

On Foreign Soil: Merchant Diasporas & the Archaeology of Cross-Cultural Exchanges

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Abstract

The focus of this lecture is the trading networks that in multifaceted ways formed a bridge between the cultural and commercial centers of Eurasia. More specifically, I am interested in the ways merchant diasporas, both temporary and permanent, not only facilitated the movement of objects and materials between places but also were vectors of physical, cultural, and economic transformation.

1. Introduction

- a. Questions Posed
- b. Routes and Merchandise
 - i. Egypt and the Indus Valley: 3rd/2nd Millennium BCE
 - ii. Achaemenid Persia: 4th - 6th century BCE
 - iii. Pazyryk Kurgans: 5th - 3rd century BCE
 - iv. Tillya-Tepe: 1st century CE
 - v. Kushans (Begram): 1st – 3rd century CE
 - vi. Roman maritime trade (Berenike and Barbaricum): 1st - 3rd century CE
 - vii. Sasanian and Sogdian (Iranian) trade with China: 4th - 7th century CE
 - viii. Arab networks (India and China): 8th – 10th century CE
- c. People and Ideas

2. Evidence of Mercantile Communities

- a. Textual Evidence
 - i. Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (Ancient Roman Empire)
 - ii. Jatakas (Ancient India)
 - iii. Isodore of Charax (Ancient Parthia)
 - iv. Xuanzang (Central Asia)
 - v. Arabic and Persian sources (India, China and Southeast Asia)
- b. Archaeological Evidence – epigraphic (inscriptions) and urban remains
 - i. Socotra
 - ii. Red Sea
 - iii. Karakorum
 - iv. India and Sri Lanka
 - v. China

3. Diasporic Mercantile Communities – temporary and settled

- a. Romans
- b. Palmyraeans
- c. Tamils

- d. Sogdians
 - e. Arab Merchants in China
 - f. Chinese Mercantile Communities in Southeast Asia
4. Artistic Exchanges in the Context of Mercantile Activities

Selected Bibliography

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