

FROM CHANG'AN TO ISTANBUL: SPATIAL PATTERNS AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSMISSION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ALONG THE ASIAN SILK ROAD

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Abstract

The Silk Road functioned as both a trade network and a living corridor for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) across Eurasia. Based on UNESCO ICH Lists data as of December 2025, this study systematically examines 148 ICH elements inscribed by seven countries and regions along the Asian Silk Road from Chang'an (Xi'an) to Istanbul: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Türkiye. Three major findings emerge. First, ICH distribution exhibits a “three-gradient” structure, with China (45 items) and Türkiye (32 items) forming two peaks and Central Asia serving as a cultural pivot, revealing an “ICH corridor effect.” Second, cross-border sharing is prominent, with festivals (Nowruz), epics (Nasreddin Hodja), music (Shashmaqom), and craftsmanship (sericulture and yurt making) jointly inscribed by multiple countries, forming a transnational cultural community. Third, a systematic comparison of the Muqam/Makam family reveals a functional transformation from secular festive music in Xinjiang through courtly art in Central Asia to Sufi ritual music in Türkiye, demonstrating a law of “functional sacralization” with increasing distance from the eastern origin. By integrating spatial analysis and cross-cultural comparison, this study contributes to both the theoretical understanding of ICH transmission along cultural routes and the practical safeguarding of living heritage.

Keywords

Silk Road; Intangible Cultural Heritage; UNESCO; Corridor Effect; Muqam; Cross-Cultural Comparison

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background



Site of Danfeng Gate, Xi'an

The Silk Road, stretching over 6,000 kilometers from East Asia to the Mediterranean, stands as one of the most significant networks of cultural exchange in human history. Beyond the movement of goods, it served as a living corridor for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH)—the practices, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003) [1]. ICH elements such as the Uyghur Muqam (China), Shashmaqom (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), the Mevlevi Sema ceremony (Türkiye), epic traditions (Manas and Dede Qorqud), and silk craftsmanship embody the living cultural memory of the Silk Road.



Jiayu Pass

cultural history of the Silk Road, tracing the rise and fall of empires, the transmission of religions, and the flow of artistic traditions across Eurasia. Wu emphasizes that the Silk Road was not merely a trade route but a civilizational corridor within which cultures mutually shaped one another over two millennia.

From a broader civilizational perspective, Yang (2021) [4] examined the interconnections between ancient civilizations and the Silk Road, arguing that this network of exchange routes facilitated one of the most significant cross-cultural encounters in pre-modern history. Yang's edited volume brings together contributions from multiple disciplines—including archaeology, history, and art history—to demonstrate how the Silk Road served as a bridge between the Mesopotamian, Indus Valley, Chinese, and Mediterranean civilizations.

Focusing specifically on the Chinese section of the Silk Road, Zhu, Liu, and Xiang (2018) [5] provided a systematic overview of ICH elements along the route, documenting traditional performing arts, craftsmanship, festivals, and oral traditions. Their work serves as an essential reference for understanding the diversity and distribution of ICH within China's Silk Road regions. Complementing this, Rong (2022) [6] examined the Silk Road as a conduit for East-West cultural exchange, with particular attention to the transmission of religious ideas, artistic motifs, and literary traditions. Rong's research demonstrates how Buddhist art, Manichaean painting, and Nestorian Christianity traveled along the same routes that carried silk and spices, creating a shared visual and intellectual culture across Asia. This perspective is essential for understanding how intangible heritage—including musical systems, epic poetry, and craft techniques—diffused across political and cultural boundaries.

The study of heritage along the Silk Road also benefits from research in world heritage and tourism geography. Sun (2018) [7] examined world tourism geography, offering analytical frameworks for understanding heritage tourism dynamics across different regions. Building on this, Sun and Sun (2020) [8] provided a comprehensive overview of world heritage sites, including those along the Silk Road, with detailed documentation of their historical and cultural significance. These works provide essential background for the spatial analysis and tourism implications discussed in this study. Moreover, Sun and Sun (2026) [9] recently reviewed the current status, hot topics, challenges, and future prospects of ICH research in China, highlighting the growing attention to cross-border and comparative studies—a trend that this study directly advances.

Central Asia has long been recognized as the pivotal hub of the Silk Road, where diverse civilizations met and exchanged goods, ideas, and artistic practices. According to Lan (2018) [2], the history of Central Asia is characterized by the dynamic interaction of nomadic and settled peoples, with oasis cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva serving as critical nodes of cultural transmission. Lan's six-volume work systematically examines Central Asian historical evolution from primitive culture to the mid-18th century, covering ethnic migration, political transformation, and civilizational interaction along the Silk Road corridors. More recently, Wu (2023) [3] provided a comprehensive three-volume



Xinjiang Section of the Silk Road



Central Asian Section of the Silk Road



Central State Museum of Kazakhstan

While World Heritage sites along the Silk Road have received extensive scholarly attention, the intangible heritage that traveled these routes remains relatively underexplored. Previous studies have primarily

focused on individual heritage elements or single-country contexts. For instance, Zhou (2007) [10] examined the transmission mechanisms and challenges facing the Uyghur Muqam in Xinjiang, while Li (2005) [11] provided a century-long review of Silk Road studies, highlighting the need for more systematic cross-border research. In the context of accelerating globalization and modernization, ICH faces growing threats, including disrupted transmission, aging inheritors, declining youth participation, and the risk of decontextualization through tourism commercialization (Lenzerini, 2011; Lixinski, 2020) [12,13]. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has provided an



Amir Timur Square in Tashkent

international framework for identification, documentation, and safeguarding. However, the spatial patterns of ICH distribution along the Silk Road, the cross-border sharing phenomena, and the mechanisms of cultural transmutation over long-distance transmission remain under-theorized (Bortolotto and Demgenski, 2024) [14].

This study addresses these gaps by systematically analyzing ICH resources along the Asian Silk Road from Chang'an to Istanbul, using complete UNESCO data up to December 2025 and integrating spatial analysis of distribution patterns with cross-cultural comparison of the Muqam/Makam family as a case study.

1.2 Research Scope and Data

This study covers the overland Asian section of the Silk Road from Chang'an (present-day Xi'an, China) to Istanbul (Türkiye), divided into four geographic sectors: (1) the Hexi Corridor (China), a cultural “funnel”; (2) Xinjiang (China), the eastern gateway to Central Asia, with Kashgar as the primary hearth of the Uyghur Muqam; (3) Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan), the civilizational pivot, including the oasis cities of Samarkand and Bukhara (Shashmaqom); and (4) Anatolia to Istanbul (Türkiye), the western terminus, with Konya (Mevlevi Sema) and Bursa (Ottoman silk weaving).

The primary data source is the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists (accessed December 2025) [15], including the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (RL), the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (USL), and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (Art18). A total of 148 ICH elements inscribed by the seven countries and regions along the research route are analyzed: China (45), Kazakhstan (14), Kyrgyzstan (16), Tajikistan (13), Uzbekistan (18), Turkmenistan (10), and Türkiye (32). For each element, the country of inscription, year of inscription, UNESCO domain, and textual description were recorded. The authors also conducted field investigations at key nodes between 1994 and 2024.

1.3 Analytical Framework



Ancient City of Khiva

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis, spatial analysis, and cross-cultural comparison. The analytical framework comprises three interconnected dimensions: (1) spatial distribution—quantifying national totals, temporal patterns, and agglomeration effects; (2) corridor effect—identifying the four-stage trajectory (origin → funnel → nodes → terminus); and (3) functional transformation—comparing the Muqam/Makam family to reveal transmission dynamics and cultural transmutation mechanisms.

2. Spatial Distribution and the Corridor Effect

2.1 Overall Distribution

As shown in Table 1, RL items dominate (136 of 148). China has the largest number of inscribed ICH elements (45 items, 30.4%), with diverse categories ranging from performing arts to traditional craftsmanship. Central Asian countries exhibit prominent nomadic and oasis cultural characteristics. Türkiye (32 items, 21.6%) shows the highest domain diversity, including Sufi ritual music not found in the eastern sections.

Table 1. ICH Items Along the Asian Silk Road (Chang'an–Istanbul)

Country/Region	Total	RL	USL	Art18	Core ICH Types
China	45	40	3	2	Muqam, Xi'an drum music, epics, crafts
Kazakhstan	14	14	0	0	Dombra art, nomadic culture
Kyrgyzstan	16	14	1	1	Epic of Manas, yurt culture
Tajikistan	13	13	0	0	Shashmaqom, Pamir music
Uzbekistan	18	16	1	1	Shashmaqom, silk craftsmanship, ceramics
Turkmenistan	10	10	0	0	Carpet weaving, horse culture
Türkiye	32	29	3	0	Whirling dance, carpet art, coffee culture
Total	148	136	8	4	

Notes: RL = Representative List; USL = Urgent Safeguarding List; Art18 = Under Article 18. The total refers to national ICH inscriptions.

Data source: UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists (December 2025), collated by the author.

2.2 The Three-Gradient Structure

Empirical analysis reveals a clear three-gradient structure along the Asian Silk Road. The first gradient (≥ 30 items) comprises China and Türkiye, together accounting for 77 items (52.0% of the total). These ancient civilizations possess rich and systematic ICH systems. The second gradient (15–20 items) includes Uzbekistan (18 items) and Kyrgyzstan (16 items), representing 23.0% of the total. These countries form the core Silk Road pivot, exhibiting high cultural diversity. The third gradient (10–15 items) includes Kazakhstan (14), Tajikistan (13), and Turkmenistan (10), together accounting for 25.0% of the total. These countries are characterized by the coexistence of nomadic and oasis cultures, with emerging potential for ICH safeguarding.

Table 2. Three-Gradient Structure of ICH Distribution Along the Asian Silk Road

Gradient	Countries	Number of ICH	Characteristics
First (≥ 30)	China, Türkiye	45 + 32 = 77 (52.0%)	Ancient civilizations, rich and systematic ICH systems
Second (15–20)	Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan	18 + 16 = 34 (23.0%)	Core Silk Road pivot, high cultural diversity
Third (10–15)	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan	14 + 13 + 10 = 37 (25.0%)	Nomadic and oasis coexistence, emerging potential

The two peaks at the eastern and western ends—China and Türkiye—account for over half of all inscribed ICH elements along the route. Central Asian countries, while having moderate numbers, exhibit the highest proportion of cross-border shared heritage, reflecting their historical role as transmission hubs along the Silk Road corridor.

2.3 The ICH Corridor Effect

This study proposes the “ICH Corridor Effect” to describe the phenomenon whereby ICH elements cluster along historical routes of cultural exchange, exhibiting predictable patterns of origin concentration, corridor diffusion, node transformation, and terminus reconstruction. The Asian Silk Road exemplifies this effect with a four-stage trajectory (Table 3).

Table 3. Four-Stage Trajectory of the ICH Corridor Effect

Stage	Geographic Sector	Spatial Function	ICH Characteristics
Origin	Chang'an (Xi'an)	Generation / Codification	Court-derived, state-supported, high diversity
Funnel	Hexi Corridor	Filtering / Mediation	Few indigenous elements; high influence on adjacent regions
Nodes	Kashgar Samarkand/Bukhara	→ Absorption Transformation	/ High density of local ICH; emergence of “classical” forms
Terminus	Istanbul / Konya	Reconstruction / Branding	High diversity; integration with tourism; presence of sacred ICH

Note: This table illustrates the four-stage evolutionary trajectory of intangible cultural heritage distribution constrained by geographical settings along the Asian Silk Road.

2.4 Cross-Border Sharing as Evidence of the Corridor Effect



Registan Square in Samarkand

A distinctive feature of ICH distribution along the Silk Road is the exceptionally high density of cross-border shared elements. Based on the UNESCO data, ten ICH elements are jointly inscribed by two or more countries along the route. Notably, Nowruz (the spring festival) and Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes are shared by all six countries from Kazakhstan to Türkiye. Other shared elements include flatbread culture (three countries), sericulture and silk weaving (three countries), yurt making (three countries), and Shashmaqom (two countries). This pattern of cross-border sharing is not random; the shared elements fall into categories specifically associated with Silk Road mobility: festivals marking seasonal transitions, oral narratives that traveled with merchants and pilgrims, foodways adapted to caravan travel, craft technologies that diffused along trade routes, and

performance genres transmitted through court patronage. The concentration of shared heritage in the Central Asian-Turkish corridor provides the strongest empirical evidence for the corridor effect: the Silk Road continues to function as a living heritage space beyond national boundaries.

3. The Muqam/Makam Family: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

3.1 Overview

The term “muqam” (from the Arabic *maqām*, meaning “position” or “mode”) refers to a family of modal musical systems found across the Islamic world, from Northwest China to North Africa. Along the Silk Road, three major traditions of this family have been inscribed on UNESCO’s lists: the **Uyghur Muqam of Xinjiang** (China, 2005/2008), **Shashmaqom** (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, 2008), and the **Mevlevi Sema ceremony** (Türkiye, 2008), which incorporates the Turkish Makam system as its musical foundation. These three traditions represent different stages of a transmission chain spanning approximately 5,000 kilometers from Kashgar to Konya.

The Uyghur Muqam of Xinjiang represents the eastern branch of the Silk Road muqam family. According to the Department of Culture of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (2006) [16], the muqam phenomenon in Xinjiang is deeply rooted in the region’s oasis culture, which served as a crucible for musical synthesis along the ancient trade routes. This official source further confirms that the Uyghur Muqam has been recognized as a vital testimony to East-West cultural exchange along the Silk Road, embodying the synthesis of musical traditions from across Eurasia (Department of Culture of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, 2006) [16]. The twelve-suite structure of the Uyghur Muqam, codified in the 16th century by Amannisa Khan under the Yarkand Khanate, reflects the systematic integration of diverse musical traditions from across the Silk Road.

3.2 Systematic Comparison

Beyond musical structure, the transmission models of the Muqam/Makam family differ significantly across the three regions. As Wang (2017) [17] noted, the Uyghur Muqam has long relied on an oral tradition (*kou chuan xin shou*, or “mouth-to-heart transmission”), wherein master-apprentice relationships ensure the preservation of subtle ornamentations and emotional expression. Written notation (*pu ben*) serves only as a memory aid and cannot fully replace embodied knowledge. In contrast, Shashmaqom in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan developed alongside written notation systems under court patronage, while the Turkish Makam, embedded in the Mevlevi Sufi ritual, is transmitted through both oral instruction within the order and notated scores. This gradient—from oral-dominant (Xinjiang) to mixed (Central Asia) to notation-supported (Türkiye)—parallels the functional sacralization trajectory identified below.

Table 4. Systematic Comparison of the Muqam/Makam Family Along the Silk Road

Dimension	Uyghur Muqam (Xinjiang)	Shashmaqom (Uzbekistan/Tajikistan)	Turkish Makam (Sema, Türkiye)
UNESCO inscription	2005/2008 (RL)	2008 (RL)	2008 (RL, as Sema)
Core hearth	Kashgar	Bukhara, Samarkand	Konya, Istanbul
Number of suites/modes	12 suites	6 suites	Hundreds of makam modes
Core instruments	Satar, tanbur, dap	Tanbur, dutar, sato, doira	Ney, kudum, tanbur
Performance context	Festivals, weddings, folk gatherings	Courtly / elite cultural events	Sufi religious ceremony (Sema)
Social function	Secular festive music	Courtly connoisseurship	Sacred ritual (dhikr)
Degree of Islamization	Moderate	High	Very high
Transmission mode	Oral-dominant	Mixed (oral + notation)	Notation-supported

3.3 From Secular to Sacred: Functional Transformation

The Muqam family exhibits a clear functional transformation along the Silk Road.

Stage 1 (Xinjiang): Secular festive music. The Uyghur Muqam is performed primarily at weddings, festivals, and folk gatherings. As documented by Zhou, Wang, and Zhang (2015) [18], the Uyghur Muqam encompasses multiple regional variants—including the Twelve Muqam, Turpan Muqam, and Hami Muqam—each with distinct performance contexts. Despite regional variations, the Uyghur Muqam remains predominantly secular in its social function, performed at weddings, harvest celebrations, and community festivities. Zhou (2007) [10] further noted that the transmission of Uyghur Muqam faces contemporary challenges, including aging inheritors and declining youth participation, yet the tradition continues to be sustained through community-based practices.

Stage 2 (Central Asia): Courtly elite art. Shashmaqom, meaning “six maqams,” developed under the patronage of the Bukharan Emirate, becoming associated with courtly culture and performed for elite audiences in urban settings. Compared to the Uyghur Muqam, Shashmaqom is more structurally refined, less rhythmically driven, and more closely tied to Persian-Tajik classical poetry. Its social function shifted from popular festivity to elite connoisseurship.

Stage 3 (Türkiye): Sufi religious ritual. In Anatolia, the Persian-Arabic maqam system was integrated into the ritual practices of the Mevlevi Sufi order, founded in Konya after the 13th-century poet Rumi (1207–1273). The Mevlevi Sema ceremony—the “whirling dervishes”—is a complex ritual combining music, chant, and meditative whirling, structured according to specific makam modes. Here, music is no longer entertainment or even art for its own sake but a vehicle for spiritual elevation (*dhikr*), aimed at achieving mystical union with the divine.

3.4 Theoretical Synthesis: The Law of Functional Sacralization

The Muqam/Makam family’s journey from secular festive music in Xinjiang to courtly elite art in Central Asia to Sufi religious ritual in Türkiye reveals a law of functional sacralization with increasing distance from the eastern origin. This law posits that, along long-distance cultural routes, the ritual function of transmitted ICH becomes increasingly sacred as distance from the source increases and remains increasingly secular as proximity to the source increases.

This transformation is driven by three interrelated mechanisms: (1) institutional recontextualization—the movement from folk contexts to court patronage to religious institutions; (2) audience stratification—the shift from general public audiences to elite connoisseurs to religious initiates; and (3) semantic densification—the accumulation of mystical and theological meanings over time and distance. This framework may apply to other ICH families transmitted along cultural routes, such as epic poetry, carpet weaving, and bread-making traditions, suggesting a broader pattern of cultural transmutation along long-distance exchange networks.

4. Key Regional ICH Highlights

4.1 China: Xi’an Wind and Percussion Ensemble

Xi’an *guyue* (wind and percussion ensemble), inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List in 2009, is one of China’s oldest and most completely preserved instrumental music traditions, with a documented history of over 1,300 years. Its origins can be traced back to the court banquet music (*yanyue*) and ritual music of the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) dynasties. The ensemble employs a unique notation system known as *suzipu* (vernacular character notation), a direct descendant of the Tang dynasty *gongche* notation and the oldest notational system still in active use for Chinese music. Approximately 3,000 pieces of music have been documented, preserved in an estimated 150 hand-copied notation manuscripts. Transmission follows a strict master-apprentice system across three major lineage groups: the Monk School (associated with Buddhist temples), the Taoist School (associated with Taoist rituals), and the Folk School (prevalent in rural communities). As the eastern origin of the Silk Road, Xi’an *guyue* embodies early cross-border artistic interaction between East Asia and Central Asia, absorbing Central Asian rhythms and performance techniques while retaining the ritual order of agricultural civilization.

4.2 Central Asia: The Pivot

Central Asia features a dual coexistence of nomadic and oasis cultures, which has shaped a distinctive pattern of ICH distribution. Kazakhstan’s ICH is dominated by nomadic traditions, represented by dombra art, equestrian culture, and yurt craftsmanship. Kyrgyzstan’s cultural identity is deeply shaped by epic heritage, foremost the *Manas* epic, which is one of the longest epic poems in the world. Tajikistan preserves the Sogdian legacy through Shashmaqom and distinctive Pamir folk music, reflecting the region’s historical role as a crossroads of highland trade routes. Uzbekistan, as the geographic core of the ancient Silk Road, gathers iconic historic cities—Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrisabz—and hosts rich ICH including Shashmaqom, the cultural space of Boysun, and traditional silk craftsmanship. Central Asia’s abundant cross-border ICH (Nowruz, nomadic culture, yurt making) reflects the unified cultural context of the ancient Eurasian corridor, where modern national boundaries have done little to erase shared heritage.

4.3 Türkiye: Mevlevi Sema Ceremony

The Mevlevi Sema ceremony (UNESCO 2008) is a Sufi ritual practiced by the Mevlevi order, founded in Konya after the death of Rumi (1207–1273). The ceremonial whirling—known as *devr-i veled* (the “turning of the beloved”)—is not a dance but a form of active meditation. The ceremony is structured in four parts (*selams*), each with a distinct musical mode (*makam*) and poetic text. The whirling direction is counterclockwise, with the right foot stepping forward and the left foot following—a movement symbolizing the orbit of planets around the sun and the soul’s journey toward the divine. Key instruments include the ney (reed flute), whose opening improvisation evokes the primal cry of the reed torn from its reedbed—Rumi’s metaphor for the soul separated

from God—and the kudum (drum), whose rhythm simulates the heartbeat. As the westernmost major ICH element in this study’s route, the Sema represents the **sacralized endpoint** of the Muqam transmission chain. Istanbul, the primary urban hub of the western terminus, hosts related traditions including Meddah storytelling, Karagöz shadow puppetry, Turkish coffee culture, Ebru marbling, and Hüsni-i Hat calligraphy—many preserving direct continuities with Central Asian traditions.



Bosporus Strait, Türkiye

5. Conclusion

This study systematically analyzed 148 ICH elements along the Asian Silk Road from Chang’an to Istanbul, offering three major contributions to both theoretical understanding and practical safeguarding.

First, spatial patterns. The ICH distribution exhibits a three-gradient structure (China and Türkiye as peaks; Central Asia as pivot) and an “ICH corridor effect” with a four-stage trajectory (origin → funnel → nodes → terminus). This framework advances the spatial analysis of living heritage along cultural routes, providing a replicable model for studying ICH distribution on other long-distance exchange networks.

Second, cross-border sharing. The high density of cross-border shared heritage—exemplified by Nowruz, Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes, sericulture, and yurt making—demonstrates that the Silk Road continues to function as a living transnational cultural space. These findings provide empirical evidence for the corridor effect and offer concrete targets for transnational safeguarding cooperation.

Third, functional transformation. The systematic comparison of the Muqam/Makam family reveals a transformation “from secular to sacred” along the route, leading to the proposed law of functional sacralization: as distance from the cultural origin increases, ICH functions become more sacred; as proximity increases, they remain more secular. Three mechanisms—institutional recontextualization, audience stratification, and semantic densification—explain this transformation. This framework may apply to other ICH families transmitted along long-distance cultural routes and opens new avenues for cross-cultural heritage research.

Practical implications

The findings provide evidence-based recommendations for three areas of safeguarding practice. First, for transnational safeguarding cooperation, the cross-border shared ICH elements identified in this study (particularly Nowruz, Nasreddin Hodja, and Shashmaqom) should be prioritized for joint documentation, transmission support, and cultural diplomacy initiatives. Second, for sustainable tourism management, the spatial clustering of ICH at key nodes offers opportunities for heritage route development, but must balance authenticity with economic benefits to avoid decontextualization and over-commercialization. Third, for digital heritage preservation, the corridor framework can guide resource allocation, with priority given to vulnerable elements in nodes with limited institutional capacity.

Limitations and future research

This study is limited to UNESCO-listed ICH; national and local inventories may reveal additional patterns and elements not captured in the international lists. The proposed “law of functional sacralization” requires further testing on other ICH families (e.g., epic poetry, textile traditions, bread-making) and along other cultural routes

(e.g., the Maritime Silk Road, the Trans-Saharan trade routes, the Incense Route). Future research could develop quantitative indicators for the corridor effect and functional sacralization, enabling cross-route comparative analysis and more rigorous hypothesis testing. Additionally, comparative studies including the European section of the Silk Road (beyond Istanbul) would extend the spatial scope of this analysis.

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