

# MY SILK ROAD JOURNEY: ALEXANDER GREGORUS



It is 780 C.E., and your name is Alexander Gregorus, and you are an Eastern Orthodox Christian merchant living in Constantinople under the Byzantine Empire. Although Islamic empires have successfully taken much of the territory of the Byzantine Empire, trade and prosperity remain strong in Constantinople and you have established successful business relationships with Arab traders. The primary goods that you sell is Byzantine made silk and bronze ware to Arab merchants. On your journey, you first go to Cairo to sell some of your goods where new, powerful Islamic Empire has taken control in the Middle East called the Abbasids. After spending time there, you cross the Red Sea to Damascus to meet with trading contacts and sell more of your goods. From there you join a camel caravan to head to the capital of the Abbasids, Baghdad. It is a truly remarkable place, full of wealth, learning, and beautiful architecture. You end up spending weeks there, which was far longer than you had planned. While in Baghdad, you strike a deal wherein you will cross the Ferghana Valley into Sogdiana to purchase some of their prized horses to bring back to Baghdad for new trading partners. Although recently conquered by Muslims, you make contact with Zoroaster merchants and find a unique civilization there. Once this mission is completed and a good profit has been made, you head home for Constantinople.

## Character 5 – Alexander Gregorus

Break down of required writing (more is fine, but this is minimum for your character):

- 2 paragraphs/3 images on who you are, your religion, the city you live in, and the dynasty you live under. Also talk about the goods (Byzantine silk and bronze ware) you are trading. And why you are taking this journey (okay to talk about planned destinations).
- 1 paragraph/2 images on traveling by ship to Cairo and the city of Cairo (the buildings, the religion, the architecture, the kingdom/empire it's in, etc. – whatever is in the information on the website I provided for you) and the Abbasid dynasty who controls it.
- 1 paragraph/2 images on crossing the Red Sea by ship to Damascus (the buildings, the religion, the architecture, the kingdom/empire it's in, etc. – whatever is in the information on the website I provided for you).
- 1 paragraph/1 image about the camel caravan you take across the Arabian Desert to get to Baghdad.

- 1 paragraph/2 images about Baghdad during this time (the buildings, the religion, the architecture, the kingdom/empire it's in, etc. – whatever is in the information on the website I provided for you) and what you do there.
- 1 paragraph/2 images about your horse ride to Samarkand (the buildings, the religion of Zoroastrianism, the architecture, the kingdom/empire it's in, etc. – whatever is in the information on the website I provided for you) in the Ferghana Valley.
- 1 paragraph/1 image where you reflect on your journey as you head home (people you met, cultures experienced, good times, bad times, hopes for when you get home, etc.)

Information on the Byzantine Empire and Orthodox Christianity: <http://www.crusades-history.com/byzantine-empire.aspx> and <http://wsu.edu/~dee/MA/BYZ.HTM>

Goods manufactured for trade in Byzantine Empire:

<http://plaza.ufl.edu/hwinger/byz/products.html> and Byzantine Silk Making: <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/byzantium/byzantium.html>

Information on Constantinople:

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/turkey/istanbul/istanbul.html> Images of Constantinople: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/byzantium/images.html#ex3>

Information about the Silk Road to China:

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html>

Information on Islam on the Silk Road:

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/religion/islam/islam.html>

Information on Abbasid Period for Cairo, Egypt: <http://www.touregypt.net/habbasid.htm> and information/images of early Islamic architecture (scroll down to find buildings in Egypt):

<http://www.bw.edu/academics/his/faculty/igesink/gallery/islamic/>

Information about Syria and Damascus:

<http://www.syriagate.com/Syria/about/cities/Damascus/history.htm> Information and images of the historical sites of Damascus:

<http://www.syriagate.com/Syria/about/cities/Damascus/index.htm>

Information on camel caravans on the Silk Road: <http://www.cpamedia.com/trade-routes/silk-road-trade-transport/>

Information on Camels of the Silk Road:

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html>

Information on Baghdad: <http://islam.about.com/cs/history/a/aa040703a.htm> and Images of Abbasid Castle <http://architecture.about.com/od/themiddleeast/ig/Iraq-Photos/Abbassid-Castle.htm>

Information and art images for Sogdiana:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/sogdians/sogdians.html>

Information about the history and pictures for the Ferghana Valley:  
<http://www.orexca.com/fergana-valley.shtml> and customs of the people there  
<http://www.orexca.com/customs.shtml>

Information about Zoroastrianism:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/religion/zoroastrianism/zoroastrianism.html>

#### GENERAL RESOURCES ON THE SILK ROAD:

Modern Travel Journal Example: <http://www.jodypoesy.com/html/alterredbook.html>

Silk Road Travelers Maps (go to Silk Road Travelers, hit the arrow tab and scroll down to your traveler for map of where he traveled to):  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/maps/maps.html>

Information on Cities and Architecture of the Silk Road:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/cities.html>

Art and Culture from the Silk Road from the Art Institute of Chicago:  
[http://www.artic.edu/aic/education/trc/borrow/Selfguide\\_FINAL\\_new\\_.pdf](http://www.artic.edu/aic/education/trc/borrow/Selfguide_FINAL_new_.pdf)

Cultures of the Silk Road:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/timeline.html>

Religions of the Silk Road:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/religion/religion.html>

Trade Routes of the Silk Road:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html>

Camels and Horses on the Silk Road:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html>

The Importance of Silk:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html>

Map of the Silk Road and images of goods sold on it:  
<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html>

Cross-Cultural Exchange on art/goods produced:

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/exchange/exchange.html> (click on image of goods to the left for information on products)