**上海外国语大学 2020 –2021学年第一学期**

**期末考试试卷**

课程名称 中国文化概要

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**Please write an essay about 500-800 words in English, explaining a cultural phenomenon in China. A comparative perspective is encouraged.**

How did Chang’an play a role as a global city in Tang dynasty?

“Global city” is becoming an increasingly eye-catching concept during these years in China, for many Chinese big cities are trying to become “global cities” on world stage in order to be internationally attractive. Although the concept of “global city” was not used by many think tanks and research institutions until 20th century, a city in ancient China, Chang’an, had enjoyed the status as a de facto “global city” long before that. So how did Chang’an play a role as a global city in Tang, and how can its splendid history better help Chinese people to build global cities nowadays?

From economic and commercial perspectives, Chang’an was a very important international trade center at that time. As the starting point of silk road, Chang’an attracted tens of thousands of foreign merchants to come along traveling through a long way from Xiyu (literally means the western regions). According to historical records, the number of foreign merchants or other ethnic groups from Xiyu living in Chang’an was quite big. For example, the number of Turkic people living in Chang’an was more than 50,000 in the early stage of Zhenguan era in Tang dynasty (627-649AD).[[1]](#footnote-0) These merchants from different places brought goods from their homelands, which enormously boomed the development of markets in Chang’an. They gathered in a market called Xishi (literally means the west market), where precious and desirable goods from “all parts of the world” could be found so that residents in Chang’an could get access to them easily without leaving their city.[[2]](#footnote-1) This description also can be proved by a book called *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* written by an American historian Edward Hetsel Schafer specializing in Tang dynasty. In this book, Schafer depicts a comprehensive picture of exotic goods appearing in Chang’an and Tang dynasty as a whole, which covers almost every part of daily life such as woods, drugs, diamonds, costume, and sculpture and so on.

The huge number of expats in Chang’an, as we have mentioned before, strongly enhanced intercultural communication. In view of the economic prosperity and unprecedented open-mindedness in Tang dynasty, especially in its capital Chang’an, many foreigners came to Chang’an not to trade, but to pursue a better education or even a promising career. Apart from the story of Qiantangshi (Japanese missions to Tang) which have been fairly familiar to us, foreign students from Korea and central Asian regions also benefited a lot from their learning experiences in Chang’an. [[3]](#footnote-2) Those students came to Chang’an with their own lifestyle and art, which improved the intercultural communication between China and other regions, and enriched the diversity of culture.

Through examining the international communication happening in Chang’an in Tang dynasty, we can easily find much evidence about how influential Chang’an was in international trade and intercultural communication. However, it is also obvious that the influence of Chang’an was limited to a part of the world for the inconvenience of world transportation in 7th century. In this sense, Chang’an seems not to be competent as other present global cities like NYC. Certainly, it is inappropriate and unfair to compare Chang’an with them. Given that the scale of global interaction in Tang was much less than that at present, Chang’an is without doubt a great city in history. And in fact, what is worth discussing is that why Chang’an succeeded in achieving this at its period. First, the stability, prosperity and strong leadership of Tang offered Chang’an immense resources in becoming “a global city”. Second, the policy of government toward foreigners were very friendly and open-minded, which enabled the whole society to be more willing to embrace foreign cultures.

For those Chinese cities which are ambitious to become global cities, it is worth noticing that global cities are not built deliberately. They always come into being naturally with the economic development and the rise of the political power of the country in international issues, and meanwhile the residents will become confident enough about their own culture and inclusive to other ethnic groups. In a word, from a big domestic city to a global city, many efforts must be made, and it is useless to hurry if the time is not ripe.

1. 薛平拴.论唐代的胡商[J].唐都学刊,1994(03):11-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. 李其平.唐代胡商的社会地位考察[J].黑龙江史志,2014(01):62-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. 黄留珠.关于汉唐文化的几个问题[J].长安大学学报(社会科学版),2010,12(02):8-24+29. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)