

The Social Classes Who Served in the Great Silk Road Service System

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Abstract: In this article some features of the service system of the Great Silk Road are discussed based on historical sources and literature.

Keywords: Great Silk Road, caravan routes, service system, convoy carrier, messenger, medicine, hire, postal service, ambassadors, shopping cities, spies.

Introduction

It is known from history that the system of service on all types of roads (domestic, foreign, international, transit) has played an important role. The Great Silk Road and its branches are no exception. In addition, the development of the service system on various roads includes many issues such as the composition of trade caravans, the condition (replacement) of camels and horses, guides, sarbons, the supply of food (fodder), water to traders, ambassadors or tourists and animals. The activity of the service system on caravan routes, more precisely its scope, also depended on the composition of the caravan. Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to briefly dwell on the issue of caravan composition. The composition of the caravan was usually determined by the proximity of the city or country, the natural geographical conditions of the area where the trade caravan passes, the condition and level of safety of roads, the availability and accessibility of road infrastructure, the convenience of the season and other similar factors.

The Main Results and Findings

In the Middle Ages, traders worked in large caravans along the Great Silk Road. In large caravans, camels were divided into 20 to 60 camels, forming a group – a flock [1:15]. The trade caravans were led by a caravan leader, who was responsible for determining the composition of the caravan, marking the direction, making the order of traffic and tasks on the road, and developing security measures. Caravan leaders often have a special letter from the ruler of the country concerned, which was the basis for ensuring his and the caravan's rights on the roads, providing them with the necessary services and assistance when necessary. Caravan leaders usually belonged to influential social strata of society and in many cases also had high political and great economic prestige. The caravan leaders, who led large trade caravans for many years, managed to accumulate a large amount of wealth and become prominent and influential representatives of the society. In particular, the fact that Somonhudot's father (the founder of the Samanid dynasty, Ismail Somoni, his successor), one of the leading political forces in Khorasan, became a caravan leader after relinquishing his political position in Khorasan during the reign of Caliph Umar (634-644) [2: 216] confirms this.

In the Middle Ages, the Turkic peoples also took an active part in international economic and trade relations through the Great Silk Road. Merchants and caravans engaged in international trade were called "Arkish" among the Turkic peoples [3: 440-441]. The term Arqish (Arqis) also means messenger or messenger, [4:54] indicating the extensive participation of the ancient Turks in the region's domestic and foreign trade relations. Several social strata who organized, supervised, managed, and directly provided various services were involved in the development of the service system for caravans, members of embassy missions, and passengers on the Great Silk Road routes. They can be classified as follows according to their position and participation in the service system. The first were overseers, administrators, who usually belonged to the upper class, were responsible for organizing and supervising the service of trade caravans, members of embassy missions, or passengers in major shopping malls, cities, and other road infrastructure. The second social class included the ones who served passengers and caravans directly on the caravan roads and in some cases service providers who were part of the caravan. These social categories were also, in turn, divided into several categories. Among them the activity of coachmen who served caravans with their own vehicles was considered important. Our research shows that the formation of the category of coachmen in Central Asia, located at the crossroads of international economic and cultural relations through the Great Silk Road, dates back to ancient times. The activities of coachmen on the Central Asian routes of the Great Silk Road played an important role in the organization of trade relations. The coachmen were usually representatives of the peoples living in the area where the trade caravan passed. In some parts of the region, in the Middle

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Ages, coachmanship was the main occupation for certain segments of the population and was the main means of subsistence. This type of service was common among representatives of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoral tribes in the steppe and desert regions of the region. Even for some tribes of nomadic Turkmen and Kazakhs, coachmanship is known to be the only source of income. In particular, in the late Middle Ages, Kazakhs and Turkmen were hired as guides and hired coachmen in large trade caravans in trade relations with the Russian cities of Central Asia and the Iranian cities of the Caspian Sea [5: 22-23]. Individuals or groups acting as guides in the service system of the Great Silk Road, interpreters who play an important role in the communication of traders speaking different languages, doctors who are required to be part of trade caravans to distant lands, and other social categories also participated. According to Russian sources, it was possible to rent carts and camels in Bukhara and all major commercial cities of the emirate [6: 9]. The rent for camel transportation was 8 versts, or an average of 25-29.5 Russian rubles for 1 stone road. The city of Karshi was also one of the centers where camels were rented for trade caravans, and Russian sources pay special attention to the fact that resistance caravans serving caravans for 1 silver coin per stone could be seen in all parts of the khanate [7: 328]. In Karshi, camels and carts could also be hired to transport goods to Bukhara and Samarkand [8: 204].

In general, the rental of carts and camels for the transportation of goods was in all the major cities in the region. For example, in the Bukhara emirate in the second half of the XIX century, on average, about 1,000 carts, about 5,000 camels were at the service of passengers and traders. The cart could carry up to 25 pounds, a camel 16 pounds, a horse 6 pounds and a donkey 4 pounds [9: 9-10]. In mountainous areas, the load was mainly on horses and donkeys [10: 3]. Cars were also used on the Bukhara-Kokand road [11: 6], and traders from Kokand to Kashgar loaded their goods on rented horses (8 pounds per horse) and paid 2-4 gold coins for each horse [12: 109]. In addition to providing safety and other services on caravan routes, the quality of roads also had a major impact on the effectiveness of trade links. Although the central and local governments are responsible for ensuring the uninterrupted operation of roads and roadside structures [13:44], there are reports that the state treasury [14: 823] and private funds were spent on the construction of roads [15: 187]. However, sources from the 19th and early 20th centuries state that the roads in the Bukhara Emirate [16: 162] and the Kokand Khanate [17: 26-27] were in poor condition. While emphasizing the role of international transit routes in economic and cultural relations, inter-civilizational dialogue, it should also be noted that in some cases, dangerous infectious diseases have spread to large areas along trade routes. As an example, it can be said that the plague, which began in China in the middle of the 13th century, reached the countries of the Balkans and Eastern Europe along the Great Silk Road in 1330-1340 [18: 4430-440]. Since such cases were frequent in ancient and medieval times, the organization of medical services on caravan routes was a vital necessity [19: 62-73]. In Central Asia and neighboring regions, there have long been hospitals that provide medical care to the population, passengers and traders. Information on the existence of hospitals in Balkh and some cities of Iran, Bukhara (1st century BC), medieval hospitals in large cities such as Merv, Urgench, Bukhara [20: 233-235] [21: 194], findings suggesting the existence of a pharmacy in ancient Poykent, located on the Great Silk Road [22: 177-178], suggest that cities were major medical centers. The development of medicine reached new heights, especially in the advanced Middle Ages. Hospitals built in the major cities of the region [23:58] were the main centers providing medical services to locals and foreign tourists, traders. During the reign of Amir Temur and the Temurids, medical knowledge and medical services were further developed. We see this in the fact that Sahibkiran built a brick hospital near Kabul [24: 233-235], and through the hospitals built by HazratAlisherNavoi in Herat. The fact that the Bukhara khan Subhanqulikhan (1681-1701) built a special hospital in Bukhara and gave lectures on medicine in the madrasah [25: 304] and other relevant data also testify to the fact that medical knowledge in our region developed during the Middle Ages. Advances in medicine have also had a positive impact on the development of medical services on caravan routes. By the Middle Ages, some progress had been made in this area. In addition to cities, in large villages and important stations, medical services were provided to trade caravans and passengers, and special groups of doctors were formed to deal with this [26: 234-253]. The secrets of medical knowledge and medical care have usually been passed down from generation to generation, and many dynasties of physicians have emerged. In particular, sources note that even in remote areas of the region, there were local doctors who could provide qualified medical care to passengers and vehicles [27: 247]. Embassy missions and large trade caravans also included special physicians. This served, on the one hand, the development of political and economic relations between different regions, and, on the other hand, the spread of medical knowledge to different regions along trade routes [28:72]. Special couriers, spies, and others in the civil service were usually provided with essential medical supplies, a variety of medicinal herbs, and were also able to provide first aid to themselves and their partners. Cultural events were also organized in the shopping centers and large caravanserais on the caravan routes, which was a great source of economic income for the property owners. There is also a subtle issue to keep in mind when it comes to service system maintenance on old roads. This is an issue related to ensuring the rights in marital relations of traders engaged in international trade and forced to live away from their families for a long time due to their activities. In the Middle Ages, Muslim merchants involved in international trade were known to have families in various major shopping malls. Sharia law gave Muslim traders a legal opportunity for such marriages. At the same time, it is known that some categories of traders and passengers on the trade routes and in some large shopping centers also used the services of prostitutes. There are also reports that such services were

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introduced more consistently, especially in Chinese cities and East Turkestan, where the government was unable to eradicate the scarcity [29:65].

Conclusion

In general, the service system on caravan routes is wide-ranging, and the directions related to its activities can be seen in the following figure:

- 1). Security service, hiring guards to watch the caravans
- 2). Information on the organization of wholesale trade, prices for goods and trade news
- 3). Organization of rest of passengers in caravanserais, rooms
- 4). Provision of fodder for horses at roadside facilities
- 5). Service of carters, porters, guides and interpreters
- 6). A service to provide merchants, caravan service providers and passengers with what they need in caravanserais
- 7). Provision of household, cultural, medical and other services

Thus, the extensive system of services on the caravan routes of Central Asia was formed in ancient times and developed in the Middle Ages in accordance with the development of economic and cultural ties. Residents of towns and large villages, artisans, cattle-breeding tribes and representatives of other social strata directly interested in trade took an active part in this process.

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- 13) In some cases, due to the fact that less funds are allocated from the state treasury for road maintenance or these funds are used by the local government for other purposes, the repair of roads is entrusted to the local population. For example, the Kokand khan entrusted the local population with repairing the road from Kokand to Tashkent via Tuytepa. See: Masson M.E. Ahangeran. Archaeological and topographic essay. - Tashkent, 1953. - C. 44.
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