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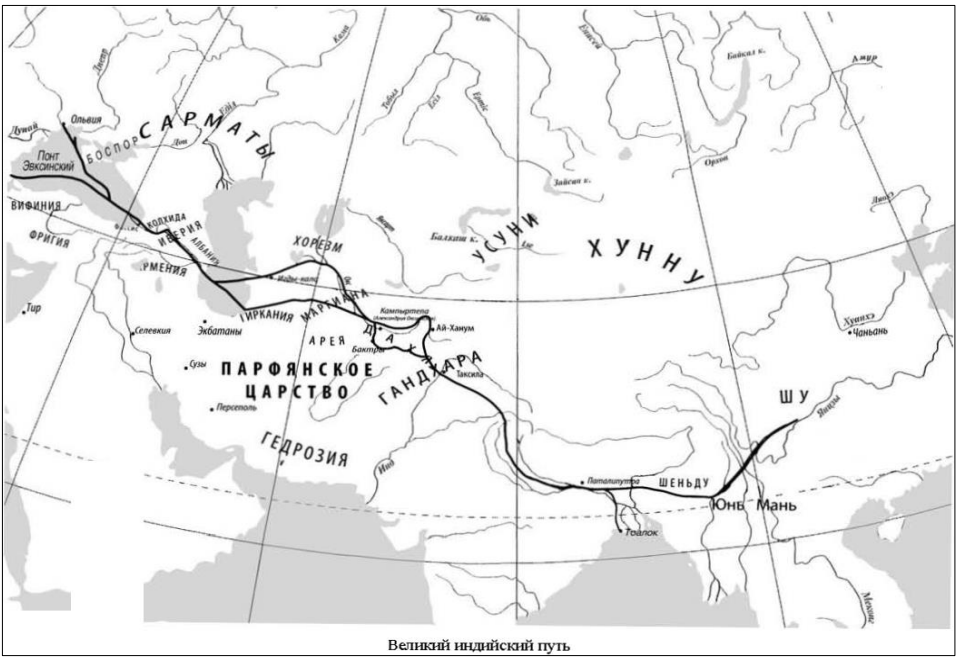
EDUARD V. RTVELADZE, *VELIKIĪ INDIĪSKIĪ PUT': IZ ISTORII VAZHNEĪSHIKH TORGOVYKH DOROG EVRAZII,* SANKT-PETERSBURG: NESTOR-ISTORIĪA 2012, 295 PAGES, 12 UNNUMBERED PAGES OF PLATES: ILLUSTRATIONS (SOME COLOR); 25 CM. ISBN 9785905987939 5905987939[1]

This book reconstructs the long-distant trade route by land and water of the Great Indian Road that extended from China to the Mediterranean by way of India and Central Asia, focusing primarily on the Chalcolithic and early Iron Age to the Sasanian conquest of the East by Shapur I (241–271 CE). Integral to this survey of the trade and commerce of luxurious items, Rtveladze examines the social significance that this exchange network brought to Central Asia as it is reflected primarily in material culture. He pays special attention to the site of Kampyrtepa, situated on the northern bank of the Amu Darya some 30 kilometers west of Termez and identified as Alexandria Oxiana (pp. 58, 97, 105, 109) and as the "Greek" crossing of the Oxos (Pandakheion) mentioned in Greek sources (pp. 93–104), which he has excavated for many years. There are a summary (pp. 290–291) and Contents (pp. 294–295) in English. Readers may also find it helpful to consult his overview in English: 'The Great Indian Road: India-Central Asia-Transcaucasia,' *Anabasis* 1 (2010), 80–96.

Six chapters comprise the work. The first presents a historiographic overview in two parts (pp. 14–28): an analysis of the Greek and Roman sources and a review of modern studies with an emphasis on archaeology as well as history. The next five chapters are demarcated by temporal, rather than spatial, divisions.

[1] Е.В. Ртвеладзе, *Великий индийский путь: из истории важнейших торговых дорог Евразии* (Санкт-Петербург: Нестор-История, 2012) = E.V. Rtveladze, *The Great Indian Road: from the History of the most Important Trade Routes of Eurasia* (Sankt-Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriīa 2012; suggested price 928 руб. = $25.90 = €18.65).

In the second chapter (pp. 29–50), he sets up the parameters of the road beginning in the prehistoric epoch (Map: The Great Indian Road, p. 9).



The Great Indian Road[2] originated in southeast China in the ancient provinces of Shu (modern Sichuan and Chongqing) and Qin (modern Gansu and Shaanxi), and made its way southward through Burma into India where it traversed the northern part of the subcontinent to Gandhara in the northwest. From here the road led to the Caspian Sea in three stages: from Gandhara to Baktria (northeastern Afghanistan) up to the Oxos (modern Amu Darya); by water one could sail the Oxos from Baktria to Khoresm on the Aral Sea or march overland from Baktria to the crossing of the Oxos and there take one of the roads that led to Margiana; a third variant involved sailing one of two routes to the Caspian Sea: from the Oxos one could take the Uzboi directly to the Caspian, or sail the Oxos to the Kelif Uzboi past Margiana (Merv oasis) and ultimately to the Caspian. Of these scenarios Rtveladze estimates that the latter was most preferable as it was the most expedient. The third segment comprised the route from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea by way Albania and along the Kuros River, followed by a four day portage on a wagon road through the Surami Pass to the fortress of Sarapana, where one could take the river Phasis (modern Rioni) to Colchis or to the city of

[2] The idea derives from a short article: Mukasheva 1972.

Phasis itself, located on the river of its namesake and was no more than a two or three day sea voyage to Amisos and Sinope on the Black Sea (e.g., 33–50, 63–74, 85–109, 126–131, 133–138).

Although much of the work concentrates on the exchange network from Central Asia to the Black Sea, a greater sense of balance could have been achieved with a discussion involving trade between China and India rather than how it is here summarily treated. An examination of the literary and archaeological sources reveal, simplistically put, that India exported to China a variety of items, like coral, pearls, glass, incense, and perfume, while the Chinese primarily sent silk, even though no specimen has ever been discovered.[3] A discussion of this sort would have served to place in context the appearance of bamboo sticks from Qin and cloth from Shu that Zhang Qian (pp. 123, 142, 157), the Chinese envoy from the Han court in the second century BCE, found in Baktria (Daxia) as imports from India (Shendu) (pp. 8. 10, cf. 256, 260). It would have complemented the discussion of objects that originated in India found in various excavations at Central Asian sites and would have reinforced the notion that Baktrian, Indian, and even Chinese merchants had long before Zhang Qian's arrival established a long distance exchange network. This would have provided the context for discussions about Indians and Indian objects found in Central Asia, like cowry shells (pp. 39–40, 195, 202), ivory (pp. 11–12, 110, 137, 156), and not least the Harappan mercantile site of Shortugai (pp. 33, 92) in northern Afghanistan that by c. 2000 BCE was trading lapis with Mesopotamia in the west and India to the south. The notion that Indian coins (pp. 108–109), the Kharoshthi script (pp. 111–117) as well as a range of miscellaneous items made of ivory (pp. 110–111), and the establishment of Buddhism (e.g., stupas and monasteries, especially pp. 202–225) would appear in Central Asia by the Hellenistic and Kushan era thus becomes a bit less surprising. The same can be said of items originating in the Mediterranean that are enumerated in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* of the mid-first century CE as part of a maritime network that are found in the Indian subcontinent as well as in Central Asia and China, such as papyri of possible Egyptian origin, Mediterranean corals, and Egyptian beads among others (pp. 234–242, 253–255).

A significant portion of the book is given over to discussing Indian influence as well as Indians themselves in Central Asia. Among the Indian commercial colonies that existed was Indikomardana/Indikomandana, "City of Indians," mentioned by Ptolemy (6.12) which Rtveladze is inclined to identify as Termez due to the numerous artifacts of Indian origin, including Buddhist monuments, found there as opposed to other sites that might well have also been trading posts, such as Airtam, Takht-i Sangin, Kampyrtepa, Ai Khanoum,

[3] Liu 1988, 71, cf. 65.

and Dal'verzintepa (pp. 188–202, 225–227). In many respects, these sites serve as forerunners for others that subsequently appeared in Turkmenistan and western Kazakhstan. Indeed by 1600 Mughal-Indian merchants were thriving in an Indian community at the Russian Caspian port city of Astrakhan from where they acted as intermediaries, selling Russian goods in Iran and Iranian commodities in Russia, much like their counterparts on the Absheron Peninsula in Azerbaijan.[4]

On page 170 there is a photograph of an oared "military transport boat floating on the Oxus" which was "imprinted on a bulla" dated at the end of the fourth to the beginning of the fifth century CE from Karatepa. Rtveladze uses this image as the basis of an analysis of the types of ships that might have navigated the Oxos and other rivers in Central Asia (pp. 171–181). In this case, he draws analogies to similar boats in Mesopotamia. He also notes that Sogdian merchants were known to have sailed various water ways in addition to trekking overland (pp. 181–185). Of course, if the prototype for this particular kind of construction is sought outside the region, one should not preclude the possibility that India, which has enjoyed a long and illustrious ship building tradition in its own right, might have been the source.[5] On the other hand, this lone specimen does not by itself prove that any vessel of this type plied the waterways of Central Asia. It is surprising that there is no discussion on the use of skin-floats, ship skin-floats, or coracles which were long popular throughout Central Asia. Indeed Central Asia may have even been the locus from where the skin boat was invented.[6] Alexander, for example, is known to have crossed the Oxos and Hydaspes using skin-floats; it is not excluded that he may have employed the other kinds of vessels as well (Arrian, *Anab*. 3.29.4; 5.9.3, 12.3; Curtius, 7.21.17).

A portion of the text is devoted to establishing a Roman presence in Central Asia in the wake of the popularity of the Great Indian Road (pp. 242–253). As proof he returns to a discussion of the possible existence of a Mithraeum in a cave at Kara-Kamar. In what concerns us here are two of the three inscriptions which are purportedly inscribed in Latin found at the site:

1. line 1 ROD
line 2 illegible
line 3 I M

[4] Dale 1994, 101–124, especially 59 n. 63, 108 n. 24, 111, and 128. On the other hand, Pliny (*NH* 6.19 [52]) was referenced in the Elizabethan period as evidence that a northeastern passage to China existed, so the intelligence report in part reads from "Jehan Scheyfee, the Imperial Ambassador in England," writing to the Bishop of Arras on 10 April 1553; see Wallis 1984, 455–456 *et passim*.

[5] E.g., Tripathi 2006.

[6] Johnstone 1988, 36–44.

2. line 1 PAN
line 2 G. REX
line 3 AP. LG

Unlike earlier publications, the book presents the find with clear illustrations and photographs. The argument that is here attempted is that they were written by a member of a lost Roman legion that had been defeated in a battle against the Parthians. The idea that the find is an intact Mithraeum was first advanced by Ustinova in 1990 and was swiftly rejected the following year by Braund, whose criticism remains unchallenged. Succinctly put, there is no recognizable Latin word, save REX, which might be an English proper name, and there is no evidence that the site was ever permanently inhabited.[7] In this respect, the argument has not yet advanced satisfactorily to accept the proposed identification of the site or the reading of the inscriptions. On the other hand, it would have been fascinating to have learned more about such discoveries as the small molded terracotta slab with a relief (c. 10 x 7 cm) depicting a soldier found at Kampyrtepa and dated to the 1st century BCE – 1st century CE pictured on p. 227. The importance of this object has been the subject of a great deal of discussion ever since it was found, particularly as it was identified by Pugachenkova as a Roman legionary of the first half of the second century CE.[8] Recently, however, Nikkonorov has called this identification into question. His analysis has led to the more sensible conclusion that the object portrays a soldier or officer of an elite infantry unit of the Greek-Baktrian army of the first half of the second century BCE.[9] In this respect, bibliographical references for each of the figures that appear in the book would have been most welcomed.

The work is resplendent with numerous photographs, drawings, and maps, including an insert of twelve colored plates. Many of the photos from Kampyrtepa, for example, appear for the first time in an accessible venue, having previously appeared in publications that are difficult to obtain, particularly those in the series *Materialy tokharistanskoĭ ekspeditsii*. Unfortunately, the book does suffer from a few, albeit, minor blemishes. Given the extensive number of maps and figures, it would have been beneficial to have provided the reader with a list detailing each, especially as they do not always form part of the discussion. On page 104, the city plan of Dura Europos is wrongly identified as Seleukeia on Tigris, while the provenance of the "Statue of a Parthian Prince" from Shami, Khuzestan (National Museum of Iran, Tehran) is mislabeled as found in Syria (p. 151). For those unfamiliar with terminology peculiar to Central Asian studies,

[7] Braund 1991, 189–190.
[8] Pugachenkova 1989a, 19–21; 1989b, 55–57; 1992, 64–67.
[9] Nikonorov 2013, 187–199.

it would have been useful to have explained them. For example, what is meant by the notion of a "Northern Baktria" especially as its meaning changed over time, or what sections make up the different parts of the upper, middle, and lower Amu Darya. There are two indicies: personal and ethnic names, and geographical ones. It would have been helpful had there also been a subject index. This in no way should act as a deterrent from the book. Both the arrangement and thematic composition render this a valuable work in how Rtveladze approaches the subject afresh. Anyone who has had occasion to pursue a topic relevant to the archaeology, art history, epigraphy, history, and numismatics of Central Asia doubtless will have made ample use of Rtveladze's fine scholarship.

This contribution is no exception, for it expands our knowledge of Central Asia and provides a foundation on which to assess its cultural remains. *The Great Indian Road* serves as a significant addition to the historiography of the field as well as to the study of the movement of goods, ideas, and peoples across Eurasia. The work expands our knowledge about the vital role that Central Asia played in this long distance exchange network.

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