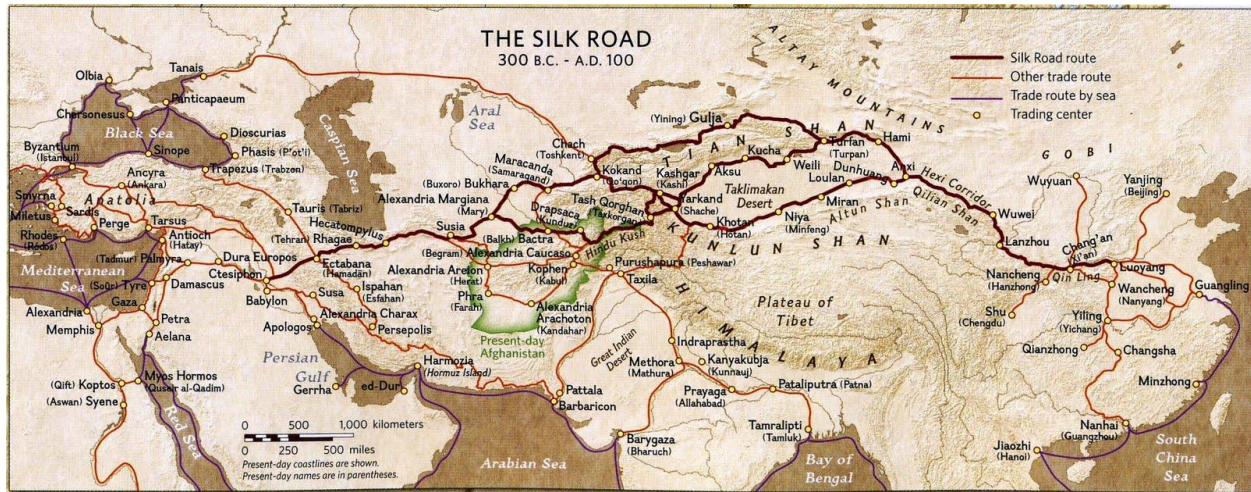


# The Silk Road

As early as 2500 B.C.E, merchants created a trade route that became known as the **Silk Route** or **Silk Road**. In western Asia, various groups established trade between the people of the Eastern Mediterranean, through Mesopotamia and east to China. The Silk Road was a series of caravan paths that crossed both mountain ranges and deserts. The cities of Samarkand, Tashkent, and Bukhara became important commercial centers along the way.



The Silk Road was a dangerous trip that took up to three years to make. The terrain was not easy to cross in many places and bandits and nomadic tribes often attacked traders. Specialized trade groups emerged, equipped with their own small armies.

The Silk Road was a cultural link between east and west. **Buddhism** spread from India along the Silk Road into Asia. **Cultural Diffusion** mixed the arts, customs and traditions from the Hellenistic, Roman, Egyptian and Persian civilizations with those of China and others along the route. The Silk Route remained a main line of East-West contact until the 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

Goods that travelled along the Silk Road	
West to East	East to West
Horses, Sheep, Hunting dogs	Silk
Grapes and grape seeds	Porcelain wares
Woolen goods	Tea, Rice
Carpets, curtains, blankets, rugs, tapestries	Paper
Camels	Gunpowder
Gold, silver, semi-precious stones	Bronze ornaments
Iron and Glass items	Medicines
Animal skins	Perfumes
Cotton Fabric	Corals
Watermelons, melons peaches	Amber
Wild animals (leopards and lions)	Asbestos
Ivory and rhino horns, turtle shells	Spices (cinnamon and ginger)

## Making Silk

Since ancient times, the Chinese have known how to make silk cloth from fibers spun by silkworms. A silk worm is a caterpillar that spins an especially strong, lightweight covering. This covering (that protects the silkworm while it is changing into a moth) is called a cocoon. The Chinese discovered how to unwind the thin fibers of cocoons, spin them into thread, and weave the thread into cloth.

Silk cloth is very light so it was easily transportable along the Silk Route. It was a valuable commodity in the west and it made merchants rich who could bring it back from China in large commodities.



Silk worm

## Inventing Gunpowder

When the Mongol invaded Eastern Europe, they used gunpowder. The Chinese are believed to have invented it during the tenth century. Its original use was for fireworks but cultural diffusion allowed it to be transformed into warfare such as rockets, cannons and guns.



## Making Paper

Paper, as we know it today, was invented by the Chinese around 100 C.E. This knowledge was carried along the Silk Road into the Middle East and Western Europe. The first paper mills were built in Europe around 1280 C.E. (when Marco Polo first visited China).

塘漂竹斬



造纸 Making paper