

The Silk Road as a Cultural Crossroad in Western Travellers' Perspective

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Abstract: Throughout the history, Silk Road has functioned as a means of cultural and economic production, through which it has been the fundamental focus of socio-cultural, economic, and political interactions between Asian and European geographies. European world of thought and politics, which was attracted to Central Asia/East especially due to Mongolian invasion, has been the initiator of organizing expeditions in order to closely examine, and to gather data on, many ethnic groups such as Mongolians, Turks, and Chinese.

The present study includes travel books of three Westerner travelers, namely, Johann de Plano Carpini (1246-1247), Wilhelm von Rubruk (1253-1255) and Marco Polo (1250), who witnessed this process in person. Content analysis method is used in the study where comparison method is observed. Production system in the process of culturization, material and mental processes, which we observed in the travel books, has the potential to function together. Functioned as the fundamental founding element in the construction of Europe as a historical-cultural area, the factor of religion is also the basic factor in the formation of identities. Contribution to the formation of the classical orientalism is among the shared features of the three travel books. The

period of Mongolian invasion, during which the travels were made, also marks a period where missionary works and orientalism intersect.

Keywords: The Silk Road, Cultural Change, Central Asia, Travel Books, Religion, Identity

Travel books bear in themselves historico-sociologic traces of the societies they are produced. On that sense, mirroring history and societies like social documents, travel books are indispensable sources for sociologies of culture and knowledge. In this respect, travel writing is “not only the product of its subject but its ages and society as a culture forming literary space” (Erdoğan, 2011, p.5). It is possible to obtain data on the historical development of interrelation between today's societies, cultures, and states, pondering on the travel books which are inevitable sources of history of culture. On the other hand, we also learn about the effects of social forces, such as migration, war, and trade, on individuals and human communities, thanks to the travel literature.

It can be remarked that travel writing in the broader sense developed thanks to two new genres. The first one can be defined as political travel books which are placed in politic. These travel books were written by those who were travelling in the line of duty and they included political writings. The other type formed the scientific literature which gained importance in the fields of ethnographic-historical or geographical-statics (Graz, 1987).

Being the subject to many types of world travel literature, Silk Road is the main course uniting continents with commercial and political reasons, for the sake of which innumerable travels were made. “Silk

Road was not only a main route, but also one that joined many different caravan routes and which started at Hian in China to join with trade ways at Rome in the Europe. This road lived its most brilliant period in the 7th and 8th centuries” (Rzayev & İsayev, 2012, p.21). However much it reminds an exotic travel, "Silk Road" is historically one of the main routes of economic, cultural, and political interaction. In fact, such roads used for commercial purposes have formed the network of political and social interactions (Düğen, 2011). We carry the belief that the following should be underlined, if the discussions and determinations made today on globalization and its initial phase are considered. Silk Road forms the first fundamental dynamics of globalization in its every aspect (cultural, economic, etc.) and, in our opinion; Asian geography is the first geographical-social area in which globalization has commenced.

When considered sociologically, in constructing politic, economic and socio-historical contact points of Asia and Europe the Silk Road played an indispensable role as a tool of cultural expansion and economic production. Throughout history, the Silk Road has functioned as a dialogue space between cultures, nations/tribes and civilizations. Regarding this, the Silk Road, in a way, has become the crossing point of civilizations for centuries. Besides archival documents, politic-diplomatic texts and embassy records, it is also possible to follow the traces of institutional changes, economic trends/changes (trade, production and consumption habits, etc.), spatial transformation (urban-rural structures) and identity interactions and other intellectual-material cultural relations (artistic objects, clothes, food culture, etc.) in travel books as a supportive field of knowledge.

Correlating sociologies of culture and history, in this presentation works of three Western travellers in Asian geography during the Mongol expansion will be evaluated. Wilhelm von Rubruk's *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Mongke (1253-1255)*, Marco Polo's *The Travels of Marco Polo (1250)* and Johann de Plano Carpini's *History of Mongols (1246-1247)* are included in the scope of the study. Comparative method-content analysis will be used in the study. Content analysis method is used in the study where comparison method is observed.

If examined in sociological terms, the three travel books we examined in our study discuss many issues. These issues may be listed as, urbanization-settlement trends, prolificacy and population growth, marriage types, cultural values and norms regarding family and socialization, culture of language and writing, diplomacy, government and leadership properties, forms of religion and faith, transportation and communication, relations between production-consumption and possession, trade activities, security and defense mechanisms, science and technique. Being a paper, our study required to observe scope and limitations in term of subject. In our study, cultural intersections shall mean relational areas (techniques-values-social forces area: factors such as identity characteristics, commercial and political activities, faith and religion culture, material techniques and values), where different cultures get in touch with.

1. On Travelers and Their Works

P. Carpini ve W. von Rubruk's works can be included in the category of political travel books. In a way, in order to take precautions

against the Mongol invasion, he tried to determine the reflex of the Mongol society. Spuler (1987), who on both travel books claims perfection of both travel books emerges every time when you compare them with puny news of oriental writers and with other news, sets forth that travel books of P. Carpini and W. von Rubruk bear a peculiar value among other Western travel books, due to the information given in them on history of culture. However, work of M. Polo has become more popular compared to these two works of art. Work of M. Polo, who gave the most significant travel book of European Middle Age to the world literature-culture literature, does not attract that much attention in his life. However, his work of art will be re-explored when travel books turn into a popular area with effect of orientalist perspective and its value will be understood in fairly short time.

Chinese, Turks, Mongolians, and Russians have been the deterministic parties of the power struggle on the Silk Road throughout the history. Nations effective on the region definitely had a politics on Silk Road. Freedom and openness to everyone characteristics of Silk Road which was an international trade region, has made Silk Road and ethnic groups ruling on the Silk Road effective on the world politics (Düğen, 2011). Nomad Mongolians are one of the ethnic groups dominating the world politics and Silk Road basin for a certain period of time. Common feature of travel books we examine in our study is that they are authored in the ruling period of Mongolians expanding up to Continental Europe. In Europe, 1240s covers preparation of a crusader army comprised mostly of volunteers against the Mongol invasion and dominance which had reached to the shores of Adriatic over Hungary. In this period, in which the word “Mongol” was virtually associated with

“fear”, the most important cultural outcome was the increasing interest in the East.

Against the mobility created by the Mongols with their over time horsemanship, arrows and spears, with their life styles, tactics in the war and in the raids which had defeated heavy armoured armies of Europe (Leicht, 2012), the Western world, especially the Pope, started to think of taking some measures. It seemed that the first thing to do against the Mongol threat was to establish friendly relations. Ambassadors going to Mongolia would also learn about their next move. The Pope hoped that through missionary activities of ambassadors Mongols could be converted and so that they could prevent disasters that they would possibly suffer (Ayan, 2012).

In the competitive political medium of the 13th century, formed on the basis of political, religious, and economic interest under the shadow of Mongolian invasion, religious diffusionism or religious culturization was seen by the Pope and the King of France rather as a tool for reconciliation or peace in attenuating the Mongolian rule. Carpini is charged with a duty under such conditions. Giovanni de Plano Carpini, a Franciscan friar, was sent off in April 16, 1245 with another committee of ambassadors from Lyon and with the Pope’s letter written to the Mongol Emperor. Travelling from the South Germany to Poland, from there to Russia, Carpini reached to Genghis Kahn’s grandson Güyük Khan’s palace in 1246. The committee returned back in 1247 and delivered Güyük’s respond to the Pope. The respond was not politically satisfying because Güyük Khan had demanded that the Pope and European princes had to be subject to him for alliance. They had to go to his palace for this reason. Güyük’s demands were quite clear in the

beginning of his letter: “As the greatest nation of the whole world, ‘Khan of Seas’, we order in the name of eternal sky (God); this is the order we sent to the venerable Pope for him to see and understand.” Güyük Khan firmly rejected conversion to Christianity (Leicht, 2012).

Traveller Wilhem von Rubruk was dispatched with the order of the king of France in order to engage in missionary activities and to provide intelligence. For this purpose he completed his travel to the East (1253-1255). A missionary priest, W. von Rubruk did not travel to East all alone. His committee included his brother from the order, Bartholomeus von Cremona, priest Gosset, a slave called Nikolaus purchased from Constantinople, and a dragoman whose name was Turgemannus or Homodei or in Arabic, Abdullah (Leicht, 2012).

Setting sails with his committee on May 7, 1253, W. von Rubruk reached to Crimea via Black Sea. He took the land route over Southern Russia to be accepted by Sertak Khan. Sertak welcomed the committee with courtesy; however, he stated that he is not authorized on the kingdom letter and did not allow priest to practice religious missionary. He sent them to Batu, the Khan of the Altun-Ordu at the city of Sarai. However, W. Von Rubruk could not reach his goal at that city. Upon this, he was sent to the Great Khan at Qara Qorum. Thus, W. von Rubruk, making his world travel due to a very limited duty, stayed at Qara Qorum for more than six months. When he told to stay longer at Qara Qorum if not to settle down, Mengü, the Great Khan, sincerely refused him. Starting his return journey, W. von Rubruk reaches Syria in 1255. Since he had to report to King Ludwig (IX), he found himself in France (Leicht, 2012).

Venetian Marco Polo, his father Nicolo Polo and his uncle Maffeo Polo started their long Asia travel in 1271. Meeting Pope before setting off for the journey, Polo brothers arrived at Kubilay Khan's capital, Khanbalik (present Beijing) by following the Silk Road step by step. Young Marco Polo quickly succeeded in earning Khan's trust and during the missions he was appointed for, he had the opportunity to be acquainted with majority of China and India. Marco Polo's journey had lasted for 25 years. In a sea battle between the Venetians and the Genoese in 1298, he was captured and taken to Genoa as prisoner. During his four-year imprisonment, he dictated his travel memories based on the travel notes brought from Venice to his story writer cell-mate Rusticano from Pisa (Güngören, 1985). However, the work could not attract the expected attention in the period it was printed. Marco Polo's travel book would be rediscovered in the eighteenth century when travel literature began to be popular. His accompaniment to his father Niccolo and uncle Matteo in their trade journeys contributed significantly to M. Polo to become a traveler.

We can state that all three travel books discussed here are not authored as a result of personal interest or out of curiosity. Journeys made by travelers on Asian lands following the route of the Silk Road, their professions, and experiences were the causes behind these travel books. In this sense, P. Carpini and W. von Rubruk appear as individuals compiling data. Their travels are results of their official duties. Taking notes on his journeys in the beginning by combining his interest in trade with his ability to observe, M. Polo would continue to take notes on his journeys aligned with the opportunities arising due to the official duties charged to him upon wishes of Mongolian Ruler, Kublai Khan. He

would author, in a fluent style raising curiosity, his impressions from his journeys to outer countries he visited as an ambassador, under the auspices of the Great Khan. Marco Polo authored his travel book in “Venetian dialect” (Carim, 1966, p.9). His accompaniment to his father Niccolo and uncle Matteo in their trade journeys contributed significantly to M. Polo to become a traveler. He travelled to Asian lands for a good 24 years, from 1271 to 1295. His journey there and back took totally 7 years.

2. The silk Road as a Space of Cultural Crossings and Changes

In general we can say that culture is any kind of interpretation process, technique, and production efforts of an individual spent on existence. It can be said that, up to now, many definitions are given to culture in the field of social sciences. However much there are differences of opinion on culture definitions, the basic argument that science agrees on is: no culture is pure and stable; therefore, intercultural interaction and change is inevitable. However; each and every culture has different points of resistance against changes. In Barlett’s words, each culture has “hard” and “soft” points. It is observed that the hard part of a culture is composed of symbolized elements differentiating it from other cultures. Societies “do not welcome the idea of changing the cultural values which differentiate them from other societies and which they believe add specificity to them” (Kaya, 2002, p.193). Said hard and soft points are effective on determining whether and which points a culture will take from another culture in the process of change-interaction.

If viewed in sociological terms, culture is not given; essential creator of culture is the individual itself. Humanitarian changes occupy the focus of the cultural changes. Fundamental power that creates and changes society are social relationships. Factors such as interest-curiosity, benefit, need, problem solving or desire for innovation play a deterministic role on individuals taking their position before different or various cultural elements. Such determinism, in time, becomes a source for the change in cultural elements. Causes effective in diffusion are curiosity, desire for innovation, benefit, and guaranteeing esteem. However, at this point a very significant factor takes effect to determine the fate of the new element: appropriateness to the existing culture system. Even though it is beneficial, new element which does not fit in the existing culture system cannot survive (Kaya, 2002).

Wealth of the Silk Road basin is caused by different cultures getting in touch with each other. Such dynamism entailed by the Mongolian invasion would cause cultural changes for a long time at an important part of Asia, Middle East, and Europe. Asian geography of the Mongolian era is an area where a life style, production form, and social division of labor based on nomad herding, i.e. steppe culture in brief, reigns. And nomad empires accomplished to establish a specific civilization in this vivacious-dynamic geography, of which impacts would spread to the continental Europe in time. Mongolian invasion had played an important role in meeting Asian and European geographies at different contact points. War conditions imposed by the Mongolian domination, in sociological terms, have constituted the basic dynamics of significant cultural-political and commercial relations, which would continue of centuries in both continents, as an example of social power.

According to Hungarian historian Ligeti (1970), these two old continents, i.e. Asia and Europe, met with each other in the Mongolian invasion period, especially in 13th and 14th centuries. Inner parts of Asia, political and ethnographical landscape of the Eastern Europe formed under the influence of the events that took place in this period.

In the culturization process as observed in the travel books, production system has the potential to treat material and intellectual process together. In the narration of travel spaces, travellers frequently refer to social representations; human portrayals, behavioural patterns, life styles, cultural materials and ceremonies are typical concretised elements of social representations. Functioned as the fundamental founding element in the construction of Europe as a historical-cultural area, the factor of religion is also the basic factor in the formation of identities. When analyzed sociologically, we can list the common points representing and realizing cultural crossings in both three travel books as:

1. Religion and missionary activities
2. Politics and diplomatic activities
3. Economy and commercial activities

Our manners of perception play a significant role in forming the social world. Culture is the most fundamental perception manner of human being. Factors such as how we are raised, our experiences, professional patterns, etc. give a determining reference framework in forming the said manners of perception. If viewed from this perspective, we can say that professional statuses and purposes-intentions to travel of travelers are deterministic in selecting the content, language, and style of travel books, and in describing individuals, objects, and events. It is observed that institution of religion and missionary activities, as well as

institution of politics and diplomatic activities are discussed intensively in works of missionary priest P. Carpini sent by Pope Innocent IV and missionary priest W. von Rubruk sent by Louis IX, King of France, who both saw diffusing Christianity as a solution against Mongolian invasion. If the works are examined in detail, it can be stated that missionary priest P. Carpini, sent by Pope Innocent IV, places more weight on religious activities and institution. On the other hand, in line with his duty charged by the King of France, missionary priest W. von Rubruk discusses rather issues such as diplomacy, government, and political relations. We can claim that, although he refers to the abovementioned issues, due to the influence of his profession, even his father's profession, as a trader, M. Polo has a financial-economic perspective, such as handicrafts, agricultural production, underground resources, commercial goods, tax system, transportation and communication of the places he visited.

Observing the cities and rural communities he visited with an eye of a trader, Polo (1979a) has information that can list the economic inventory of each city he visits. For instance, he mentions ruby and silver beds in Mount Sighian near the City of Balashan (Badakshan) and precious stones at Pem Province. He provides detailed information on the religion, language and arts, life style, tent culture, food and clothing, production styles, ethnic structure, governmental and administrative structure, financial system, arts of war, family and marriage relations, social solidarity procedures, traditions and customs (burials, treatment methods of sick) of the people living at each region he visits. In this sense, M. Polo's work may be assessed as a city documentary.

Based on what we learn from travel books, religion is a significant factor in the development of entity perception of societies.

Expression of self and defending personality in Asian societies and communities, as determined by Sezer (2011), is formed by state in the political and military area and by religion in the ideological area. Religious activity in the Asian geography has had a significant effect on social differentiation of Asian-Altaic communities in time. Religion virtually maintained a duty of a cognitive scheme in forming the perceiving styles and identities, and played a role in the diversity both in area of values and in material culture products and techniques. Depending on this process, institution of religion itself would reach to an organizational maturity based relying on different conflict processes between settled farmer communities and nomadic herders by time. In sociological terms we can say that social powers and manners of relation shall produce religious socialization areas appropriate to their own structures.

Cultural values system in a society, besides being influential on determining the social integrity and belonging by the functionality of the elements it contains, also plays a role of labeling in determining the borders and contents of sometimes similarities, sometimes differences with other societies. As a fundamental element of such system of values, religion has been frequently taken as a reference in forming the "perception of self" throughout the history of humanity/culture on individual, institutional, and social levels. Regarding travel books, religion as an element of cultural value system functions as a referential space in determining both the content and the borders of culturization. Beyond being a perception style, culture in general and religion in private function as a cognitive scheme and guide for travellers. Cultural value system and religious patterns represent the "hardest" points in

cultural crossings. In the travel books, trade and material products (namely the materialist culture) form the “soft” points of cultural crossing.

In the competitive political medium of the 13th century, formed on the basis of political, religious, and economic interest, religious diffusionism or religious culturization was seen by the Pope Innocent IV and the Louis IX, King of France, rather as a tool for reconciliation or peace in attenuating the Mongolian rule. We can say that, whether to this end, or due to the fact that it has a political context, W. von Rubruk's and P. Carpini's travel books have contributed in the function of creating a collective identity. The factor of religion is seen as the most basic forming factor of this identity by the King of France and the Pope, who assumed a defensive attitude against ever-expanding Mongolian invasion and sovereignty. In the travel books, as a cultural element, religion sociologically has both a uniting-solidarist social function and a differentiative function determining politic-cultural distance. That is to say, on one hand, religion has a uniting function which melts political differences within the Christian world, on the other hand, it functions as a border to determine the cultural distance between non-Christian societies. Following is another issue we would like to mention: For the King of France and the institution of papacy, Christianity also serves a political mission that ensures political diffusion and power. Against the danger seen from the East, Pope Innocent IV gathered the council of Spirituals in Lion, in 1245. The Council, besides its regular work, shall, on one side, consider remedies to resist Mongolians, and on the other side, shall seek for solutions to settle the danger for once and all, by

setting them against Muslims after converting them to the religion of the Messiah (Spuler, 1987).

Shamanism is one of the religious beliefs specified in the travel books heavily in terms of cultural interactions. Radlof (1976), who states that all northern Asia folks, which are from the western branches of Ural-Altai family of nations, in other words, all Tunguz, Mongol, and Turkic clans, were connected to Shamanism in the beginning, claims that Shamanism was pressed by Buddhism from east and by Christianity from west and north. Based on the Chinese sources, “principles of ancient Central Asian Shamanism were Celestial-God, sun, moon, earth, water, ancestors, and fire cults. Religious rites and ceremonies in Shamanism are practiced according to a certain hierarchy” (İnan, 2000, p.2). We see that Shamanism, the basic texture of the Central Asian steppe culture, passed through a period of interaction with various religions such as Islam, Christianity, Manichaeism, Buddhism, etc., especially in the Silk Road's medium suitable for trade and comfortable transportation. We can witness the findings of Radlof exactly in the travel books we discuss.

In the travel books we see that other Asian origin non-heavenly religions are areas of cultural contact besides heavenly religions. If viewed in general, “the fundamental peculiarity differentiating Shamanism from other religions is the belief that a tight connection exists between the long deceased ancestors of a living individual” (Radlof, 1976, p.232). When we examine the works (Rubruk, 2012; Carpini, 2000; Polo, 1979a, 1979b), we can say that travelers have observed in detail and wrote about folk beliefs on Shamanism. Another issue pursued by the travelers with interest is that folk beliefs based on

Shamanism are strongly present. We can claim that the rituals, which are called as superstitious beliefs in the perspective of travelers, or in European centered ethnocentric perspective, are in fact religious beliefs entailed by Shamanism. We can list the superstitious beliefs in the works relying on religious fundamentals as follows: General prohibitions such as not polluting water, not drinking pure water, not using knife in the dish from which food is consumed, not washing dishes from which food is consumed, catching and killing baby birds, crumbling two bones by rubbing them each other, playing snare drum during solar and lunar eclipse, waiting full moon or crescent moon to appear on the sky in order to reach a beneficial result before starting to any work, taking the same route on the way back used for going, hitting horses with rein, touching arrow with whip and standing on them, not standing on threshold, necessity to clean up the persons or things stroke by lightning and cleaning such persons or things by passing through two stones, not staying in the tent of a dying person, not entering into the tent of a deceased before being purified by the shaman, washing the worn clothes, not touching fire with knife may be given as examples of beliefs mentioned in the travel books.

One of the issues the travelers showed great interest and quoted in detail is the fortune-telling and sorcery. Travelers claim that fortune-tellers or sorcerers have a distinguished position in the Asian communities. Inconvenient conditions of the nature, as emphasized by Sezer (2011), would cause steppe people not to establish sufficient dominance over the powers of nature and to have an "animist" viewpoint. World is governed by souls foreign to themselves. They can only hope to have the assistance of individuals who can get in touch with such foreign

powers, which are fortune-tellers. Regarding this issue, in his travel book Rubruk (2012) states that Möngke Khan resorts to "bone fortune-telling" before taking any action and then decides accordingly. In the bone fortune-telling practice, first bones are burnt and then the fractures on the bones are interpreted. If there is a straight line on the bone, then the way is open, if there are curved lines or holes, then the way is closed. Rubruk states with particular attention that he had seen burnt bones near Möngke Khan. Chinese Menhun, who travelled in 1221, also stated before that Mongolians were telling fortune with scapula bones. Fortune-telling with bones is not widespread in Mongolian communities but among Kirghiz-Kazakh communities. İnan (2000) claims that such fortune-telling motif is encountered frequently in the Kirghiz-Kazakh folk literature. And Polo (1979a) states in his work that Kublai Khan has soothsayers and tells fortune by stars.

Polo tells about his following observation on the belief of Buddhist people in fortune-telling: "When a Buddhist is deceased, his relatives goes to a fortune-teller and have the fortune-teller to tell fortune about the deceased by looking at stars. The fortune-teller states when to burn the deceased Buddhist. Upon this, family of the deceased shroud the body with a procedure peculiar to them; they sort of mummify. Body of the deceased Buddhist stays at the most respected corner of the house sometimes for one month, sometimes for six months. Moreover, relatives set a table each day lavishly. And they set the table right next to the dead body. According to a belief, soul of the deceased eats those foods" (Polo, 1979a, p.62).

M. Polo using the language of "we" and thus comparing cultures of the visited communities with his own culture and making judgments

worth attention. Stating his bewilderment on the customs of fortune-telling and hosting male guests at home, another cultural contact point that surprises Polo is the monetary system used in trade. "Paper money is much lighter than our gold and silver coins. And it is easy to carry. There is a system here not practiced in our country. Who owns torn or worn money, applies to the treasurer of Kublai Khan. And here's another issue which I like very much; such procedures are not practiced in our country" (Polo, 1979a, p.125). Likewise, Buddhists bringing the cooked and presented to Buddha to home and eat with religious ceremonies and keeping the remaining bones in a large wooden chest or Buddhist Kamul folk granting the lady, who is the wife of the landlord to the visiting male guest and leaving the house for a few days are among the customs which attracts attention of Polo. "Kamul people are not ashamed of this, they do not consider this as immoral" (Polo, 1979a, pp.61-63). Based on the information given by M. Polo, folks are following such customs believing that God will give prosperity. Giving few more examples in his work on this issue, Polo clearly states his cultural distance when mentioning the followed customs: "Such kind of action is totally inappropriate for us. In our hometown such an action is considered as immoral." (Polo, 1979a, p.183).

One of the common features of the three travel books is their contribution to the formation of classic Orientalism. A typical indicator of this is that the travel notes that political agents and clergymen of the Christian church took or had someone taken during their missionary activities in Asia and in the Silk Road basin were opened to information sharing. According to Spuler, P. Carpini and W. Rubruk are priceless witnesses on lives and activities, religions and customs, state

organization and martial issues of Mongolians even today because these two individuals had the opportunity to stay in the palace for a long time during their visit of the sovereigns" (Spuler, 1987, p. 250). P. Carpini and W. von Rubruk's effort to present political-economic map and cultural life of Asian communities while they carry on their journeys with political-religious awareness brings this up clearly.

The period of Mongolian invasion, during which the travels were made, also marks a period where missionary works and orientalism intersect. Especially in the 13th century, upon Christian churches deciding to Christianize Muslims, both languages of Arabic and Muslim communities and Islamic sources were started to be read and examined this time not to defend and protect themselves and their religions but 'give pagan (Muslim) souls peace.' Lack of a criterion that would differentiate orientalism from missionary at that period may be accepted as a natural condition. The sole way of expanding the map of Christian world in the 13th century, or in other words, to bring the message of Jesus Christ to those societies ignorant of His message, was considered to indulge in missionary activities (Alpman, 2004).

Wealth of the Silk Road basin is caused by different cultures getting in touch with each other. Such dynamism entailed by the Mongolian invasion would cause cultural changes for a long time at an important part of Asia, Middle East, and Europe. Turkic States played a great role in the realization and becoming famous of the said cultural wealth of the Great Silk Road. How much importance was placed by Turks on this road is expressed as follows in an Uzbek proverb: 'There are two great roads in the universe: Milky Way in heavens and Silk Road on earth'. Roughly 20000 kilometer of the total length of the great Silk

Road, which was active down to 1800s, passed on the lands where Turkic communities have settled (Rzayev and İsayev, 2012, p.21). However, as the time goes by, after tolerances of Christianity was erased and trade roads are besieged through the changes made by Mongolians, Portuguese who were leaders in trade, choose naval routes to go to the Far East, they established trade centers, and opened the wealth of the continent to the westerners including themselves. They thus commenced the colonialism that continues for centuries. In the end, all European forces secured their shares through their military opportunities (Leicht, 2012).

Consequently, we can say that travels made by European individuals and political actors, who met with the cultural and economic wealth of Asian communities in general and Mongolian society in specific, through individual and mass contacts, turned out to have a political-strategic context in time. Asian geography shall be tried to be perceived as a "material-cultural object" for Europe during and after this period. Asian Silk Road basin, in terms of underground and ground resources and of consumer products, is gradually defined as the area of interest in the eyes of economy-politic. In these centuries yet reigns the effort to define and curiosity on East, on Asia. By the 19th century, such effort will be replaced with a hegemonic and insistent attitude.

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