

History - The Silk Road

In antiquity the movement of goods was as important as it is today. Using the natural resources available locally, each region in the world created products that were unique. For example: Badakshan, in what is now northeastern Afghanistan, is rich in the precious opaque, deep blue gem: Lapis Lazuli. This gem was often used to construct trinkets and other keepsakes for royalty, but was also used as a spice for cooking. As a result Badakshan became known as the Lapis lazuli spice capital of the world. Another example comes from China: The Chinese were famous for their fine silk cloths, produced by worms native to their region. Silk grew to be the finest material known in ancient times and is still valued highly today. With each item being unique to a region, trade became inevitable. In order to create a flow of these goods, rudimentary logistical infrastructure had to be developed. This infrastructure became The Silk Road - a non-tangible road, linking countries and societies together on the Asian, African, and European continents by land and sea. The name for this timeless marvel is actually a translation from the German word Seidenstraße, first used by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877.

The movement of goods along these routes caused the birth and expansion of entire industries to support the travelers. Spanning centuries of human history, The Silk Road was the primary trade route for almost the entire eastern hemisphere. These travelers also met other travelers or local people allowing them to intermix and spread art, customs, culture, philosophy, religion, and technology. In essence the geographically interwoven concept wasn't just an economical marvel, it was an heirloom of humanity. Never before has there been an icon to share and influence such a broad spectrum of cultures.

To explain and pay The Silk Road its full esteem, we decided to explore the trade route that set the foundation for world trade and cultural exchange with a series of articles. Each article over the course of the next few months, will examine the way in which The Silk Road impressed the culture, technology, and economic capacity of the countries it connected.

Join us next month as we make our first stop in India!