



## **Symposium on Life and Environmental Sciences**

Hosted Online from Paris, France

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### **HISTORICAL ROUTES OF THE SILK ROAD IN GEORGIA AND THEIR TOURIST AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE**

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### **Introduction:**

The Silk Road was one of the most important trade and cultural systems in world history, connecting the East and the West for centuries. This route was not only a space for economic relations - it also became the main axis of mutual influence of cultures, religions, technologies and civilizations. The geographical location of Georgia, which includes the transit space of the Black Sea and the Caucasus, gave the country an important strategic function.

Since ancient times, trade routes passing through the territory of Georgia have been a link between Asia Minor, Iran, Central Asia and Europe. This circumstance led to the economic and cultural strengthening of Georgian cities - Tbilisi, Mtskheta, Kutaisi, Gori and Telavi. The existence of trade routes contributed to the development of urban centers, the expansion of crafts and trade, as well as cultural diversity.

In modern conditions, the historical heritage of the Silk Road is still an important resource. Historical routes are actively used in the direction of tourism development, which is one of the important factors in strengthening the regional economy. Cultural tourism is especially important, which is based on the popularization of historical monuments, ancient trading cities and traditional culture.

The aim of the paper is to discuss the significance of the historical routes of the Silk Road on the territory of Georgia and to assess their tourism and economic potential. The research process used the analysis of historical sources, modern scientific literature and tourism statistical data.

The formation of the Silk Road and the place of Georgia in the international trade system: The formation of the Silk Road dates back to the 2nd century BC, when trade relations from China to the West became more active. Initially, this route



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was associated with the export of Chinese silk, but over time it developed into a multi-profile economic system.

Georgia's location in the space connecting Europe and Asia gained special importance. The Caucasian corridor created favorable conditions for the movement of trade caravans. The road connecting the Caspian Sea region with the Black Sea coast passed through Eastern Georgia, while cargoes went to Byzantium and European markets through Western Georgia.

Ancient and medieval authors often pointed to the importance of trade routes existing on the territory of Georgia. Greek and Roman historians described the economic potential of Colchis and Iberia. Later, Arab and Persian travelers mentioned Georgian cities as important trading centers.

In the 11th–13th centuries, during the period of Georgia's political strengthening, trade routes underwent a special development. During the era of David the Builder and Queen Tamar, the country acquired the function of a regional economic center. Caravan routes developed, bridges, caravanserais, and markets were built. This process significantly increased the scale of international trade.

Historical routes and cultural heritage of Georgia: The Silk Road routes on the territory of Georgia were diverse. One of the main routes passed through Tbilisi. The city became a trade hub between the East and the West. Different ethnic and religious groups converged in Tbilisi, which determined the cultural diversity of the city.

Mtskheta, as the ancient capital, also played an important role. Roads coming from the north and south converged here. Archaeological materials confirm that trade and crafts were widely developed in the city.

Kutaisi, Vani and Phasis were important centers in western Georgia. The Black Sea coastal cities participated in international maritime trade. From here, goods were exported to European markets.



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The Kakheti region, especially Telavi and the Alaverdi region, was an important space for the exchange of wine and agricultural products. Trade relations with Iran and other regions of the Caucasus contributed to the strengthening of the local economy.

Along the historical roads, there are still many cultural heritage monuments - fortresses, monasteries, bridges and caravanserais. Among them, Uplistsikhe, Svetitskhoveli, Gelati, Alaverdi, Narikala and Gonio fortresses are of particular importance. These monuments are not only historical, but also represent a tourist resource.

The tourist importance of the Silk Road in modern Georgia: In the 21st century, cultural tourism has become one of the fastest growing directions in the world tourism industry. In this process, special importance is attached to historical routes and cultural heritage.

In Georgia, the theme of the Silk Road is actively used in planning tourist routes. Ancient cities, historical monasteries and traditional culture are especially attractive to tourists. Travel agencies create special routes that are connected to historical trade routes.

For example, the Tbilisi-Mtskheta-Gori-Kutaisi direction is considered one of the most popular cultural tourist routes. Tourists are interested in both historical monuments and Georgian cuisine, wine culture and folklore.

The development of wine tourism in Kakheti is directly related to historical trade traditions. Wine cellars and family tourist facilities operating in the region significantly improve the economic situation of the local population.

According to the National Tourism Administration, the number of visitors interested in cultural tourism has been increasing in recent years. The interest of tourists from European countries and the Asian region is particularly high.



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Economic impact and development prospects: The tourist use of historical routes has a significant impact on economic development. Tourism creates additional jobs, promotes the development of small and medium-sized businesses and increases economic activity in the regions.

The development of family hotels, traditional crafts, wine production and local catering facilities is especially important in the regions of Georgia. The increase in tourist flows on historical routes increases the income of the local population. The economic effect is noticeable in the regions of Kakheti, Imereti and Adjara. The scope of tourism-related services has expanded significantly. Investments in infrastructure have increased - in roads, hotels and tourist spaces.

Nevertheless, there are certain challenges. In a number of regions, problems remain with the malfunctioning of infrastructure, insufficient protection of historical monuments and lack of international promotion.

In the future, it is important to:

- Better study of historical routes;
- Strengthening the protection of cultural heritage;
- Promoting regional tourism;
- More active integration of Georgia into international tourism networks.

The impact of the Silk Road on the urban and social development of Georgia: The functioning of the Silk Road had a significant impact on the social and economic development of Georgian cities. The proximity of trade routes determined both the economic function of cities and their demographic and cultural characteristics. In medieval Georgia, cities were not only administrative centers - they became the most important centers of international trade, cultural relations, and craft production.

The development of Tbilisi was directly related to international trade movements. The city was one of the main distribution centers of trade routes coming from the



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East. Arab, Persian, Armenian and European trading groups actively operated in the city. The multi-ethnic environment contributed to the expansion of economic relations and the coexistence of various cultural traditions.

Historical sources indicate that there were specialized trade districts in Tbilisi, where silk, spices, metal products and agricultural products were sold. The economic strengthening of the city was also significantly reflected in the standard of living of the population. Craftsmanship activities developed - blacksmithing, ceramics, textile production and goldsmithing.

Kutaisi was an important trade center of Western Georgia. Its role especially increased after the strengthening of trade ties in the direction of the Black Sea. Connection with European markets contributed to the development of local production. There were trade warehouses, caravansaries and artisan unions in the city.

The development of trade routes also influenced the migration processes of the population. The population from different regions moved to cities due to economic opportunities. This contributed to the process of urbanization and the formation of social strata.

The function of caravans is particularly interesting. They were not only trading objects, but also spaces for cultural interaction. Merchants, travelers and diplomats from different countries gathered in caravans. This was how information, technological innovations and cultural traditions were spread.

Modern international projects and the role of Georgia in the New Silk Road system: In the 21st century, the idea of the Silk Road has acquired a new political and economic significance. Modern international projects aim to strengthen the transport and trade corridors connecting Europe and Asia. Georgia has a special geopolitical importance in this process.



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One of the important directions is the “Middle Corridor” project, which includes a transport network from China to Europe. Georgia plays an important transit function in this system. Railway, road and sea communications pass through the country's territory, connecting Asia and Europe.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway has significantly increased Georgia's transit capabilities. The project has contributed not only to economic relations, but also to the activation of tourist traffic. Modern infrastructure projects further strengthen the country's international importance.

Georgian ports — Poti and Batumi — play an important role in the Black Sea transport system. This space is one of the important connecting links in the economic relations between Europe and Asia.

The use of cultural heritage in modern economic processes is considered an important tourist resource. International organizations, including UNESCO, actively support the research and popularization of the historical heritage of the Silk Road.

Georgia's participation in international cultural and tourism projects increases the country's visibility. This process is also accompanied by significant economic results - increasing tourist flows, service sector revenues and investments.

Research results and analysis: Historical and modern materials analyzed during the research process demonstrate that the historical routes of the Silk Road were a multifaceted factor in the development of Georgia.

First of all, the importance of the country's strategic geographical location was confirmed. Georgia historically served as a mediator between the East and the West. It was this circumstance that determined the specifics of the country's economic and cultural development.

The research revealed that historical trade routes significantly contributed to:

- Economic strengthening of cities;



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- Development of crafts and trade;
  - Cultural relations;
  - Formation of a multi-ethnic environment.

At the modern stage, special importance is attached to the tourist use of historical heritage. Cultural tourism has become one of the important directions of economic development in Georgia. The example of those regions where historical routes have been transformed into a tourist product is particularly effective.

The study revealed that the development of wine tourism in the Kakheti region provides significant economic results. Local wineries, family hotels and ethnographic tours increase the income of the population and reduce economic migration.

Certain problems were also identified:

- A number of historical monuments require rehabilitation;
- Information infrastructure is insufficient in the regions;
- A unified tourist network of historical routes has not yet been fully formed.

Based on the study, it can be said that the integrated development of historical heritage and tourism is an important resource for the economic strengthening of Georgia.

Conclusion: The historical routes of the Silk Road are an important part of the historical development of Georgia. The geographical location of the country has determined its economic, political and cultural function in the international space for centuries.

The trade routes existing on the territory of Georgia contributed to the development of cities, cultural relations and economic growth. This heritage remains an important resource in the modern era.

Today, the historical routes of the Silk Road play an important role in the development of tourism and the regional economy. Cultural tourism, wine



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tourism and the popularization of historical routes have become one of the important directions of the country's economic development.

For Georgia, the preservation of historical heritage and its presentation at the international level are of particular importance, since it is precisely cultural diversity and historical experience that constitute one of the country's main competitive advantages.

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