

The Original Concept of the Silk Road and Richthofen's Humanistic Ideas

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The concept of the “Seidenstrassen” (Silk Road) was created by the German geographer F. von Richthofen (1833-1905) in 1877. The “Seidenstrassen” means communication between China and the Roman cultural area. To prove the route of dissemination of silk, Richthofen not only focused on geographical substantiality, based on the routes of the Chinese Zhang Qian and the Roman Ptolemy, but also on etymological, historical, and religious sources. In fact, his Silk Road concept has the trade of silk as well as the humanistic ideas of cultural exchange. It is worth noting that in his book *China*, Richthofen presented the Silk Road as a space-time concept that considers the length of space as well as the length of time by highlighting humanistic examples that came into modern times through the Sea Route. Later, the English term “Silk Road” appeared in 1938, the Japanese term “シルクロード” (sirukurodo) in 1939, and the Korean term “실크로드” (silcrodeu) in 1952.

Keywords: Seidenstrassen, Richthofen's Sea Route, Ptolemy, A. Herrmann, English term Silk Road

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Introduction

When we define a general concept of the Silk Road and its expandability, we call it Silkroadology (Silk Road studies).¹ In this paper, based on a theory of Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), which is a fundamental source for Silkroadology, I intend to search for its original meaning when the term “Seidenstrassen” (Silk Road) was coined in 1877, as well as to focus on investigations of Richthofen’s spirit in the concept.² This study will contribute to the analysis of layers of meaning which were included in the concept.

Richthofen’s “Seidenstrassen” means communication between China and the Roman cultural area.³ Escaping from the limit of the interpretation of the Silk Road as just a trade route, the Silk Road also had the role of a cultural exchange route from its beginnings. Richthofen was not merely a geographer but also a scholar with a humanistic vision.

Even in recent years, there have been only a few studies focusing entirely on this subject of Richthofen’s. Among them, there are no papers which analyzed Richthofen’s theory in depth with as broad a perspective as Daniel Waugh’s 2007 study.⁴ While interpreting and criticizing Richthofen’s major book *China*, Waugh made the valuable contribution of defining the humanistic value of the concept of the Silk Road and predicting its future direction.

In her 2012 book, Valerie Hansen emphasized the importance of literary sources which were discovered through excavation. In a half page explanation about Richthofen, Hansen introduced Richthofen as the author of the term “Silk Road” and his geographer’s aspect, and noted that Richthofen was given the task of designing railroads to be built from China to Germany. Fortunately, the Silk Road map from Richthofen’s original text was published in Hansen’s book for the first time.⁵ However, Hansen did not link Richthofen to the role of the Silk Road as a route of East-West cultural exchange.

In 2012, *Richthofen’s Sojourn in Japan* was published and drew attention in Japan.⁶ Richthofen visited Japan twice, for about five months between 1860 and 1861 and also in 1870. This travelogue was published in 1912 in Germany. It was translated into Japanese 100 years later.

¹ In 2001, Jeong Su-il defined the concept of “Silkroadology” and conducted substantial research on it, contributing to its development by expanding its concept. He explained definitively “Silkroadology as diachronic and dynamic humanities and sociology.” Jeong Su-il, *Silkroadology* (Seoul: Changbi Publishers, 2001), 21. Silkroadology was first proposed by Higuchi Takayasu of Japan in 1994. Research Center for Silk Roadology, ed., *Advocacy of Silk Roadology* (Tokyo: Shogakukan Publisher, 1994).

² F. von Richthofen, *China: Ergebnisse eigener Reisen und Darauf Gezügelter Studien* (Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer, 1877). Of the five volumes, the first volume uses “Seidenstrassen” for the first time and contains the core ideas of his theory. The following data are useful for understanding Richthofen’s spirit in the concept. Young-pil Kwon, *Silk Road’s Ethos* (Seoul: Hakyon Perblishers, 2017), 21-72.

³ From a regional point of view, Richthofen’s “Seidenstreassen” should be seen as extending from Oxus and Jaxarte to Syria in the west, not ending at Bactria and turning south to India, as A. Herrmann claimed. Albert Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien*, (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1910), 10.

⁴ Daniel C. Waugh, “Richthofen’s ‘Silk Roads’: Toward the Archaeology of a Concept,” *The Silk Road* 5, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 1-10. Waugh presented many sources about Richthofen in the bibliography of his article.

⁵ Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2-3.

⁶ F. von Richthofen, *Richthofen’s Sojourn in Japan*, trans. Naoki Kamimura (Fukuoka: Publication of Kyushu University, 2012).

In the preface to this travelogue, a Japanese scholar evaluated the book as “a writing of a fusion of intellect and sensibility, science, thought, and literature.”⁷ This evaluation is helpful in understanding Richthofen's characteristics. Previously, in 1942, Richthofen's voluminous work, *China*, was partially translated into Japanese. Earlier, in 1900, Shiratori Gurakichi in his study, criticized Richthofen while citing him.⁸

Peter Frankopan, in 2015, said that this sprawling web of connections was given a name, “Seidenstrassen,” by Richthofen which has stuck ever since. Also he said that despite the importance of these pathways' connections, it has been forgotten by mainstream history, because of what we have called “orientalism.”⁹ It seems that he connects the Silk Road to political and social aspects.

In recent years, in contrast to Richthofen's evaluation in the world academic sphere, I gave a presentation about Richthofen in a workshop of the Korean Association for Central Asian Studies in 2013¹⁰ and had an opportunity to newly understand his multiple aspects, notably his humanistic ideas.

Richthofen's Scholarship and Journeys of Exploration

A. von Humboldt (1769-1859) and C. Ritter (1779-1859) had a significant effect on Richthofen's study. In particular, Richthofen received, intact, from Humboldt a characteristic of traditional German geography, which emphasized the totality of the world and field research as positivism. We can consider this a philosophy of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), who handed his mantle to Humboldt, who in turn did crucial work on this characteristic. Specifically, as Herder's stance was to develop ethnology based on anthropology, foreign culture was an important subject of interest.¹¹ Also Humboldt's masterwork *Central Asia* (*L'Asie Centrale*, 1843) and Ritter's *Asia* (*Asien*, 1832) prepared the way for Richthofen.¹²

In 1860, when the German government formed a diplomatic mission to the Far East, the 27-year-old Richthofen, who had studied geography at the University of Berlin, participated

⁷ F. von Richthofen, *Richthofen's Sojourn in Japan*, i.

⁸ Shiratori Gurakichi, *Research for the History of Western Region* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1970), 17-18, 34, 529.

⁹ Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), xvi.

¹⁰ Young-pil Kwon, “Richthofen's Perspective of Asia” (Presentation at a workshop by the Korean Association of Central Asian Studies, January 25, 2013).

¹¹ John H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 345.

¹² Von Richthofen, *China*, Vol. I, 724-25. Richthofen highly praised Humboldt: “In *Central Asia*, which contains the wonderful value of Humboldt, the great spirit of Humboldt who always tried to grasp the totality of the phenomenon, not narrowing the scope through the limitations of what we saw and what we experienced, but put the whole continent into a single eye.” He also praised Ritter, stating, “Ritter's book *Asia* has a marvelous structure ... and is a completion of comprehensive geography in China.” In addition, Waugh states, “according to Professor Ulla Ehrensward's 2007 presentation entitled “Sven Hedin and Eurasia: Adventure, Knowledge, and Geopolitics,” Ritter's mapping technology was imitated by Richthofen and passed on to Hedin through him.” (Waugh, *Richthofen's Silk Roads*, 2).

in this mission as a geologist and secretary of the legation. This event became an initiation for his later research on geological features and geology in East Asia as well as in China and Central Asia.¹³ It became a crucial opportunity to create his masterwork.¹⁴

For 13 years from 1860 to 1872, he surveyed the geological features and environment of most parts of China. Moreover, by analyzing ancient Chinese history books, he developed a methodology to observe changes in the geographical environment. Differing from the usual Western perspective on China, he thought that it was necessary to understand the history of Chinese knowledge of their own land.¹⁵ For example, he used “Tribute of Yu” (Yü-kung, 禹貢) which is a section of *The Book of Documents* (Shujing, 書經). “Tribute of Yu” is an ancient Chinese geography book which recorded that Yu (禹), the progenitor of the Xia Dynasty (ca. 2205-1776 BC), controlled the great floods and cleared the land. Richthofen began to engage in this study in Shanghai in 1872. He did basic work in English, and after returning to Germany, he found that J. H. Plath (1821-1912) had already done some preliminary study. Although Richthofen could not use Chinese sources, through J. Legge’s (1815-1897) excellent translation,¹⁶ he focused on the task of comparing the contents revealed in these classics with the information he had found on his own.

“Central Asia” and the Silk Road

Ironically, Richthofen did not have an opportunity for an actual exploration of Central Asia. At the beginning of his exploration of China, from 1860 to 1861, his attempt to enter Central Asia (Xinjiang) was frustrated by Chinese riots. However, he became aware of the importance of Central Asia from Humboldt’s book and then he made his own interpretation differently from that of his predecessor. He defined Central Asia as follows:

First, it is an area where an ancient puddle without an outlet connects to the continent, in other words, the long-standing existence of this puddle is the most fully developed special phenomenon which was caused by the nature of having no outlet: from the Tibetan Plateau in the south to the Altai Mountains in the north and from the Pamir Watershed in the west to a watershed of an enormous Chinese river and Khingan Mountains in the east. Second, rivers around that area run into the sea and flow into the ocean-like parts of land such as the Caspian and Aral Seas. Third, mountain pass areas, where there were no outlets in the past, were either partially turned into water areas or vice versa. These areas still maintain a considerable degree of uniqueness in Central Asia and have not yet completely lost their characteristics. So these areas do not belong

¹³ F. von Richthofen, *China I: China and Central Asia*, trans. Mochizuki Katsumi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1942), 2.

¹⁴ Von Richthofen, *China I*.

¹⁵ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 275.

¹⁶ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena and Copious Indexes* (Hong Kong: At the Authors, 1865), quoted by Von Richthofen, *China I*, 284.

entirely to this area, nor do they belong to that area. Fourth, an island separated from the continent by a port without water.¹⁷

Expressing Central Asia in this way is a considerable literary rhetoric.

In summary, the eastern and western sections of Central Asia, as seen by Richthofen, cover a large area from the west of Pamir to the beginnings of the Khingan Mountains. Most of all, it is interesting that he described Central Asia as a region like an island separated from continents and acknowledged its cultural uniqueness.

It seems that during careful study of "Tribute of Yu," Richthofen understood the economic value and utility of silk in Chinese culture. In ancient China, local governments produced and administered silk, and silk products were collected as tribute by the central government.¹⁸ He also confirmed a route of Chinese silk through Central Asia to west Asia by examining Zhang Qian's route during the Han Dynasty. In Chinese history books such as *Shiji* and *The Book of Han*,¹⁹ it is recorded that Zhang Qian passed Dàwǎn (大宛, Fergana: Jaxartes = the upper region of the Syr Darya) and Dàyuèzhī (大月氏) to reach Dàxià (大夏, Bactria: Oxus = the upper region of the Amu Darya) and then returned home to report to the emperor. Richthofen understood the importance of Zhang Qian's explorations and his awareness of the existence of India (Juān dú (身毒) at that time) in Dàxià.²⁰

Richthofen suggested three routes for the caravans that moved west. Among them, two routes were based on Zhang Qian's journey to the west²¹ and used routes which started from Chang'an. The first route is the one that Chinese caravans used to cross the Terek Pass to Dàwǎn, and there, silk was handed over to transporters, who might have been Parthian (安息) merchants. Silk was supplied to Persia, Mesopotamia, and Syria. The second route was taken by a tribe called the Aorsi, living north of the Caspian Sea and near the mouth of the Volga River, who brought silk to Pontus (south of the Black Sea). The third route was used by the people of Dàxià, which went from Bactra, which is above Kabul, to India. The goods that went to India did not move west beyond Dàwǎn, but went directly to Oxus by way of the Pamir Pass. After reaching Dàwǎn beyond the Terek Pass, Zhang Qian began his return journey through the upper reaches of the river. It seems that he had already mastered the two routes because he went first from Dàwǎn to Dàyuèzhī, and then from there to Dàxià, and

¹⁷ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 6-8.

¹⁸ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 443.

¹⁹ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 449, footnote 1. Richthofen recalled that while reading through Sima Qian's *Shiji*, in particular the story of Zhang Qian in chapter 123, he thought this report highlighted the "truth as it is" (ungeschminkt). Richthofen read the story of Zhang Qian through the following translated version: M. Brosset, "Relation du pays de Tauwan, traduit du Chinois," *Nouveau Journal Asiatique* II (1828): 418-450.

²⁰ *Shiji*, Dàwǎn Biography 63.

²¹ According to Zhang Qian's biography in *The Book of Han*, and the Dàwǎn biography in *Shiji*, Zhang Qian left home in 139 BC and returned in 126 BC. His 13 year journey to the west followed this route: Cháng'ān (長安) → Lǒngxī (隴西) → Wǔwēi (武威) → Yīnshān (陰山) → Khara-khoto → Hami → Chēshī (車師) → Kucha → Kashgar → Dawan (大宛, Fergana) → Guishānchéng (貴山城) → Marakanda (Samarkand) → Yuèzhī (月氏) → Baktra → Yútián (于闐, Khotan) → Yūmí (于彌) → Wǔwēi (武威) → Yīnshān (陰山) → Tàiyuán (太原) → Cháng'ān. Nagasawa Kazutoshi, *Zhang Qian and Silk Road* (Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin Co. Ltd., 1984), 60.

to Yútián (于闐, Khotan). The first caravan in 114 BC also crossed the Pamir Pass in order to get directly to Parthia (Ansi), and it seems that because of this, Dàwǎn, which wanted to trade with China for a while, was not mentioned at all in the records of expeditions in Chinese history books. Richthofen thought that although in later years, the northern route was more accessible due to its convenience, the connectivity with Ki-pin (罽賓, Kephene, Kablistan) suggested that the southern route had not been neglected.²² It is the second route that draws our attention here. This is because we can understand that Richthofen had already emphasized the importance of the Steppe Route.²³

Ptolemy's Silk Road

Based on the historical fact that the road was officially opened to east-west traffic in the Former Han Dynasty, Richthofen confirmed the movement of Chinese silk to the West along this route. Moreover, he intended to find out how this historical fact was understood in the West through maps. Marinus of Tyre and Ptolemy (Ptolemaeus, active AD 125-151) are the ones who matched his perspective.

The geographer Ptolemy was able to use survey data organized by the Roman Empire. In addition, he used a large number of land and sea travel guides which have since been scattered and lost. Ptolemy was greatly influenced by the success of his predecessor Marinus.²⁴ Richthofen pointed out the achievement of Ptolemy in this way:

The source of Marinus' investigation of the provinces beyond Imaus (Pamir), a country belonging to the Chinese who bring the silk, namely the region Marinus called Serica, is information from the Macedonian merchant MAËS (Titianus), who sent middlemen there. We should be grateful to Marinus' successor, Ptolemy, for the very short content from Marinus' writings. Ptolemy, also a mathematician, supplemented this data in various ways. Knowledge of ancient geography reached its climax in Ptolemy. His geographical works were used for two centuries, but then fell into oblivion with the fall

²² Von Richthofen, *China I*, 463-64. Here, it seems that the year 114 BC meant when Zhang Qian was sent to Wusun as an envoy. Therefore, Richthofen's opinion, that Dàwǎn was not mentioned in the expedition records, needs to be reconsidered. This is because Zhang Qian sent assistant envoys to many countries including Dàwǎn. *Shiji*, Vol. 123, Dàwǎn Biography 63, Dà xià article.

²³ In a recent presentation, Gościwit Malinowski presented the fact that the Chinese silk brought by the Huns through the northern Steppe Route was carried to Tanais, a city in the Bosporan kingdom (Gościwit Malinowski, "Alexandria, Roma, Palmyra, Tanais and other Western Gateways of the Silk Road in Antiquity," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium Ancient Capitals on the Silk Road*, Gyeongju: World Capital Culture Research Foundation and Gyeongju University Silk Road Research Center, September 18-19, 2015). It can be inferred that this is related to the second route that Richthofen mentioned.

On the other hand, Masuda Hisao once said that finding the Steppe Route is the achievement of Japanese academics. Masuda Hisao, *Exchange between East and West*, (Tokyo: Shibundo, 1962), 3-4.

²⁴ Lelio Pagani, "Claudii Ptolemaei Cosmographia," in *Ptolemaei Cosmographia*, ed. Lelio Pagani, trans. Takeuchi Keiichi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1978), 3-5.

of the Roman Empire. Then in the 15th century, his writings were revived.²⁵

In his own way, Richthofen organized the city names of Ptolemy: Serica, Seres, Sera Metropolis, and Issedon. He first became aware of "Issedon" in Herodotus,²⁶ and said that this place should be used to specify the western part of the Tarim Basin. Richthofen also said that in later years when Strabo called the people living beyond Imamus (Pamir) Serer rather than their tribe name, he used this name to refer to "the people who brought silk" in that period. As the Chinese merchants had already played this role, Strabo used the wrong name for the indigenous tribe (Issedon).²⁷

J. B. B. d'Anville (1697-1782) did not think the places called "Seres" and "Serica," which Ptolemy refers to, were part of China, but included the northwestern part of Gansu (1768). J. de Guignes (1721-1800) revised this opinion in 1784 and considered "Serica" to be China. This conflicting claim eventually led to Humboldt and Ritter concluding that Ptolemy's Serica started from the east of Imaus (Pamir) and extended to the "unknown territory" (terra incognita) which is east of the Tarim Basin.²⁸

Auxakisch, Kasisch, and Emodus, the great mountains of the Serica area, which Ptolemy marked on his map, were renamed Tien-shan (天山), Kwen-lun (崑崙), and the Himalayas respectively by Richthofen.²⁹ He considered Issedon Serica, which is located in the northern part of the Kasisch Mountains, to be a key point of the silk trade and thought of it as Khotan.³⁰ Furthermore, he pointed out that the various cities of the trade route on Ptolemy's map – namely Kashgar, Turfan, Hami, Shāzhōu (Dunhuang), as well as Kantshou (甘州, Zhāngyē 張掖), Liángzhōu (涼州, and Wuwei 武威) – had been erroneously stated to be located on the southern shore of Tien-shan. He asserted that the circumstances in which the southern route of the Tarim Basin was utilized in the Han Dynasty had not not considered.³¹ In addition, he thought the metropolis of Sera to be Chang'an.³² The important cities of the Serica region (the cities on the Silk Road), which Ptolemy put forward and were summarized by Richthofen, are as follows: Damna, Piala, Asmiraca, Throana (敦煌), Issedon Serica (于闐), Aspakara, Dorsakhe, Paliana, Thagura, Atragana, Daxata, Orosana, Ottorokorraha, Solana, and Sera Metropolis (長安).³³

On Herrmann's map, most of these ancient cities are marked with today's place names,

²⁵ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 478.

²⁶ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 442.

²⁷ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 458.

²⁸ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 479-480 and footnote 1; Jean B. B. d'Anville, "Recherches Géographiques et Historiques sur la Sériouie des Anciens," *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* XXXII (1768): 573-603; Joseph de Guignes, "Idée Générale du Commerce et des Liaisons que les Chinois ont Eues avec les Nations Occidentales," *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* XLVI (1793): 560.

²⁹ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 484.

³⁰ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 458, 487-488.

³¹ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 483.

³² Von Richthofen, *China* I, 489; Waugh, *Richthofen's 'Silk Roads,'* 3-4.

³³ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 481.

and there are problems in one or two places.³⁴ However, his map allows us to understand the Silk Road and the geographical concept of Central Asia that second century Westerners had. It seems that this conclusion of Richthofen and his interpretation of Ptolemy were objectively evaluated by Herrmann to some extent. “Richthofen was able to grasp the significance of Ptolemy’s statements more deeply than anyone else, and to use it as the basis of his achievement with sharpness and clarity. He traced the origin of place names and Chinese records of traffic.”³⁵

The Emergence of Herrmann and Criticism of Richthofen

Once Richthofen first coined “Seidenstrassen,” Albert Herrmann was the first to write about this concept in German in 1910. Herrmann, by proving in his book *Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien* that the Silk Road actually reached Syria, revised Richthofen’s Silk Road theory on the basis of Chinese history books and Friedrich Hirth’s (1845-1927) theory, by which in fact, the Roman Empire in the Chinese history books of the Han period was Syria. According to Herrmann, Richthofen suggested that between 114 BC and 127 AD, China traded silk with the countries of Oxus and Jaxartes and from there the route was connected to India. However, Herrmann argued that the Silk Road went further west, in the Oxus region, and reached Syria.³⁶

In order to understand Herrmann’s argument, it is necessary to first examine the academic conditions of the time. First of all, Chinese history books such as *Shiji* and *The Book of Han* that Herrmann referred to had been published in a newer, more accurate translation with commentary by Édouard Chavannes (1865-1918).³⁷ In addition, the relationship between China and Central Asia had been intensively studied since the 1870s, and new theories by researchers such as Hirth had been presented. Finally, excavations and research on Central Asia by Sweden, Germany, and England started at the beginning of the 20th century. The

³⁴ A. Herrmann, “Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien” (PhD diss., Göttingen University, 1910). A book with the same title was published in the same year at Weidmannsche Buchhandlung (Berlin, 1910). This book was again published in a photoprint edition in Tientsin (天津) in 1941. Ada Takeo (織田武雄) explained the city names of Herrmann’s map as follows: Hormeterion (Kashgar, 疏勒), Auzacia (Aksu, 姑墨), Issedon Schyha (Kucha, 龜茲), Issedon Serica (Charklik, 鄯善), Daxata (Yumenguan, 玉門關), Dorsacha (Jiuquan, 酒泉), Thogara (Zhangye, 張掖), Sera metropolis (Wuwei, 武威), Soeta (Yarkand, 莎車), Chaurana (Khotan, 于闐), Damna (Karashar, 焉耆), Piala (Turfan, 交河), Asmiraea (Hami, 且彌), and Throana (Dunhuang, 敦煌). Takeo, “Ptolemaei Cosmographia Definition,” in *Ptolemaei Cosmographia*, ed. Lelio Pagani, trans. Takeuchi Keiichi (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1978), 17. In regard to Herrmann’s city names, Waugh pointed out “... somewhat illogically it seems, Sera Metropolis was not Chang’an, as Richthofen had it, but Wu-Wei, farther to the west.” Waugh, *Richthofen’s ‘Silk Roads,’* 6. Ada Takeo also considered Asmiraea to be Yi wú (伊吾) and said that others consider Sera metropolis to be Lánzhōu (蘭州). Ada Takeo, “Ptolemaei Cosmographia Definition.”

³⁵ Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 23-24.

³⁶ Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 10.

³⁷ In 1882, *The Book of Former Han* was translated by A. Wylie, and in 1907, *The Book of Later Han* was translated by E. Chavannes. The commentaries in Chavannes’ book have more value. Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 14.

relics excavated at this time became the basis for the study literature.³⁸

Under these conditions, relying on Hirth's work, Herrmann questioned Richthofen. He presented the following research results. First, he suggested that Dàqín (大秦) was Syria.³⁹ He also claimed that the majority of exported items from China to Dàqín (Syria) were silk and these silks were produced in northwest China during the reign of Emperor Chao-ti (昭帝, 86-73 BC).⁴⁰ Furthermore, he stated that various Syrian trade goods were imported into China.⁴¹ However, he qualified this by saying "Although both countries were highly interdependent, there were no direct national links."⁴² What we need to understand here is the fact that the passage through which the trade goods passed is verifiable all the way from China to Syria. Herrmann said that the route connecting the east and the west began at Yangguan Pass (陽關), the main gate of the Great Wall connecting Dunhuang and Lop-nor, and eventually reached Tyrus, the industrial city of Syria.⁴³

Herrmann and Richthofen not only differed from each other in terms of the extension of the passage, but also in terms of which path in Central Asia played the role of the main passage. Herrmann asserted that "in the first hundred years AD, the connections between the East and West had reached a high state of development (the caravans went the farthest west at the time of Pancho (班超)). The trade caravans did not use only the southern route, as Richthofen had assumed, and long before, they had used the northern route. This is because there were three important Chinese bases (Kucha, Turfan, and Hami) on the northern route. Probably the middle way (中道: from the Yangguan, through Loulan to Kucha) was the most favorable route. This is because it is the shortest route connecting east and west."⁴⁴

Herrmann also pointed out the improbability of Richthofen's claim that the southern route was mainly used. By pointing out that in 103 BC, the Han Dynasty general Lǐ Guǎnglǐ used the southern route and lost many of his troops from famine, he asserted that the conditions for caravan movement on the southern route were poor at the time.⁴⁵ Herrmann also criticized another of Richthofen's claims, that the west part of the northern route finally opened in the Later Han Dynasty.⁴⁶

³⁸ For example, two things were very helpful to Herrmann. First, A. Stein of England proved that, after explorations of Central Asia on two occasions (1900-01 and 1906-08), the old villages from the Han Dynasty and later were stops on roads that had been completely forgotten (Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 11). The second was Stein's map (1907/1909) of the ruins (Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 129).

³⁹ With all the relevant Chinese history books, Hirth found that Dàqín was Syria, with Antioch as its capital. F. Hirth, "Syrisch-Chinesische Beziehungen im Anfang unserer Zeitrechnung," in *Durch Syrien und Kleinasien*, ed. R. Oberhummer et al. (Berlin, 1899), 436ff, quoted by Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 16.

⁴⁰ F. Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1885), 226.

⁴¹ Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient*, 72ff, 228ff. This claim is based on the Dàqín (大秦 here means Syria) content of *A Brief History of Wei* (魏略).

⁴² Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 6-7.

⁴³ Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 17.

⁴⁴ Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 126-27, 8-9.

⁴⁵ Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 119.

⁴⁶ Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 120; Von Richthofen, *China* I, 468. As evidence for this, Herrmann presented the idea that Sima Qian wrote that after the Han had destroyed Lun-tai (輪台, near the east of Kucha) in the western part of the Han Dynasty region (104 BC), the route to the west became more stable.

Review of Richthofen's Seidenstrasse: The Necessity for a Re-Examination of Richthofen

By asserting that Richthofen's Silk Road, which was limited to Oxus, should be extended to Syria, Herrmann gained the support of world academia.⁴⁷ However, when we examine Richthofen's silk trade route more carefully, we discover a new fact. Richthofen presupposed that the oldest silk trade to "the west beyond Oxus" existed and he proved this proposition based on a variety of sources.

In the category of "silk trade," Richthofen carefully analyzed the transportation of silk, its economic feasibility, and its ripple effects.

"In the era of Herodotus(484-430/20 BC), Eastern and Western civilizations might not have known each other. However, there is no question that trade could have occurred at that time or perhaps had for long before that time. Perhaps there were many difficulties with trade at that time, and a lot of trade would have been hindered. Despite these difficulties, hand-to-hand-traded Chinese products reached the countries in Oxus and those at Jaxartes (currently the Syr Darya River), and further west from there. Among the trade goods, *the most expensive and the lightest to carry was silk*" (Italics mine).⁴⁸

As already mentioned, silk passed through Parthian middlemen and was supplied to Persia, Mesopotamia, and Syria.⁴⁹

Waugh criticized this idea in this way: "but he (Richthofen) portrays the earlier trade contacts as *episodic* (Italics mine) exchange from hand to hand, not as something organized and involving long distance travel and large quantities of goods."⁵⁰ However, in my opinion, it is clear that this route was a silk-carrying route, even if it was not for large-scale caravan transport. In addition, as already noted, Richthofen described three routes for trading Chinese silk: the Terek Pass route, the northern Caspian route, and the Bactria-India route. Moreover, by examining the conditions under which silk was produced in China and its spread to the West from linguistic, religious, and social perspectives, ie, humanistic methodologies, Richthofen presented a more in-depth picture of when silk could have gone to which part of the West.

First, he referred to the value of silk. "From the earliest times in China, silk could be obtained, and it was woven into a fabric. This is based on the fact that silk is referred to in the 'Tribute of Yu' as the inventory of tribute in nearly all provinces, and also in *The Rites of Zhou* (周禮) many times in reference to its production."⁵¹

Second, he investigated the linguistic diffusion of silk. The spread of the Chinese word

⁴⁷ For example, Nagasawa is one of the people who accepted Herrmann's assertion. Nagasawa Kazutosi, *Cultural History of Silk Road I* (Tokyo: Hakusuisha Co., 1983), 10-12.

⁴⁸ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 442-443.

⁴⁹ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 463.

⁵⁰ Waugh, *Die alten Seidenstrassen*, 4.

⁵¹ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 443 and footnote 1.

silk (絲) mirrors the range of the spread of silk. Therefore, there is a need to consider the pronunciation of silk in neighboring countries. “Chinese silk (絲) is pronounced as ʃʒʹ, ʃʃʃ, ʃʃʃ and sometimes with a suffix r attached, it becomes ʃʃʃr or ʃʃʃr. In such a word structure, silk became ʃʃʃr in Korean, ʃʃʃrbe in Manchurian, ʃʃʃrkek in Mongolian, and ʃʃʃr (ʃʃʃr) in Greek.”⁵² Of course, the important thing here is when the word silk was disseminated.

Third, he looked at references to silk in the Bible. In relation to language, we can search for the word silk in the Bible and check the period in which it occurs. Following De Guignes's assertion, Richthofen thought that the word “Sherikoth” in the book of Isaiah (19:9) meant silk, and he agreed with Pardessus that the word “Meschi” in the Book of Ezekiel (16:10,13) must be silk.⁵³ Although Richthofen was dubious about Pardessus's inclusion of silk in the trade with Tyrus in the book of Ezekiel,⁵⁴ what we need to pay attention to is that there is a positive opinion agreeing with Pardessus.⁵⁵

Fourth, he drew attention to the use of silk in ancient costumes. A famous example of costumes in ancient society is “Median costumes.” Richthofen thought that in the writings of ancient authors, much of the mention of medieval costumes showed the importance of the silk trade with the West. As evidence for this, he pointed out that Procopius quotes from *De Bello Gallico* of Gaius Julius Caesar that Median costumes were made of silk fabrics.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, according to Herodotus' *Histories*, the Medians were well-dressed and had always been praised by neighboring races, especially the neighboring Persians. It was true that the costume was likely to have been silk, but it was difficult to tell with certainty.⁵⁷

Finally, there was the question of when silk first became known in Greece. It is well known that when General Nerchos, in the time of Alexander the Great, crossed the Indus River in 327 BC and went into Punjab Province, he saw silk for the first time.⁵⁸ It is significant that in this passage, Richthofen emphasized that Nerchos was the first person among the

⁵² Von Richthofen, *China* I, 443 and footnote 2. Concerning language relationships, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that Richthofen referred to Henry Yule's book but Richthofen directly quoted De Guignes (1793) and Pardessus (1842).

⁵³ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 443, footnote 3, 4; Joseph de Guignes, “Idée du Commerce des Chinois et Nations Occidentales,” *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* XLVI (1793): 575; Pardessus, “Mémoires sur le Commerce de Soie Chez les Anciens,” *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* XV (1842). Henry Yule [*Cathay and the Way Thither* (1866), 20] and Terrien de Lacouperie [*Western Origin of the Early Chinese Civilization from 2,300 BC to 200 AD* (1894), 201] pointed out that it was an error for De Guignes to regard the Sherikoth in the Book of Isaiah as silk. On the other hand, as Pardessus said, the Hebrew word “meschi” in the Book of Ezekiel (16:10,13) is translated as silk in the *King James Bible* and Strong's *Hebrew* and St. Jerome's interpretation of this part was also silk. Frederic Charles Cook, ed., *The Holy Bible, According to the Authorized Version, A.D. 1611*, Vol. 6 (London: John Murray, 1876), 68.

⁵⁴ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 443, footnote 4.

⁵⁵ Cook, *The Holy Bible*. There are three places in the Bible where the word silk is mentioned, one of which is the Book of Ezekiel. He interprets Ezekiel (xxvii, 16): “Ezekiel, xxvii, 16, places silk among the merchandise brought to Tyre.”

⁵⁶ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 443, footnote No. 5.

⁵⁷ Herodotus, *Histories Apocryphes*, trans. Byong-hi Chun (Seoul: Sup Publication, 2009), I-135, III-84. Von Richthofen, *China* I, 443. Richthofen said that Herodotus himself had never mentioned the material of the garment.

⁵⁸ L. Boulnois, *La Route de la Soie*, trans. Nagasawa Kazutosi (Tokyo: Kawadeshobanshinsha, 1980), 12.

Greeks to use the word silk.⁵⁹ This is because the area where Chinese silk entered was indeed India and the person who recognized it as *seres* (silk) was a Greek. In other words, this suggests that silk entered Greece before Alexander the Great's eastern expedition. Based on humanities sources, Richthofen made the point that whether silk transportation was done directly by the Chinese or by brokers on the Silk Road, the Silk Road ended further west than Oxus in places such as Greece and Syria.

In conclusion, this is significantly different from what Herrmann argued. This theory of Richthofen might have been regarded as a hypothesis at the end of the 19th century, and it may have been difficult to obtain a positive evaluation from the more common position. However, when we bring the achievements of contemporary archeology into view, it is possible to see that in fact Chinese silk crossed into Europe as well as Central Asia in the 5th century BC.⁶⁰

Richthofen's "Sea Route"

Richthofen paid a little attention to the Sea Route,⁶¹ although it was not comparable to his writing about the land route. I would like to provide a brief history of maritime traffic following his writing.

Richthofen made an introductory comment that China first began trading with Ceylon in the Eastern Chin (317-418) period and further advanced to Hira on the Euphrates in the middle of the 5th century.⁶² The trade with Ceylon was especially active in the 5th century, and Chinese merchant ships presumably transported many envoys from Ceylon to China. This first case likely began after 405, followed by Fa Xian's visit to Ceylon during his journey (India pilgrimage 399-413).⁶³ It is assumed that other envoys also used the Sea Route. These envoys came to China in 428, 430, 435, 456, 515, 523, 527, and 531.⁶⁴

China was fascinated by Buddhist culture including Buddhist scriptures and the Buddhist sculptures in Ceylon, so further exchange was promoted.⁶⁵ In particular, the relationship

⁵⁹ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 443.

⁶⁰ Zhao Feng, *History of Chinese Silk Art* (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press, 2005), 10. Silk goods from the 5th century BC, excavated near Pazyryk in Altay, Stuttgart in Germany, and Xinjiang Urumqi, are very early examples of China's Silk Road trade with the West.

⁶¹ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 519, 567. He used the term "traffic to the sea; traffic by the sea" (Verkehr zur See; Verkehr auf dem Seeweg) instead of "Marine Silk Road."

⁶² Von Richthofen, *China I*, 520. Fujita Toyohachi thinks that the Chinese Marine Route started in the Former Han Dynasty. According to *The Book of Han* (Treatise on Geography), in the time of Emperor Wu, China traded with Kanchipuram (黃支國, current 康契普臘姆) which was in southern India. Fujita Toyohachi, "Record of Southwest Maritime Transportation in Former Han Dynasty," in *Studies of East-West Interaction History – Southern Sea part*, ed. Ikeuchi Hiroshi (Tokyo: Okaishoin, 1932), 124.

⁶³ Fa Xian arrived in Ceylon in 409 and left in 411. Liu Yingsheng, *Silk Road Culture. Sea Route Part* (Zhejiang: Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1996), 34.

⁶⁴ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 521.

⁶⁵ In addition, China imported cotton products, golden jewelry, and jewels and exported silk and celadon. *The Book of Sui* (隋書) is also a reference to the products of Ceylon (wood, ivory, camphor, sesame, black pepper,

between India and China was close at the time of Emperor Wu (reign 502-549) in the Liang Dynasty. He loved Buddhism and created exchanges with India. During his reign, the king of Ceylon declared Ceylon a vassal of China in 515. The various kingdoms on the mainland of India also sent envoys to China with expensive gifts. It seems that here Richthofen thought that the Sea Route was used for exchange between China and India.⁶⁶

While researching the Sea Route up to 600 AD, at its final stage, Richthofen described the impact of the nomadic people of Central Asia on Persia and China. Above all, the emergence of the Turks in the middle of the 6th century and the expansion of their forces put pressure on Persia, which resulted in an alliance between Persia and China.⁶⁷ Finally, in the expansion of nomadic forces in Central Asia in the late 6th century, Richthofen suggested that the expansion catalyzed a focus on the maritime trade of Persia.⁶⁸

At the beginning of the 7th century, China's maritime trade was concentrated on Arabia and Persia. In the early Tang period, China's maritime traffic reached its peak. In *The Book of Tang*, the routes of junks to Shiraf beyond Ceylon are described in detail. Prior to the establishment of Islam (the early 7th century), the maritime travels of Arabs and Persians moved only a little beyond Ceylon, and the Chinese had not only reached friendly arrangements with them by that time, but had also sailed up the Euphrates and anchored their trading ships in front of Shiraf and Hormuz. Afterwards, the Arabs destroyed the Sasan Dynasty in the Battle of Kadesia (636), and Khalif Omar dominated the coasts of Egypt, Arabia, and Persia. In 637, Omar dispatched a fleet from Oman ports to the Indus River and to the west coast of India and allowed Arab merchants occupy several commercial cities.⁶⁹

On the Arab side, trade with China peaked when the Arab Abashide government (750-1258) moved the capital to Baghdad on the Tigris in the early 8th century. The Arabs made commercial use of large areas of the countries between the Mediterranean and India. Baghdad's port was the Persian Siraf, and later Kisch Island, and then Hormuz Island, which was important until the end of the Middle Ages.⁷⁰

Chinese circumstances relating to the maritime trade of the 8th and 9th centuries were newly discovered in the 18th century. In 1718, Abbé Renaudot of France surprised academics

and myrrh). Von Richthofen, *China* I, 521.

⁶⁶ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 526.

⁶⁷ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 526. "The defense of the power of the Tukiui united the interests of the Persians with those of the Chinese. The former sent embassies in 555 and 567 to claim the help of the latter against the Tukiui, but had no success..." It is estimated that around 567, Turks and Persians had a war. Jaehun Jeong, *The History of Turk Nomadic Empire (552-745)* (Seoul: Sakyujul, 2016), 206-207. Also in the same year (the second year of the reign of Emperor Wu, from *The Book of Zhou*), China and Persia exchanged envoys. Prudence O. Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981), 22.

⁶⁸ In fact, many scholars have emphasized this point. Abbas Tashakori, "Iran in Chinese Dynastic Histories-A Study of Iran's Relations with China Prior to the Arab conquest," (Master's thesis, Australian National University, 1974), 24; Originally, H. Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither - Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* Vol. I (London: Hakluyt Society, 1915), 204-205.

⁶⁹ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 568.

⁷⁰ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 568.

by translating and publishing an Arabic manuscript.⁷¹ In the 9th century, the Arabs actively engaged in trade with the Chinese city of Khanfu (Canton). This fact was revealed in the manuscript.

Also in 1764, De Guignes found an Arabic manuscript in the Royal Library of France that had been overlooked, and Reinaud later translated and published it with annotations. The report was assembled in a way that presumed long-standing exchanges between Arabia and China. He divided it into two parts. The first part of the manuscript tells the story of the merchant Soleyman from 851, describing the Sea Route along the Indian coast to the Chinese commercial city of Khanfu, and the second part of the manuscript, made in 916 by the Arab Abu Saïd as a supplement to the previous one, containing Ibn Vahab's story of a journey from Khanfu to the Chinese capital.⁷²

However, according to Chinese sources, the actual content of the original book is about one and a half centuries earlier than the original publication date of 851. In the year 700, a market for foreigners was opened in Canton, and imperial staff were appointed to handle the procedures of immigration and customs. Exceptional and special goods began to be imported as trade grew. Many ships sailed to Guangdong (Canton). However, a century later, in 795, the Chinese annals record: "Many foreigners left the city. Maybe tariffs are rising, and there is not enough profit to be seen."⁷³

Among the contents of the translations are some of the cultural aspects of China and Korea that Richthofen was more interested in:

... the lack of cleanliness, the education of the population as everyone learns to write and draw. Salt and tea are controlled by government monopolies. People mourn for the dead for three years. Ceramics are produced. The interest of the Arabs in the Silla Dynasty is great. Even Chinese people say that everything is developed in Silla, and the air is clean there.⁷⁴

In addition, Richthofen noted that Khradadbeh wrote that saddles were included in Silla's exports in *Book of Streets and Provinces*, and Richthofen corrected his confusing Silla with Japan. He mentioned that ceramics were also made in Japan for the first time in the 16th century. He added that the technology was learned long ago in Korea.⁷⁵ Here too, we can see his insights and interest in the humanities.

Richthofen's understanding of the Sea Route is somewhat limited. He made no

⁷¹ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 569, footnote 1, [Abbe Renaudot, *Anciennes Relations des Indes et de la Chine. De Deux Voyageurs Mahométans qui y Allèrent dans le Neuvieme Siecle* (Paris, 1718); Another English translation in John Pinkerton, ed., *A General Collection of the Best and Most interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World* (London, 1808-14), XII, 179-230. (Tashakori, "Iran in Chinese Dynastic Histories," 143)].

⁷² Von Richthofen, *China I*, 568, footnote 1; J. T. Reinaud, *Relations des Voyages Faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et la Chine dans le IXe Siècle de l'Ère Chrétienne* (Paris, 1945), XLI ff.

⁷³ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 569-570.

⁷⁴ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 570-571.

⁷⁵ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 575-576, 576, footnote 1.

comments about China's activities after the 10th century in his maritime history, and he further asserted that the "Ming Dynasty did not have the power to go beyond the limits of China."⁷⁶ He seems unaware of the existence and achievements of the famous naval admiral Zheng He (鄭和, 1371-1424) at the time of Emperor Yong-le (reign 1402-1424) in the Ming Dynasty. Zheng He's western voyages, which started in 1405, reached Africa through the Indian Ocean. His expeditions, in seven voyages, ended in 1433.⁷⁷ This was about a century ahead of Columbus' four voyages (1492-1504).

In the later part of Richthofen's "Sea Route," he presented the situation of "western powers occupying the east." He understood that Columbus (1451-1506) kindled the drive to pioneer the east-west sea route, and that many European cultural figures worked actively in East Asia. He also mentioned that "the people working on the stage were European merchants, missionaries, and envoys," and they used marine transport (Schiffahrtverkehr). This statement also includes European scholars who came to China in the mid-nineteenth century.⁷⁸

Richthofen's Humanistic Ideas

Richthofen's basic perspective – Chinese geography should be understood through Chinese classical geography – can be regarded as a philosophical and humanistic attitude. The process by which religion was spread via the Silk Road can be a subject of geography. However, Richthofen was more interested in the humanistic ripple effect of the spreading of religions. For example, the Chinese monk Faxian's 5th century book *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms* (佛國記) was translated by Rémusat in 1836. By referring to this book, Richthofen explained not only religious history such as the persecution of Buddhism, but also characteristics of culture and art. For example, Richthofen expressed interest in art by paying attention to Faxian. He described Faxian's trip to Yü-tien (于闐) in this way:

There, Buddhism is in full bloom, and there are three thousand believers in one temple. The fact that the monks were very lonely at the time of the meal was a source of wonder for the Chinese traveler, and Faxian stayed there for three months in order to participate in the Buddhist images carrying ceremony. He also carefully described the customs there.⁷⁹

Faxian left for India in 399 AD and returned in 414. He studied at the birthplace of Buddhism, traveled to 30 countries, and visited all the holy sites. Richthofen pointed out that Faxian was

⁷⁶ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 645-646.

⁷⁷ One of his subordinates, Ma Huan (馬歡) participated in this journey and his record of these expeditions, *Ying-jai Sheng-lan* (瀛涯勝覽), is considered to be an invaluable resource for Chinese maritime history. Ma Huan, *Ying-jai Sheng-lan. The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, trans. J. V. G. Mille (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1977).

⁷⁸ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 694-726.

⁷⁹ Von Richthofen, *China I*, 516.

very much impressed with the morality, diligence, and strict manners of Buddhists, which seems to reveal Richthofen's own point of view.

Richthofen presented somewhat reliable sources to find "the first Christianity to enter China."⁸⁰ In the 6th century, the evidence that missionaries entered the countries beyond the Pamir Mountains became more certain through the record of smuggled silkworm eggs into the Byzantine Empire.⁸¹ With considerable plausibility, Richthofen recognized Khotan as the place "Serinda." The reason that Richthofen thought the name "Serinda" meant Hotan was because Hotan was the only country to do sericulture outside of China from early times and was a major city of Indian religions in the early 6th century, and many things were imported from India, including the Indian alphabet, language, manners, and customs.⁸² According to Richthofen's assertion, Khotan was full of the Buddhist culture of India, but there was enough room for Christians to enter and work. In addition, he reported about the Nestorian sect, which entered Tang Dynasty China in 635, based on *The Nestorian Tablet of Se-gan Foo*.⁸³

In many parts of his book, Richthofen highlighted the spirit of the times in which many historians and religious people were active. Richthofen presupposed that in the 14th century, people who were motivated to travel were given liberal opportunities to do so and were more satisfied than before. From this perspective, he pointed out three people: Rashid-Eddin (1247-1318), Abulfeda (1273-1332), and Ibn Batuta (1304-1377). He suggested that "Rashid-Eddin, a Persian, lacked a geographical point of view, but in other respects possessed a very deep and precise understanding of China in particular." What particularly attracted attention is that he added details of how Rashid-Eddin learned about Korea (Goryeo Dynasty).⁸⁴

In addition, Richthofen noted that religious freedom was fully guaranteed in Genghis Khan's Mongol era. He also introduced the achievements of Bishop Johann V. Montecorvino (1247-1328), who worked in the Chinese capital, as well as the 1326 letter by the suffragan bishop Andreas of Perugia, which stated, "We are guaranteed full freedom and can preach without difficulty."⁸⁵

In contrast to the Spanish missionary Francesco Xavier (1506-1552), who spent three years in Japan from 1548 to 1551 and was dedicated to missionary work, Mateo Ricci (1552-1610) arrived in Macao in 1582 and moved to Beijing in 1601 and remained in China for nearly thirty years until his death in 1610, serving as a scholar disseminating European knowledge as well as a missionary. Richthofen explained these missionary functions:

When a priest is not too focused on his job, he studies the character of the people, their morals, and religious habits. And when they learn the language of the country, they can learn about the country's literature, history, scholarship, and government. And they take

⁸⁰ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 548.

⁸¹ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 528-29; Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, CLIX ff.

⁸² Von Richthofen, *China* I, 550.

⁸³ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 554.

⁸⁴ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 593, 594 footnote 1, 595.

⁸⁵ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 582, 616.

advantage of chances to learn the geography of the country by travel. No country in the world has the capacity to fulfill its mission beyond the bounds of its professions and to create a wide range of disciplines as much as Christian missionary work in China. Without the comprehensive and fundamental activities of the Jesuits in the 17th and 18th centuries, even now China may have remained "terra incognita" except for the coast.⁸⁶

In this way, Richthofen emphasized the importance of the spirit of the humanities.

According to S. Bushell, "King Yu of the Xia Dynasty made nine-legged vessels by casting metal material from nine states, and these ritual vessels were decorated with maps of local provinces and drawings depicting natural products."⁸⁷ As in this information, Richthofen analyzed ancient bronze vessels in his book.⁸⁸ Moreover, an assessment that he was interested in art also appeared in a memorial tribute in 1905 after his death. The editor of the Japanese art magazine *Kokka* even referred to Richthofen as an art specialist.⁸⁹

"Seidenstrassen" and "Silk Road"

In 1886, Richthofen founded a geography lecturer post at the University of Berlin to build a foundation for continuing studies. In this way, he helped the ancient silk trade become a subject of interest in geography. In the context of the late 19th century German academic geography world, a doctoral dissertation was written on the subject of the silk economy. It was titled "The Development of the Silk Trade and Silk Industry from Ancient Times to the early Middle Ages" and submitted by Tetsutaro Yoshida of Japan.⁹⁰ He constructed his theory based on the ideas of F. Hirth (1845-1927) and G. Semper (1803-1879), but he was primarily influenced by Richthofen's theory.⁹¹ Despite this, it is quite unusual that he did not use the term "Seidenstrassen" in his paper. However, in his doctoral dissertation in 1910, Herrmann revived this term.

Surprisingly, Hedin, Richthofen's direct disciple, did not actively use his mentor's term. Hedin finally used this concept directly in his 1936 book, which discusses excavations in

⁸⁶ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 653.

⁸⁷ Stephen W. Bushell, *Chinese Art*, Vol. I (London: Wyman and Sons, 1904), 71.

⁸⁸ Von Richthofen, *China* I, 368-373. Richthofen explained the ancient bronze vessel in the chapter entitled "Oldest Cartographic Representations" (Älteste Kartographische Darstellungen).

⁸⁹ "Richthofen's specialty is geography, but it is no exaggeration to say that modern Chinese studies in Germany had its doors opened by him. In his book, *China*, he wrote a little about Chinese art, especially the ancient bronze vessels. It is not without errors, and it does not meet current standards. However, considering that Richthofen's work inspired Hirth and Chinese art researchers, it can be thought that Richthofen's interest in oriental art may have influenced Hirth." "Mr. Richthofen Pass Away," *Kokka* 16, no. 186 (1905): 145.

⁹⁰ T. Yoshida, "Entwicklung des Seidenhandels und der Seidenindustrie vom Altertums bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters" (PhD diss., Heidelberg University, 1894).

⁹¹ In Yoshida's article, there are 301 footnotes, including 33 for Richthofen, 19 for Hirth, and 7 for Semper. This can be seen as evidence of the influence of Richthofen.

Central Asia, but only in its Swedish version of “Sidenvägen” (Silk Road). After 1938, the term was used in English and gradually gained more common usage.⁹²

Since then, “Silk Road” in English has become an object of attention in world academia. The first example of the use of the concept of “sirukurodo” (シルクロード) in Japanese was in 1939.⁹³ In fact, academics in Japan were interested in the study of the Silk Road from the point of view of East-West cultural exchange before World War II and became more active afterwards.⁹⁴ In Korea, the Korean term “silkkrodeu” (실크로드) appeared for the first time in a world cultural history book written by the history scholar Cho Jwa-ho in 1952.⁹⁵ In the 1980s, Korean Silkroadology was established as a field of study and became more active.

Conclusion

Richthofen’s geography originated in economic geography, but his creation of the Silk Road concept is primarily based on the spirit of the humanities. Herrmann, who questioned Richthofen’s theory, focused only on the point of material exchange, overlooking Richthofen’s other merits. It is worth noting that in his book *China*, Richthofen presented the Silk Road as a space-time concept that considers the length of space as well as the length of time by highlighting humanistic examples that came into modern times through the Sea Route.

The fact that Richthofen considered the importance of temporal extension can be interpreted as setting the stage for the Silk Road to be discussed even in our time. It may be considered that the practicality and expandability of Richthofen’s Silk Road concept had already begun in the establishment of a cultural infrastructure based on silk. Although the spirit of the humanities embedded in Richthofen’s Silk Road concept has not received much attention in world academia, with the distorted attribute of a romantic fantasy surrounding the Silk Road being pervasive, the orientation of research in this field is brightened by the fact that positive evaluations for Richthofen are alive.⁹⁶

⁹² Waugh, *Richthofen’s ‘Silk Roads,’* 7; Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History*, 8. According to Young-pil Kwon’s investigation, in 1938, Hedin wrote an article in English for the *The Rotarian* with the title “Silk Road.” Sven Hedin, “Rediscovering the Silk Road,” *The Rotarian* LII, no. 2 (February 1938): 12-16; Willy Hess, *Die Werke Sven Hedins* (Stockholm: Statens Ethnografiska Museum, 1962), 102.

⁹³ Adachi Kiroku, “Über die Altchinesische ‘Seidenstrasse,’” *Research for History Studies* 9, no. 9 (October 1939): 36-46.

⁹⁴ Representative examples include Matsuda Hisao, *Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West* (Tokyo: Shibundo, 1962).

⁹⁵ Cho Jwa-ho, *World Cultural History* (Seoul: Jeilmunwha-sa Publication, 1952), 77. Cho Jwa-ho (曹佐鎬), who graduated from Tokyo University in 1943, seems to have been influenced in his views of history by the school of Tokyo University led by Shiratori Gurakich (白鳥 庫吉), Haneda Toru (羽田 亨), and Matsuda Hisao (松田 壽男). In fact, Silk Road studies in Korea originated from a paper by Chung Se Kim (金重世), who received his PhD from Leipzig University in 1926. Chung Se Kim, “Ein Chinesisches Fragment des Prätimokṣa aus Turfan,” *Asia Major* 2 (1925): 597-608.

⁹⁶ Waugh gave a positive evaluation of Richthofen even though he sharply criticized Richthofen’s Silk Road concept: “I would argue that we can benefit from reading him [Richthofen] for his breadth and depth of understanding of the interaction between man and the environment and for his appreciation of the significant role of communication in human exchange across the centuries and in various parts of the globe.” Waugh, *Richthofen’s ‘Silk Roads,’* 7.

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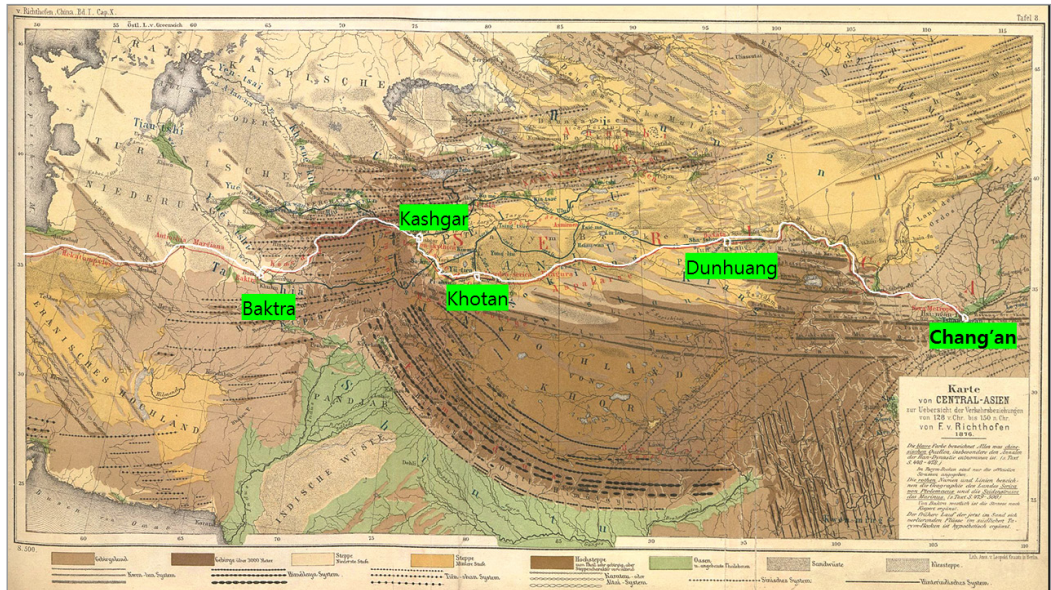


Fig. 1) White line: Richthofen's Seidenstrassen, based on Ptolemy's map

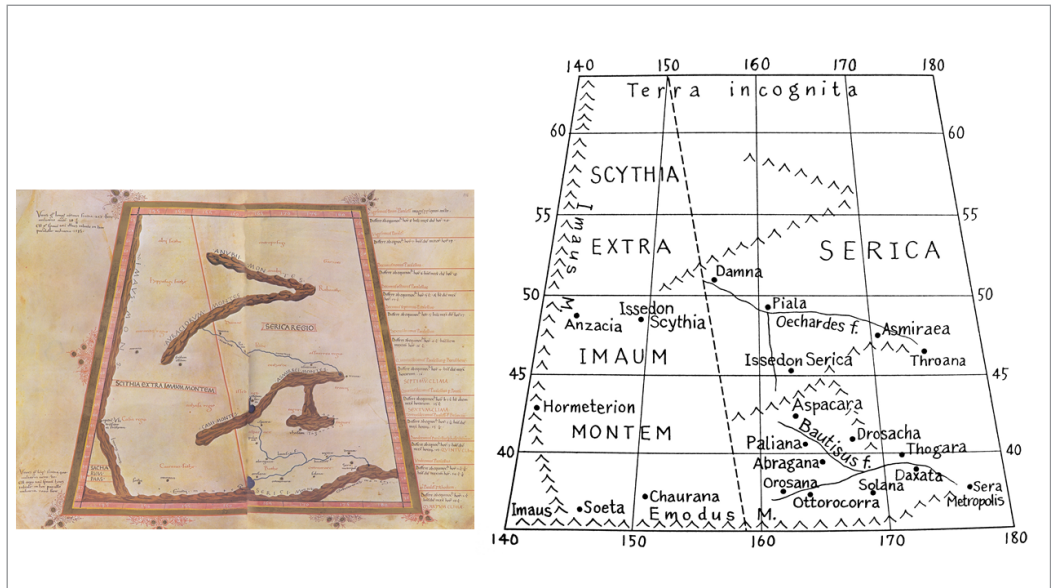


Fig. 2) Ptolemy's map: North East Part of Asia

Fig. 3) Ada Takeo's map

