Okadh. It is noteworthy that the Fitjar I and II occurred In this market (Ibn Athir, Vol. 6, p. 102). As mentioned earlier, Souk Okadh was an interregional or even somehow international market. The Fitjar II happened due to this property of the market since al-Mundhir ibn al-Numan's trade caravan led by Urwa al-Rijal from the Qays tribe caused the outbreak of war between the Qays and Quraysh (Ibn Athir, Vol. 6, pp. 104 – 114). Numan's another trade caravan which was going

to Souk Okadh was looted by 'Amir ibn Sa'sa'ah which resulted in a battle between these two tribes. This event is called the Yom al-Salanahm which is one of the important Arab Ayyam (Ibn Athir, Vol. 6, p. 194).

After the advent of Islam, Souk Okadh was more or less active, however, it could not prosper naturally as before Islam based on the changes happened in the world map. Above all, Souk Okadh which was open up to around 130 A.H. closed as a result of the Khawarij revolts led by Mokhtar ibn ‘Awf Azadi and fear of plundering (Arzaghi, p. 152). On the other hand, besides Souk Okadh, there were ten famous markets in the peninsula (Afghani, Saeid, 1974 A.D.).

Additionally, the Meccan trade caravans to Levant were extremely significant, full of goods and products, and very famous in the old world. Quoting from Istraboon who had seen one of these caravans, Amin states that it was like a big army (ibid, p. 29). One of these great caravans, in which the Meccans had stock, was travelling along Medina when it was threatened. Consequently, the battle of Badr started (ibid, Ibn Khaldun). Mecca came under pressure from the Prophet and people of Medina because of the commercial position of this trade route. Therefore, trade was tied to the nature of Mecca. Apart from this, the Prophet's family, including his ancestor named Hashim, Abd al-Muttalib, his sons and grandchildren were engaged in commerce and trade. Although it is claimed that Hashim was the founder of commerce with Yemen and Levant, it cannot be true since the history of trade is older than Hashim's time. At least, it shows that the Prophet's ancestors were merchants. His father, Abdallah, was also a merchant and on his return from Levant to Medina with the Quraysh caravan, became sick and died. Before revelation, Prophet Muhammad's profession was trade like his ancestors. He had good moral and particular skill and expertise in commerce to the

extent that he acquired the nickname al-Amin meaning faithful and trustworthy. This nickname must have been given to him before revelation in the world of commerce, trade, sale, and trustfulness. On the other hand, during his teenage years, Muhammad went to Levant with his uncle Abu Talib, which is very famous. What is more, his marriage to Khadijah occurred was due to trade, and a period of time he was trading with her money and capital. Trade led to their familiarity for marriage. Therefore, not only the Prophet but also his wife Khadijah were merchants. It is not exaggerated to say that the Prophet came from a family and environment that were totally related to commerce.

On the other hand, based on the Quranic verses, the Arabs were completely familiar with various contracts and treaties, particularly the commercial ones. The Quran highlights that when you are trading write your promises and take a witness for it. This issue is discussed in detail in the Cow, verse 282 which is one of the longest verses in the Quran. "O believers, when you contract a debt one upon another for a stated term, write it down…" (The Cow, verse 282). This verse seems to be a commercial and legal instruction. Moreover, there are numerous verses highlighting trade, commerce, merchandise, following measures, and condemning those give less in measure and weight, dishonor, and abuse measures as well as weights. All of these issues reflect the existence of a commercial environment replete with trade and commerce. Islam arose in an urban and commercial environment. The Prophet of Islam was reluctant to start his invitation from among the Bedouin tribes. He also rejected the Arab tribes' greedy suggestions for support. Due to an urban area in which he was born, the Prophet Muhammad was totally aware that the invitation had to be advanced via the people living I Hejaz. Therefore, when his invitation in Mecca ended in failure, he went to Ta'if

and Medina respectively. Anyway, he preferred cities of Hejaz to the Bedouin tribes. Islam, as an urban religion, arose in a city with long commercial background, which was familiar with the modern world.

C. The Expansion of Urbanization in Islam: A Major Factor in the Development of Trade along the Global Silk Road

In the era of the expansion of Islam, cities which Islam had founded in the early periods were important both socially and economically. Foundation of Kufa, Basra, Fustat, Baghdad, Wasit, Shiraz, etc. and the development of tens of other cities show Islam's leaning towards urbanization. With the development and spread of Islam, what happened in the area of urbanization in the history of world or at least the west of Asia or North Africa was unprecedented. Fast changes and movements were created that resulted in the incredible rapid development of urbanization. From this point of view, the advent of Islam should be considered as the golden age of urbanization in the history. Islam made great changes in urbanization and other related issues. Bartold has emphasized the development of urbanization in most of the Islamic regions in the early centuries (Bartold, 1996, p. 35).

It can be said that Islam made great and novel changes in the structure, function, and nature of population. Accordingly, it can be regarded as a creator of the urban population. With the development of urbanization, Islam reorganized the scattered tribal or even rural population and gathered people from dispersed tribes, nomadic races, remote and the least populated villages together founding various big cities. Foundation of big cities tempted tribes and villagers to leave their tribal lives and migrate to cities developing urban population. Compared with the earlier tribal and rural lives, this population had interconnected social, cultural, and economic approach which was unexampled in the history. In other

words, the geographical regions and areas were far from each other due to the economic, cultural, and social conditions. Islam assembled the scattered areas via strong and multilateral ties. In the past, there were no serious links among these regions and areas. There were human, social, historical, economic, and cultural gaps because of few commonalities, fragmented history, limited social evolution and development, as well as defined classes. Meanwhile, Islam created profound link and long lasting social, economic, and cultural solidarity that manifest themselves in the urbanization and its extraordinary development.

The spread and development of Islam gave particular meaning to the urban population in Iran, the west of Asia, north of Africa, and even Central Asia. This broad area, which constituted at least one third of the old world, was unified and became the religious, cultural, economic, and occasionally political territory over time. Up to this period, such unity had never been formed, and was unique. The rise and spread of Islam should be considered as one of the most important historical periods in interregional and continental ties and unity. As a result of this process, urbanization flourished greatly which was unique in the history of world or even the west of Asia and North Africa. From the early decades and centuries of Islam, big cities like Basra, Baghdad, Raqqa, Damascus, Aleppo, Fustat, Cairo, Kairouan, Fes, Toledo, Córdoba, Seville, Murcia, Mahdieh, Shiraz, Ray, Bukhara, Samarkand, Balkh, Termez, Ghazni, Isfahan, Tabriz, etc. were founded, developed, and flourished. None of these cities, even those established before Islam, are not comparable with Islamic cities (see, Cities of Iran during the Parthians and Sassanids, Pigou Luskaia, 1999). It is not possible to provide estimates of the urban population. Undoubtedly, Baghdad in the third century A.H. (ninth century A.D.) and Cairo in the fifth century A.H. (eleventh century A.D.)

exceeded Constantinople and other particular cities in the Far East in terms of population and area. Additionally, there were small cities equaled the largest ones in the west (Kahen, 2005, Vol. 2, p. 1618). Due to the Muslim rulers' attention to urbanization, cities were founded quickly, and their population increased. Not only have these cities developed, but also become famous regional areas. With the passage of time, the development and construction of cities slowed down and even stopped in some cases. In spite of this low speed, the process of urbanization did not stop and continued until the Mongol invasion. However, it was not as fast as the first four centuries of the A.H. Although The Mongol invasion interrupted urbanization in many parts of the world from the Central Asia to Europe, no serious attempts were made in urban development. None of the subsequent dynasties have the honor of having a metropolis within their rule. In fact, as though, all at once, urbanism and urbanization were stopped and such large towns were not constructed, or at least the existing towns were not developed anymore.

By now, the values and services which Islam provided to people is being clarified with regard to the volume of urbanism before Islam and after the era of Mogul. Muslims even reconstructed towns that their own enemies such as Romans demolished. Baladhuri states that, Muslims reconstructed and developed cities that Romans smashed during their withdrawal of war or reinvasion. These cities include: Maltie, Alhads, Zabtare (Baladhuri, pp. 260, 269, 275, 276, 277). It is worth mentioning that Alexander is the greatest in the constructing towns coming second only to Islam. Why and how Islam was able to construct and develop such large number of cities? Which strategies and guidelines were used, so that it is second to none in the span of Central Asia to Africa and new

era? What are the factors that led to the rapid urbanization and development?

Although, the whys and the wherefores of urbanism in Islam and its basis and procedures are beyond the scope of this discussion, the above questions will be answered briefly due to the fact that it is interrelated with trade. It seems that there are a number of reasons for the development of urbanism in Islam, such as the essence of Islam and Islamic orders which are given to people concerning improvement and prosperity. Moreover, the social nature of Islam and its approaches through urbanism must be taken into account (Louis, pp. 175-174). Some, have emphasized the political power of Islam on this issue which has considerably influenced construction and development of towns (Ghraybh, 2015, p. 189). But the religion which originated from one of the ancient cities of the world and nurtured in a commercial environment, couldn't be indifferent to the issues like town, urbanism, and also market and trade which were the necessities of urbanism. After the arrival of Islam, it has been immediately expanded from peninsula to Iraq and borders of Sassanid government and eradicated the classy system. And this means disarray of classes which resulted in migration of a huge population from villages to the towns which formed the basis for development of towns. By the arrival of Islam, followed by a string of victories, the Arab tribes' nomadic life changed into a residential life. The efforts of the first Muslim rulers, about residence of Arab tribes, was one of the biggest historical achievements of Islam which led to one of the main phases of the conversion of rural civil into urban civil. Islam led to sedentism of large groups of Arab Muslim warriors and immigrants in Kufa, Basra, Wasit, Hashemiye, and Baghdad. On the other hand, Islam created an open atmosphere for rural world by wiping

out the villagers dependency on the villages as well as lands and eradicating the Sassanid class monopoly. As a result, large groups of people migrated to new cities and towns which increased the urban population and developed urbanization. To sum up, Islam made great changes in population switching nomadism and rural life to urbanization. Therefore, Islam marked an important milestone in urbanization.

Another issue is that the economic power created by the arrival of Islam developed urbanization, and agriculture as well as trade in Islam were taken into serious consideration. Muslims revived arid lands and those belonged to the dead (Baladhuri, pp. 411, 415, 417, etc.). From the second decade of the conquest in Iraq, Muslims were careful not to harm agriculture in the region, and one of their major concerns was how to treat the conquered lands, whose people were busy preserving agriculture. Then Omar, the second caliph, ordered the Iraqis to protect their lands and refused to divide them among Muslims. If this policy were not implemented, transferring ownership could cause disruption to agriculture. On the other hand, Muslim rulers, spend great amount of money on civil project and agricultural growth. It is reported that agriculture was highly significant for Al-Mu'tasim, the Abbasid caliph. Agricultural growth is one of the important pathways for fostering urbanization which can affect the development of cities either directly or indirectly. Nevertheless, Lewis claims that in Islam much attention has not been paid to agriculture compared with trade (p. 174), which is not acceptable.

Concerning the provided introduction, societies and rulers faced new issues as a result of urbanization development in large scale. Consequently, the first step was to obviate urban population's necessary economic and entertainment needs. In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun

discusses the populated cities' needs to trade, products, and goods and how luxuries and amusement become the essential parts of human life without which urban life unlike nomadism is not possible. He also adds, "In the populated areas, wealth, goods, and luxuries are abundant… As a result, luxuries become necessities, and all works are valued in these cities. Due to the great population, wants and needs for luxuries and goods become costly. On one hand, wealth and luxuries increase, but on the other hand, royal taxes imposed on the markets and goods affect the price of products. So, entertainment, food, and services become very expensive- like it or lump it! Therefore, the expenditure of the cities' residents grows compared with the civil development…" (Ibn Khaldun, 1991.2 / 721-722). This urbanization itself brings about markets and production without which cities do not have any meaning. As a result of this situation, commerce and mass trading are highly attended by the urban population. Urbanization creates a particular process in societies and make other economic and social sectors revolve around its axis. It also have others play their own roles. In conclusion, trade is one of the items affected by urbanization. On the other hand, with the development of conquests from Central Asia to Andalus, a single realm was created which put an end to independent states and satellite towns. Lewis states that, "The Islamic conquests formed a political and economic unit from Europe to the borders of China and India for the first time" (Lewis, p. 173). For the first time in a large part of the world of that period, a single religion was put forwards and became the basis of action. Besides uniting the major part of the world, it made numerous economic and commercial changes. This issue led to economic prosperity from different dimensions. The aforementioned issues can be concluded in what Lewis mentions, "The novel unity and the emergence of the new ruling class

possessing great wealth led to the commercial and industrial prosperity. Like the European Vikings in the Middle Ages, this wealth was spent on brocade. The royal court and aristocrats were highly interested in these kinds of commodities… The construction of royal palaces, luxurious houses, public building, and so forth led to economic prosperity (ibid, p. 67)". Among Islamic countries, Iraq has had a particular place in the urbanization in Islam. In order to prove our claim, this area of Islamic territory will be examined from the urbanization point of view.

Iraq was a key region in the Islamic era. On one hand, due to the early influx of the Arab Muslims to Iraq, its vicinity with the peninsula, and being the pathway for Arab Muslims to enter Iran and the west, and on the other hand, because of special links with Anatolia and Levant as well as its neighborhood with the Persian Gulf, Iraq was one of the most important Islamic regions in urban development. Kufa, Basra, Wasit, Hashemiye, Baghdad, Samarra, Najaf, etc. were founded in this region and became a center that linked the east and west in the Islamic world. Moreover, Iraq's urbanization and the presence of the Abbasid caliphs for over one hundred centuries made it one of the most important centers of Islam. Referring to the role of Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, Lewis states, "As long as Baghdad controlled the vital commercial routes passing through this region, the empire's political dispersion did not prevent the expansion of trade and culture" (Lewis, p. 84). However, Iraq did not enjoy this position before Islam and at least was a semi-independent or satellite state. Or, eventually, it had a local government trying to protect its territory, confronting the Ghassanid government of Levant, and preventing the entrance of Arab tribes from the south and southwest. The Sassanids and Romans turned areas such as Iraq and Levant into marginal, insecure, and contentious areas due to their

inability to protect them. These areas could have connected three continents of the world. The fact that the Sassanids and Romans abandoned these areas quickly after the Muslim conquests deals with their market policy focusing on protecting their existing status regardless of other issues. Perhaps it is not exaggerated to say that Muslims got ruined, impoverished, and chaotic regions from Sassanids and Romans. However, these two government were not fully capable to dominate and control the region. Both were engaged with their daily lives and tried to preserve the status quo which was satisfying for them. Areas that had lots of talents and potential and could serve as links concerning the global relations were thrown into turmoil. One of the researchers at the University of London refers to some remarkable points that can be cited and taken into consideration with respect to the aforementioned issues. He states, "Before the Arab invasion, Iranians and Romans had ended a prolonged conflict which had lasted for over one hundred years. This conflict had ruined their resources and facilities. None of them could confront the serious outside threat. People of Levant and Syria were not satisfied with the Roman governments due to their political, religious, and financial oppression. They turned to Arabs rather than their rulers in Constantinople due to their Semitic origin. There were also some Semitic people in Iraq that did not like to support foreign domination of Iran" (Pari, 2004, 2024/2). Therefore, Islam as the third new force put an end to the old and incompetent sovereignty immediately. Hence, Levant and Iraq became the centers of the Islamic sovereignty after Medina. In the era of conquests, Islam first entered Iraq after the Ridda Wars[1]. On the other hand, the dispersed conflicts between Arabs and Sassanids continued among Banu Bakr tribes and others after the Battle of Thi Qar.

[1] Wars of Apostasy

At this point of time, Islam arose, and the Islamic conquests continued which drew Iraqi tribes' attention toward Medina and growing power of Islam to confront the Sassanid dynasty. Therefore, after peninsula, Iraq was the second area that attracted Muslims. As they entered Iraq, it became Islamic land and one of the most influential regions that constituted the special and important part of the history since the early years of the second decade. The influence of Islam in Iraq was very decisive and serious to the extent that it became the heart of the Islamic lands which had a particular ideological, cultural, and social situation.

From geographical and historical geography's point of view, Iraq was located in the middle of the old world, and most of the land and maritime routes of that time passed through this area. Concerning civilization it was very rich so there is no need for further explanation. Iraq has had a unique situation in terms of geography and strategic position since the distant past. Iraq in the southwest of Asia, as an important region, linked east to Levant, Anatolia, Palestine, Egypt, and Peninsula. In other words, Iraq was like a circle, and other lands were its radii (About the Geography of Iraq, Le Strange, 1999, p. 26; Al-Mousavi, p. 33). Iraq also has a wide variety of climates, from north to south and east to west. It seems that Asia is manifested in Iraq. Moreover, Iraq was very rich and full of potential among the neighboring areas due to its agriculture and trade. These factors made Iraq the focus of attention since the beginning of Muslim conquests, and the biggest Islamic historical city, i.e. Baghdad, was founded there. Although before Islam, in the distant past, urbanization had been developed in Iraq (Al-Mousavi, p. 36), during Islamic era, Iraq had particular capacity to absorb population and Arab tribes after the conquest in terms of permanent residence and sedentism due to its centrality and especial status. Accordingly, a researcher

compares it with the Nile Wadi (ibid, p. 38). It should be noted that it is more diverse than the Nile land. Therefore, Iraq, as an attractive region, has been a populated area since the ancient times having different numerous cities and towns. There are references to its villages and rural districts existing about six thousand years B.C. The foundation of big cities such as Ur, Orc, Oma, etc, and later Akkad, Neynava, Assur, Babylon, and so on dates back to four thousand years B.C. Iraq, from the Achaemenid domination to the era of Islamic conquests, just over a millennium, experienced a recession about which there is not much information. However, during the Seleucid Empire, it became (pseudo) central (Al-Mousavi, p. 46). At the same period, famous cities like Ctesiphon, Kaskar, Abelah, etc. were established because of their location and nature but were not so attractive. However, this situation was somewhat made up for by Al-Hirah, the capital of Al-Manathera. This city was active and prosperous in the early Islamic era (Al-Mousavi, p. 51). Despite numerous political and military tensions, Iraq experienced golden age in urban development with the advent of Islam and its influential and long lasting presence in the region. Iraq is an instance of the Islamic lands.

It is crystal clear that Islam has a particular tendency towards society and urbanization. This approach can be observed in the areas dominated by the Islamic governments. Although Al-Mousavi believes that four military, administrative, political, and religious factors led to urbanization in Islam especially in the first three centuries (p. 56), other factors such as economic and social issues seem to be neglected which had major role in urbanization in Islam. In this regard, it is true that Kufa and Basra were founded because of military reasons for the Muslim warrior tribes, but it had had an important social reason. The foundation

of these cities cannot be merely due to military issues, since were often on the go or residing in temporary garrisons. The fact that Kufa quickly became a metropolis or Manchester of the time as stated by Jawad had social necessity to organize the Arab tribes in a city (Jawad, 1991). Owing to the particular relations that this city had, it was possible to develop urbanization more. Not long after its foundation, Kufa became an active as well as prosperous city. The reason was the nature of this city, since it was not established solely to be the garrison for the warriors. However, the ultimate goal was to organize the Arab tribes.

The speed of urbanization and subsequently sedentism can be considered as one of the essential social and civic functions of Islam (Massignon, 2010, p. 15). However, concerning Islamic cities, a number of scholars like Naji, an Arab researcher, have surprisingly stated that there are no commercial and economic reasons for the foundation of Basra (Naji, 2001, p. 159), which cannot be true. It seems that this city was founded due to commercial and economic issues, since as he declared, Basra was located near Abelah which was a very famous commercial port (ibid.). Contrary to his view, the foundation of Basra in that location and position occurred due to economy and commerce. The establishment of Islamic cities in the era of conquests was affected by the conquests. But the process of foundation was carried out meticulously since their purpose was to establish permanent not temporary cities. To sum up, based on what discussed, one of the reasons for choosing Basra was economy apart from other factors. According to Dinawari's Al-*Akhbar Al-Tiwal*, the first house in Basra with commercial position and privilege was constructed by Umar's permission (1990, p. 149). Overall, apparently, the foundation of Basra was accompanied by a kind of trade and commerce.

Interestingly, although nomads usually resists against sedentism, they did not show any resistance in the aforementioned process which was not compulsory. Instead, they accepted it easily which is very remarkable compared with the other periods in the history. Economy is another issue which has not been taken into consideration. If Kuf was founded with the stated nature and position, undoubtedly there were economic and commercial factors. Abelah was a commercial port city affected by commerce and trade. It was founded in the fifteenth century A.H. because of trade and commerce. Basra was near Abelah which had perfect commercial and economic position (Naji, 2001, p. 153). Al-Mousavi also mentions that Arab trade caravans used to go to Basra or the former Abelah. This region was known as India (Al-Mousavi, p. 67). As a result, commercial and economic issues are very significant factors. On the other hand, foundation of various cities by Islam, revival of the former cities, and development of urbanization occurred as a result of the advent of Islam and its conquests made great economic and commercial changes. Because urbanism and sedentism creates various economic needs compared with nomadism and tribal life. These diverse needs led to economic and commercial prosperity and more or less obviated urban consumers' needs. Growing economic needs of the Islamic cities required dynamic economy as well as organized international trade.

D. Markets of Islamic Cities: Factors of the Prosperity of Silk Road

With the advent and spread of Islam as well as the establishment of numerous cities, markets and permanent and seasonal trade centers were founded. Arab markets were closed. Islamic markets were largely different from Arab markets due to a kind of discipline, the ethics rooted in Islamic culture and civilization. Accordingly, Arab markets lost their position and significance. Some believe that Arab Muslim markets in

Kufa and Basra in Islamic era, particularly the early centuries were affected by the past situation besides new climate, religion, and Islamic civilization (About Markets in Jahiliyyah, Afgani, pp. 86, 174). These Islamic markets grew so fast in the early second century that the former Arab markets disappeared (ibid.). It is also reported that the Prophet, whose main occupation was trade before Islam, established a market in Medina during his mission (Baladhuri, p. 22). As mentioned earlier, Arabs had permanent, local, and seasonal markets before Islam; they also had great commercial relations with the north and south. Additionally, Arab tribes in Iraq and Levant had commercial relations with their neighboring areas and other regions. In line with urbanization, Muslim rulers established markets and trade centers from the early decades. The Umayyads paid particular attention to Damascus and built streets and markets, including Al-Hamidiyah Souq (Farhat, 2014, p. 1).

There are reports on the constant commercial activities in Iraq since the early years of the conquest. In thirteenth and fourteenth century A.H., Umar ordered Utbah ibn Ghazwan who was commanding a force near Basra to respect the rights of Al-Harith ibn Kalada. He was carrying Ghazwan's message about the conquest of Abelah to Umar. On his return, he told Umar that he was engaged in trade and asked him to tell Utbah to respect his neighboring right. Umar wrote a letter to Utbah and told him that Harith ibn Kalada had made better life and wanted to build a house there, therefore, respect him. Utbah determined a part of land for him, and Harith ibn Kalada, as the first person, built his house there (Dinawari, pp. 148-149). This case and other similar examples show that Islamic governments and the rulers attempted to provide trade facilities and encourage people.

If, based on this report, he built the first house and ribat[1] in Basra, it could be understood that trade was one of the main reasons of the establishment of this city. Particularly, Harith ibn Kalada built a ribat which was not similar to those constructed by Sufis in the following centuries. In fact, his ribat was like a market or even trade center. Chabra writes that all Muslim dominated lands turned into a common market in which capital and goods were traded freely. These issues in addition to low tax improved all aspects of life. Effective use of agriculture, industry, and trade led to an increase in income (Chabra, 2013, p. 65).

Abd-Allah ibn Amir, the governor of Basra (647–656), encouraged people to establish a market known as Abd-Allah market. Apparently, this market played a significant role in the economic life of Basra. Ziyad ibn Abih, the next governor of Basra, also motivated people to establish a market dubbed Al-Rizq market. More probably, he developed this market that was used to store food and provisions. Therefore, Basra moved away from military city towards a commercial and economic one. The old Mirbad market was developed, and other markets were established. These extensions and development were carried out by Bilal ibn Abi Bardeh in the early second century (around 118) (Naji, 2001, pp. 166-168). Mirbad market in Basra was the most famous one among others in which camels were traded. This market became the largest market of the Islamic world in the Umayyad dynasty and similar to Souk Okadh, played particular cultural and literary roles. It was active up to around 431 A.H. (Fatehi Nezhad, 2003, p. 116). Additionally, Basra had other beautiful big markets (Al-Maqdisi, 1/162).

[1] Ribat is an Arabic term for a small fortification as built along a frontier during the first years of the Muslim conquest.

In most cities that were built in the first and second centuries, the market was one of the most important issues. Khalid bin Abdullah built different shops in Kufa that had brick and plaster arched vaults (Baladhuri, p. 406). His brother, Assad, built a market in a village called Souk Assad and transferred people there (ibid.). Islamic markets developed amazingly. For instance, Baladhuri refers to a district in Kufa in which bedding was traded. It shows the significance of the market that a particular area was devoted to this issue. It also presents a developed and rich city (Baladhuri, p. 402). Hajjaj established Wasit in 83 or 84 (Baladhuri, p. 410) and Mansour founded Rufegh in 155 A.H. When Ali ibn Sulayman became the governor of the island, he transferred Raqqa's markets to a field between Rufegh and Raqqa which was also called the old Hisham market. When Rashid went to Raqqa, he got most of his needs from the market which was active in Baladhuri's era (the second half of the third century) (Baladhuri, p. 259). The Damascus Market was very famous. Rabi Benjamin writes that Damascus is a city that is trading with all countries (Rabi Benjamin, 2015, p. 68). Perhaps it is not necessary to describe Baghdad's markets in details. The writer of *Hudud-al Alam* regards Baghdad as the biggest city in the world. However, Bab al-Sham market in Baghdad was very famous in which all varieties of goods were traded. In the third century, it was the biggest market in Baghdad (Yaqubi, p. 16). Karkh is another big market that was particularly for merchants and artisans. There was a market in each area of Baghdad. It seems that when this city was founded, it was agreed to build a market in each district so that people could trade (ibid., p. 11). Yaqubi described commercial position of Baghdad better than others. He writes, "Various types of goods and commodities were exported to Baghdad from the eastern and western parts of Islamic and non-Islamic

regions like India, China, Tibet, the Turkic lands, Deylam, Khazar, Ethiopia, etc. These commodities were found abundantly in Baghdad compared to the places in which they were produced" (ibid., p. 4). As Yaqubi stated, this international aspect of Baghdad encouraged merchants and traders of other regions to bring their capital to this city (ibid., p. 6). Baghdad's markers were famous for rare goods (Le Strange, p. 88). The eastern markets of Baghdad, including Khadhir market were the Chinese center (Yaqubi, p. 20). The merchants resided in Karkh where the big market was located. In the vicinity of this area, there was a particular place for the merchants coming from Khorasan who imported various kinds of fabrics to Baghdad (Yaqubi, p. 14). Karkh was the biggest market in Baghdad that had productive, industrial, and commercial aspects. This market enjoyed great discipline and organization. Each part of this market was devoted to a particular kind of economic activity so that each profession or activity was done in a separate exclusive area (ibid., p. 14). If Yaqubi's report were correct and market's length and width were two (about 12 kilometers) and one farsakh[1] respectively, the magnitude of this market became evident. Some markets in Baghdad were never shut down, in other words, they were fulltime (ibid., p. 17). The markets of Islamic cities enjoyed particular freedom in term of the existing activities. Each market had a head who could hire soldiers to supervise and control market. This shows the significance and to some extent the autonomy of the markets. Therefore, Muslim rulers did not interfere in most parts of the market in a negative or dictatorial way (Haussig, p. 207; Frank & Bravindston, p. 266; Holt, p. 284). Islamic cities enjoyed order and discipline. Trade centers and markets were not haphazardly established in places that were

[1] Also called parasang

near Jame Mosque or even defensive castles and ramparts (Kahen, Vol. 2, p. 1619).

In Egypt, many cities with large markets were built. In Fustat, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz established trade centers, streets, and markets such as Caesarea, Asal Commercial Street, and Ghanadil market (Farhat, 2014, p. 1). The same condition occurred in the following periods in Askar and Qata'i founding Ayyaran[1], herbalists, and drapers markets (ibid.,). This trend continued in the Fatimid and Ayyubid era; in the Ayyubid era dynasty, trade and commerce reached a particular stage of development (ibid.,). These markets had particular inns and caravanserai for merchants. Alexandria and Cairo's markets were very famous. The Fatimids paid special attention to Cairo. There were wide and long streets extending from the north to south in which various markets and activities were established. It is reported that the narrowest street's width was about eight meters (ibid., p. 2) which was very active and prosperous.

In the newly established cities, most residents, or at least a large number of them, were warriors or soldiers who played great roles in flourishing the economic lives of cities. Haussig believes that great demands of nomadic warriors led to this prosperity. With the triumph of Islam, they got familiar with decorative and expensive things through the obtained spoils, which were unknown to them. They used to reside in Iraqi and Egyptian military garrisons freely and independently regardless of their tribal affiliations and relations (Haussig, p. 131). Haussig's view is in complete agreement with historical evidence. Kufa, one of the first Islamic cities, which was initially founded to accommodate Muslim warrior grew rapidly and became prosperous. There were large range of professions in Kufa like florists (Massignon, 2010, p. 304), which

[1] refer to a person associated with a class of warriors in Iraq and Iran

demonstrates the wealth of the city. The existence of currency exchange and dealing centers shows the commercial growth of the city (ibid., pp. 32-34). Muslim warriors who took relatively high wages or spoils helped the economic development of the city. Occasionally, they bought decorative stuff (Haussig, p. 132; Lewis, p. 67). In a similar vein, other parts of society emerged as a result of the overall development and economic prosperity, largely due to the integration of different regions, which ultimately increased the purchasing power of the community. Naturally, major trade was formed in different cities and ports. Recent studies also highlights the role of trade and commerce in cities. Kahen writes, "Emergence of an interconnected trade and capitalism based on commerce in these cities became a social-economic factor" (2005, Vol. 2, p. 1619).

A question arises here: What would happen to wealth in economic sections since riba is prohibited in Islam? Undoubtedly, a part of this wealth was spent on production and establishing various workshops. Moreover, a major part of it was dedicated to trade. Agriculture was also taken into consideration in this regard. For instance, in Basra, there were lots of arable lands due to the existence of the Tigris and Euphrates which were neglected and abandoned. This process began at least from the late Sassanid period. In this situation, a number of rich people started to buy lands and revive them. Accordingly, wealth and capital were not afflicted with recession but increased agricultural products and crops. As a results, goods and capital were found abundantly (Haussig, p. 132). Due to the nature of capital, it will not be stagnant and some remedies will be found to circulate it in a way that can lead to economic prosperity. In this regard, Haussig writes about a big capital emerged in Iran, Iraq, particularly Egypt, and Levant (ibid., pp. 130-131). Sometimes, this

capital was not used properly and spent hastily on decorative things and goods. The result of these arbitrary demands was the competition in the production of imitative fake goods which did not require high purchasing power and only developed the production of these things. The fact that the original commodities with high quality were not always available or produced limitedly resulted in a competition for the production of fake goods. Along the same line, many fabrics were produced in Kerman, Herat, Merv, and cities in Egypt. For instance, Pigou Luskaia states that in the caliphate era, Ahvaz and Shushtar became very famous for producing and supplying Diba[1], Harir[2], and other precious silk fabrics. Accordingly, great power and wealth were established that led to special measures in commerce and trade. In addition to urbanization, population growth, and economic welfare, using productive forces, developing agriculture, and reviving lands were taken into consideration. Muslim rulers were interested in nurturing agriculture and enhancing related products. These changes were the harbinger of a prosperous commercial world that was unique until Modern Times, discovery of America, and Mercantilism.

[1] A kind of silk fabric
[2] A kind of silk fabric

Chapter Three: Islamic Governments and Silk Road

A. Islamic Conquests: Integration of Silk Road

From the Assyrian to Achaemenid Empire, Alexander, Seleucids, Parthians, Sassnids, and the Roman Empire ruled over the large parts of the ancient world in certain historical periods. But, first, none of these empires and governments could expand their territory like Islamic sovereignty. Second, they could not protect and manage their dominated lands for a long time, at least a century. On the other hand, each of these governments, while developing, faced serious challenge from their rivals and were unable to manage a large part of this world for a long time by themselves. Moreover, most of these governments were established outside their territory which made them weak, therefore, they had frail and feeble power. None of these governments could create common ideology or interests among their obedient nations to attract their loyalty. These governments had political and military superiority and faced serious challenges from their nations that had no commonalities. After challenges and failure, it seemed that they had never existed there since they presence was due to military reasons. As a result, some weak countries were founded which caused tension and arguments. Perhaps, Alexander the Great should be considered as an exception due to his unification thoughts. After Alexander's death, his conquests disappeared as fast as they had been made. During his life, he could not unite a part of this world.

Given the above issues, if conquests and extensions of Islamic governments are compared with those of the former empires as well as governments, their differences, nature, and approaches will be found out.

The result of these conquests was the establishment of Islamic territory. While Muslims were conquering Iraq from twelfth to fourteenth centuries, Islamic empire was making other conquests in Levant. If it was conquering Iran from the fifteenth to thirtieth centuries, Muslims were also making conquests in Egypt. Similarly, other conquests took place in Khorasan and the North Africa simultaneously. Furthermore, at the end of the first century, Muslims reached Transoxiana and Andalusia concurrently. It seems that these conquests occurred based on precise estimation. This fact shows the nature of Islamic conquests and the balance between the eastern and western part which is unprecedented in the history. These conquests which happened in organized and parallel trends in east and west are unique. These conquests also involved Silk Road. On the one hand, they included the Mediterranean Basin, Egypt, and North Africa, and on the other hand, passing through west of Iran, Khorasan, and Transoxiana reached the borders of China, i.e. the origin and destination of Silk Road. Therefore, Islamic conquests covered the central part of world from east to west and China to Europe which was along Silk Road as far as commerce and trade are concerned. Referring to conquests in Transoxiana, Baladhuri claimed that peace was made between this region and Abdallah ibn Amir, and one of the items that had been sent to him was silk (1989, p. 568). According to the distribution of Islamic conquest which were broader in the eastern-western part compared to the northern-southern section, land trade nurtured naturally. McEvedy points out that although Arab (Islamic) Empire occupied an integrated territory which also had coasts, its trade was mostly carried out through land routes (p. 223). According to other conquests that were made in east and west, land trade, i.e. Silk Road, became highly significant. Baladhuri in *Futuh al-Buldan* shows how the eastern and

western conquests happened exactly along Silk Road. Subsequently, in the Umayyad and Abbasid era, the major part of the Silk Road was placed within the realm of Islam. Since the main part of Silk Road in this region was occupied by Islam and additionally with the foundation of Islamic empire, the eastern and western parts of the world located in its two sides, Silk Road became highly significant. It is quite natural that the most available information concerning Silk Road is related to this Islamic period up to the seventh century. Pointing to the highway of Khorasan (the main central part of Silk Road), Le Strange writes, "Geographers have paid great attention to Silk Road more than other routes due to its significance" (1999, p. 10). Muslims were not only dominating areas, but trying to provide the security of roads. Spuler refers to conquests in Khorasan and Transoxiana and mentions, "Although after Qutayba ibn Muslim's death in 716 A.H. development of Islam did not stop temporarily, he remained as an example when the connection between Silk Road and Khorasan was necessary" (1995, p. 53). Accordingly, conquests naturally occurred along Silk Road and greatly affected this route.

Islam was a religion that invited people and was propagated. It also attempted to create Ummah based on ideology. Ideological unity led to unity in other aspects, including unity of shared economic interests. Therefore, profound economic relations were formed among different parts. Developing urbanization and obviating needs happened as a result of political, social, economic, etc. changes. Despite various governments, this unity was not challenged. It sounds that Lewis precisely mentions this point, "“As long as Baghdad controlled the vital commercial routes passing through this region, the empire’s political dispersion did not prevent the expansion of trade and culture” (Lewis, p.

84). Most Islamic governments were not neighbors and did not have same borders, otherwise it was insignificant. Even, there were no specific borders between the Abbasid, Fatimid, and even Umayyad (Andalusia) caliphates. Similarly, there were no borders among the Samanian, Ghaznavid, and Buyid dynasties. It appears that these governments had no borders. In this regard, historians and Muslim scholars have confirmed the wide area of caliphate and Islamic territory, which had never been dominated before. Quoting from Fazari, Muslim astronomer and geographer, Masudi estimated Amir al-Mu'minin's (caliphate) territory from Fergana and Aqsa in Khorasan to Tangier to be three thousand and six hundred farsakh and Baba al-Abwab to Jeddah to be six hundred farsakh (Masudi, p. 584). This situation was unique in human history (Lewis, p. 180). Therefore, Islam conquered a large part of the world, which was the heart of the ancient world, from Central Asia to Andalusia, Caucasus to Sudan and the southern part of the Sahara. Lewis had also referred to Islam's unifying approach based on which a political and economic unit was established from east to west (Lewis, pp. 67, 173). Based on this unifying ideological approach, it seems that Muslim merchants did not pay tax within the Islamic domain, otherwise, it was trifle (Grimberg, 1991, p. 58).

As mentioned earlier, the eastern-western Islamic conquests were along the ancient routes, particularly Silk Road, more than half of which from Kashgar and Central Asia to Levant and Egypt passed through the Islamic world. Consequently, golden age of Silk Road appeared. Silk Road in the Islamic era, particularly during caliphates, Samanid, and Seljuq dynasties experienced one of its busiest and most prosperous periods, which will be discussed in the following sections.

B. The Umayyad Dynasty: Trade and Silk Road

The economy of Islamic lands flourished in the Umayyad and Abbasid era, particularly in the second century, which is beyond the scope of this book. Before the turn of the second century, economic prosperity took place gradually and step by step. This issue manifested itself in house building and construction by Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik. On the other hand, it sounds that the Umayyads sought to have good relations with merchants. One of the scholars states that during the Umayyad era, rich Iranian merchants paid their campaign's expenses in Transoxiana (Dennett, 2007, p. 8). If this claim is true, which is not rejected, the aforementioned fact is confirmed that merchants were not satisfied with the existing situation, and Islamic empire provided great opportunity for them to expand their commercial activities. In line with Islamic conquests, strong evidence of support for merchants can be seen.

In the Umayyad era, foundation of cities and markets as well as construction of buildings depict the good economic and commercial situation. In Jahiliyyah (the period of ignorance or pre-Islamic period), some of the Umayyads were famous merchants in Mecca. They came from rich Quraysh tribes engaged in business. It is reported that Abd Shams, the forefather of the Banu Umayya, was the agent of commercial contract between Quraysh and Ethiopia or Iraq, therefore, he was regarded as a Quraysh Sahabah (Yaqubi, Vol. 1, p. 244). Based on Islamic historical resources, it is claimed that Abu Sufyan was leading Quraysh trade caravan which resulted in Badr Battle on return. Uthman and the other Umayyads were also merchants. Therefore, The Umayyad dynasty must preserve its commercial origin. However, due to the political incidents, battles, wars, riots, and the continuation of eastern-western conquests in the Umayyad dynasty, they did not have an

opportunity to focus on commerce and trade. Or at least these political and military issues, tensions as well as various risings did not allow them to pay attention to trade and commerce. However, evidence and measures taken in line with foundation of markets and other constructions depicts their attention to commerce and trade. Now, given the abovementioned issues and taking the stories narrated by merchants and traders into consideration, commercial growth in this period of time can be figured out. As stated earlier, some, including Metz and Spuler without any reason emphasized that the Arabs and Umayyads used to look at trade with contempt and hatred (see, Metz, 1986, p. 507; Spuler, 1991, p. 219), which is not true. Spuler have a kind of distorting approach trying to attribute commercial prosperity of the Islamic world to Jews, Christians, and even Europeans (p. 220). In contrast, Lewis declared that the Arabs paid more attention to commerce compared with agriculture (p. 174). Shelby believes that before the advent of Islam, Arabs were engaged in trade, but with the expansion of conquests, products, agriculture, and industry, trade nurtured remarkably. Subsequently, trade caravans travelled to China, Philippines, north and east of Africa, Russia, and other regions. He also states that major Islamic cities such as Baghdad, Cairo, Alexandria, Tripoli, Basra, Siraf and Isfahan became centers for the exchange of international goods (Shelby, 2012, p. 270). Coin mintage by Abd al-Malik, the Umayyad caliphate, shows their attention to commerce and trade. As Lewis declared, this measure had continuous consequences which frustrated the Roman Empire, who considered coin mintage as their own exclusive right. Accordingly, Roman Empire declared war on him (p. 73). In spite of the Umayyads' negative attitudes towards merchants and commerce, some researchers have referred to the construction of caravanserai and the measures taken

to assist merchants (Uthman, 1998, p. 241). Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik's era was the period of economic growth and prosperity. He paid attention to industry, founded new markets, repaired roads, and developed trade and agriculture (Taqqush, 2013, p. 143). Moreover, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf's attempts such as reforming the financial structure and monitoring weights as well as measures helped the stability of commerce and trade (Termanini, 2007, p. 267). In the Umayyad period, due to the geographical location of the caliphate center, which was located in the south and on the Mediterranean coast, presence of navy became noticeable. Therefore, the Umayyads had a large naval fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, and repeatedly confronted Europeans, and occasionally invaded Constantinople by sea. They also benefited from maritime commerce. Besides the Mediterranean Sea, they were active in Persian Gulf and helped commerce and seamanship there. Some researchers have mentioned the Umayyads' efforts in maritime commerce, "By the eighth century A. D., Chinese were prominent in seamanship in the Indian Ocean … but, by the turn of the eighth century, Basra's seafarers surpassed Chinese and Indians in seamanship and shipbuilding. During the reign of al-Hajjaj, Basra seafarers were sailing on ships that had metal nails. Up to this period, wooden nails and ropes were used in shipbuilding" (Reza, p. 73). But the important point is that the development of conquests in the Umayyad era, started from the Rashidun Caliphs' period and extended to Central Asia along Silk Road, greatly affected commerce and trade.

C. The Abbasid Caliphate: Trade and Silk Road

Although the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown by a rebellion led by the Abbasids in the second century, Baghdad's great urbanization began,

which shows the economic power of society. Almost most scholars, prior to them historians, and those who were writing about Masalik and Mamalik have mentioned the good economic situation and diversity of products and goods demonstrating good economic situation. Apart from tensions, wars, and occasionally drought, economic situation was good and tolerable (see, The Social and Economic Conditions of the Caliphate Era, Manazer Ahsan, 2002, p. 80).

But the Abbasid territory after the Umayyad caliphate was along Silk Road, particularly in the first two centuries. In its heyday, the Abbasid caliphate ruled over regions from Central Asia to North Africa, i.e. nearly all the traditional roads of the old world except for the Russian route-Volga, and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, Islamic culture and civilization flourished in the Abbasid era and nurtured. Pointing to the advent of Islam, McEvedy writes, "Islam brought peace and unity to a large territory which could not be compared with the Roman Empire's kingdom. And it was natural for trade and civilization to flourish in such an environment" (p. 223). Owing to the development of civilization and urbanization in line with the growth of industry and products, trade flourished tremendously, and if not exaggerated, international commerce was formed. Frye provides an interesting example of the Islamic prosperity compared with the pre-Islamic period. He write, "Panjakent in Samarkand is a great instance of commercial growth and prosperity which had few houses in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. based on the archeological evidence, but in the seventh and eighths centuries (first and second centuries A.H.) big houses with perfect decorations and murals[1] were constructed. This description is consistent with what Arab resources show about the Sogdian prosperous trade at the beginning of

[1] Wall Paintings

the Islamic era" (p. 183). The Abbasid caliphate earned great amount of money through trade (Hassan, 2014, p. 873). Obstacles and harassments along traditional routes were overcome, so that merchants could travel from Seyhun to North African and the Mediterranean Basin without any tensions. Al-Mansur, the second Abbasid caliph, assigned a particular region in the south of Baghdad to merchants besides establishing numerous markets and pathways (Yaqubi, 2009, pp. 10-20). In the Harun al-Rashid's era, economy gained a special boom (Holt, 2005, p. 175).

From Harun's time to the end of al-Mutawakkil caliphate, economy flourished. Masudi writes, "al-Mutawakkil's time was full of prosperity and thriving" (1996, Vol. 2, p. 496). In the first period of the Abbasid caliphate, all aspects of life and society developed. In fact, this period should be regarded as the golden age. It is worth mentioning that Baghdad reached its heyday during Harun and al-Ma'mun's reigns and became a world trade center (Taqqush, 2013, p. 89). In the Abbasid time, Baghdad was became a center of the East (Kahen, p. 1621). As Lewis declares, "At the height of the Middle Ages, trade in the Islamic Middle East was richer, greater, more organized and advanced than Europe. There were great varieties of products and goods, abundant money for merchandise, and large network of efficient commercial relations" (p. 184). The first period of the Abbasid caliphate, including Harun and al-Ma'mun, was the time of political, cultural, and economic superiority. During this period, Baghdad became a world trade center (Taqqush, 2012, p. 88). At the same time, Harun founded a commercial union under the supervision of a head due to the trade prosperity that required organization (Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, 1997, 49.6). The caliphate's realm was regarded as a crossroad for global commerce since goods and commodities from the Far East and India were exported to

Europe through this way. This issue added to the significance of the Abbasid caliphate in terms of global trade and transit. During the Abbasid caliphate, commercial relations among the countries of this vast territory extended from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, covering four seas (the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf) became highly significant (Reza, 1970, pp. 72, 73).

Furthermore, Muslim merchants patiently and expediently establish particular relations with commercial groups in other regions, governments, money changers, etc. Accordingly, trade became global and reliable in a vast area. In the Abbasid era, a post known as "head of merchants" was assigned because of growing prosperity of trade, which shows the significance of this issue (Shelby, p. 271). The term "board of merchants" was used in the resources to refer to this post and group of traders depicting the significance and prosperity of commerce. On the other hand, Khwarizmi refers to partnership, agreements, and statements. There are different types of partnerships such as Enan, one in which cash goods and products are traded and both sides are involved in its profit and loss, Mofawezea, one that deals with agreement that is held among partners regarding what they possess, and copartnership that represents the growth of commercial sectors (1984, p. 22).

Transfer of caliphate from the Umayyads to the Abbasids changed the condition of roads. Since the Umayyads were near the Mediterranean Sea, maritime trade was popular among them. In contrast, the Abbasids mostly travelled through land routes. McEvedy highlights that Arabs ignored maritime routes and traveled through deserts (p. 223). Later, pointing to Arabs' efforts in establishing commercial relations with India, he changes his opinion and states, "Arabs were great sailors" (ibid.).

D. The Seljuq Dynasty: Trade and Silk Road

Other Muslim dynasties did not fall behind the Abbasids in developing commerce and trade. Among them, the role of the Samanids is unique. They precisely dominated over one of the most important interconnecting rings of trade in the old world which covered the major or even central part of Silk Road. The Samanids and prior to them the Tahirids had understood the value of trade and commerce since they had experienced urban environment, urbanization, and the Abbasid divan. In this regard, the Samanids' roles are so remarkable that their collapse disrupted trade and commerce in region or even world (in the fourth chapter, the Samanid dynasty will be discussed in the Transoxiana's section).

But the emergence and formation of the Seljuq dynasty should be considered as a return to the beginning of the Abbasid era or even beyond that. Although the Seljuqs originally came from tribes, their residence in Transoxiana and accepting Islam modified their behavior. At the very least, they did not agitate the existing situation, but accompanied it. Perhaps their needs were different from those of the Samanids, but in general, main rulers (maybe unlike some of the commanders or disobedient tribes) trusted bureaucrats who had experienced the Samanid, Ghaznavid, and Abbasid dynasties and attempted to abandon their tribal lives. Accordingly, the Seljuqs followed the existing trends. Therefore, the Seljuq era was similar to the early Abbasid period in terms of commerce and trade. With the fall of the Samanids, imports were reduced, but the Seljuqs tried to increase it. The Seljuqs sultan in 1081 A.D./ 473 A.H. attempted to encourage the Song empire to trade with them in order to develop their commerce. He sent an expedition with gold coins to China to show his interest (Haussig, pp. 125, 126). It is

worth mentioning that he must be Malik-Shah. This issue demonstrates the Seljuqs' attention to the importance of global trade and commerce. If Harun established relations with Charlemagne, the sultan of Seljuqs turned to China. Hence, the early Seljuq era was similar to the early Abbasid dynasty.

It is true that with the fall of the Samanid dynasty and the rise of the Seljuqs, with the Ghaznavids in between, trade declined and the Samanid dirham coins become rare. But when the situation became normal, economic activities continued as needed. Trade and commerce were taken into consideration since they were profitable for the governments. Haussig reports that the Seljuq invasions, particularly in Iraq and Syria put an end to the economic growth and prosperity in Islamic countries since the number of wealthy people, merchants, and owners of workshops were limited or decreased due to internal migration. On the other hand, low-quality goods and severe inspections in the southern part of Silk Road (the Seljuq territory) were other factors that reduced prosperity and development (p. 133). This viewpoint is too general and incomplete that may be true about the early periods of the Seljuq dynasty in Khorasan nor other regions. His idea is not true. Islamic resources have mentioned the prosperity and growth as well as abundance of products in the Seljuq era. Trade was done remarkably in the ports of Persian Gulf and Kerman. Furthermore, based on Ibn al-Athir's frequent reports on the economic and commercial situation of Kerman, Haussig's general and negative idea is rejected. Of course, Haussig faces some contradictions because he talks about the Seljuqs' attempts to have commercial relations with China and the coins they sent to the Chinese emperor.

However, Nasir Khusraw provided reliable reports on the superiority of the Seljuqs, which are revealing and valuable. He praises Tughril's efforts and measures in Isfahan. There is no evidence that can verify Nasir Khusraw was trying to advocate the Seljuqs. He reached Isfahan in 443 A.H. and provided proper descriptions of its market. He also mentioned two hundred money changers lining in Isfahan and Taraz alley in which there were fifty caravanserai. Additionally, he was travelling with a caravan that was carrying one thousand and three hundred commodities that were easily handled, which surprised him. In the same report, Nasir Khusraw states that Tughril assigned Khaje Amid as the governor of city who was eloquent learned man from Nishapur. Nasir Khusraw also emphasizes that Tughril ordered people not to pay tax for three years (1963, p. 138). These reports reject Haussig's idea. In another part of his writing, Haussig refers to unfair taxes which made city poorer, closed workshops, and transferred some of them to Levant and Palestine (ibid., pp. 135-136, 153). The Seljuq resources and recent researches demonstrate the good economic situation in the Seljuq era. At least, roads had unprecedented security and prices were not high all over the empire (Boil, 1988, p. 89). The fact that Ravandi mentions the construction of public building, roads, and walls around cities shows the economic power in the Seljuq era (Ravandi, 1986, p. 132). Ibn al-Athir also stated the security of the Seljuq era and wrote about Malik-Shah, "There was peace and security during his time" (Vol. 17, p. 188). He also refers to low prices in Malik-Shah's era, "Construction toll was obtained from different regions which were spent on building roads. The villages that were located in plains were revived and streams were waded… He assigned road repairmen in Mecca and developed urbanization in Isfahan. He also constructed Ghorun Minaret in Sabiei region on the way

to Mecca" (ibid., Vol. 17, p. 190). Afzal al-Din Kermani wrote about the significance and position of Kerman in the Seljuq era, particularly Sanjar's time, which show commercial prosperity and development in Kerman. He says, "Tizest (a city near the Oman Sea) is a remarkable property of Kerman where one tenth of merchants' property and ships' income was given to the King's treasury. People from India, Sindh, Ethiopia, Zanj, Egypt, Arab regions such as Iraq and Bahrain boarded ships there. Musk, Ambergris, Nil[1], logwood[2], Indian spice, Indian, Ethiopian, and Negro slaves, delicate plain Paragin velvet, Deybal Gamucha, and other souvenirs that were available in world was found abundantly in this region" (1978, pp. 127-128). He also put emphasis on the commercial importance of Kerman (ibid., p. 136). Recent studies also confirm this fact about Kerman. Qavurt, a Seljuq prince, played great role in the security and trade of Kerman. He built ab anbar[3], observation towers, and caravanserai and helped foreign merchants, particularly the Indians (Boil, p. 89). This was another sign of commercial growth and prosperity in the Seljuq era, which was elaborated in detail. What Ibn al-Athir stated were in line with commercial development. In addition, the fact that import duties were not taken shows the importance of trade without any greed. Ibn al-Athir in another part emphasizes the same issue (Vol. 17, p. 136). Arriving Baghdad in 485, once again he points to low prices, development, and civil growth in the Makik-Shah era (ibid., Vol. 17, p. 190). After Malik-Shah's death, situation changed due to climate not the fact that the Seljuqs set barriers to commerce. In Sultan Mohammad's era (Malik-Shah's successor) prices rose in Iraq due to lack

[1] A Kind of Colour

[2] Logwood was used for a long time as a natural source of dye

[3] Literally "water reservoir"

of rain (ibid., Vol. 17, p. 275). In 512 and 517, expensiveness reached its peak (Vol. 18, p. 259; Vol. 19, p. 54). However, the Seljuqs were trying to stabilize the situation. Kamal Dargazini, Masud Ghazni's vizier[1], abolished commercial and border levy as well as unfair kharaj. These are the instances of his measures and reforms (ibid., Vol. 19, p. 315).

Haussig claims that the Seljuq domination intercepted the exchange of goods along Silk Road. He also adds that following their domination of Kerman and Khorasan, the sale of Kermani cloth or Silk reduced respectively. While other researchers point to the growth in production, trade, and exports in Seljuq era, Haussig refuses to present his resources and documents. In Saljuq era, great changes occurred in the textile industry. The textiles of this period had solid texture, design, and decorations (Zaki, 1988, p. 229). In addition, Islamic designs and patterns were used and developed (Chitsaz, 2001, p. 32) to the extent that more than fifty Seljuq textiles are available that had great quality and novel designs showing the weavers' skills (Alvand, 1972, p. 112). Seljuq cloth with their particular pattern was like today's medal awarded honorably to competent officers and was popular in the eastern part of the Islamic world, Byzantine Empire, North Africa, and Andalusia (Fathi, 2009, p. 45). Moreover, this kind of cloth was not only for internal consumption but also exported to the Mediterranean Basin (Hausen, 2003, p. 505). The Seljuqs were the most important textile exporter to the Mediterranean and West Christian countries (Conel, 2002, p. 93). To conclude, Haussig's general statements for which no evidence or historical proof are provided seem to be unacceptable. But, it should be stated that with decline of the Seljuqs during the later Sanjar time in line

[1] In modern usage, the term has been used for ministers in much of the Middle East and beyond.

with domination of Qara Khitai and Oghuz tribes as well as the presence of rivals such as Ghurids and Khwarazmians along Silk Road, important issues occurred that led to the rise of the Mongol Empire (Teimori, 1999, p. 103). The Seljuq era was the period of economic and commercial growth, and most early resources and researches confirm this fact. The minimum amount of taxes as well as urban and rural density in the Seljuq era compared with the earlier periods show their high economic potential (see Petrozhevsky, p. 1989, p. 469).

However, the Seljuqs dominated Seyhun and Amu Darya to Mediterranean Basin which undoubtedly covered a great part of Silk Road. Based on the security they created and numerous reports on cancellation of goods toll, it can be figured out that Silk Road experienced its good period in the Seljuq era which was not repeated again.

Although it was impossible to close Silk Road completely, obstacles like invasions and fall of dynasties could disrupt or even affect different parts of Silk Road temporarily. Military conquests of the Turkic tribes and Mongols and fall of dynasties like the Samanids and rise of others such as Qara Khitai as well as other similar issues disrupted Silk Road and reduced traffic on this route. Furthermore, conquests and changes that occurred in remote areas could affect parts of this route. None of Muslim dynasties disrupted this road deliberately or trade deceptively.

Chapter Four: Major Routes and Loops of Silk Road

Entry

Due to the length of Silk Road, undoubtedly some of its parts and routes are highly significant. Indicators and characteristics that lead to Silk

Road's regional privilege compared to other areas are location and position of region along Silk Road, remoteness and nearness of this region, distance between this region and other trade centers along Silk Road, amount of production and availability of regional goods, existence or non-existence of a government, the governments' attitudes towards trade and commerce as well as economic and social structure, including urbanization and urban density. Now, according to these indicators, some centers, loops, and main regions along Silk Road will be discussed. It should be noted that the link between these areas created Silk Road without with this route would not exist. It should be highlighted that most of these commercial regions and loops of route network, which are discussed below, become meaningful during Islamic era, and there was not an interwoven connection between them before vast Islamic empire. Based on this view, these areas flourished with the advent of Islamic empire and governments before which they had their own local approach and did not have any great developed relations with others. Even those areas that had never been conquered by Muslims such as China benefited from the situations and opportunities created by Islam. The reason behind mentioning these issues is not to believe that this area had always enjoyed this function.

Along Silk Road, each region has its own importance and dignity. For instance, China has always been the center of Silk Road, its rich origin and destination, or to some extent the founder of this route that developed and nurtured it. Therefore, it is better to start from China and then move to main loops and regions along Silk Road respectively.

A. China: Founder of Silk Road

Silk Road is meaningless without China, which is the most important origin and destination of this route. Therefore, Chinese did their best to discover and recognize a route that can be named after their native commodity, i.e. silk.

Archaeologists have discovered the oldest silk cloth in the Tai lake area in China, which has a long history (Myung, 1985, p. 22). Myung believes that it is not clear how silk reached the west. He also indicates that until the fifth century B.C., China and west had no relations, but perhaps, the nearby nomads who were familiar with China such as Yueh-Chih took silk in their packs to the Scythians lands who carried it to the west (ibid., p. 22). Although Steppes transferred silk from China to Russia, north of Black Sea and the west, it cannot be claimed that there was a road at that time for commercial purposes (ibid., p. 22). It seems that when silk reached Greece, Greeks called China "Silk Land" because they did not know anything about this country. Based on research, Chinese have been familiar with silk since 5000 years ago (ibid., p. 22).

All world, particularly the rich, noble, and governments needed silk which is an ancient commodity become known by China. In spite of this need, they could never reach Chinese silk quality, and the most expensive silk was always the Chinese one (Stories on Distribution and Production of Silk in World, Yung, p. 23; Kashgari, 1964, pp. 34-38; Shahab, 1965, p. 235). Ancient resources have referred to the legendary history as well as supernatural and dreamlike discovery of silk. Rashid al-Din Faḍlullah writes, "People used to wear tree leaves during the Chan Wen's time who was a king of China. While sleeping, he dreamt that he was in heaven and people there were wearing clothes. So, he learned and obtained information. He took necessary measures when he got up. As a

result, he produced silk, wove clothes, and taught people" (2007, p. 21). Based on this story, Chinese wore silk clothes for the first time. Besides this story, it can be demonstrated that silk had a long history in China.

On the other hand, compared with other regions, China has always been a fertile land with tremendous wealth. As it is today, China was a populated area compared with other regions (McEvedy, p. 31). These population and wealth made China the origin and destination of the world trade because they needed various needs and products. Qazwini states, "China is vast and has three hundred cities" (Vol. 1, p. 63). Most early authors have referred to the gold, silver, and ruby mines of China and called it rich land (Huduh-al Alam, p. 60; Qazwini, 1993, Vol. 1, p. 65). Hence, China required international trade to obviate its needs and as it required imports, decided to export goods and products. Throughout history, the Chinese did not look for political and military ties, but instead, they were trying to establish economic relations. If Chinese rulers' policies are taken into consideration, it will be understood that they were too restrained as far as politics was concerned and focused on their own economic interests. Their political issues were affected by relations and economic matters rooted in the historical tradition of China. However, the best parts of Silk Road were located in China passing through a valley that had great weather and was full of trees. This part of Silk Road which was covered with cobblestone and guarded carefully was known as the Royal Road (Frank and Bravindston, pp. 20-22). China was also well known in maritime trade due to its long Maritime boundaries. In fact, the southern China used sea for commercial purposes. But the major part of China, in the north, still preferred land routes. Yaqubi writes, "China has three land borders and one sea boundary. First border is between the Turkics and Tokuz-Oghuz (nine

oghuz). There was always a continuous war between them and Chinese until their reconciled and several marriages took place between them. Second border is Tibet. There is a mountain between China and Tibet; both countries have their own border guides there trying to resist against each other. Third border belonged to a tribe known as Mansas that had an autonomous government and big cities. Some reports that it takes several years to travel through their country and no one knows who lives there after this tribe. They live near the Chinese" (Yaqubi, p. 226). If Yaqubi's view is correct, Oghuz and Tibet borders will lead to west and northwest of China. Interestingly, he believes that the sea boundary is between China and Islam. But he also writes, "Anyone who wants to go to China through land routes, s/he should travel along Balkh (Amu Darya) passing through Sogdia, Fergana, Chach, and Tibet" (Yaqubi, p. 225). Accordingly, Yaqubi believes that Chinese border with Tibet leads to Muslim lands.

As stated earlier, Masudi considers Chinese as the founders of international trade (p. 130). At that time, land roads were preferred to maritime routes because travelling through sea needed high costs to prepare enough equipment and Ships that can resist the storm. Based on Haussig's estimates, the cost of maritime route was thirty percent higher than the land roads, which could have been a major obstacle, especially for low-capital merchants (p. 103). But most of the precious and luxurious goods were transported through land (McEvedy, p. 223). On the other hand, China traded on both sides, and there are references to Chinese sailors' long-lasting presence in Persian Gulf. Masudi and Sulayman ibn Abi Karimeh narrate a detailed story of a Khorasani or Samarkandi merchant who was traded with China through Persian Gulf and Sea. They explain how the mentioned merchant disagreed with the

treasurer of the Chinese king in Khanfu (Kanfu), protested, and insulted him (Masudi, p. 137; Sulayman, 2003, p. 115). However, Masudi puts emphasis on China, "Merchants from different countries were through land and sea carrying their various goods and commodities" (ibid., p. 133). Probably, Islam was brought to China for the first time by the merchants through sea (Arnold, pp. 214-215). There is some evidence that Chinese requested Mansur, the Abbasid Caliph, to help them against Alushah, a rebellious slave, who had thrown big long-lasting chaos in China. Mansur helped them and sent auxiliary forces to China. These forces stayed in China after putting down the rebellion and formed the Muslim community in China (Gerald, pp. 375-376). Now, it is time to travel back in time to consider the relations between China and the Islamic world in order to get the overall path of the discussion.

First of all, as usual, historical events have fictional and narrative aspects and China and Islam's relations are no exceptions. The relations between China and Islam have a long history. Some of the authors have stated that Islam was propagated in China during the Prophet's time. They have also stated that four Sahabahs of Prophet (Idris Qays, Waqqas, and two other Sahabahs whose names are not mentioned) were propagating Islam in different cities of China such as Yangshao and Chaochir (Mar'ashi Najafi, 2005, p. 15). Of course, it is unlikely that such cases occurred since the names of Sahabahs are not compatible with the common Arab names that are often mentioned by the fathers' names. Perhaps this story was made about a famous Sahabah named Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. Meanwhile, historical evidence does not prove it. Probably, this issue is a part of stories, oral history, or Muslim narrations that tried to attribute the history of Islam in China to the Prophet and his Sahabahs. Apart from this, Islam and China's relations have a long history. China's relations

with the Islamic world have had their ups and downs. Most likely, based on resources, official relations between Chinese and Muslims occurred in Uthman ibn Affan's, the third caliph, time. Apparently, Chinese attempted to obtain some information about Muslims and mediated between the Muslims and Sassanids how had asked for help against Muslims (Arnold, p. 215). Based on Chinese resources, Tai Desung, the Chinese emperor, did not accept Yazdegerd and his associate's request and only allowed his son, Firooz, to stay in China (Gerald, p. 372). But the second serious relations between Chinese and Muslims took place in 713 A.D./ 96 A.H. In the same year, Qutayba ibn Muslim, the Umayyad commander, advanced towards Kashgar in the Chinese border. It seems that the Chinese ruler asked Qutayba to send one of their heads to China for negotiation, which may have been due to the pressure on China's borders or the curiosity of the Chinese to learn more about the new developments and trends. He sent twelve of their eloquent speakers and elders there. In addition to the narrative aspect of this mission, it really happened since Chinese resources have mentioned it in details. Based on the Muslim narrators' claims, Chinese gave them some gifts but they considered them as bribe. Hebrai ibn Moshmarj Kolabi was the head of this expedition who was supposed to tell the news to Walid, the Umayyad caliph, but died on his way in Fars (Tabari, pp. 3887, 3891-9). Chinese resources have not only referred to this mission, but also added that Muslims did not bow before Khagan, which is almost in line with the epic tone of the Muslim narrators. Chinese resources have indicated that the purpose of this mission was to prevent the Chinese from helping the rulers of the Central Asia. Apparently, Chinese Khagans did not take any measures against Muslim Arabs (Gerald, pp. 373-374; Blant, 1985, pp. 79-81). Thereafter, for more than thirty years, there was no particular

confrontation between Muslims and Chinese until the Central Asian divisions. This battle took place at the early Abbasid caliphate period in 133, but the ground was set in the Umayyad dynasty. It was remarkable in terms of scientific, cultural, and industrial achievements.

It was one of the most important scientific and cultural decisive battles in the history. Seemingly, the only historian who has explicitly indicated this incident is Ibn al-Athir (Vol. 9, p. 82). However, both sides caused one of the most influential scientific, industrial, and cultural battles to happen without realizing this fact. At the very least, Muslims learned how to make paper and produce silk from Chinese captives, and half a century later, at least one of them became the major commodity that was produced abundantly all over the world. The first papermaking company outside China was set up in Samarkand and quickly spread throughout the Muslim world. In Egypt, paper was exported and reached Spain and Europe in the fourteenth century (about these incidents and scientific and industrial achievement, Frank and Bravindston, pp. 251-255; McEvedy, p. 248; Haussig, p. 108; Nazari, 2010, p. 9). According to Haussig's reports, in 751 A.D./ 134 A.H. some of the Chinese captives were taken to Kufa (Haussig, p. 108). In the period from 751 to 762 A.D. (133-145 A.H.), the Chinese painters named Fan-Shen and Liu-Tseh were in Kufa (Massignon, 2010, p. 35). Some of these captives returned to China in 762 and stated that they were working in silk workshops, which may be textile workshops (Haussig, p. 108). After that battle, Muslims learned papermaking skills from the Chinese captives and made papers in Baghdad and other cities to the extent that it became one of the main goods that was produced and consumed. Samarkandi and Baghdadi papers were very famous. Other areas' papers were produced in various sizes. After the Chinese defeat in Talas in 751 A.D./ 133 A.H., Muslims

got lots of spoils that were mostly Chinese. They had great impact on the production of goods in Islamic regions (McEvedy, p. 248). In addition to Chinese saddles, Muslim conquerors obtained brocade, painted jugs, and golden stuff (Haussig, p. 110). It is worth noting that Afrasiab workshops in Samarkand, one of the main trade pathways of the old world, produced various kinds of Chinese stuff imitating them (ibid., p. 112). After that conflict, friendly relations were established between Khagan and Mansur, Abbasid caliph, which was Chinese Khagan's request from Mansur that was mentioned earlier (Gerald, p. 375). The extent of Chinese relations with Samanids is not clear. But in a report attributed to Abudolf, it is stated that Chinese expedition wanted to have family bonds with the Samanids. They came to the court of Nasr ibn Ahmad Samani. Based on this report, the Chinese king's name was Qalin ibn al-Shakhir, but Nasr ibn Ahmad did not like her daughter to marry an unbeliever. Instead, he suggested that one of the Chinese princess marry one of his sons. This Chinese expedition returned to Sindabil with Nasr ibn Ahmad's messengers (Abudolf, Minoreski's Introduction, p. 14). As the researchers have stated, such kingdom is not known in Chinese history and their dynasties (Khanmohammadi, 2001, p. 18), but it is not in contrast with their relations with the Samanid court. Chinese are famous for producing various goods and industrial issues. They are considered to be the most skilled people regarding handicrafts, craftsmanship, and innovation. They could make novel creative things that others were not able to produce (Sulayman, p. 98; Hudud-al Alam, p. 60; Qazwini, pp. 1-65). Moreover, researchers and authors have referred to the relatively advanced Chinese trade repeatedly. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* has mentioned twenty two cities of China in which people were trading (pp. 60-63). Sulayman indicated Khanfova commercial city and port that was

very important (p. 60). Due to the abundance of coins, the Chinese issued a commercial license to make transfer less frequent. They had particular rules to preserve wealth and capital. Hence, the Chinese were the most professional merchants (Sulayman, pp. 73, 75-69). It should be added that Chinese domestic trade boomed due to abundance, diversity, and wealth, followed by international trade.

Masudi refers to the presence of merchants, especially Muslims, in Khanfova (Vol. 1, p. 137), which is likely to be Canton port, where Muslim merchants enjoyed great power and importance in 120 A.H./ 738 A.D. to the extent that launched a rebellion (Spuler, Vol. 2, p. 272). Apparently, Spuler's point is the same as Masudi and Sulayman's. To sum up, the Chinese have been familiar with the western seas, including Persian Gulf, Oman Sea, and Gulf of Aden for centuries.

Silk was one of the commodities that Chinese exported. In fact, it is not necessary to say that history of trade in ancient world is known with silk and China. Earthenware dishes were other major commodity that was very well-known. These dishes were green. Qazwini writes, "Chinese Ghazayr is kind of clay used to make dishes. It has lots of properties. It is white, transparent and non-transparent which does not reach our region" (p. 66). In what follows, these that are said to be made in China are fake (Qazwini, Vol. 1, p. 66). However, Haussig believes that dishes were one of the major Chinese commodities that were exported to other regions. They were particular and had unique material that made them impossible to be copied (p. 125). Apparently, other tribes and nations' efforts to produce goods that were similar to the Chinese did not succeed. Qazwini has compared original Chinese dishes with fake ones and stated that fake dishes had low quality. Islamic resources have reported that

Chinese dishes were imported to Central Asia. These dishes were also shipped to Egypt and Europe (Haussig, p. 125).

Additionally, Chinese were the major exporters of clothes, fabric, and textile. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* mentioned Harir (silk), Parand (plain silk clothes), Khawakhir (it does not have any equavalents), and Chinese Diba (colorful silk fabric) that were abundant in China. Clothes trade not only carried out in China but also occurred in neighboring areas like Turpan (Haussig, p. 119). Chinese wealthy classes used to wear perfect silk clothes (Sulayman, p. 98) and almost the majority of Chinese wore silk dresses in winter (Ibn al-Faqih, 2009, p. 70). Silk as the main commodity of China had twenty types. While Chinese silk was very costly, Iranian was less expensive. On the other hand, skilled craftsmen and silk producers from other regions, including Rome used gold and silver threads on the Chinese silk making precious and fine brocades that were exported to Islamic countries (Haussig, p. 97). Therefore, Chinese silk concerned all people and a large part of industry and trade was linked to it.

Accordingly, the main exports of China and its neighboring areas were dishes, clothes, silk, various spices such as Cinnamon, yeasts, vinegar, tea, boswellia, alum, cinnabar, copper, iron, lead, stone, amber, jade, etc. (Haussig, p. 91). Another important issue was the transfer of the latest fashion and model from China to other parts along Silk Road (ibid., p. 113), some of them which were Chinese were changed along this route to the extent that Islamic patterns and designs, or in other words Islamic fashion and models, which were transferred to Europe besides other goods had Chinese origin. Clothes worn in the western part of Europe were occasionally affected by Islamic regions' fashion and dresses. This new fashion was passed through commercial routes. For instance, a

European scarf named Ries was a counterpart of one produced in the Islamic east. This scarf was a piece of cloth worn around neck and head. It was similar to Arab turban or headwear produced from fine Chinese silk which had Chinese origin and nature. This scarf was painted and adorned with Islamic Tawhid manifesting its Islamic origin. Other European women outfits were affected by the Islamic clothes (Haussig, pp. 209-2010). These fashion and designs increased the Europeans' need to silk (ibid., p. 210). More interestingly, foodstuffs that had Chinese origin were transferred to other regions. The Jews, in contact with the Uyghurs living in the vicinity of China, obtained Chinese recipes. They cooked some dishes with Chinese dough that was used in cooking dough-strings and pastries affected by Chinese recipes (ibid., p. 218). In the Islamic era, Chinese art entered the Islamic lands. Among the effects of the Chinese art is the glazing on Islamic ceramic. Iranians also imitated Chinese in various areas such as weaving Satin as well as porcelain enamel with metal in the seventh century (Haussig, pp. 123, 147). But the Chinese imports were not few. They used to import goods like raisins, linen, carpets, spices, and pearls.

Therefore, China was the significant player along Silk Road that has always affected the distribution of goods, production and trade on this route. Silk Road has always been affected by China without which Silk Road does not have any meaning. Chinese exerted great impact on Silk Road by painted and patterned dishes as well as high-quality silk.

B. The Tibetan Sovereignty and Armies: Harsh Nomads, Honest but Baffled Traders on Silk Road

Tibet is China's nearest neighbor in the west sharing the same borders which can be mentioned within the Chinese world due to its closeness and vicinity and can be considered as a part of the Chinese land. Tibet

was at the heart of Asia surrounded by the Chinese, Indians, Turkics, and Sogdias on one hand, as well as deserts and Tibetan and Pamir plateau on the other hand. Accordingly, this area had a central and nucleus status and the main part of Silk Road was passing through this region. This issue had doubled its significance. On China's side, Tibet was located at the entrance of this land and had diverse relations with China compared to India with which they practically did not have any relations because of plateaus and terrains. Yaqubi refers to the borders between China and Tibet that was controlled by border guards (Vol. 1, p. 226).

This land had eclectic religion and culture. The first real government in this region was established by Serang Bresan Gumbo, whose family life with three wives from three different religions and traditions, reflects the eclectic nature of this area (Haussig, p. 77). From this perspective, Tibet was similar to Khazar land. Although Tibet had close and old relations with China because of its vicinity and closeness, at the same time, these relations became harsh due to economic interests as well as political and military changes. Trade and its profits led to controversies between China and Tibet since both of them were trying to rule over a large part of commercial Silk Road and commanders. Tang dynasty was plagued by Alushah's rebellion for a long period of time. At this time, i.e. around 740, Tibetan tribes emerged as a powerful government and attacked China. They occupied western Kanso and other neighboring areas. These invasions continued until the Tibetans become weak in 849 A.D., which means that they survived for half a century (Gerald, p. 343). Tibetans showed their power by occupying Hami which was one of the main routes of Silk Road. After Enshi, Hami was one of the major cities along Silk Road where the route forked into two parts. Southern route was passing through Kunlun Mountains to reach the northern road in

Kashgar. But northern route was extended from Enshi to Hami, Turpan, and finally Kashgar (about this route of Silk Road, Frank and Bravindston, p. 31). If Tibetand dominated Hami, they would have control over the Chinese routes and passes. Chinese tried to unite with the Sogdians in order to get out of this tension. Similarly, Tibetans were looking for allies when Muslims Arabs arrived and became their natural allies against the Chinese and Sogdians. These political and military divisions along Silk Road occurred in this region. Two new forces, the Tibetans and Muslim Arabs, and two old forces, the Sogdians and Chinese appeared. If Muslim Arabs did not help the Tibetans, probably the Sogdians and Chinese would dominated the Central Asia and advance due to the existing gap. If it had happened, the Chinese would have occupied the main part of Silk Road. But the arrival of Muslims changed the situation and the Chinese efforts to rule over the western parts of Silk Road were in vain. Moreover, their desire to expand their territory in Central Asia was ended. This event is known as the Battle of Talas River in 133, 132, or 134 between Muslims and Chinese that resulted in the China's defeat. In this battle, Ikhshidid, governor of Fergana, asked the Chinese to help them. Abu Muslim assigned Saleh ibn Ziyad to assist the governor of Shash, and Chinese troops defeated near Talas River despite the initial victory. The Chinese were defeated severly, many were killed, and two thousand became captive (Ibn al-Athir, pp. 82, 83-89, Frye, 1997, p. 67; Haussig, pp. 78-79, Frank and Bravindston, p. 252). This battle which resulted in the captivity of thousand Chinese transferred great achievements to the Islamic world (McEvedy, p. 248). Arab Muslims, the Tibetans' allies, controlled Silk Road for a long time. Furthermore, the Tibetan armies occupied a part of Tarim and Kansu from the eighth to ninth century A.D., which

temporarily halted traffic on Silk Road from Tarim. This issue was not noticeable in the west of Kansu. Although it was not possible to close Silk Road completely, these obstacles could temporarily disrupt Silk Road or affect some parts of it (Haussig, p. 37). Although Muslim Arabs did not advance their conquests up to the main Chinese lands, the Tibetans occupied Dunhuang in 766 A.D. and called it "Small Tibet" due to their dominance (Frank and Bravindston, p. 253). They controlled the main route of Silk Road from around China to Sogdia which was an economic disaster for the northern China.

Accordingly, commercial traffic along Silk Road in China faced crisis and the Chinese lost their luck for a period of time. Meanwhile, the western part of Silk Road flourished because of the Islam's role (ibid., p. 260). The Tibetans also played particular roles in this regard. Disruption of trade with China was compensated in two ways despite the serious damage to global trade and transaction. First, the southern China continued its trade through maritime route (Gerald, pp. 377-378). Second, Islamic empire nurtured economy in a vast area from Sogdia to North Africa and Andalusia as well as Caucasus to East Africa and Yemen. Now, in addition to the Tibetans and their violent relations with the Chinese, the Turkic tribes often dominated and controlled central part of Silk Road from China to Khazar lands and occasionally endangered the travelers and merchants' lives because of their activities and measures (about the examples of the Turkic conflicts, ibn Fadlan, pp. 66). On the other hand, their older counterparts, namely Huns, played destructive role in the region (Haussig, pp. 39-40). But with the foundation of Seljuq dynasty the impacts of the Turkic tribes become less significant (Frye, pp. 39-40, 67). When the Tibetans established their own government, the Uyghurs were founding their vast empire in the northeast extending from

Lake Baikal to the borders of Manchuria dominating the important settlements of Silk Road. In the meantime, Chinese government in Tang's era (618-907) faced these two governments and had to choose one. As Kitan rebels attacked the northern routes of Silk Road, the Chinese asked the Uyghurs to support them. The Uyghurs assisted Khagan and followed Manichaeism. However, a century later, in 840, the Kyrgyz defeated the Uyghurs while their religion and Manichaeism temples still existed (Haussig, pp. 79-80). Therefore, Silk Road route, especially the Chinese part, became insecure. In addition to this political and military insecurity, the Chinese faced religious insecurity. China's weaknesses, the Tibetans' bewilderment, and various tribes such as the Kyrgyz, Uyghurs, etc. resulted in various religions and rituals along Silk Road to the extent that this route became the road of religions and rituals. As a result, this part of Silk Road has long been the location of conflicts between Manichaean and Buddhist rituals, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism (Frank and Bravindston, p. 248). Christianity spread in the northeastern Silk Road near Turpan. Some Uyghurs joined Christianity that have been referred to a lot in the Mongol era. But the Tibetans attempted a lot to expand their culture and literature and decided to play a leading role in the Central Asia. But their efforts were in vain, and they reached their final point in 840 A.D. (Haussig, p. 81). However, the Chinese part of Silk Road can be named "The Buddhas Road" due to Mogao Caves[1], art works and stuffs attributed to them (Frank and Bravindston, pp. 323-338). The Tibetans supported Buddhism, and later the Qara Khitai followed them. Then, Tokuz-Oghuz (nine oghuz) rapidly affected Silk Road from Volga and south of Russia to Iran and the Middle East resulting in the establishment of Seljuq dynasty by one of its

[1] Also known as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes or Caves of the Thousand Buddhas

branches (Haussig, p. 83). Therefore, the Tibetan sovereignty in the east did not develop and prosper this region because they had problem with the main part of Silk Road, i.e. China. Perhaps Tibetans' poor presence on Silk Road was due to their weak economic status. In this regard, the author of *Hudud-al Alam* indicated that Tibet was a prosperous land with great population who did not have great needs and wants (p. 73). Nevertheless, Tibet was a region that had particular goods such as musk and various kinds of fur clothing (Hudud-al Alam, p. 73). Istakhri stated that musk was one of the Transoxiana's commercial goods (p. 227). Masudi claimed that this musk had better quality compared to the Chinese one so that others were trying to counterfeit it by adding other stuffs like blood (Vol. 1, p. 156). Apparently, poverty and lack of wealth and capital did not allow them to have strong economy, therefore, other trade roads were not important for them. Interestingly, based on Masudi's statement, it can be understood that Chinese have long practiced forgery and counterfeit.

C. Transoxiana, Khorasan, and its Surrounding: The Middle Caravan Stops along Silk Road

Transoxiana and Khorasan were the most influential areas along the ancient roads of the old world, especially Silk Road. Transoxiana and Khorasan, for various reasons, are two broad or complementary regions that will be referred to in one position. These two areas are located in the east and northeast of Iran between India, Tibet, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Khwarazm, the Caspian Sea, and Sistan. During Islamic era, Khorasan attracted Muslim conquerors' attention due to various reasons. Complex process, presence of Muslim Arabs, and continuation

of conquests in Transoxiana which lasted for a long time led to particular ties between them and the Umayyads and Abbasids caliphate to the extent that the Abbasid revolution occurred there. Hence, Transoxiana and Khorasan became the most influential Islamic countries particularly in the Abbasid era. Frye mentioned that Transoxiana and Khorasan were two provinces that benefited from commercial and industrial privileges provided by the Abbasid government (p. 184).

With the slow and gradual establishment of the Tahirid, Samanid, and Ghaznavid dynasties and vicinity of Sistan's Saffarid dynasty as well as rise of Seljuq government, Transoxiana and Khorasan became active and full of incidents. Regarding roads and trade, Transoxiana and Khorasan were the most important commercial highways of the old world from China, India, the Turkic lands to other regions of Iran, the Middle East, the Mediterranean Basin, Anatolia, on the other hand, Khwarazm, Khazran land, Russia, and East Europe. If not exaggerated, these two regions were key players and global trade poles in the Islamic era. It seems that Transoxiana and Khorasan were surrounded by the major commercial areas. Various products and commodities of Khorasan and Transoxiana, including Samarkand show the centrality of these two regions (Maqdisi, 1983, Vol. 2, pp. 476-477).

Transoxiana was highly significant because Seyhun and Amu Darya were flowing there that provided great facilities for this region. On the other hand, in Transoxiana and Khorasan, there was a developed urbanization that was unique. The development of urbanization in Transoxiana and Khorasan showed the existence of a commercial-industrialized world. Vicinity with various regions that were producing their own goods and products led to particular relations, so that some villages of Bukhara became affluent due to these centrality and

commercial route. Narshakhi emphasizes that their wealth came from market not agriculture (p. 18). Cities like Bukhara, Samarkand, Balkh, Herat, Merv, Nishapur, and other big and small cities show the domination of urbanization followed by industry and trade. Authors who were writing about Masalik and Mamalik claimed that these two regions, particularly Transoxiana had superiority due to the wealth and power (Ibn Hawqal, pp. 194, 197). However, the basis of wealth and power of Khorasan and Transoxiana was laid on trade and industry, which was due to the fact that these areas were on the main road, and one of the important ring of the Silk Road and even the trading center of the neighboring areas. However, the political and military transformations resulting from the rise of Islam did not stop trade and transaction in these areas, and the road became even more active as a result of Muslim rulers' attention. Haussig asserts that Ali ibn Isa, governor of Khorasan, sent Harun al-Rashid some Chinese jugs which shows the continuation of trade and commerce (p. 109). The discoveries of the ruins of Khalf Palace in Iraq confirms the abovementioned issue that there were some Chinese dishes (ibid.). Chinese stuff were transferred, obtained, or even copied in this area. It seems that Chinese goods were copied in Samarkand. In this regard, Afrasiab workshops have been referred to (ibid., p. 112).

However, the Central Asia suffered from two major problems, each of which was a serious damage and challenge. First, it had few population. Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, all western parts of Asia, and even Russia had a similar situation; only in the Tigris and Euphrates Basins, east of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Nile area, there was remarkable population (Factor of population was mentioned earlier). Second, although vicinity of Transoxiana with the Turkic nomads and other tribes was considered

as opportunities, their threats were more effective. There was remarkable population in Transoxiana concentrated in Samarkand and Bukhara that was playing significant role in the industry and transportation of goods and products. The four cities of Khorasan, Herat, Balkh, Merv, and Nishapur, also had good urban population.

Istakhri indicated that Transoxiana had the best climate in the Islamic world (p. 226). The author of *Hudud-al Alam* also stated that Transoxiana was prosperous and affluent (p. 105). Since Transoxiana and Khorasan had a developed urbanization, metropolises had to produce goods and commodities, some of which are mentioned. First of all, it should be stated that there were gold, silver, copper, mercury, lead, iron, alum, mines, ammonium chloride, pitch, oil, etc. in Transoxiana (Jayhani, p. 184; Istakhri, p. 227). Other industrial products such as Samarkandi paper, canvas, iron, etc. have been mentioned (ibid., p. 227). At least Samarkandi paper had a worldwide reputation exported to all parts of the world (ibid., pp. 107-108). Red salt of Kash was also known worldwide and exported to other regions (ibid., p. 108). Moreover, in some parts of Transoxiana, woolen cloth, palas[1], and saffron were produced that could be traded (ibid., p. 109). Undoubtedly, Khorasan and Transoxiana were superior to others in weaving and producing fabric and the famous Zandniji cloth was produced in the Oasis of Bukhara and exported. More interestingly, the products of these areas were multifunctional which means that nomads, urban people, and merchants needed them. For example, in Samarkand, these items were produced: large copper pots, water canteens (bottle), tents, stirrups, bridles, straps, leather saddle, etc. (Maqdisi, Vol. 2, p. 476). Nomads and merchants often needed these stuffs.

[1] Coarse woolen cloth worn by dervīshes

Transoxiana has long been known for having permanent and seasonal markets. The author and translator of *History of Bukhara* have referred to various markets around Bukhara and Samarkand. For instance, the market of Eskajkat was established for ten days in winter and merchants from far and near went there to get their needs (Narshakhi, pp. 20-21). All people in some parts of Transoxiana were merchants (ibid., p. 18). Most people of Tavayes in which two peacocks were found in each house were merchants. One of the most famous markets was established in Tir[1] for ten days on the highway from Samarkand to Bukhara. Apparently, second hand stuffs were sold in this market and people from surrounding areas went to this market. People had their own loss and profit in this Asian market and their abundant wealth came from this market (Narshakhi, p. 18). The Central Asia, including cities of Sogdia were the major and most important caravan stops along Silk Road. Almost all roads reached this area, which in general terms was similar to ports of the Mediterranean Basin, Egypt, and Italy since Iran, Iraq, the east of Mediterranean Basin, and a part of Europe route as well as India, northern part of Silk Road passing through the northern and Eastern Europe route reached Sogdia through the south of Russia. Some goods were exported to China and Far East from this region. If based on the famous saying, all roads lead to Rome, in this area, all routes lead to the Central Asia, particularly Sogdia.

Transoxiana was the most important part and heart of the Central Asia with Sogdia being its artery. There was no better land than Sogdia in the distance between the Central Asia and Levant. The authors writing about Masalik and Mamalik have stated that there were three areas superior to others in the vast Islamic world. Ibn Hawqal writes, "Sogdia in

[1] The fourth month of the Solar Hijri calendar

Samarkand, Abelah, and Ghouta in Damascus were the most delightful areas in the world" (p. 201). Comparing these regions, ibn Hawqal stated that Sogdia in Samarkand was superior to other two areas (ibid., p. 202). Sogdia was a lush green area covered with trees located between Seyhun and Amu Darya irrigated by several rivers, including the Sogdia River (Zeravshan / Bukhara) and Kushkeh Darya (Gazran River). These tortuous rivers, though short, parallel to Amu Darya, that sometimes created lakes irrigated and fertilized this area. Sogdia was one of the four heavens in the world near Basra's Abelah River, Ghouta in Damascus, and Bavan in Fars that was superior to others (about the Sogdian area, its rivers, and towns, Le Strange, p. 489). The majority of authors writing about Masalik and Mamalik praised Transoxiana for being rich and prosperous. Of course, they meant Sogdia, where the famous cities of Samarkand and Bukhara located. Ibn Hawqal writes, "Transoxiana is famous all over the world for being affluent, lush, delightful, and full of blessings" (p. 193). Istakhri and others have also had similar opinions (Istakhri, p. 226). The oasis of Sogdia had been civilized since the ancient times and benefited from abundant water, thriving agriculture, and locating along commercial routes that had given privileges to this area. Regarding agriculture, a village in Sogdia known as Ofer can be mentioned. Describing this village, Maqdisi stated that dryland farming was used there. There were lots of villages active in animal husbandry. It is reported that the harvested grains could supply Sogdia and Bukhara for two years (Maqdisi, Vol. 2, p. 409). However, irrigated cultivation of crops was more profitable. To sum up, Transoxiana, particularly the oasis of Sogdia was rich and affluent in terms of agriculture and animal husbandry, therefore, it must have had thriving trade due to its geographical position and the mentioned issues. More importantly,

Transoxiana was the crossroad of India, Khorasan, Khwarazm, and China's routes. The authors have described routes of Transoxiana in great details and various directions (Ibn Hawqal, p. 204; Maqdisi, Vol. 2, p. 499). It is worth noting that among all these descriptions, there is no road with a specific name.

Moreover, Sogdia has long been known as the land of commerce and trade. One of the occupations and means of livelihood in Sogdia was trade. The Sogdians had great commercial relations with other areas such as Khwarazm, the Oghuz lands, India, China, and Tibet due to their land's geographical position. There were various big and small cities, particularly Samarkand and Bukhara in the lush and delightful oasis of Sogdia. Geographers and historical resources have extremely praised Samarkand and Bukhara. These two twin cities, none of which being superior to the other, were the main metropolises in the region. The Large Sogdian cities had particular autonomy and did not follow any governments. However, they were sometimes attacked by aggressive nomadic tribes like the Yueh-Chihs, Scythians, Hephthalites, and Turkics. Accordingly, Sogdia was the largest city in the Central Asia, and Sogdian language was a lingua franca or bridge language along Silk Road (Gharib, p. 254). The Sogdian language was spoken in Sogdia and its famous cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara (Jayhani, 1990, p. 184; Istakhri, p. 245). The Sogdian immigrants who had gone to China for commercial purposes formed ther largest colony there (Gharib, p. 258). Taking numerous stone carvings into consideration, more than six hundred inscriptions in the Sogdian language were discovered in Indus Valley. The Sogdians had particular commercial relations with India like China (Gharib, p. 256). Investigating the names written on inscriptions and comparing them with the Chinese ancient letters, it can be concluded

that the Sogdians had a monopoly not only on the eastern routes to west (China to Sogdia, borders of Khorasan, and then Rome) but also the northern routes to south (Sogdia to China, and then India) for some centuries (from the fourth to the tenth century A.D.) (ibid., p. 267). In the government's commercial center, the Sogdian cities which were less under the domination of tyrant rulers, policy of moderation and religious freedom were observed to the extent that Buddhists, Christians, followers of Nestorianism, Manichaeism, and Zoroastrian could propagate their religions freely. All in all, Samarkand's heyday was in the seventh century A.D. when its commerce and trade prospered greatly, and Samarkand's eastern gateway was known as the China's gateway (Le Strange, p. 493). The fact that Chinese culture affected Samarkand (Gharib, p. 277) shows that these two regions had closed relations achieved through trade and commerce. Samarkand played particular roles in the region's commerce which was connecting China to Khwarazm, Khazrestan, Russia, India, north of the Black Sea, Europe, Khorasan, etc. This city played remarkable role in Silk Road's trade and was in its center. Samarkand was always famous for trade and commerce. In the Islamic era, it was one of the centers of knowledge and science in the world (see, Nesafi, 2009). Maqdisi regarded it an ancient rich city (Vol. 2, p. 401). Samarkand's trade was developed, and products were brought to this region from distant areas since it was located at the crossroad of main commercial routes passing through India (via Balkh), Iran (via Merv) and the Turkic dominated lands (Rahmani, 2013, p. 14). Maqdisi also put emphasis on the commercial status of Sogdia, particularly Samarkand. He stated that commodities from remote areas were transferred to this region (Vol. 2, p. 402). It goes without saying that remote areas refer to regions such as China, India, etc. Jayhani

claims that Samarkand's position is similar to ports, "Samarkand is port of Transoxiana. Merchants are gathered together in this region, and there are lots of commodities which are transferred to other areas" (p. 187). According to various resources, Le Strange indicated that, "All types of goods and commodities were abundant there because Samarkand was the great port of Transoxiana" (p. 494). Bukhara is Sogdia's another famous city located near Samarkand, which does not need any further explanation. Bukhara is famous because of science, knowledge, and temples. Ata-Malik Juvayni stated that, "The term Bukhara is derived from Bukar meaning scientific gathering in Moghan language. Bukhar in this meaning is close to the Oghuz language since they called their idol temples Bukhar" (Vol. 1, p. 76). Narshakhi indicated that, "Bukhara has many names, and the most famous one is Bukhar that based on narrations means valuable" (p. 30). Although Samarkand is more famous than Bukhara, its reputation is due to the fact that it was the capital of the Samanids. Maqdisi had a detailed description on the superiority of Samarkand and Bukhara to each other (Vol. 2, p. 389). He himself stated that Samarkand is superior to Bukhara (ibid.).

One of the most important issues regarding Transoxiana, particularly Sogdia is the history of their relations with China. Most people of Bikand in Bukhara were merchants that were trading with China. It seems that their business was lucrative because they were rich and affluent (Narshakhi, pp. 26, 62-63). Bikand building was older than Bukhara in which a king was living (Narshakhi, p. 8). Tabari calls Bikand the city of merchants (Tabari, 1984, Vol. 9, p. 3810). In Bikand's conquest in 87, five thousand Chinese silk pieces were proposed as ransom to make peace treaty (ibid., p. 3811), which shows Transoxiana's commercial relations with China. Regarding the incidents that occurred in 104 and

the conflict between the Sogdians and Muslims commanded by Saeed ibn Umar Al-Harashi, Tabari writes, "Muslims saved four hundred merchants whose lives were in danger and had brought a lot of goods and properties from China" (ibid., Vol. 9, p. 4037). As a result, in spite of Muslims' long conflicts and battles in Transoxiana, commercial relations with China in the form of big caravans were going on. On the other hand, undoubtedly Muslims helped the growth of trade and commerce as examples were provided earlier.

In general, Silk Road exerted great impact on Transoxiana, its cities, and types of products. Almost most of the goods made in Transoxiana were influenced by the Chinese origin of Silk Road. In addition, China has been affecting the production of industrial goods and commodities such as paper, silk, and earthenware dishes. During the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D., Nishapur and Samarkand which were located along the Far East caravan route became prevelidged in making earthenware dishes being influenced by the Chines Tang dynasty (Mobini et al., 2013, p. 82). This influence was in various ways. Initially, besides Chinese raw materials, Chinese dishes were also imported. The abundance of these two items resulted in the production of fake Chinese dishes and earthenware crockery in the Central Asia, Sogdia, and Iran, including Nishapur and Ray (about the influence of China on earthenware products, Mobini, 2013, p. 81). The first papermaking factory outside China was founded in Samarkand. Accordingly, paper was exported to other parts of the world from Samarkand (Sadeghian Khouri, Vajiheh, 1999, p. 137). During the early Islamic centuries, production of earthenware goods flourished in Samarkand affected by China.

On the other hand, Khorasan was a dry land with little water surrounded by deserts. Although it was not rich in terms of agriculture and water

supplies, Magdisi and Hakem Nishapuri have reported the abundance and diversity of fruits in this region (Hakem Nishapuri, p. 213; Magdisi, p. 463, 464). There are other references to Khorasan's other regions' fruits such as Merv Melon (Istakhri, 1990, p. 208). Nevertheless, Khorasan was a prosperous city due to commercial routes, particularly Silk Road whose main route was passing through Khorasan (Basur, pp. 145-146). This part of Silk Road covered four cities of Khorasan, including Nishapur, Balkh, Merv, and Herat which was known as India's gateway attached to Silk Road. During the early caliphate era, Khorasan was at the center of attention due to various reasons which is beyond the scope of this discussion. Khorasan had a unique status following the expansion of Islam in the caliphate era, particularly the Abbasid caliph. Various incidents occurred in the eastern parts that led to population growth and urban development. Nishapur was dependent on two economic basis: commerce and industry. The reason was China and presence of various caravans connecting China to the Mediterranean Basin (ibid., p. 149). Nishapur developed from the second century and became a large one in the fourth century. Hakem Nishapuri refres to three thousand eminent scholars living in this region which shows the magnitude of Nishapur. Kohandezh in Nishapur had two cities and four gateways. The major economic activities were done in the suburbs of this city. Nishapur had large markets, including the small and big Moraba' with long markets intersecting each other. Commercial and industrial activities were carried out in this market (Le Strange, 1999, p. 410). Hakem Nishapuri indicated that Nishapur had forty seven districts that each had its own peculiarities (1997, p. 200). Maqdisi also mentioned forty four districts whose area was half of Shiraz area (1983, p. 460). Nevertheless, Maqdisi's claim should be accepted cautiously. The author

of *Hudud-al Alam* stated that it was a populated city (1984, p. 89). In markets and alleys, each profession had its own particular Serai[1] and place. But the merchandise was thriving and the people were wealthy. Every day a trade caravan entered the city. Maqdisi considered Nishapur as the treasury of the East and trading post of the West, whose products and goods were exported to various areas (Maqdisi, p. 460). Ibn Hawqal explains carefully that there were caravanserais, inns, and khanbars in the middle of the markets that merchants go to trade with others. Each caravanserai had its own goods and almost all caravanserais were similar to big markets (Ibn Hawqal, pp. 167-168). The author of *Hudud-al Alam* writes briefly about Nishapur that it was a city for merchants (ibid., p. 89). Ibn Hawqal provides more details about the residence of famous merchants in Nishapur and other issues such as industry (ibid.). In addition to Nishapur, other cities like Tabran and Tous enjoyed developed trade and commerce (Maqdisi, p. 467). Khwarazm's goods and products were transferred to Nishapur and then exported to other Islamic and western countries (Basur, p. 150). On the other hand, goods and products were transferred to Persian Gulf and other southern cities of Iran (ibid.). City's industry was also in line with trade and commerce. Nishapur's cloth and textiles were also famous; Iraqis and Egyptians were their customers (ibid.). Yaqubi provided interesting information about fur clothing in Nishapur. Martens, foxes, Stoats, lynxs, and squirrels were killed for their fur (Yaqubi, 2009, p. 44). Furthermore, there were precious stone mines such as marble and turquoise that were exported to China and other regions (ibid.). All these activities were due to the presence of Silk Road. The authors writing about Masalik and Mamalik have describe Nishapur's routes in great details. This

[1] Serai in market is similar to caravanserai.

meticulous attention and detailed description is due to Nishapur's significance and position on Silk Road in the Islamic era.

Merv on Silk Road was known as the city of Silk. For a long time, it was famous for silk. It is reported that sericulture and silk farming reached Turkestan in the fourth and fifth centuries, were spread in Merv in the sixth century A.D., and then developed in the coastal cities of the Caspian Sea (Savagheb, 2003, pp. 146-147). Ibn Hawqal writes, "There are camelthorns in the Merv's deserts taken to other areas. Cocoon and silk are abundant in this region" (p. 171). Eggs were taken to Tabaristan and fine cotton and canvas were produced in Merv (Istakhri, p. 208). Ibn Hawqal and Istakhri point to the history of silk in Merv. However, although Iranians actively participated in the Chinese silk trade, they did not play a role in its production until the late sixth century A.D. (Tavassoli, Mohammad Mehdi, 2011, p. 15). Apart from Nishapur, authors and researchers have mentioned the neat markets of Merv which was full of various goods, and each profession had its own market (Ibn Hawqal, p. 170; Istakhri, p. 208). According to the vast majority of Arab geographers, Merv was the most delightful city in Khorasan and Merv's fruits were better than those of other places. Istakhri states, "In Merv, melon is dried and taken to other areas. I have never heard that melon can be dried in order to prevent its decay" (Istakhri, p. 208). Other commodities such as cloth, turban, cheese, copper, sesame, zante currant, honey, fig, orpiment, etc. were produced in Merv and exported to other areas.

But Balkh was along some major routes, including Silk Road and had different names such as Balkh al-Hassana, Umm al-Qura, and Umm al-Balad. Balkh is the major and most important city of Khorasan on Silk Road from China's side. In stories and myths, Zoroastrian religion and

Avesta arose from Merv (past, Nasir "Balkh" Vol. 12, p. 437). Chinese pilgrims have reported that the bathtub the Buddha purged himself in it is still available in Balkh (Gharib, p. 253).

What is important is that Balkh was located in an international region between Transoxiana, India, Tibet and equal distances from other cities of Khorasan, near Samarkand and Bukhara. In other words, it had a middle surrounded position. The fact that most religions like Buddhism and Zoroastrian had their own holy places in Balkh even after the rise of Islam shows the centrality of this city. However, in spite of this situation, Balkh could not be compared with Nishapur, therefore, the status of routes and commerce cannot determine the magnitude of a city. In 32 A.H./ 652 A.D. Muslims arrived Balkh commanded by Ahnaf ibn Qais (Baladhuri, p. 567). In 118 A.H., Asad ibn Abdullah Qasri transferred capital of Khorasan from Merv to Balkh (Baladhuri, p. 598). It lost its centrality in the Tahirid dynasty (Istakhri, p. 205). Accordingly, one of the good periods of Balkh's history began, and this trend continued until the Mongol invasion. With the Mongol invasion, Balkh suffered from the same catastrophic fate as other cities of Khorasan. Balkh is one of the four areas of Khorasan besides Herat, Merv, and Nishapur. The buildings and walls of Balkh were made of clay and the markets were located around the Jame Mosque (Istakhri, p. 278). Before the Mongol invasion, Balkh was considered to be one of the major commercial centers in Khorasan and the Indian caravan stops (Safi al-Din Balkhi, p. 47; Hudud-al Alam, p. 291). The existence of the Indian gateway in Balkh shows that they had close relations with India. Balk is the center of silk cloth. This industry entered Iran from west (Ahvaz and Shoshtar) and Balkh (Pigou Luskaia, p. 229). Mahmud of Ghazni was interested in Balkh and Asheghan (Lovers) Market belonged to him. The author of *Hudud-al*

Alam puts emphasis on the area and significance of Balkh and writes, "Balkh is a big city where merchants were residing. Indian caravan stops as well as numerous markets were there" (Hudud-al Alam, p. 99). Yaqubi claims that Balkh is one of the big cities of Khorasan (ibid., p. 52). Safi al-Din Balkhi in several positions refers to the imports of various goods and products such as medical plants, perfume, sugar, and paniz[1] from India, silk cloth, stones, precious metals, and slaves from Turkestan (pp. 47-48). He also states that there were various markets and occupations in Balkh demonstrating the active economic and financial life of this region (ibid., pp. 12, 35, 44-47, 3312). Regarding Balkh, Maqdisi indicated that the wealth and beauty of this city were unique among Ajam[2] regions (Maqdisi, Vol. 2, p. 483). Balkh was on Silk Road's gateway to India and people of Balkh and Sogdian merchants dominated commerce and trade in the southern route from the left side of Amu Darya to the Indian subcontinent. Twelve Balkh stone inscriptions discovered in valley proves this issue (Gharib, p. 251).

Herat is another famous region in Khorasan besides other three important cities. Although it is not directly located along Silk Road like Balkh, Merv, and Nishapur, it is not unrelated to this road due to its position on the route leading to India. At least, it was Khorasan's caravan stop to enter India. Herat was located along subcontinent's route to Khorasan and connected with Sistan and Kerman. Moreover, Herat had great water resources. Therefore, Herat which had thriving agriculture drew attention in the Samanid era and became significant in the Ghaznavid dynasty. Herat was one of the Seljuq's largest city in Khorasan and the Ghaznavid's capital. Naturally, with the Mongol invasion, what

[1] Kind of halva

[2] Colloquially, it now refers to non-Arabs in general.

happened to other regions occurred in Herat as well (Le Strange, p. 435). Ibn Hawqal regards Herat as Khorasan, Fars, and Sistan's caravan stop depicting its commercial status (ibid., p. 173).

D. Ray: Interconnecting Ring between Khorasan and other Regions

In order to keep the discussion going, it is time to mention Ray since it is the most famous city outside Khorasan that played a special intermediary role in terms of commerce and trade. Ray was on Khorasan's main route to Iraq and other regions. In Iran apart from Khorasan's cities, no other regions had Ray's position, particularly along Silk Road. Without Ray, discussion of Silk Road in Iran would be incomplete.

Ray was revived in the Islamic era by Al-Mahdi, son of Al-Mansur the Abbasid caliph, and experienced its heyday. Like other cities of Iran, Ray was destroyed after the Mongol invasion (Le Strange, pp. 231-233). Ray had a unique position among cities of Iran and was considered as a crossroad. It was the largest city in the distance between Khorasan and Iraq. Istakhri indicates, "Apart from Baghdad, no city in the east is bigger and more prosperous than Ray, except Nishapur" (p. 166). According to ibn Hawqal, Ray is superior to Nishapur due to its buildings and affluent people (p. 115). Most trade caravans of Iraq and Khorasan passed this city. On the other hand, it was located on the route to Persian Gulf. Ray was a connecting ring between Khorasan, central Iran and Azerbaijan, Anatolia as well as Caucasus. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that Ray was an interconnecting ring in the middle part of Silk Road passing through Iran to Iraq and the Mediterranean Sea. Ray was Silk

Road's gateway where goods and commodities were distributed. In the explorations and excavations done in Tape Gabri graves and Nagarkhane Mountain near Ray, about fifty precious silk cloth pieces with human and animal paintings were discovered that belong to Diyalmeh period (Sami, 1971, pp. 13-24) showing the commercial status of Ray. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* mentioned Ray's commodities and goods such as canvas, Bord[1] clothes, woolen Tilasan[2], and cotton crops (p. 142). Maqdisi also refered to Ray's famous fabric (Vol. 1, p. 583). Ray was the exported of goods like Moniri textile, cotton, needle, Bentonite[3], and dishes (Maqdisi, Vol. 1, p. 592). Apparently, Ray was an active city in producing silk cloth and was specialized in this regard. Abudolf claimed that there is an important point concerning Ray textile (341 A.H.). He writes, "Famous fabric known as Razi is woven in Ray which is particular to this city and cannot be found in other areas. I saw that a roll of this fabric that was about two hundred spans was sold for ten thousand dirhams" (p. 75). Due to Ray's weather and abundant water supplies, there were lots of agricultural products and fruits (ibid.). Cotton cultivation was common in Ray. Hence, cotton had a particular role in weaving various types of fabrics and clothes. There were numerous markets and great caravanserais in Ray. The existence of these markets and caravanserais show the prosperous trade in the region. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* stated that there were a lot of merchants in Ray (p. 142). Maqdisi also claimed that there were a lot of large markets and caravanserais (Vol. 1, p. 582). Additionally, he mentioned that there caravanserais were nice, beautiful, and full of facilities (ibid., Vol. 1, p.

[1] Kind of valuable expensive clothes.
[2] Kind of thick clothes
[3] Kind of clay used for washing hairs

583). The abovementioned issues in line with Ray's geographical position, domestic products, industry, well-equipped caravanserais, and big markets show the existence of a commercial world in this city. All in all, Ray achieved an important position on Silk Road.

Now, taking the abovementioned discussions that show the significance of commerce, industry, and production in Khorasan and Transoxiana into consideration, in what follows the roles and impacts of the Samandis and Qara Khitais are elaborated, particularly in terms of trade and commerce in order to better understand these two regions and their roles in global commerce and Silk Road. A great deal of information has been provided about the Samanids' scientific, industrial, and commercial roles, which is true. But this dynasty was extremely influential, especially in global trade. These roles and positions were tangible when fall of a dynasty affected global trade from East Europe to China.

The fall of the Samanid dynasty was a calamity for Silk Road to the extent that East Europe was also affected. It can be stated that the reduction in transactions in economic centers in the western part of the Silk Road in the eleventh century A.D. (fifth century A.H.) was due to the decrease in the flow of Samanid currency (silver dirhams), which led to a decline in trade. This issue was aggravated by the fall of the Samanid dynasty and the domination of the Turkic tribes in Central Asia (Haussig, pp. 67-68). The demise of the Samanids in the middle of Asia in the fourth century A.H. (1000 A.D.) put an end to dirham that had been minted there (ibid., pp. 163-164). The fact that reduction of dirham and silver coins is associated with the collapse of the Samanid dynasty is an issue that should be considered. Frye also referred to the sudden discontinuity of silver coins which had been abundant in East Europe during the Samanid dynasty. He added that this issue should be

investigated more since the Qara Khitai invasion cannot alone justify it (ibid.). Undoubtedly, there is some evidence of a decrease in the Samanid silver coins along Silk Road. But what are the factors? Did the fall of the Samanid dynasty and rise of the Seljuqs cause it? Frye believes that further investigations should be carried out. However, Haussig asserts that with the collapse of the Samanids, imports of goods, including Chinese dishes from China decreased. On the other hand, various governments' shifts played significant role in decrease or increase of trade and types of goods, which can be associated with the culture of these governments. The demise of the Samanids and domination of Turkic Karluks and Qara Khitai changed the approaches, viewpoints, and needs (Haussig, pp. 125-126).

Unlike Haussig's view that attributed decrease in silver coins to the fall of the Samanid dynasty, there are other important factors that have not been considered by him. A decrease in the Samanid coins led to the reduction of commerce along Silk Road. Therefore, there must be stronger factor other than the Samanid collapse. It seems that this overall decline in trade and commerce was associated with the incidents and events that were occurring in China. In 907 A.D., Tang dynasty was collapsed by the Song dynasty. China was experiencing chaos for fifty year (960 A.D.) until the Song dynasty reached relative strength and stability. Regarding this dynasty, three points should be considered. First, compared with the Tang dynasty, the Song dynasty had dominated fewer lands. Second, the Qitans had dominated the northwestern region and gateway of China. Presence and influence of the Tibetans as well as other rival groups aggravated the situation (see the Tibet section). Third, the Song dynasty had focused on agricultural issues and the villagers' problems. They were trying to establish equilibrium in China and solving

boundary issues in perfectionist but not decisive way (Gerald, 1989, pp. 427-451). However, their efforts were not very fruitful. If the dates of these events are attended, it will be understood that shortly after the establishment of the Song dynasty, the Samanids collapsed, moreover, based on the properties of Song dynasty, it becomes evident that they paid less attention to commerce and trade. On the other hand, the Songs focused on southern maritime routes and ports due to the civil and northern and northwestern problems. As a result, trade on Silk Road's land route was negatively affected. Now, when trade was reduced by the Chinese, the exchange of goods along the route was decreased leading to paucity of money. On the other hand, the fall of the Samanid dynasty also contributed to the reduction of commerce. In fact, the problem was the origin of trade, i.e. China, which was aggravated by the fall of the Samanids. As a result, the demise of the Samanids and rise of Seljuqs did not result in the sharp drop of silver dirhams. Stoppage and slow flow of products from China led to this situation. When the commodities are not traded, there will no longer be any money.

It should be stated that if the Samanid dynasty could play a positive and influential role on Silk Road, the reason is traced back to the Tahirid dynasty arose from the great Abbasid caliphate. Haussig regarded the advent of Tahirid dynasty as the most important events of Silk Road. On the other hand, Haussig claimed that the Tahirid dynasty and their successors, the Samanids, were the heirs of the Sogdian governments in Transoxiana that were mostly engaged in commerce. Nevertheless, the Tahirids and Samanids followed them (ibid., p. 58). However, some of Haussig's statements are reliable and dependable. Haussig's claim that the government was not associated with the Abbasid caliphate does not seem to be true (ibid., p. 58) since Frye compared Sogdia before and

during the Islamic era and referred to its prosperity during the Islamic period relying on the Abbasid caliphate (Frye, p. 183). Haussig had a particular attitude towards the Abbasid caliphate and Islamic governments. It seems that he attempted to underestimate or underrate its role in the world trade. It is surprising that the Seljuqs were likened with the Mongols. Unlike Haussig's claims, the Tahirid and Samanid dynasties were directly or indirectly established by the Abbasid caliphate whose decisive role in their formation cannot be denied. If the Samanids could rule with security for a long period, the reason was the conquests and lasting security created by the Islamic conquests. Transoxiana was more prosperous and thriving than other regions such as southern part of Khorasan, Kerman, Isfahan, Persian Iraq, etc. due to various reasons such as abundant water and agricultural oases (Haussig, p. 59; Frye, p. 182).

However, Silk Road's threats and dangers did not end. The social and geographical structure of the Central Asia and borders of China to Khorasan could be easily disrupted because in the vast nomadic region which did not have firm borders, any tensions or conflicts could make a continuum affecting remote areas from borders of China to Khorasan, Black Sea, and the East Europe. The formation of the Qara Khitai must be examined in this situation considering the impacts. The Qitan government was collapsed by the Chorchins in China (around 1122 A.D.). Some Qitans led by one of their members went to the western regions that were known as Qara Khitai in the history. The Qara Khitai territory was extended from Pamir to Aral Sea and the western part of Seyhun to the Tengot lands. Although it was not a centralized government, common interests and tribal bias united them. This nomadic government managed the nomads' economy and owing to this fact, they

ruled over the main route of Silk Road between China and West. More importantly, as Haussig stated the weakness of the Qara Khitai government that dominated Silk Road and its main route was that the tribes under their control had tribal and religious conflicts and even were somehow autonomous. They were following Buddhism while people in cities and villages were mostly Muslims.

Another important issue is that this government had particular control over the neighboring regions. They also defeated the Seljuqs and took Kharaj from the Khwarazmians. The formation of this government with tribal approach was another factor that affected commerce on Silk Road followed by the Mongol Invasion.

However, the Seljuqs ruled over regions from Seyhun and Amu Darya to the Mediterranean Sea. Undoubtedly, they dominated a large part of Silk Road for a long period, and based on the security that was created and various reports on the imposition and cancellation of toll in that era, particular attention was paid to trade and commerce. During the Seljuq period, Silk Road experienced its heyday which was never repeated (in chapter three, the Seljuq government was discussed in details).

E. Khwarazm, the Northern Silk Road's Interconnecting Ring: Silk Road's Professional Merchants

Khwarazm in the north and northeast of Transoxiana was one of the most important loops that had a particular position on Silk Road. Khwarazm was one of the important commercial regions in the history. To some extent, Khwarazm should be regarded as a commercial region because a great deal of trade caravans travelled through this city due to its geographical status and routes. It is not an exaggeration to say that

Khwarazm was one of the main commercial regions in history where goods and products were stored and distributed. Although Khwarazm was an agricultural region, their northern, eastern, and western neighbors were nomads in history. As Hawqal stated, they were surrounded by deserts (p. 206). This was both an opportunity and threat for Khwarazm. These nomads required goods and commodities found in Khwarazm's markets. In addition, people of Khwarazm more or less needed nomads' goods, products, and raw materials. Therefore, first of all, there was an important permanent market in Khwarazm, and nomads and urban people were trading an exchanging their goods. It had developed Khwarazm's economy. Moreover, an estuary of Seyhun and Amu Darya that reached each other in the Khwarazm Sea formed Khwarazm Lake that doubled this region's significance. Hence, agriculture, animal husbandry, and even fishing made this area significant. Fishing was so common in this region that authors writing about Masalik and Mamalik stated that they made a living via fishing. Khwarazm was also famous for fishing (Qazwini, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 345). Accordingly, Ibn Rustah indicated that fish was exported from Khwarazm to other regions (Ibn Rustah, p. 104). Khwarazm was famous for the abundance of products, including grains, fruits, cotton, and so forth (Ibn Hawqal, p. 206). Khwarazm's watermelon was sent to the court of Abbasid caliph in lead packs (Bartold, 1974, Vol. 2, p. 507). Apart from this, Khwarazm was the mediator of three major trade partners, China, India, and Eastern Europe. Khwarazm was one of the areas with most traffic along Silk Road. For example, although Egypt was neither on Khwarazm's route nor had direct relations with it, Egyptian fabric known as Dabighi was available in Khwarazm (Bartold, ibid.). Moreover, Khwarazm was located between two commercial areas and acted as a mediator between

Khazar and Transoxiana. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* considered Khwarazm as a caravan stop of the Turkic region, Turkestan, Transoxania, and Khazar (Ibn Hawqal, p. 210). Khwarazm was a place for merchants and warehouse for world goods and products. Ibn Hawqal stated that their wealth came from trade and commerce (p. 210). In Asia, particularly in regions from China to East Europe, none of the areas had a unique position like Khwarazm. They had vast relations with their Oghuz neighbors. Seriously speaking, this area was another Mediterranean. Maqdisi mentioned that in this fertile region prices were low (Maqdisi, Vol. 2 p. 413). Le strange stated that Urgench markets were well known for various precious goods and commodities brought from Bulgaria and Volga shores (p. 487).

Khwarazm Rivers like Seyhun and Amu Darya helped the commerce of this region. Masudi referred to ships loaded with goods and commodities in Khwarazm rivers that were going to Chach (Shash) (1987, pp. 162-163). Based on this position, urbanization had a particular place in Khwarazm, and cities like Kath, Hazorasp, and Urgench enjoyed developed urbanization. On the other hand, people of Khwarazm were affluent and rich (Hudud-al Alam, pp. 122-123). Undoubtedly, these urbanization and wealth were obtained via trade and commerce. Istakhri pointed to an interesting issue about people of Khwarazm that they travelled a lot. In Khorasan, there is no city where people of Khwarazm are not seen (1990, p. 238). Evidence proves Istakhri's idea and states that people's profession was trade. Yaqubi pointed to the Khwarazmian district in Baghdad (2009, p. 14). In addition to Khwarazm, they were in Khazars' lands and exerted tangible influence there (Masudi, pp. 176-177, Ibn Hawqal, p. 133). Frye also referred to the significance of commerce in Khwarazm (1997, p. 58).

Ibn Hawqal has given a long list of goods and products that Khwarazmian had exported or travelled to achieve them. Concerning trade, their land is known as Gog and Magog indicating that they travelled to remote east and northeastern areas to buy and prepare fur including fox, marten, martes, and other animals' fur (Ibn Hawqal, p. 210). Kilim, quilt, cotton and silk Diba, women's clothing, as well as cotton and silk scarves were among other products and exports of Khwarazm (Le Strange, pp. 487-488). Of course, Khwarazm had other natural and artificial exportations, such as glue, kind of Gelatine, ambergris, Buxus wood, honey, hazelnut, sword, arc, goshawk, jujube, grapes, and so on. Masudi stated that caravans were travelling from Khwarazm, Khorasan, and Khazaria to Bargaz on the Black Sea coast (Vol. 1, p. 178).

Since Khwarazm was almost an independent region or away from the centers of power and empires, it had certain regional and local autonomy. Even the Seljuqs in the Sanjar era whose capital was Merv could not control Khwarazm's local and regional independence movement to which they had been accustomed. Despite the vicinity of the Ghaznavids, they could not dominate the Khwarazm. As a result, what others would do was clear.

Khwarazm had its own economic and commercial organizations. For example, Khwarazm's trade was based on its coins. Since Khwarazm's trade was prosperous and its commercial life was active and dynamic, it is quite natural that its currency becomes more valuable and powerful than others. Apparently, this currency status is due to Khwarazm's independence besides its thriving trade and commerce. Moreover, Khwarazm's position did not alter when the dynasties fell and arose. In other words, political changes did not affect this region's fate and general

requirements. Khwarazm coins had at least transregional aspect in areas such as Transoxiana, Khorasan, and even Volga. Frye referred to the Khwarazm's role in leather, particularly fur trading and abundance of eastern part of caliphate territory's coins (Transoxiana and Khwarazm) in Russia and Scandinavia (Frye, p. 183). It seems that Khwarazm's advanced economy and prosperous trade had caused concern among its neighbors, particularly Transoxiana. Ahmad ibn Fadlan named Khwarazm coins "Tazjeh" and fake dirhams "Zoyuf" (1967, p. 65). Khwarazm currency with its power and high value caused loss among neighbors, particularly Transoxiana. Khwarazm's professional merchants and traders guaranteed regional and local interests by their monetary policy, money exchanging, and controlling circulation of money. Maqdisi provided an example in this regard (1983, Vol. 2, p. 415). If Narshakhi's report is correct, people of Transoxiana turned to the region's ruler, Ghatrif ibn Ghata, in Harun al-Rashid time to get rid of Khwarazm currency's pressure. He minted coins with his own portrait known as Ghatrifi, which were not valuable (pp. 50-51). This decision was made to get rid of khwarazm's economic and commercial power. However, in addition to its dynamic local economy, Khwarazm was located on Silk Road's main route and acted as China, India, and Transoxiana's mediator among the Khazaria, Russian, the Black Sea Basin, and Eastern Europe.

F. Khazarias: Tolerant Merchants of Silk Road

Khazarias were nomadic and Turkic people who controlled north of the Caspian Sea and Caucasus, south of Volga, as well as eastern shores of the Black Sea from the sixth to the tenth century A.D. Probably they were the followers of the Jewish religion. People in their territory were

following different religions such as Islam, Christianity, etc., and there is not exact information about their language. Atil was the capital of Khazaria (see Khazaria, Koestler, 1983). Istakhri divided Khazarias into two groups: Qarakhazarias with black hair and tawny skin and second group with fair skin (p. 223) showing ethnic diversity in this region. They had complex relations with the Romans and Sassanids. Khazarias' relations with the Romans was bound to Huns' history.

In the first Islamic century, the Khazarias resisted firmly against the Muslim conquests in Caucasus. This issue saved the Byzantine Empire. In 89 A.H./ 708 A.D., Moslemah ibn al-Malik advanced towards Bab al-Abwab against the Khazarias after occupying cities and castles of Azerbaijan. During Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz era, the Khazarias passed through the Caucasus Mountains and invaded Azerbaijan and Arran once again looting and killing people. The Umayyad caliph sent an army to Arran through Azerbaijan commanded by Hatam ibn Noman Baheli to resist against the Khazarias that were defeated and retreated to the northern Caucasus (Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 6, pp. 53-54).

In 104 A.H., in Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik era, Jarrah ibn Abdullah Hakami launched a military campaign in Caucasus to resist against the Khazarias, defeated Khazaria Khaghan's son and occupied Balanjar (Yaqubi, Vol. 2, p. 279). But this victory was not decisive since Jarrah ibn Abdullah had to invade Balanjar to repress the Khazarias in 112 A.H./ 730 A.D. They were defeated and killed (for further details, Ibn al-Athir, pp. 8-10, 57-60). Therefore, Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, the Umayyad caliph, initially sent Sa'id ibn Amr al-Harashi to confront the Khazarias. But he argued with Moslemah ibn al-Malik. Moslemah ibn al-Malik crossed the northern route towards the Khazaria and fought against the Khazaria king that did not result in victory and Marvan ibn Muhammad became his

successor in Sarir (between Alan and Darband) (Yaqubi, p. 285-286; Ibn al-Athir, pp. 76-78). Marvan ibn Muhammd, ruler of Armenia, attacked Khazaria with a large army in 119 A.H. and later in 121 A.H. Occupying two important cities of Khazaria, Balanjar and Samandar to Atil (capital of Khazaria), he advanced towards Volga and killed people. The Khazaria khaghan who could not resist against Marvan ran away (Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 8, pp. 116, 145). The Khazarias retaliated against their attack and even threatened Mosul. But the Umayyads in a surprising attack advanced towards the Caucasus region and reached Europe passing through the northern part of the Black Sea. Suddenly, everything changed and Muslim Arabs retreated without assigning forces to protect their achievements in Khazaria and areas around the Black Sea (Frank and Bravindston, pp. 247-248). This issue was associated with the fall of the Umayyad dynasty.

After the fall of the Umayyads and rise of the Abbasids, the conflicts between the Khazarias and Arabs continued. During Al-Mansur caliphate, the Khazarias revolted and attacked Yazid ibn Asid Salmi, the Abbasid governor of Armenia. When Al-Mansur heard the news, dispatched twenty thousand soldiers to the area commanded by Jabril ibn Yahya. But they were defeated. Hence, Al-Mansur sent seven thousand prisoners and a large group of people along with construction workers and architects to Caucasus to build fortresses against the Khazarias. Accordingly, battle against the Khazarias started which was victorious and Muslims could protect the Caucasus fortresses (Yaqubi, pp. 362-363). Apparently, peace and tranquility were established to the extent that Khaghan's daughter married to Fadhl ibn Yahya Barmaki, but unfortunately bride died on the way. A few battles happened after that which resulted in Khaghan's enmity and hatred, so the Khazarias invaded

Muslim cities, particularly Darband and killed lots of people. Based on Yaqubi's writing, Sa'id ibn Salim ibn Qatiba Baheli, governor of Armenia, mistreated the Christians to the extent that they revolted. The leader of rebels Najm ibn Hashim's head was opened. Najm's son decided to take revenge and helped the rebels. Harun assigned Nahab to castigate Sa'id ibn Moslem and guide people. But he took bribe and Harun sent Nasr ibn Habib. He was immediately dismissed and Ali ibn Isa ibn Mahan became ruler of Armenia, and nothing more was done (Yaqubi, pp. 439-441). In Al-Mutawakkil era, the Caucasian Christians revolted and requested help from three powers in their neighborhood (the Khazarias, Slavic king, and Byzantine Emperor) who responded positively. But they could not succeed against caliphate troops and Muhammad ibn Khaled ibn Yazid, commander of caliphate army, gave quarter to them (Yaqubi, pp. 518-519). Thereafter, there is no mention of the clash between Muslims and the Khazarias.

Regardless of these dense discussions, two important issues concerning the Khazarias and their key land should be taken into consideration. First, it sounds that in Harun time, The Khazaria khaghan joined the Jewish religion (Masudi, p. 176). Second, what caused the Khazaria, Slavic, and Byzantine not occupied by Muslims was the transfer of the caliphate from the Umayyads to the Abbasids. Marvan ibn Muhammad was familiar with that region and had launch military campaigns there. If his caliphate had not demised, he could have followed the battles seriously due to his sensitivity to the issue. Anyway, the transfer of the caliphate from the Umayyads to the Abbasids saved the Khazarias, Slavics, and Byzantine Empire from danger. Probably if the Khazarias had not resisted against Muslims on the early Muslim conquests, northern part of the Black Sea, Ukraine, southern part of Russia, and Eastern Europe

would have been occupied by the Muslims. First, Darband was liberated by Muslims, but twenty years later in 658, the Khazarias recaptured this region up to the southern part of Caucasus. Eventually, the Khazarias set the Caucasus Mountains as their borders with the Abbasid caliphate. Of course, the fall of the Umayyad dynasty comforted the Khazarias (for more information see History of Shirvan and Darband, p. 184).

More importantly, the Khazarias played a particular international role in commercial transactions. When the Islamic empire occupied the Middle East and North Africa, the Byzantine emperor became anxious to transfer commercial route from Asia to the northern part of the Caspian Sea and Khazaria. Accordingly, Khazaria's international aspect became more highlighted and it turned to be an alternative route from East (Byzantine and East Europe) to the Central Asia (McEvedy, p. 223). Meanwhile, the Khazaria governments challenged Muslims' commercial relations with the northern region of the Black Sea. The Khazaria governments that had controlled northern parts of Caucasus, the Black Sea, and the Caspian Sea joined the Jewish religion and became barriers. It appears that the Khazaria governments, which were also called the thirteenth Jewish tribes, had good relations with other Jews in Spain while their relations with Muslim merchants were not good (about the Khazaria Governments, Koestler).

The Khazaria was one of the most important commercial mediators between China, Europe, Islamic lands, and India. The Northern Silk Road and even some parts of it passing through Iran were located in this region. Having access to the Black and Caspian Sea, Volga River, as well as Don River, the Khazaria had particular situation. On one hand, they were Khwarazm's neighbors, and on the other hand, through Caucasus their land was located in the vicinity of Azerbaijan, Arran, and Armania

whose major cities were Barda'h, Darband, and Ardabil that were producing Silk and cotton textiles (Bartold, 1997, p. 39). The Khazrias possessed one of the most important routes of Silk Road on the world scale and like a circle were surrounded by Khwarazm, Iran, and Eastern Europe (the Slavics). A part of Silk Road was extended from the Samanid territory to Khwarazm, and then to Khazaria, Russia, and Eastern Europe. The Khazaria territory was so large in terms of trade that was extended throughout Asia. In 650, they occupied lands between the Caspian Sea and Aral up to the Sogdian territory before the Muslim conquests and advanced towards the Black Sea. The Khazarias were the allies of the Byzantine Empire and had frequent conflicts with Muslims (Frank and Bravindston, p. 246). This part of road from Transoxiana to Khwarazm, particularly Khwarazm to Khazaria, Russia, and Europe was known as fur road. As stated earlier, one of the most important goods of Khwarazm was various kinds of fur exported to other areas. Another important issue was the facilities that Khazarias provided for merchants and traders. Khazaria was a cosmopolitan city with different nations and religions. The historians have referred to even different religions and sometimes seven judges (two Muslim, two Christian, two Jews, and one Slavic) (Hudud-al Alam, p. 193; Masudi, p. 177; Ibn Hawqal, 1988, p. 131; Istakhri, 1990, p. 178). First, it shows the diversity of nations and religions. Second, it depicts the legal and practical freedom of religions in Khazaria that facilitated trade and commerce.

Based on what was mentioned earlier, the Khazaria government was a commercial one. One of the hallmarks of the Khazaria sovereignty was the position of Zarrab[1] at the khaghan or Khazaria king's court. Zarrab's rank was higher than others showing the significance of money and coins

[1] A person who minted coin

in Khazaria and economic system based on commerce and trade. Moreover, Khazaria central custom was administered under the supervision of Sahib al-Khazr. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* stated that Khazaria king's wealth came from sea tribute (p. 193). Ibn Hawqal provided further explanation that his wealth came from custom and one tenth of trade (p. 131). Ibn Fadlan describes this issue more accurately and writes, "Whenever a ship goes to Slavic lands through Khazaria, the king inspects its loads and takes one tenth of it" (Ibn Fadlan, p. 97). Khazaria was the Russian trade center (Ibn Hawqal, p. 133). Ibn Fadlan writes, "I saw Russians who were trading there and travelling through the Atil River" (p. 101). Istakhri provides further details, "Goods and commodities that merchants can buy in Khazaria do not come from this area" (p. 180) showing intermediary role of the Khazarias in commerce. Khazaria had relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Arran through Caucasus which were in the vicinity of Islamic lands. These areas, which according to Bartold were the only collection whose largest city was Barda'h, were near Khazaria that contributed to the intermediary role of Khazarias (1996, p. 40). Furthermore, Khazaria had a mediatory role between Transoxiana and the Samanid territory with Bulgaria, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Black Sea Basin. Various commodities such as silver coins, earthenware dishes, cloth, silk, felt, etc. were transferred through this route. Ibn Hawqal referred to the presence of Khwarazmi merchants in Khazaria who were buying fur and expensive fur clothing (p. 133). Apparently, commercial interests had connected Khwarazm and Khazaria whose people were mostly merchants and dealers. In other words, benefits of trade and commerce had made these areas interdependent. Khwarazmians had especial privileges in Khazaria. These privileges include: 1. The openness of religion and prayer, 2.The

ministry of Khwarazmians (According to Masudi, Ahmad ibn Kuyeh was a vizier at that time), and 3. In the battle between Muslims and the Khazaria king, the Khwarazmians should not fight against their allies (Masudi, Vol. 1, pp. 176-177). It sounds that these privileges and tolerant approaches were due to the Khazarias' needs to the Khwarazmians in a trade world. Therefore, the Khazarias cunningly preferred commercial cooperation and were ready to give similar privileges. However, in spite of the Khazarias' active role in trade and international commerce, they did not have much to export except for isinglass (Ibn Hawqal, p. 135). Bartold added that the Khazarias did not have any production. But the Arab authors have clearly mentioned its trade (Bartold, 1996, 40). The Khazarias' trade without having any products made Muslim authors refer to them passionately, which shows the significance of the Khazaria trade. The Khazarias' commercial approach is due to their intermediary role, dealership, and transportation of goods relying on this area's geographical position along the Northern Silk Road. Different types of fur were one of the main and important commodities exported and imported from Khwarazm and the Oghuz land. On the other hand, the Andalusian fur clothing was transported to the Khazaria and from there to Khwarazm and Transoxiana (Ibn Hawqal, p. 133). In Khazaria, there was a tribe named Burtas that was famous for black and red fox fur called Burtasi that was costly. This kind of fur was too expensive and had lots of customers (Masudi, p. 178). Therefore, it is quite natural to call Khazaria and its surrounding fur road. Concerning the capital of Khazaria, there is no consensus among authors. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* indicated that Samandar and Atil were the capital and main city of Khazaria that consisted of various nations and religions. Furthermore, most people of these cities were merchants (Hudud-al Alam, p. 193).

Istakhri indicated that people of the eastern part of Atil were mostly Muslim engaged in trade (p. 179). During the eighth century A.D./ second half of the first century to the tenth century A.D., Khazaria experienced its commercial peak (Frank and Bravindston, p. 251).

Based on the above evidence, Haussig's claim according to which the Khazaria was considered as a threat for Muslim merchants that stopped their activities in Russia and Kiev is not correct. The special privileges of Muslims show the dependence of the economic and commercial interests of Khazaria on Islamic countries, particularly neighboring countries.

Haussig stated that by the turn of the eighths century A.D. (second century A.H.), the Khazaria khaghans joined the Jewish religion. This issue created problems for Muslim merchants since they faced challenges and difficulty in travelling to Kiev (Haussig, p. 32). Khazaria did not create any difficulty in trading with the Byzantine Empire (ibid., p. 32). Apparently, they had not noticed that Khazaria had long been the Byzantine Empire's ally. However, based on the writings of historians and authors, Haussig' opinion is not acceptable.

G. Persian Gulf: An Interconnecting Ring between Silk Road and Advieh

The Persian Gulf has long been one of the world's famous waterways. This waterway is in the central part of the Western Asia interconnecting India, Transoxiana, and Iran through water. Since long time ago, the coasts of the Persian Gulf have been the human's home and famous civilizations, various governments, and empires have occupied it throughout history. From Transoxiana civilizations to the governments

of Iran, Alexander, Muslim Arabs, the Turkics, and Mongols, each dominated it for a period of time. This waterway like other maritime areas such as the Black Sea, Red Sea, Oman Sea, and oceans became highly significant in the maritime era started in the sixteenth century. The Persian Gulf was one of the first areas dominated and occupied by the Europeans, particularly the Portuguese. The Persian Gulf has long been one of the commercial maritime routes, and there have been various ports on its long coasts. Concerning commercial ships route from China to Siraf, Abu Zayd Sirafi writes, "Chinese ships are loaded in Siraf and go to Muscat within the distance of two hundred farsakh. In Sohar, Oman they provide fresh water and follow their route to Kollam port in India that has lots of freshwater springs. If gentle winds blow, it takes one month to reach there. The Chinese ships pay one thousand dirhams and other ships pay ten dirhams to one dinar. It takes one month to reach the Harkand Sea from Kollam port. The, they go to a place called Lich Ballos (Langblas) whose inhabitants have long beard and fair skin and cannot understand Arabic or other merchants languages. Sailors have never seen their women. They bring coconut, sugarcane, banana, and coconut milk for the merchants. Thereafter, they go to a place called Kalah or Zaboj lands. It takes one month to go there. After that, ships follow their route to Batumi in ten days. Next place is Campa (Anam, Koshin, and Shin) that has fresh water. Then, they go to Sanderfolat Island in ten days that has fresh water. Next, they travel to a sea called Sanji. Next destination is China that takes one month. Passing through the mountains, it takes seven days to reach China. After gateways, they reach bays and fresh water. Khanfova in which fresh water rivers are flowing is the next place they go" (Sulayman Sirafi Merchant, ibid., pp. 61-65).

Yaqubi provided a complete report on the maritime relations with China from the Persian Gulf. He writes, "China is a vast land. Whoever wants to go to China must cross seven seas, each one with its own color and wind and fish and breeze, completely unlike the sea that lies beside it. The first of them is the Sea of Fars, which men sail setting out from Siraf. The second sea begins at Ra's al-Jumha and is called Larwi. It is a big sea, and in it is the Island of Waqwaq and others that belong to the Zanj. These islands have kings. The third sea is called Harkand, and in it lies the Island of Sarandib, in which are precious stones and rubies. The fourth sea is called Kalah and is shallow and filled with huge serpents. Sometimes they ride the wind and smash ships. The fifth sea is called Salahit and is very large and filled with wonders. The sixth sea is called Kardanj; it is very rainy. The seventh sea is called the sea of Sanji, also known as Kanjli. It is the sea of China; one is driven by the south wind until one reaches a freshwater bay, along which are fortified places and cities, until one reaches Khanfu" (Yaqubi, Vol. 1, p. 225). The fact that both Sirafi and Yaqubi have described maritime route from the Persian Gulf to China in great details shows the traffic of commercial ships between these two regions.

In general, a part of Indian subcontinent's maritime route to Europe passed through the Persian Gulf. Therefore, the Indian route to Transoxiana, Levant, Anatolia, and the Mediterranean Basin passed through the Persian Gulf. Accordingly, an important part of Indian subcontinent's trade was carried out in the Persian Gulf. But in the Islamic era, and especially before the Mongol invasion, the Persian Gulf and its coastline had a special place in the economy and trade. The economic and commercial significance of the Persian Gulf was so great that three relatively large Qarmatian, Zengid, and Jat rebellions in the

Abbasid caliphate occurred on the coasts and islands of the Persian Gulf due to economic issues. At least, Zanj Rebellion took place because of economic issues rooted in Basra's position. Port city of Basra was very rich, therefore, the affluent residents began to revive surrounding lands that needed abundant work force. In order to supply agricultural labor, some groups were transported from East Africa to Basra. Difficulty and tyranny resulted in Zanj Rebellion led by Ali ibn Muhammad. He supported the agricultural labor and resisted against the Abbasid caliphate for 14 years (see Ibn Khaldun, 1986, p. 467). Besides this, the Zat Rebellion was related to trade in the Persian Gulf. Commercial prosperity of the Persian Gulf ports, particularly Basra created a need for service forces (shipments, loading, and unloading ships) transported from India. Once again, tyranny, difficulty, and working under inappropriate conditions such as bad weather led to workers' dissatisfaction and resulted in the Zat Rebellion (about Zats, Ibn Khaldun, ibid., p. 399).

Nevertheless, trade and commerce played a major role in the Persian Gulf. Why did the Persian Gulf become active in the Islamic era? In the first place, the main reason was the formation of Islamic empire and caliphate which resulted in the economic and commercial growth. The establishment of the Abbasid caliphate and cities of Iraq specifically affected the Persian Gulf in the Islamic era. In the Islamic era, famous cities such as Basra, Kufa, Wasit, Baghdad, etc. were established in Iraq that had large rich urban population. Regarding the commercial development in the Persian Gulf, Kahen writes, "Goods and commodities imported into Iraq were bought by the rich, nobles, and the court" (ibid., p. 1621). Additionally, the interest of some governments such as the Buyids and Seljuqs in the Persian Gulf due to the Indian Subcontinent,

East Asia, and China's proximity to the sea flourished trade and commerce in this region. It is worth mention that in Islamic era, ports of the Persian Gulf, including Basra, Siraf, and Muscat were developed remarkably. Another evidence to show the impacts of the Abbasid caliphate and major Iraqi cities on the growing commercial activities of the Persian Gulf is this region and its ports' status after the Mongol invasion. Almost all ports of the Persian Gulf lost their significance when the Mongols attacked Iran. When the Abbasid caliphate demised, Baghdad was destroyed, and urbanization in Iraq and Iran was heavily affected, there was no urgent need to trade. When the Abbasid caliphate fell, Baghdad was afflicted with a disaster, and its economic power was wiped out, trade and ports were no longer required. An example of humanitarian disaster was the massacre of Iraqis. Iraq was a rich and populous country (see Mostofi, 2003, pp. 369, 589). Another issue is a dramatic drop in Iraq's economic power that reached one tenth in the Ilkhanate era compared to the caliphate time. Now talking about trade and commerce, particularly with the Mongolian way of thinking is useless. According to the available resources of that era, Petrushevsky reported that that Iraq's tax in the Caliphate period was about thirty million dinars while it became less than three million dinars in the Ilkhanate era (p. 470). This report can reveal a great deal of information. In fact, Iraq descended from the best to worst as a result of a decline in economic power and rural as well as urban population. Based on Iraq's tax in the Ilkhanate era, it can be understood that the government was trying to obviate its needs while trade takes place when the necessities are met and society seeks entertainment and luxuries.

Commercial geography of the Persian Gulf was broad and wide. Kahen added that merchant ships were loaded in Iraq and Iran and travelled to

Oman on the coasts of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and East Africa through Basra in the Persian Gulf or Siraf on Iran's coasts. Thereafter, they traveled towards Zanzibar and Comoros archipelago. Going eastwards, these ships arrived in Malaysia and China (Canton port) (Kahen, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 1621). The arrival and departure of other regions and countries' ships made the Persian Gulf a big commercial waterway. Goods and commodities unloaded in the Persian Gulf were transferred to Egypt and Syria by caravans. Therefore, the international role of the Persian Gulf in world trade became highly significant as a major complement to Silk Road.

In the Islamic era, the Persian Gulf's trade triangle was formed by Siraf, Basra, Sohar, and Muscat (Yahyaei, 2008, p. 90). Siraf had a particular position among these regions and was one of the most important ports of the Persian Gulf, which was equal to Basra. A part of Advieh (maritime route) was located in Siraf which was connected to Silk Road through Fars and Kerman. When coasts of Levant and the Mediterranean Sea were agitated by the Crusades, goods and products were transported to the west of Iran and Trabzon on the coast of the Black Sea through Siraf and Azerbaijan. Given the mentioned issues, it can be understood why geographers and authors writing about Masalik and Mamalik have referred to the wealth, magnitude, and splendor of Siraf. In the divisions provided by the authors, Siraf was one of the most famous cities of Ardashir-Khwarrah in the province of Fars (Pars), therefore, it was considered as a port of this city. Yahyaei stated that, "Compared to the Sassanid era, trade in Siraf was more advanced and prosperous after the rise of Islam, particularly in the Abbasid caliphate time because the caliphate, whose capital was Baghdad, dominated over vast areas of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Levant, Egypt, Morocco, etc." (ibid., p. 92). What is

more important about Siraf is its wealth, splendor, and multistory buildings that had attracted authors' attention. They have mentioned Siraf's multistory houses showing the prosperity of city whose citizens were mostly merchants. Jayhani indicated, "After Shiraz, Siraf is the biggest city in the region … Houses there are built of teak and other woods brought from Zangian … A great amount of money is spent on these houses to the extent that a merchant spends three thousand dinars for this purpose" (p. 117). Ibn Hawqal referred to multistory buildings in Siraf that were similar to those constructed in Egypt and stated that they spent a lot of money on these houses (p. 51). The author of *Hudud-al Alam* stated, "Siraf is a big city that is merchants' center and …" (p. 131). Istakhri claimed that Siraf's exported products and goods included incense, amber, camphor, jewelry, Bambuseae, ivory, ebony, sandalwood, and drugs (p. 134).

Additionally, rulers of the Buyid dynasty paid particular attention to Siraf due to the benefits they obtained. Therefore, they were interested in developing this region to the extent that they covered Siraf's route to Shiraz with cobblestone (Yahyaei, ibid., p. 94). Siraf had broad commercial relations with different regions such as Zanzibar, East Africa, Silane, India, China, other ports of the Persia Gulf, and so on. For instance, teak that was used in Siraf's buildings came from Zanzibar showing great wealth of the city and merchants' awareness of various goods and products. Maqdisi considered Siraf as the warehouse of Fars and Kerman as well as China's gateway (Maqdisi, Vol. 2, p. 636; for further information, Schwaz, 1994, p. 90).

Famous ports of the Persian Gulf including Basra and Abelah were located at the end of maritime route or in other words Advieh on China's side. Basra at the end of the Persian Gulf as the most famous port of Iraq

does not need further description. Basra was a big commercial center, and there were prosperous shipbuilding workshops in Abelah, which shows the significance of commerce and maritime routes in Basra. Yaqubi writes, "Khiti ships are built in Abelah and navigated towards China" (Yaqubi, 2009, p. 115).

H. Egypt: Distributor and Regulator of Silk Road and Advieh

Egypt had a prominent part in the trade world. It had a perfect position along Silk Road and was one of the world's important rings. Egypt was unique because of its maritime and land status. This land was connecting two continents, Asia and Africa, through sea and land. It enjoyed an exceptional role due to its status in the Mediterranean entry from Asia, Africa, and Europe's side and was considered as an entrance of these three continents through sea and land. Yaqubi asserted that Egypt was the harbor of the western countries and Levant's ships (Yaqubi, Albuldan, p. 97). On the other hand, Egypt has long been linked to India through sea and had intermediary role in transportation of goods from the Indian subcontinent, Indochina, and China to Europe. Egypt was at the end of the maritime route, Advieh, and one of the last and most important stops along Silk Road through Levant. Egypt was an affluent land. Wealth that came from sea and the existence of the Nile River added to the potential and prosperity of this region. Egypt has long been known for being wheat warehouse. In Yusuf, the 12th chapter of the Quran, the issue of wheat in Egypt is referred to. This area was Palestine, Levant, Iraq, and particularly Baghdad's wheat supplier in the Islamic and caliphate era. Yaqubi pointed out that some goods and products such

as flour were shipped from Egypt and Levant to Baghdad through Raqqa (ibid., p. 17). On the other hand, there was a region known as 'Alafi Wadi in the south of Egypt around Aswan towards south, i.e. Sudan that had gold mines (Yaqubi, ibid., pp. 94-95). The Egyptians also benefited from East African gold mines. Hence, the Egyptian golden dinar was considered to be the most famous currency in global exchanges, including the Mediterranean Basin and India, which could be exchanged with major currency such as Byzantine gold (see, previous pages). The Egyptian golden dinars were spent on expensive decorative items and stuffs like Chinese dishes and various types of pepper (Haussig, p. 157). Egypt's golden dinar was a measure of commodities' value. "This issue is important because the features of monetary economy in Egypt shows the quality of Silk Road's monetary economy" (Haussig, pp. 189-190). The Egyptian currency's superior status lasted for a long time. In Iran, gold coins known as ashrafi were very famous, which were derived from the coins minted in Egyptian countries by Sultan Ashraf Barsbai. Thereafter, gold coins were called ashrafi in Iran.

Egypt was connected to Levant through land and sea. Levant was one of the last rings of Silk Road in connection with a large part of Asia, particularly India, China, and a part of North China passing through Iran. Levant's ports were significant in terms of maritime trade. Referring to Tripoli, Yaqubi stated that Tripoli in Levant was a strange port where thousands ships could be anchored (p. 89). On the other hand, this region was in the Anatolian entry from Egypt overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, West Europe, and other islands and ports. In fact, this region was considered as the major commercial area of Egypt. It is worth noting that Egypt and Levant's relations were very complex and multilayered based on cooperation. In spite of this cooperation, they were in competition

with each other. While Egypt was in charge of trade with North Africa, south of France, and Spain, Levant traded with other European regions and Anatolia. Egypt also had close relations with East Africa that was famous for its gold mines and reserves, as well as other goods like ivory. It also had particular relations with Aden and coasts of Yemen. It seems that like a circle, Egypt was surrounded by famous commercial regions. Egypt's relations with Spain and Islamic West were permanent, and had never been disturbed. However, Egypt's relations with Western Europe were sometimes irregular (Belyayev, Reza, p. 75).

Trade had a particular status in Egypt to the extent that it was used as a political weapon. The Fatimids used a commercial weapon in competition with the Abbasid caliphate. They tried to extend a commercial route with Asia towards the Red Sea through the Persian Gulf to weaken the Abbasid caliphate (Holt, p. 257). Egypt also traditionally had close relations with Yemen and occasionally controlled it. In the mid-fifth century, during Al-Mustansir caliph time, Egypt was disturbed and trade slumped (ibid., p. 260). The Fatimids were deeply aware of the importance of commerce. They established a kind of export trading (ibid., p. 263). The Egyptians attempted to rule over the Red and Mediterranean Seas. The Egyptian ships travelled to the ports of Sicily and Spain, and two major cities, i.e. Alexandria and Tripoli became warehouses of international goods (ibid., pp. 263-264). Egypt's economy and trade experienced its heyday in the Ayyubid dynasty. In spite of the continuation of the Crusades in the Ayyubid dynasty, Egypt and even Levant were developed in Salah ad-Din's time in terms of economy and trade. In a letter to the Abbasid caliph, Salas ad-Din Ayyubi put emphasis on differentiating trade from politics and the Crusades. He attempted to revive Egypt's traditional commerce and created a suitable environment

for the Italian and French merchants in the areas dominated by the Ayyubids after occupying Jerusalem and ratifying peace treaty with Franks (ibid., p. 383). At this point, one of the major exports of China was alum whose producer was China (ibid.).

Egypt had particular situations in various aspects. It was located at the entrance of the rich African continent and other inhabitants of Africa had numerous relations with the Egyptians. From Mali in West Africa to the eastern parts, they sometimes needed Egypt. Therefore, these relations have attracted gold in Egypt. Furthermore, Egypt dominated Yemen who had no other choices. Yemen was the main ring of the maritime route between South China, Indochina, India, and the Mediterranean Basin as well as Europe leading to Egypt due to its status. Yaqubi argued that Yemen was the harbor of the Chinese ships (p. 80). Yemen also produced commodities (Haussig, p. 156). Additionally, Yemen was a port of entry for the Indian and Mediterranean goods and commodities through maritime route and Hejaz land road. It also has long had its own exclusive products and industry. For instance, iron and cast-iron pots resistant against fire were exclusive to Yemen and they had important roles in exporting incense and myrtus. Therefore, Egypt had relations with India, and India's role in Asia was similar to that of Egypt in the Mediterranean Basin. Accordingly, a world trade puzzle was completed, and Egypt and its cities formed its major rings.

Levant and Egypt had particular status in the middle part of world trade, particularly in the Islamic era. Compared to other regions, there is a great deal of information regarding Egypt and its economic condition. Various Egyptian resources, European as well as Islamic western and eastern travelers provided numerous reports on this region and praised its economic power and commodities. Nasir Khusraw provided an

interesting report of his observation from Egypt. He surprisingly referred to various summer and winter fruits in Egypt (1963, p. 74). Besides fruits, the Egyptians were very skilled in trading and producing commodities. Their decorative wood engraving had a lot of followers. They were skillful in casting cups, abgineh[1], and statues that were Egypt's major exports (Haussig, pp. 149-150). It seems that the Egyptians also exported raw materials such as copper to India from where copper dishes were transported to Europe. They also copied Indian goods, especially copper dishes (ibid., p. 157). They were also famous for producing and weaving various types of textiles and fabric. Yaqubi who was living in Egypt at the end of his life (the late third century) stated that expensive delicate Dabighi clothes, soft cotton, striped cloth, velvet, patterned fabric, and different kinds of textile were produced in Tennis (Tinnis) (p. 97). Referring to markets and caravanserais such as Alghanadil souk and Dar al-Vazir in Cairo, Nasir Khusraw writes, "These markets are unique in the world, and all goods that are available in the world can be found there" (pp. 73, 78). Yaqubi also added that Dabighi clothes, abchin[2], textile, and delicate cotton were produced in Damietta. In addition to fabric, paper was made in Damietta (Yaqubi, p. 97).

The author of *Hudud-al Alam* describes Egypt, "It is the most powerful region among the Islamic lands" (Hudud-al Alam, p. 175; Nasir Khusraw, p. 77). He also refers to the exports and imports of this area, "Clothes, various types of burnoose, Egyptian suf (kind of clothes), Dabighi turban, etc. are produced in this region that are the most expensive ones in the world" (ibid.). Spice was far more important than

[1] Glassware

[2] Kind of towel

expected to the extent that the balance of world trade relied on it. Spice was transshipment cargo in the Middle East Islamic lands (McEvedy, p. 270). In this regard, the Egyptians' role was remarkable. Decorative luxurious items like Chinese dishes and various types of pepper were exchange for the Egyptian gold dina (Haussig, p. 157). Accordingly, most of trading and commercial documents were found in Egypt (Haussig, p. 191). Egypt's commercial relations with India and south of Saudi Arabia were managed by Cairo playing an intermediary role (McEvedy, p. 223). Trade was so common that bills of exchange were used instead of cash (Haussig, p. 155). Therefore, Egypt completed the world commercial ring along Europe to India, Indochina, and China. Supplying, transporting, and producing various goods and products were one of the Egyptian commercial route's privilege. Goods were traded by bills that formed a kind of international bourse[1] (Haussig, p. 157). Referring to the Egyptians' global position, Rabi states, "In Alexandria, there is a markets for merchants from all over the world. Traders go there from all Christian lands such as Venice, Lombardy, Toscana, Apulia, and most European cities, and from west, Islamic lands like Andalusia, Africa, Arab territories, and other side, India, Zavileh, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Levant, Anatolia, and Greece. The Indian merchants bring spice to Alexandria purchased by the Christian traders. Alexandria is a populous and dynamic city in which each nation has its own caravanserai" (2015, pp. 119-120). Moreover, efforts of various governments to facilitate trade in Egypt should not be ignored. The Fatimtids were merchants and to some extent professional. During their era, Egypt experienced its commercial and industrial heyday (Lewis, p. 95). Ya'qub ibn Yusuf ibn Killis, served as vizier under the Fatimids, established exporting trade

[1] Exchange (organized market)

(ibid.). Furthermore, the presence of Jewish merchants, groups, and commercial companies should not be ignored in the Mediterranean Basin that were involved in currency exchange transactions and contributed greatly to the world trade, especially in the Mediterranean Basin and Egypt (ibid., p. 151).

As mentioned earlier, the Crusades harmed ports of Levant and Palestine while benefited the Egyptian trade. Cairo's famous Fustat market was very significant in Egypt. This market was the pivot of the Mediterranean countries from the Islamic lands to European ports and Islands such as Sicily and Andalusia acted as the Mediterranean trading network. This market also had an important role in determining the price of Silk.

In this significant area, although it is not directly related to Silk Road, the role of India should not be ignored which was the major producer of goods and commodities. Undoubtedly, India was a key player in the international trade of the old world that cannot be neglected. Nevertheless, commercial and industrial discussions would not be complete without referring to India. India was the main commercial mediator through maritime route in connection with Yemen, Egypt, the Mediterranean Basin, and the Persian Gulf. India also played a mediator role for China and Indiochina (ibid., p. 156). India exported textiles and clothes woven from wool and silk, goods such as jug, silver and gold jewelry, carpet, wickerwork, pan, other household appliances like copper dishes, and woods used in soaps, cosmetics, perfume, and paints. Most of these items were transported to Egypt and India imported foodstuffs like olive oil, cheese, raisins, and sugar. These raw materials were exported to India by the Egyptians. Sometimes the Egyptians copied Indian products and commodities and exported them to Europe (ibid., pp. 156-157). But spice and different kinds of pepper were the major

commercial and intercontinental commodities in the old world produced in India and exported to other regions. As stated earlier, pepper and spice trading had particular position in the world trade and its increase and decrease had a decisive influence on international exchanges.

Chapter Five: The Quality of Road Transport and the Role of Islam in its Facilitation

Entry

The quality of transport along Silk Road and other main and side commercial routes in different regions was different based on geographical location and the volume of transportation of goods. Similarly, the merchants' trips and the distances that they travelled were also different. The use of transportation means depended on the types of roads and commodities. The quality of goods transport and other related issues are discussed I this chapter.

A. Areas that Merchants from Different Regions Travelled to

Trading in the old world was a kind of step-by-step exchange. Rarely did a caravan, merchant, or even merchants travel through distant areas passing land routes, for example from China to the Mediterranean Basin or Europe to Khorasan. This kind of trade scarcely or never happened from the origin to the destination. Based on reports and presence of merchants in different regions, the Europeans travelled to the east of the Mediterranean Basin and Egypt and the northern European traders travelled to areas around the Black Sea and Khazaria. The Egyptians and other Muslims of the Mediterranean Basin travelled to Yemen, finally India, and occasionally China. They also travelled from Iraq to Khorasan, Central Asia, and Khwarazm. They travelled from Khwarazm to Khazaria and the other way around, from the Central Asia to Kashgar, and Tibet where goods and commodities were delivered to the

merchants. They directly changed goods for other goods (Barter). This was the general state of world trade. But maritime merchants travelled long distances due to the nature of sea and its requirements; therefore, numerous commercial voyages took place between the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, India, and China. Ibn Hawqal writes, "People of Siraf and surrounding coasts spend most or all of their lives on sea. I heard that a Sirafi man was so accustomed to sea that he had not left his ship for forty years. When they approached land, he sent his friend to the city to supply their needs" (p. 58).

Numerous merchants travelled from Khorasan and Transoxiana to China (around the borders of China). It is worth mentioning that the number of these merchants was very small and they did not dare to take a risk. Referring to difficulties of commerce in distant areas, Ibn Khaldun writes, "Exporting goods and commodities from remote areas or regions that are full of danger has more benefits for merchants and traders … because commodities exported in this condition passing through hazardous routes are rare and scarce. As a result, the exporters of these goods are very few" (Vol. 2, p. 782). Based on evidence, merchants travelling to distant areas were few because it required risk-taking in spite of high guaranteed benefits. Commodities transported from remote areas were rare and sold quickly. Their price at destination was too different from the origin. Trading among the cities of region that had short distances was common, its risk was low, and the obtained profit was not that much high.

Pointing to the Muslim traders' vast trips, Kahen writes, "These Muslims' courage was so astonishing that they travelled not only to Berber in Sudan and Russia but also among non-Muslim tribes. Nevertheless, neither Muslims nor Christians followed the ancient

tradition of relations with the West" (Vol. 2, pp. 1622-1623). However, Kahen's view about maintaining relations with West requires further consideration. However, according to Egypt, Levant, and Anatolia's relations with West, this view cannot be correct. He adds, "In general, in Egyptian ports, Syria, Constantinople, and the Roman Empire, essential exchanges took place between the western and eastern merchants" (ibid.). On the other hand, if the Islamic world did not maintain commercial relations with West, how great wealth of the European merchants and domination over oceans before discovery of America could be justified! Regarding wealth of the European merchants who had commercial relations with Islamic countries, Ibn Khaldun writes, "The situation of the merchants of the Christian nations who come to the countries of the West (North Africa) in this era is so surprising in terms of wealth and welfare that cannot be described" (Vol. 2, p. 723). It can be concluded from Ibn Hawqal's writing that there were merchants who had relations with most regions of the world, or at least owned shares (pp. 57-59). Now a question arises: Did merchants initially set out to trade in the Central Asia and China? Were commodities transported by the companies? Was there regional commerce? Was there international trade? For example, did merchants sell their goods in the Central Asia and return to their regions after purchasing, or did the traders and companies transport goods and commodities to the final destination? Haussig believes that in spite of interruptions ocurred in unloading goods, one company was in charge of leading the caravan (Haussig, p.106). It is unlikely that there were public or private companies providing services such as transporting goods from the origin to the destination. Moreover, this trend does not seem to be logical due to the nature and quality of trade in that era. It seems to be true that merchants

were regional. As an instance, an Iraqi merchant transported certain commodities to a city along the road to Ray or Nishapur, sold them there, got their necessities, and returned. The same was true about the merchants of other areas. Apparently, its nature was in line with trade in that era. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun stated that few merchants traded with the Sudanese in the West (Vol. 2, p. 783). Perhaps there were companies in Europe and ports of Italy or Egypt due to centralized purchase and maritime routes while this trend was established in other areas, particularly maritime commercial route in west, center and east of Asia. According to Saadi's famous stories, in Kish, a merchant told him that he wanted to transport the Persian sulfur to China, Chinese dishes to Rome, Roman Diba to India, Indian steel to Aleppo, Aleppine abgineh to Yemen, and Yemini stone to Persia, then abandon commerce (2002, p. 100). Saadi, based on his experience, understood that he had been suffering from Melancholia. It is worth mentioning that famous merchants were cooperating with each other in big cities such as Cairo, Alexandria, Damascus, Baghdad, Nishapur, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, etc.

Undoubtedly, merchants were travelling in caravans, especially in remote areas and had guards. It was not possible to trade individually without moving with caravans. In resources and texts, there are references to trade caravans. Merchants and traders had travelling companions including Ghulams[1], servants, and secretaries. The total number of caravans' members taking horses, camels, mules, and donkeys into account resembled a military campaign. Hence, big and small merchants were travelling with a limited group of armed forces and local guides. Concerning remote trade, Ibn Khaldun states, "Merchants

[1] Arabic word meaning servant, boy, youth

transport their goods through dry hazardous plains where thirst threatens passengers, and water is only found at specific places that local guides only know" (Ibn Khaldun, Vol. 2, p. 782).

However, considering the nature and quality of trade that was transregional, what would international merchants do? Was there international trade? The short answer is yes. There was international trade. It is worth noting that international trade refers to transportation of goods across the world at that time which took place repeatedly. It was said that merchants did not go beyond some areas. It does not mean that there was no international trade while it refers to the fact that merchants gave their commodities to the traders of the next region, prepared their required goods, and returned to their lands. Other merchants transported goods to their final destination. In this way, the main indicator of the existence of global trade was goods not the routes that the merchants travelled along. In other words, global trade involved goods and commodities as well as their transportation which do not mean global merchants or traders. There were global goods, but merchants were transregional. Commodities are important not merchants. Historical evidence also proves it. Historical condition of the era prevented the formation of a global merchant or company. In the new era that began with the occupation of seas and development of seamanship, the western international commercial companies were established. It does not mean that there was no multilateral partnership in trade. Partnership of several merchants that shared their capital to trade was a common issue. Sometimes merchants share their resources and capital. Accordingly, Kahen mentions, "So they shared their resources and capital with others, or increased their wealth through partnership, expanded their commercial activities, and took more risks" (Kahen, ibid., Vol. 2, p.

1623). It goes without saying that the partnership of several merchants does not mean that there were companies like the British East India Company or others established later in the sixteenth century A.D. This partnership was more preferential, friendly, and temperament. A merchant could have more than ten partners in his life.

Now, what were the global goods that formed international trade? First of all, commodities could be used in different regions and become global. Maybe it is not possible to determine certain rules for that. But at least there were four types of commodities in all areas that were considered as necessities, and some aspects of life were dependent on them. These commodities include: 1. Silk and other related items, 2. Various types of spice, pepper, and perfume, 3. Different sorts of weapons and military equipment, and 4. Essential goods such as paper and glass. The first item was produced in China and exported to other areas, people from all over the world, including Europe and West Asia needed it. Spices, peppers, and perfume that had particular roles in the world trade were produced in India, East Asia, southern regions of Saudi Arabia, and Yemen and exported to other regions. They had a lot of customers from different parts of world, particularly from Asia to Europe and Africa. The third goods, weapons and military equipment, were produced in most parts of the world, including East Asia, particularly Levant and Egypt and exported to all parts of the world at that time. Lewis added that weapons had a significant position in productions and global trade (Lewis, ibid., p. 177). Other goods like glass and paper had formed a special part of trade. Apparently, these four items constituted main transactions of global trade.

Seemingly, global trade did not exist before the rise and expansion of Islam. With the advent of Islam in the Central Asia and establishment of

a great empire from Andalusia to India and the Central Asia, goods transportation changed dramatically. It should be noted that rapid expansion of Islam and domination of other regions made great changes on global scale in Muslim and non-Muslim tribes and nations' material and spiritual capital and resources. Therefore, grounds were set for an international economy; China became one gateway of this broad world and the Indian subcontinent became the gateway of Islam. Another gateway constituted Andalusia and the Mediterranean Basin. These gateways were open to other areas and people travelled to these areas. Researchers have occasionally referred to Islam's role. Haussig stated that after occupation of the Central Asia and regions, including Caucasus, the exchange of goods became obvious (ibid., p. 123). Earlier, some quotations by Lewis concerning the Islam's impacts on trade were mentioned (Lewis, p. 67).

Haussig believes that transportation of goods along Silk Road from China to the Central Asia occurred as a result of Iranian fugitives' efforts after the Arab Muslim invasions that went to China to learn pottery and ceramic forming techniques or transfer the related skills (ibid., p. 123). It does not seem true that the natural transportation of goods is described in such rare way. Historical resources mentioned that the royal family escaped to China and lived there. On the other hand, there are some contradictions in Haussig's view. According to evidence, the Sogdians had commercial relations with India and China before the rise of Islam. Why does not Haussig consider the Chinese relations with the Islamic world as a natural trend and justify it in a form of a story?! Owing to the fact that China was sensitive to the western borders' incidents, its security, and the relations that were established with other regions, and according to the presence of the Chinese painters in Kufa, Haussig's view

that considers natural transportation of goods as a story is surprising. According to the Chinese painters' presence in Kufa, it is not surprising to hear that the Chinese copied West Asian commodities or the Muslims learned from the Chinese how to make paper and produce it abundantly. Contrary to Haussig's view, the Chinese attempted to develop their global trade and seek ways to export and import goods. Based on Sulayman's reports the Chinese had great information about the Muslims' situation. He quotes Ibn Wahab (Ibn Hebar) and the Chinese King's conversation in a way that indicates the Chinese familiarity with Islam world and the Abbasid caliphate. Based on this conversation, he states that the Abbasid caliphate and Chinese kingdom were respectively the first major and second governments in the world (Sulayman, p. 101; Masudi, Vol. 1, p. 139). As stated earlier, Lewinsky explained that in the caliphate era, Muslims went to China (Sulayman, ibid., p. 26) showing the China's past and future relations with the Islamic world.

In general, in the Islamic era, there was global trade along either Silk Road and its branches or other roads. For example, according to the Scandinavian report in around 100 A.H., there was a commercial union named Falaq whose commercial partners were the Muslim and Jewish trade companies. Moreover, based on the transported goods, this trade was established from China to Scandinavia (Haussig, pp. 68-69). Muslim merchants had remarkable presence in all parts of the Islamic world. The presence of traders in a region depends on economic status, livelihood, production of goods, and commodities of each area. The author of *Hudud-al Alam* mentioned the areas that had particular and prosperous trade and commerce. He indicated that the Oghuz land had lots of merchants (Hudud-al Alam, p. 86). Each area had relations with its neighboring areas. However, there were lots of merchants in areas such

as Alexandria, Fustat, Cairo, Khwarazm, Nishapur, Damascus, Baghdad, Balkh, Samarkand, Basra, Atil, Kish, etc. Egypt and Levant's trade was carried out through maritime route with Yemen, East Africa, India, China, and Europe. Iraqi merchants traded through the Persian Gulf as well as land route and Iranian merchants, particularly in the northern and eastern areas traded through famous roads of Khorasan and Transoxiana. Of course, merchants had freedom depending on their interests and status. Referring to the secret history of the Mongols, Vladimir Tesef mentioned a Muslim trader named Hassan who was travelling along Argona River with one thousand sheep and a white camel to be exchanged for squirrels and martens (Tesef, 1987, p. 61). Apparently, based on a report, it traces back to a period before the Mongol invasion. Another important issue was the freedom of commerce in Islam, therefore, minorities such as the Jews enjoyed greater freedom in Islam compared with the Roman Empire. The Jews became successful by establishing monetary-commercial banks. In particular, since usury was forbidden in Islam, the Jewish financial and credit companies became prosperous (Haussig, p. 67). Muslim merchants in the first two Islamic centuries were considered as representatives of Islam accompanied by a group of scholars, therefore, there was a kind of bilateral relations between scholars and merchants. Merchants needed more awareness and expected scholars and those who were familiar with history and geography to guide them. Hence, a part of geographical texts were written in response to the merchants' needs (Haussig, pp. 102-110).

Based on the reports and mentioned settlements, the Iranian and Iraqi merchants followed a particular route along the southern Silk Road in the south of Alborz and Persian Iraq from Baghdad to Hulwan, west of Iran (Jibal), Hamadan, Ray, Khorasan, through Nishaput to Merv, Balkh,

sometimes Herat, Samarkand, Bukhara, and finally Kashgar and reached Khazaria, Khwarazm, and the Oghuz lands through Nishapur and Merv. Sometimes they travelled from Khorasan to Kerman and then the Persian Gulf, particularly Siraf and Kish (see different resources including Ibn Fadlan, Yaqubi, Istakhri, Abudolf, Khazraji, Rabi, etc.). There is not much information about a person or group from Iraq, Levant, Iran, and the Central Asia that travelled to China through land routes. As mentioned, Abudolf (mid fourth century) asserted that he had been to China, but based on the text of the book this claim is not true unless some parts of book have been disappeared. He stated, "I wrote about my trip along direct route from Bukhara to Chia and back to India …" (Abudolf, 1976, p. 37). Considering the distance between China and Khorasan, Sulayman indicated, "It takes two months from Khorasan and neighboring areas to China through arid deserts that make it impossible to attack the Chinese" (p. 119). He also provided examples of merchants travelling between Khorasan and China (pp. 169-170). Nevertheless, the mentioned efforts and information show that there was kind of international trade in the Islamic era. It is worth mentioning that trading along Silk Road had its own difficulties, and occasionally the route was too long. Sulayman stated, "It takes forty days to travel from Khorasan to China through deserts. Another route takes four months protected by various races and the Turkic tribes" (ibid., p. 170).

B. Roads and Means of Transportation

Roads were also significant and noticeable in the Islamic era. In general, different countries and regions of the Islamic world had numerous relations with each other. In addition to an empire that had to maintain its relations with the dominated areas, other issues such as economic,

educational, tourism, scientific, and pilgrimage relations made roads crowded. As a result, routes were active and prosperous in the Islamic era.

Meanwhile, a large part Silk Road was dominated by the Islamic world that became multipurpose route in terms of commerce, industry, culture, religion, and propagation. Not only Silk Road but also other side routes flourished due to the nature of Islamic era and relations that were established, therefore, heyday of roads took place. On the other hand, Muslims, especially in the early centuries and at least until the Mogul invasion, did not create any threats to trade or mislead economic and production centers on both sides of Silk Road, i.e. China and Europe. Unlike the old world that the Sassanids and Romans were competing, misleading each other, and setting barriers in their relations, Muslims eagerly and even curiously attempted to learn more about both sides of Silk Road. Muslim travelers and geographers attempted to provide more information about this road and route authoring different texts known as Masalik and Mamalik. One of the most important concerns of these travelers and geographers was introducing and describing routes, settlements as well as distances between cities and regions to the extent that geographers like Ibn Rustah and Yaqubi put emphasis on roads, settlements, and distances (Ibn Rustah; Yaqubi). Their information led to the better recognition of Silk Road. People like Yaqubi, Ibn Fadlan, Abudolf Khazraji, Ibn Rustah, Masudi, Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, Abu Hamed Gharnati, Nasir Khusraw, Maqdisi, etc. gathered information about roads and other parts of the world and provided news and information for the society of that time. The journeys of Masudi, Yaqubi, and Ibn Jubayr, efforts of officials like Qudama ibn Ja'far and Istakhri, those such as Yaqut al-Hamawi interested in learning more about the

Islamic world and neighboring areas, and propagandist and exploratory ambassadors such as Ibn Fadlan, Abudolf, Sulayman ibn Abi Karimeh, Abu Hamed Gharnati, etc. led to the recognition of routes, cities, settlements, and distances between cities. It can be claimed that before the rise of new era, information explosion in geography and country studies occurred by the Muslims in the history. In fact, a revolution took place in recognizing roads, cities, and different regions that was unprecedented. Recognition of roads, distances, and different parts of the world were at the center of attention of geographers and those writing about Masalik and Mamalik to guide Hajis and learn more about trade and commerce curiously (Ibn rustah, 1987, pp. 153-223; Yaqubi, 2009; Masudi, Vol. 1, pp. 584-585). Therefore, recognition of roads took place in various dimensions concerning administrative, commercial, pilgrimage, educational, and promotional aspects. The capital of the Islamic caliphate was the metropolitan city of Baghdad located along these routes almost in the middle part of the world to which all routes led due to its centrality. Khorasan and the Central Asian route to Baghdad became a crowded highway because of political, military, educational, propagating, pilgrimage, commercial, and other reasons. Baghdad's route to Levant and Egypt was crowded due to the same reasons. On the other hand, the existence of Kaaba, the Muslims' shrine, helped the west and east to know each other more. People from Andalusia, North Africa, Khorasan, and Transoxiana go there (Yaqubi, 2009, p. 2). These routes were also crowded due to annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

The great wealth of Khorasan, Fars, Iraq, particularly Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, and cities of the Mediterranean Basin, i.e. coasts of Levant and Egypt created demands for luxurious and commercial goods. Demands were high in these regions. Hence, trade was one of the major

occupations in these regions. How did merchants travel through these routes? If a merchant traveled along a road nonstop, which was rare, he had to change his horse or hire another one in the middle of his way. Accordingly, there were some people who had horses, camels, mules, donkeys, etc., and their job was to rent these animals to others so that they could carry their passengers, goods, and commodities. It was one of the common occupation in cities. Apparently, their location was near commercial stops and caravanserais. Haussig stated, "Camels were replaced in the Central Asia due to their ability to carry luxurious and expensive goods. Caravan guides and workers were also hired to unload commodities" (Haussig, p. 106). This caravan was replaced once again near the borders of China or Turpan. The loads of camels in this area were transported to China by a wagon. These wagons had big wheels to pass through water and were pulled by buffaloes (ibid., p. 107). In fact, the type of animal depended on the kind of commodities. Luxurious goods such as decorative stuffs, dishes, and various earthenware products were transported by camels while clothes, textile, fabric, silk, and other goods were carried by horse, mule, etc. But apparently, transportation on the roads of the Muslim lands, the Middle East, West and Central Asia had not been developed compared with China and Europe. The Chinese had taken lots of measures. For instance, they had ships, boats, and cobblestone roads that people move on them by carts, which was also used in Europe a lot. Before Islam the quality of these carts was vague or exaggerated which is not related to our discussion, but in the Islamic era there are few references to the carts. The howdah was limitedly used to carry women and had different functions compared to carts. However, various means of transportation were mostly used in the Islamic era. It is worth mentioning that development of means of

transportation like carts required appropriate lands and conditions. First, a region must have flourishing trade that could obviate its domestic needs before turning into an international one. The Middle East, particularly Iran and the Central Asia did not have these conditions. In other words, the intraregional trade was not so broad that created this need. Furthermore, before preparing and making carts, suitable roads must be constructed which was not possible. Eventually, as Lewis stated, metal and wood were rare in these regions so it was not possible to make carts. Resources have not referred to this issue either. Pointing to the transportation in the Islamic world, Lewis indicated that in other civilizations transportation was considered as industrial production incentives while it was not significant in the Muslim lands. Perhaps due to the scarcity of wood and metal, wheeled vehicles were used less and few roads were constructed (Lewis, p. 178). In the Middle East and Central Asia, there were not enough raw materials (ibid.). Unlike Europe, the lack of a specific link between agriculture and animal husbandry in the Middle East also affected the general situation (ibid., p. 176). In Europe, a single agent was in charge of agriculture and animal husbandry, but the Middle East, even the Central Asia, and other Islamic regions did not have a similar condition and they were separated. Occasionally, there was a conflict of interests between these two parts. For example, in the Middle East, agricultural lands were in the vicinity of deserts inhabited by tribes (ibid.). According to the *History of Bukhara* authored by Narshaki, carts were used in the battle between Sepid Jamegan (White-Clothed People) and Ya'qub ibn al-Layth (Narshakhi, pp. 98, 123). Narshakhi also mentioned fire in a district in Bukhara called Gardun Keshan (ibid., p. 131). He did not provide further explanation. Nevertheless, these few rare instances show that resources must be relied

on according to which carts were not used. Lewis claimed that in the eighteenth century carts and wagons were used scarcely even in regions like Syria (Lewis, ibid., p. 178). Besides vague quality of carts stated by Narshakhi, it should be mentioned that he referred to the military not commercial use of carts. Probably, carts were used limitedly in Transoxiana due to the development of urbanization, high level of trade, and flatness of region. It can be concluded from Narshakhi's writing that Mo'az ibn Moslem ordered "to build catapults and carts, and moved towards Sogdia in the best possible way" (Narshakhi, p. 98).

C. Trade Caravans, Caravanserais, and Ribats

Merchants travelled with caravans that had numerous owners or accompanied representatives of eminent merchants. Usually the movements of remote areas' caravans took place at specific time intervals lasting several months. Sometimes there were lots of caravans resembling a military campaign from afar. Quoting from Strabo who had seen one of Mecca's trade caravans, Ahmad Amin stated that it was like a big army (Amin, ibid., p. 29). Caravans set out their journeys in appropriate seasons. In late fall, winter, and early spring, few caravans travelled through mountainous areas covered with snow. Deserts had the same situation. Caravans travelled through different regions based on weather conditions. Animals such as horses, camels, mules, donkeys, buffaloes, etc. were used according to the status of roads and regions. Camels were used the most and were extremely significant. It is interesting that in the middle of Silk Road, Balkh, and Samarkand, camels called Bakhti (a kind of camel) were very famous (Ibn Hawqal, p. 184). Therefore, a sort of transportation bourse was formed.

Different signs and domes were created to help those who were not familiar with roads find routes, especially in adverse weather conditions such as winter. Concerning commercial facilities and amenities, ribats and caravanserais can be named that had different military, tourism, propagating, mystical, commercial, and other functions. Sometimes they were multipurpose and general. Hence, the owners of ribats and caravanserais were different people with various incentives. Rulers, Sufis, Ghaziyans (warriors), merchants, philanthropists, etc. each established their own ribats and caravanserais, some of which are stated here. Caravanserais known as Ribat Malek were the region's most beautiful caravanserais in the second half of the fourth century in Sogdia (Frye, p. 299). Maqdisi referred to some ribats such as Kohneh Ribat, Tash Ribat, Mash, and Amir in the vicinity of Bukhari showing the high density of the distribution of ribats in Bukhara (Maqdisi, ibid., pp. 502-503). Narshakhi mentioned one thousand ribats in Bukhara and its surrounding that seems to be an exaggeration (Narshakhi, p. 25). Maqdisi also referred to ribats in Nishapur (ibid., p.515). Ibn Hawqal also mentioned several ribats in different areas some of which were village (ibid., pp. 153, 159, 173, 178). He also named Mileh Ribat in the distance between Balkh and Merv belonging to Abul Hassan Muhammad ibn Hassan which was a shelter for travelers who went there for various reasons such as cold weather, fear, and so on. It was very strong with big houses that could accommodate an army (Ibn Hawqal, 1988, p. 187). Additionally, he established numerous ribats in Khorasan and Transoxania; his Qabodiyon (Qowaziyan) ribat is very famous (ibid.). However, the best ribat was Termiz where allowance had been determined for the passengers (ibid.). Ibn Hawqal saw the remains of a house in Sogdia that had been a settlement and inn which had not been

closed for more than one hundred years and. All passengers had been accommodated there because it had great capacity (ibid., pp. 195-196). Therefore, Ibn Hawqal stated that the rich of Transoxania was superior to those in other regions due to their good deeds. Most authors of Masalik and Mamalik have mentioned the multiplicity of ribats in Transoxiana. Accordingly, Jayhani stated that there were more than ten thousand ribats in Transoxiana that supplied free food and fodder (Jayhani, 1990, p. 179). Ali Rostam Ribat was on the way to Fars (Jayhani, 1990, pp. 157, 196, 197).

Furthermore, the most ribats with various functions were in Transoxiana and its borders. Sayram border town was one of these regions. Concerning the urban and commercial status of Sayram, Maqdisi writes, "It has several caravanserais, canvas markets, and a Jame mosque with four gates in each of which a ribat is located" (Maqdisi, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 393). He also mentioned Nakhshabiyan, Bukhara, the Sogdian, and Qaratkin Ribats (ibid.). Owing to the fact that ribats were located in the vicinity of commercial cities, it can be concluded that they had commercial functions without any doubt. While border ribats which were far from cities had military functions. Maqdisi added that Sayram was an important border that had more than one thousand and seven hundred ribats. They did not pay Kharaj because of the borders, but instead they provided battles' military expenses (Maqdisi, ibid., Vol. 2, p. 394). He explicitly talked about a city named Osh that had a big caravanserai where volunteers gathered together. Sometimes these ribats and caravanserais were multipurpose; it seems that Osh had a same position. Regarding Bikand in Bukhara, Maqdisi write, "It has a prosperous and congregational market whose Mihrab is decorated with gemstones. The suburb is in the mean part that has a market and about one thousand

flourished and ruined ribats" (Maqdisi, Vol. 2, p. 408). Narshakhi also emphasized that villages of Bikand built ribats at their own expense (Narshakhi, ibid., p. 25). Undoubtedly, based on Maqdisi and others' reports, there are particular relationships between ribats, markets, commerce, and regions' financial power. Whenever there are references to markets and commercial growth, ribats are mentioned as well. In other words, there is a direct relationship between them showing that these ribats were kind of caravanserais or related to them, which had commercial functions besides military usages. Probably, the fact that a region could afford the maintenance of an army in ribat or border shows the financial and economic power of that region gained through commerce in that area. Ibn Hawqal refers exactly to this issue. He writes, "The majority of the rich in Transoxiana except for a limited group of the unemployed people use their wealth for building ribats, roads, and bridges, Jihad for the sake of God, and good deeds. A city or road, which has water or a village that can accommodate passengers, also has ribats … I have heard that there are more than ten thousand ribats in Transoxiana" (Ibn Hawqal, ibid., p. 196). If Ibn Hawqal's writing is taken into detailed consideration, it will be understood that all these measures and activities in Transoxiana are related to trade and commerce. Nevertheless, it should be stated that the existence of ten thousand ribats is exaggerated and of course all of them were not big. While a scholar has stated that there are four hundred ribats and caravanserais along Silk Road (Los Bolnava, 2004, p. 29). However, there were numerous ribats in the vicinity of Bukhara and Samarkand as well as small cities and villages, and most historical and geographical resources have put emphasis on them. Building ribats in Transoxiana was a tradition until the Mongol invasion.

In addition to ribats and settlements, there were lots of Sagha Khanehs[1] in Transoxiana that Samarkand is was very famous in this regard. Based on reports, there were about two thousand Sagha Khanehs where icy water was provided in copper bulbs or vases on the walls as public good (Ibn Hawqal, p. 196; Jayhani, p. 197). This amount of ribats, services, facilities, and requirements in Transoxiana shows the commercial prosperity and high traffic in this region.

[1] Historical public places where people could drink water

Chapter Six: Money, products, and goods on Silk Road

Entry

Silk Road, passing thousands of kilometers and including many branches, was an international road through which each particular region had its own necessities and rules. Some of these necessities were money, coins, or any other measurements used for trading to make it easier and possible. Therefore, money, coins, and bills all had different destinies in the history because of that many different regions on the road. According to climate as well as economical quality and ability, each region used different kinds of currencies, and valuable or common metals. Considering the type and bankroll, some of these coins were internationally famous while some others were just popular in a region or town. Not only money, but also products had their own destiny on Silk Road. The existence of Silk Road was totally depended on goods, and their imports and exports that will be explained in great details along the long Silk Road.

1. Money on Silk Road

Based on different regions, different kinds of currencies with various values were used on Silk Road. There was a direct relationship between a region, the quality of life there, the kinds of currencies, affordability, and bankroll. The amount of products, level of business, lifestyle, variety of commodities, silver and gold availability, distance to main roads, and political and social powers all had a great effect on the value and spread of a currency.

A. Famous Coins and Currencies on Silk Road

Money, as a means of trade as well as counting and evaluating unit of goods, has had its own ups and downs in the history. Money as one of the important factors in economy and commerce is especially essential in three aspects of trading, counting, and saving. Money is not just a means of trading and evaluation, it also represents a region's capital and its power of the economy. Anyway, introducing a history of money is a tough task. The word "poul"_Farsi for money_ is derived from the word "pollis" which is derived from the word "follis" that is a Phoenician word. Phoenicians are considered to be the first inventors of money. According to Greek historians, Lydian people were he first people who used silver or gold coins in seventh century B.C. (Zamani-Farahani 2008, p. 30). Nevertheless, some researchers claim that the history of money is not that much clear and it is full of unreal and imaginary themes (Tavanayian Fard, 1997, p. 34). Thus, studying the history of Silk Road requires studying of money as a subject to be taken in account.

First of all, it should be mentioned that two currencies were highly concerned on the road. The first one was Egyptian gold dinar, playing an important role on the west route of the road, the Mediterranean Basin, and India along which some decorative and expensive goods were traded. Cairo's bourse was very important because the prices were set based on the Egyptian gold dinar (Haussig, p. 155). The second one was silver dirham (Kahen, ibid., p. 1642) being continuously used from around China's borders to Europe, especially on the Northern Silk Road. Before that the coins of Sogdia, as an important part of trading chain, were very popular in this area and around Transoxiana. However, Bukhara's coins somehow played an important role in commerce and trade in some regions like Transoxiana during the history in such a way

that minting the Sogdian coins led to protests of people in Bukhara since all their silver was used in coin minting process. In Harun al-Rashid era, when Ghatrif ibn-Atta became the governor of Khorasan, people started complaining about the imbalance between the coins of Bukhara and Khwarazm claiming that "silver is used by people in Khwarazm while people in Bukhara run out of silver."(Narshakhi, p. 50). They suggested to mint coins in Bukhara like past so that "no one can take our silver and we can trade using our own coins" (ibid.). But then there was a lack of silver so they decided to use six other elements to mint coins like gold, silver, iron, copper, musk, and lead, and they named the new coin Ghatrifi (Narshakhi, p. 51). However, this new black coin was not as worthy as the silver one, but gradually it became popular (Maqdisi, p. 497). These black coins seem to the be same as the copper ones used in local trade (Kahen, ibid., 1642/2), but they could not replace the silver dirham of Bukhara. Many other coins were popular in Samarkand such as Ismaeili dirham and Muhammadi dinar (Jayhani, p. 188). Muhammadi dinars were made of silver, iron, and copper (ibid.) which were used in daily trades as well as Ismaeili dirhams (Istakhri, ibid., Jayhani). Since Sogdia was a trade based region, different coins were used there all along the history. There was a word "Gu" or "Ghu" or "Poukar" on the coins in Bukhara in the fourth century A.H. This word means fortunate in the Sogdian language (Reza, p. 429).

Anyway, silver dirhams minted during the Samanid Empire, known as the Samanid dirham, was an important part of international trade. The existence of the Samanid dirham in most parts of the world at that time, such as Northern Europe and Russia, shows its popularity and expansion. The Orcs also used them. The Orc was a tribe of Scandinavia marched to Russia during the second half of the ninth century A.D. and took over

the reins of Finns and Slavs. This tribe was located at the end of the one of the routes on Northern Silk Road (Haussig, pp. 60, 61). The trade in Samarkand was usually based on gold (Istakhri, p. 253).

Apparently, in most areas in Iran like Kerman, Jibal (Persian Iraq), etc. coins and currencies of Khorasan which were the same as silver dirhams, were very popular (Maqdisi, p. 595; Jayhani, p. 131). Besides the local coins like copper or black coins, the popular coins in Islamic East and Spain were generally silver and gold (Kahen, ibid., p. 1625).

The Umayyad caliphate used silver coins but the Abbasid caliphate tried to change silver dirhams into gold dinars (Spuler, Vol. 237, p. 241). Generally, three kinds of coins and currencies were popular: first, gold dinars that were limited but used for trading rare, decorative, and expensive goods. Second, silver dirhams that were more popular and used in most regions. Istakhri and ibn Hawqal claim that trade in Fars was based on dirham (Istakhri, p. 135; Ibn Hawqal, p. 67). The third kind was the local coins that were used from Khwarazm up to Levant in various regions and parts. As it seems, Islamic coins with new modified Islamic symbols were minted in 77 A.H. Thereafter, in different cities, various coins were minted that Spuler gives a list mentioning the date of minting (Spuler, p. 245). There is a direct relationship between using the money and economic development. Spuler mentions developed monetary economy in thirs and fourth centuries A.H. (ibid., p. 223).

In the Abbasid caliphate era that commerce and economy flourished, monetary relations boomed. Some researches mention, "Due to the popularity of monetary relations based on developed industry and trade, the economic role of cities was more remarkable in the Abbasid caliphate" (Belyayev, Reza, 1966, p.71). In the developed monetary economy, traders had to carry their money with themselves, but if they

moved within the borders of Islamic dominion, some preparations were done in order to limit the transportation in a way that a contract was signed by correspondents to use some bills such demand notes and checks so that they did not need to carry a lot of money (Kahen, p. 1624). Egypt, Palestine, and Syria that previously were occupied by the Eastern Rome and had a background of minting coins continued minting, especially gold coins. Gold coins were used in these regions since 696 A.D. When the gold supplies reduced in this area, Islamic governors decided to use the gold resources in Eastern Africa regardless of distance. Therefore, Arabs could protect the value of dinar in this area due to the status that they had (Haussig, pp. 101, 102). Silver coins were mostly minted in Iran and Iraq. Dirham coin was very valid in this area and the Samanid Empire used it so that it was minted a lot and became very popular (ibid., p. 102). Anyway, minting gold coins was a step taken to pass away the silver coins in the first millennium C.E. (ibid., p. 103). Gold dinar was used as the international currency in the past world's market. Kahen considers dinar as dollar (Kahen, ibid., p. 1625).

Silver dirham was common in the western parts of the Northern Silk Road and its branches. The archeological excavations and some other evidence show that silver dirhams were used all along the Central Asian markets up to the Orc lands and the northwestern part of Iran (Haussig, p. 60), however, money was sometimes scares and hard to find and it did not have any credit. Occasionally money just had a nominated credit and sometimes it was evaluated according to the weight and kind of metal used in minting.

Nevertheless, sometimes the coins were changed into each other. Over minted coins could be changed to dirhams. Dirham was a very valid and popular coin used at least all along the Northern Silk Road, Europe,

Byzantine, Iran, and Iraq for ages. Fall of the Samanid Empire seemed to lead to a disorder in using dirham. Egyptian dinars were highly valid and popular in the West Asia, Egypt, and Levand. Haussig believes that goods in Cairo affected the use of dinar because prices were set in Egyptian gold dinar, and for the Indians Cairo's dinar was like Byzantine gold dinar in the Mediterranean Basin; these two currencies could be changed into each other (ibid., p. 155). Although, sometimes every single city and region had its own kind of currency, when gold was used in an area, it was the evidence of international trade there. In most regions, dirham and dinar were used in transactions (Istakhri, pp. 135, 173). These two coins, silver dirham and gold dinar, could be changed into one another. Kahen states, "The legal value ratio of these two kinds of coins was 7 to 100 that was rated according to their weight ratio which was 7 to 10. In metric units 4.25 grams of dinar was traded for 2.87 grams of dirham which makes 10 silver coins for 1 gold coin" (Kahen, ibid., p. 1624). Nevertheless, this ratio and price was not exactly done in trading.

B. Money-Goods System (Bartering) on Silk Road

Most trades in primitive, traditional, local, rural, and nomadic societies, that had simple and nature based economy, were done using exchange system which means bartering. Bartering was used when two people needed each other's goods at the same time. So it was used just for basic needs. In this system of bartering, sometimes services were exchanged with goods as well. This system was still common in Iran's rural and nomadic regions in the last few centuries. Evaluating the goods and services was done according to the local traditions and rules. Bartering was more expanded in larger areas during the history. Concerning wide spread of different regions as well as rising number of needs and

demands that couldn't be met locally, some goods were chosen as the standard commodities which played an intermediary role to facilitate transactions and evaluation. Then, this role was determined depending on how popular, common, and major goods and commodities were. Choosing the standard commodity for exchanges depended on climate, the amount of production, availability, traditions, and so forth. For instance, fish and snails were used as standard commodities around the sea, horse and sheep among nomads, and wheat and oat in agricultural areas. Therefore, in general, in different regions different goods were used as the standard commodities all along the history which were named as commodity money[1]. Some of these goods include animals such as horse, sheep, camel, and cow; some grains like wheat, and oat; some metals such as iron, copper, gold, and silver; or some popular products like rice, salt, oil, olive, and sometimes slaves, servants, fur, elephant tusk, some special clothes, and etc. (Zamani, Farahani, 2008, p. 24). There was a problem using standard commodity; sometimes it was impossible or hard to find the exact evaluation of the goods. For example, exchanging a camel for wheat was hard because it needed to be evaluated using smaller units. For instance, the camel had to be evaluated by something like horse and then the horse must be evaluated using sheep and the sheep was evaluated using smaller standard commodities until a camel could be evaluated and exchanged by a particular amount of wheat equal to the value of a camel. Anyway, considering geographical and living conditions, economic power, and development of the society, money-good system (bartering) was replaced by a money based system. This replacing process was faster in some areas like China and Greek using developed economy based on commerce, industry, and mass

[1] Money whose value comes from a commodity of which it is made.

production. For example, replacing the old system in Athens, in which livelihood was based on trade and solon rules, must have occurred much faster than nomadic areas in Asia (for further information see Rivar 1991, p. 1).

On the other hand, for several different reasons sometimes there was a lack of money so they had to return to money-good system. There were some reasons like prohibitions of money interest in some Islamic and even Christian areas so that nobody took the risk because if the borrower did not return the money, no court would charge them for a crime since taking the money interest was basically illegal and forbidden, and it was not considered as a lawsuit. This issue helped the popularity of bartering since the Muslims and Christians forbade the trades based on money interest and usury. Trading, especially money based commerce was ran by Jewish until some banks in Byzantine refused to obey the rules of money interest and started trading by using money (Haussig, pp. 64-65). Totally, besides money based trading, bartering was also popular at that time and had a particular status. Due to the tribal structure of some parts on Silk Road, bartering played an important role in non-cash trading especially on sideways (Haussig, p. 63).

Therefore, it can be stated that trading on Silk Road was not always based on money and coins, sometimes they exchanged the goods and sometimes they used drafts so the money flow rate was not directly related to that of goods.

C. Drafts and Credit Documents

In different regions and marginal parts of Silk Road, various local drafts were used to facilitate trade and commerce. Shortage of money and coin influenced the forms of payment in transactions, especially textile trade

which was one of the major items (ibid., p. 97). The Oghuz used a developed monetary economy in Turpan and Kansu (ibid., p. 94) and governments sometimes applied some prohibitions in order to stop exporting money and valuable metals like what the Chinese government did to the Oghuz or what Byzantine Empire sometimes did (ibid., pp. 94-95). It should be noted that sometimes the reduction of trades was due to the lack or absence of valid money; such a thing happened in the eleventh century A.D. when dirham was unimportant because of hoard and several small sized minting (ibid., pp. 67-68).

During the fifth century A.H/ eleventh century A.D. instead of coins that had their own kind of problems, some securities were used on Silk Road that were called floating money which were more used in the southern China. Using securities was also popular in Egypt that led to easier trade on Silk Road (Haussig, p. 190, Sulayman, pp. 69, 73, 75). It is obvious that the value of these securities was evaluated by some companies (ibid., pp. 190, 191). On the other hand, sometimes officials made the trade easier, supported and guaranteed it.

Credit documents and drafts were popular in China. Major traders in China, especially in interior parts of it, used some letters of credit which were like today's notes (Sulayman, p. 73). In some cases, different drafts, especially salt drafts that were excluded by government, were used on Silk Road or at least in China and the Central Asia. As Haussig stated a kind of draft was used among the Asian Turkic people called Gomdu that was a kind of clothes draft. This draft was gradually used for other items like camel, horse, mule, and other necessities of caravans in the Central Asia (Haussig, p. 90).

The common drafts would lead to the elimination of money transportation and exchange expenses. Nasir Khusraw mentioned an

important feature of Basra. He stated that everyone gave their money to money changer and took a draft and then after shopping, sent the shopping receipts to money changer (Nasir Khusraw, p. 128). In Islamic era, especially before the Mongol invasion, different drafts were used due to the commerce and trade boom. One of the most famous drafts was check that was like promissory note and was used among the officials like the staff of court, viziers (ministers), secretaries, and traders. Khwarazmi writes, "Promissory note is very common" (Khwarazmi, p. 64). It seems it was popular in a way that did not need to be introduced. Totally, promissory note referred to a draft that was used when someone deposited their property to someone else (just to be kept by him or her) and could get it back in another city or could get the credit, but check had another kind of usage and was considered as a kind of draft. According to what Khwarazmi wrote about check, it had at least three official, social, and commercial usage. Khwarazmi defines check in two ways. He writes, "Charter in which all responsibilities and duties are written. The number of people who received it and its amount are recorded; the seal and signature of the king had to be at the bottom of the charter in order to be paid." (Khwarazmi, p. 59). This definition is an official one used in Divan system. In another definition he mentions, "Check is a charter to pay the camel and horse riders' wage" (ibid.). Check was usually considered as the money for wages. Another usage of the check was the common economic and commercial one that was a kind of guaranteed credit draft to make the trade easier.

The commercial development and expansion made these two drafts more valuable and set a particular position for them in trade and transactions. Perhaps the first reason to use these drafts was to avoid money transportation that sometimes needed more protection and it was very

hard and expensive to be carried. To prevent carrying a big mass of money, stop the damage occurred to coins while transporting, and increase the protection of their money; traders preferred to use these drafts such as checks and promissory notes that had lots of advantages. It was money changers' duty to make drafts that lived in different cities and worked as a network. Spuler writes, "Money changers were available in most cities to make drafts such as promissory notes and checks." (Spuler, Vol. 2, p. 238).

Undoubtedly, insurance of promissory note, check, and other credit drafts was due to the commercial boom and urgent need to such drafts leading to much easier and prosperous commerce. Promissory note and check were invented to meet the needs of traders which helped trade a lot. Promissory note was very popular among the Muslim traders so that European traders learned to use them as well. Rabbanizadeh states that European traders followed Muslims in using promissory notes during Middle Ages (Rabbanizadeh, 2001, 50). Mentioning promissory note, he believes that it played an important role in trading during Islamic era, especially the Abbasid caliphate. As explained, there were different kinds of checks including official and commercial ones, but commercial check was an insured credit draft that had supportive bankroll for the amount stated in the check so it became very essential in trade and commerce. First, check was just an official and governmental draft, but gradually it was used in trades. Rabbanizadeh writes, "The apex of check circulation was during Mutazid caliph because the most number of changes occurred during that time. Sabi states that during Mutazid caliph, some checks with around 3000 dinars as check money were used to distribute food in the capital city. It seems that check was used to prevent possible crimes and pay the income of government officials. As

educed from historical evidence, the written checks could be paid in the case that they had two signatures on (just like what we do these days) otherwise, it was not paid and would receive an official reprimand. The usage of check in the fourth century A.H is mentioned in different resources" (ibid., p. 57). The usage of check and promissory note was different and depended on their efficiency. For instance, check was only valid in the city that it was written there, but promissory note could be used in every city (ibid., p. 59). He has mostly studied official usage of check and promissory note, but also stated the role of them in increasing trade.

2. Products, Imported and Exported Goods on Silk Road.

Making a list of traded goods (imports and exports) on Silk Road that its origins and destinations were extended from China to North Africa, Europe, Middle East, and some other regions was a tough task. We can say any kind of goods could be traded on Silk Road. Some goods like crops, seeds, and seedlings, necessary industrial products, decorative and luxurious goods, weapons, food and spices, colors, raw materials, several local and regional products, and fresh or dried fruit, etc. were traded so it is even hard to give an outline. There were some products that were permanently traded from their origin to the final destination. The final destination for goods was not the place where it was traded, but it was the place where the goods were received by the costumer, however, we should take it into account that all goods could be traded on all routes and paths so that trading was so massive on the road. Despite of lots of man-made or natural problems such as wars, conflicts, geographical rough zones, the interest of trade on Silk Road was very tempting. An

example of this greed for interest was reflected in a story written by Sa'adi mentioned previously.

Trading was always ocurring on Silk Road because everyone took their own benefits, unless there was a major problem on the road or some routes of it like China and the Central Asia. Likewise, when the main routes were improved, trade and commerce developed as well. In Islamic era, especially in the first few centuries when Tang dynasty was established, a chain of good events happened one after another, so we could notice a commercial boom at that time which was unprecedented. Different goods from all around the world could be found in major cities, and subsequently, exporting and importing increased. At this time, commodities were exported and imported between the west and east. For instance, Yaqubi mentions the location of Iraq and Baghdad in that time and writes, "Iraq is the center of the world, all people from around the world have their own commotional region and business there, all kinds of goods from the east or west, from Islamic or non-Islamic countries, India, China, Tibet, Turkey, Deylam, Khazaria, Ethiopia and other regions are exported there in a way that those goods are more found in Baghdad rather than their original region" (Yaqubi, p. 40). Some researchers indicated that during the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., there were some markets in Baghdad just for trading Chinese products such as Chinese silk and dishes; at the same time Islamic local goods were traded in Shanghai, Gwangju, and Yang Chu (By-Shu-Yee, Jamal al-Din, Muhammad Ali, 1997, p. 60).

Gradually, there were more facilities on Silk Road such as settlements, stops, and some warehouses. There were some control gates to take the export and import tax. The products on Silk Road were specialized according to their social, cultural, economic, and commercial situation,

and each region had its own products or was expert in producing one or two particular products. Most traded goods were light and small ones like spices, medicine, perfume, valuable stones and some fabrics like silk, but sometimes some heavy and massive products were also traded such as wood, timber, and iron because Islamic regions needed them to make ships, weapons, etc. (Kahen, ibid., p. 1622). The countries around Indian Ocean provided the wood, teak, and coconut wood that was needed to make ships. Egypt and some other Islamic regions sent some luxurious goods, food, and white alum to Europe (ibid.). Some products like musk, incense, silk, and dishes were imported to Baghdad from China. The ships berthed in Basra, Siraf, and other harbors carried spices and gems from India, silk, and dishes from China (ibid., p. 162).

Besides silk, which had a great importance in regional and international trade, some goods like glass and its related products had their own particular place in trade and commerce. Apparently, glass turned out to be an exchange good sooner than silk and it was traded between China and Central Asia, even before Han dynasty (ibid., p. 253).

Paper was incredibly important in international trade, especially as a vital cultural commodity. As mentioned previously, in the battle of Taras Muslims captured some Chinese who taught them paper technology, therefore, this training was first taught in Samarkand then Baghdad. It seems that the first paper factory out of China was established in Samarkand. Then in most historical and geographical resources whenever Samarkand is mentioned, its paper is mentioned as well (Hudud-al Alam, p. 108). After that paper was popular all around Islamic domination such as Iraq and Egypt, and in Egypt it turned to an export commercial product that was exported to Spain and Europe in fourteenth century. It is believed that the first discovered evidence of paper in

Andalusia belongs to the end of the tenth century A.D. when it replaced the fur (Jonathan Bloom, Dorr Ali, Fatimah, 2004, p. 48). Archeological excavation in Egypt shows that paper increasingly started to replace papyrus from the third or fourth centuries up to the ninth or tenth century A.D. (ibid.). Souk al-Varaghayn (a paper market) in Baghdad was very famous during the end of the second century A.H. that they say it was such an outstanding market in which both sides had more than 100 paper shops and bookstores (Yaqubi, ibid., p. 35). Finally mass production of paper started in Islamic areas and became one of the most popular products in people's daily life and export. This product came from China, quickly spread out in the Mediterranean Basin, and replaced papyrus in Europe (Kahen, ibid., p. 1626).

Some copper products were made in Iraq and sent to Europe through harbors in Egypt, Levant, and Palestine (ibid.). Silk products from Baghdad, fur and fabrics from Basra, linen from Abelah were exported along with date and henna (Maqdisi, Vol. 1, p. 178). Levant and Damascus had their own particular products with high variety. Maqdisi writes, "Damascus has various cheap products." (ibid., 221/1). Different other products such as paper, soap, dishes, copper, etc. were also exported from this city (ibid., 254/1). Rose water from some regions of Fars province such as Firouz Abad was very famous and exported to different areas like the western countries, Roman, Andalusia, Egypt, Yemen, and China (Ibn Hawqal, Maqdisi, 659/1). Besides rose water, some other products like clothing and oil were exported from Fars too; Fars textile industry was very famous (Schwaz, pp. 207-208). Istakhri introduces a long list of exports of Fars province (Istakhri, pp. 133-134). Shushtar's silk fabrics (Diba) were well known in Khuzestan which were exported to all around the world (Ibn Hawqal, p. 28). Some goods such

as turban, Mandil, Tilsan, and qualified cotton fabrics were exported from Kerman to some countries like Egypt, Iraq, and Khorasan (Maqdisi, 693/1, Ibn Hawqal, p. 77). Wool factories in Florence, Italy started producing some textile and fabrics that were used and popular in East, however, Kerman's high quality original handkerchief was still very common (Haussig, p. 134). The main product in the Central Asia was cotton that was exported to other places (ibid., p. 97). Ray was one of the cities that was called as the center of the Chinese products and dishes that were very famous. These products were sent to Europe and Egypt by ship (ibid, p. 125), but the most common products of Iran were different types of textile. Apart from textile, silver of Isfahan, leather of Iraq, Syrian and Iranian ceramic dishes (like Chinese dishes) were also produced and exported (Haussig, pp. 105, 106, 123). Most of the products and goods were for people's daily consumption, sometimes the produced goods were just copies with no creative or new ideas. It should be mentioned that in some fields like producing technical goods, Islamic areas had great development. Kahen states, "We can name development in mining technology and melting electroplated metals, ceramic industry, making crystalline dishes. Islamic areas have had great developments in textile and chemical industry. Finally, we cannot deny perfume, soap, and dyeing materials (Kahen, ibid., 1626/2). Anyway, local and industrial trade depended on variety, quality, and production quantity of goods. There was a close relationship between local industry and trade (ibid.). If local crops and products were made and produced in large quantities, the local trade was accordingly improved and became popular as well because there was not a bold border between the local industry and trade. Interestingly, if the rate of local trade reduced, the international trade was disturbed as well.

Here raise some questions: With the general local and international export and import, was the trading level balanced? Was the trade balanced all around the world? We should say that in the ancient world they did not calculate balanced trading level, but sometimes it was imbalanced in some areas. For instance, as mentioned previously, Transoxiana and Khwarazm's transactions experienced imbalance. Export-import balance hardly set by commercial goods, could often get set by paying coins (Kahen, ibid., 1622/2).

Customs and road management were some complicated issues that were different in various regions. Political, economic, social, and religious factors affected the act of applying customs (whether to apply or not). Sometimes tariffs were determined in the contracts between governments. Kahen says that tariffs in Islamic regions were all paid once and totally (Kahen, ibid., 1627/2). While discussing Silk Road routes, we mentioned customs in different regions as well.

Chapter Seven: Wars and Challenges on Silk Road

Entry

Some major threats on Silk Road were regional wars and conflicts. Some small parts of Silk Road were always involved in war so that Haussig states that Karakoram was always the center of war (Haussig, p. 201). Silk Road was not always calm and peaceful, once in a while there was a regional or even international war around the road. Sometimes political and regional factors such as competitions led to some difficulties on Silk Road. Since Silk Road had a lot of sideways including three main routes, two land routes, a maritime route (called Advieh), and many other sideways. Normally, some parts were affected by inconsistency and temperamental stagnation. The road was very long (thousands of kilometers) and passed through many different lands, governments, and areas so it was natural that such a road faced some problems. In what follows some items are explained.

A. Byzantine Empire and Islam: The Western Threats on Silk Road

One of the threats on Silk Road was the rise of Islam and the reaction of Byzantine Empire. The rise of Islam and its conquests made Byzantine Empire miss the access to the East Mediterranean Basin, Egypt, and Levant, to take the revenge, Byzantine Empire boycotted all the Syrian and Egyptian harbors and cities. This reaction disconnected Silk Road and Europe, especially when Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, the Umayyad Caliph, minted Islamic coin in 75 A.H. because Byzantine Empire considered coin minting as one of his own privileges, so he thought of

this action as a challengeable one then he started a war (Lewis, ibid., p. 73). Therefore, practically an economic problem caused a conflict. This somehow permanent conflict led to a disorder in trading goods. Byzantine Empire suffered so much that even asked the Chinese for help. During the history, it was impossible that Byzantine Empire sent that many couriers and ambassadors to China in a short time from the year 643 to the year 719 (the time of Islamic conquests). As it seems, the subject that these couriers and ambassadors carried was to ask the Chinese to stop Islam. Byzantine Empire wanted the Chinese to know that the expansion and progress of Islam is against the international commercial benefits of China and Byzantine Empire (Gerald, p. 369). Anyway, Byzantine Empire closed the route to Europe for Muslims, but the Chinese practically did not react.

Money and goods are like a river, if the way is closed, it flows the other way. Therefore, for quite a long time, goods were transported to Trabson using Iraq and Iran route to be taken to Kiev and Ukraine by ship or through land route, and finally be sent to Europe (Haussig, p. 57). The end of Umayyad caliphate reduced the pressure on Europe. The Abbasid caliphate brought peace to the East of Mediterranean Basin. Muslims and Europeans made peace in the eighth century A.D./ second century A.H. and restarted trading (Frank and Bravindston, p. 265).

Other major threats on Silk Road were the Crusades that Europe started in some areas such as East Mediterranean Basin, Anatolia, Levant, Egypt, and sometimes North Africa, apparently for some religious reasons, but Byzantine Empire's defeat in Malazgirt and Seljuq dynasty's attack was affective too (ibid.,p.264). However, the Christians could not have a great victory in these wars, they took some parts of harbors in Levant and Palestine in the East Mediterranean Basin that made a

disorder in trade there. The Crusades diverted some routes on Silk Road and affected areas around Levant and Egypt. Haussig believes that Arabs lost the control over Syrian harbors because they were occupied by the Christians. He continues that just Egypt was under control of Muslim traders and somehow business was shifted towards India. Another impact of these wars was that the Indian goods (or goods of other countries) that previously were transported to the Persian Gulf to be sent to Europe through Levant and Iraq, now they were sent to Europe using Northern Silk Road like Tranzon (Haussig, p. 181). This route was a kind of spare route, but anyway it made Tranzon a famous city. On the other hand, because of the Crusades, goods of Levant and its surrounding regions passed the opposite route which means they were transported using Northwestern part of Iran towards Europe, and harbors around the Caspian and Black sea (ibid., pp. 181, 182). The Crusades affected commuting on Silk Road. Ayyubid dynasty separated war, politics, and business, so despite of the Crusades, they kept their trade with Europe and Southern European harbors. The Ayyubid dynasty's commercial politic which included Levant and Yemen too, made an international commercial progress, and the big company named Karemi that was established in the Fatimid caliphate, played an important role in East-West trade so that goods were freely exported and imported (Holt, 2002, p. 283). The Ayyubid commercial and economic attitude especially Salahadin, attracted the attention of the Eastern and European Christians. This attitude led to migration of the Christion and Jewish people from Iraq to Levant, but the Jewish were more eager to migrate to Egypt. Besides the Christian and Jewish, Muslim traders traveled to Egypt and Levant as well to meet European traders face to face and to communicate with them in the Mediterranean harbors (Haussig, p. 205). Interestingly,

despite the long duration and a lot of violence, the Crusades made a progress in trade. Eastern and Western cities both got developed and their markets improved.

B. Eastern Threats on Silk Road

Maybe it is not an exaggeration if we say that the identity, stagnation, and boom of Silk Road depended on China. Whenever China experienced turbulence, the process of trade on Silk Road was immediately and deeply influenced. For instance, fall of Tang dynasty at the end of the ninth century led to an intensive stagnation in China that even changed the path of one of Northern Silk Road routes to South up to the time when Liao dynasty (Kitan Dynasty) dominated China and the road returned to its normal situation. The disturbance in China, influenced employment all over the world (Gerald, p. 427; Haussig, p. 215). Sometimes the Chinese governments had some monopolies that led to disorder in trading and production of some goods that their basic materials were based in China. After the disappearance of Tang dynasty, the export of Chinese dishes dramatically reduced, especially through land routes, but silk was the only product that was less affected by the political and economic changes and continued to be traded all along the road (Frank and Bravindston, p. 207).

For several reasons, China experienced a hard time at the beginning of the second century A.H. First, presence of Muslims in the Central Asia was a challenge for China; second, Tibetan people attacked to some parts of China and caused more disorder. They occupied Dong Hwang and at the same time Khatians defeated China and started a new era (Frank and Bravindston, pp. 251, 255). On the other hand, the rise of Khazaria and their dominance up to Transoxiana in the second century A.H./ the eighth

century A.D. was another challenge that we discussed. Interestingly, whenever China faced a problem and stopped exporting its goods, the fake ones were made all around different areas due to the need and interest of customers. This process of producing fake goods was done in Afrasiab workshops in Samarkand (ibid., 215). Apart from that, Middle China, Transoxiana, and sometimes all parts of China were attacked by undomesticated tribes that hurt citizens and their businesses. This area was never calm and peaceful during the history.

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