

**STUDIES ON THE CIVILISATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF  
SILK ROADS AND SILK PRODUCTION IN IRAQ**

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Silk roads project is considered one of the important activities of the UNESCO to revive the close and deep-rooted relations, cultural exchange and dialogue among the peoples. Silk roads were, during the old and middle ages, among the important means to achieve such aims. Although these roads were passages for fighting and wars, they played a vital role in pushing human civilizations forward for man's benefit and happiness.

During the Babylonian and Akkadian eras, Iraq was a basic and extremely important civilizational center, and it also played the same role during the era of the Islamic Arab state in the middle ages, Iraq was a starting point, a passage and an axis for the silk roads extending from China and Japan to Europe across Asia. The Chinese knowledge for the secrets of textiles coincided with that of the Mesopotamia's inhabitants. Ur, Akkad, Nineveh and Assyria as well as Baghdad and Basrah were important centers of silk trade and production.

If we deal with silk production, routes and trade during the era of the Islamic Arab state, whose borders were in touch with China, we will find that Baghdad was the axis where silk roads met because it was the capital of the Islamic Arab state and an important center of silk production in the world. Textiles of excellent silk cloths were made in Baghdad. The Baghdad-made silk textile was known as Attabi, after the area of Attabiya. The Attabi spread throughout the world and that is why this name was used in Spanish language. Tabis word was used in Italian and French and the word Tabby was used in English. The Persian Iranians adopted the Attabi textile from the Iraqis and produced it in Isfahan. Among other Baghdadi areas which produced silk was Al-Tasturiyen, Al-Nassriya and the silk house.

In Berlin museum there is a piece of silk on which the name the caliph Haroon Al-Rashid was written and it is believed that it was one of his gifts to the emperor Charles Mann. In Mosul, the kind of silk, which was produced there and carried the name of "Mosulin", achieved a wide fame. Its name was derived from the city's name. The traveller Olivier said that the Mosulin was exported to Marsilles, Sham, Egypt and Persia as well as India, who

followed the methods of Masul in producing embroidered silk. The Italian travellers Marco Polo said that the citizens of Mosul produced and traded with silk clothes, which were embroidered with gold with various countries.

According to the British traveller Jackson (1768) the citizens of Mosul produced the silk and embroidered it with flowers.

In Basrah, the silk production widely spread as the Walis preferred to wear clothes made of the Basrah-made silk. The citizens of Kufa were proud, when addressing the citizens of Basrah, of their extremely good silk which was widely produced in Kufa as well as in Hira, Anbar and Numaniya.

Iraq represented the knot of the land and sea lanes of silk, whether those coming from China across central Asia and Iran's plateau to Baghdad towards Mosul, Sham, Mediterranean and then to Europe, or those routes coming from China and India across the Arah gulf to Basrah Baghdad and then to Europe.

Due to Bahdad's political position as the capital of the Islamic Arab state, it became the meeting point and the center of interest for the Arab and foreign travellers from both east and west.

The studies, being introduced here, were prepared by notable Iraqi academic researchers, who were known of their highly respected scientific positions and their wide knowledge in their field of specialization. Although these researches were written in a concentrated-method, they are clear and scientific and they really represent a prelude for the researches of the scientific conference of the silk roads due to be held in Iraq and will be organized by the Iraqi committee of Silk Road, which derived from the Iraqi national committee for sciences, culture and education.

We hope that we have presented to the UNESCO and the world's peoples details and information about the silk roads and silk production in Iraq that might have a hand in the advance and development of the UNESCO project towards the desired target.