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The Silk Road

丝绸之路

教育部基础教育课程教材发展中心编

◎中文 林少雄

◎英文 王克友



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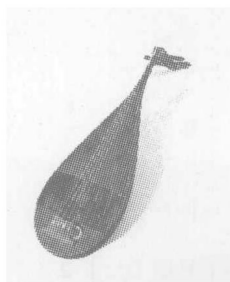
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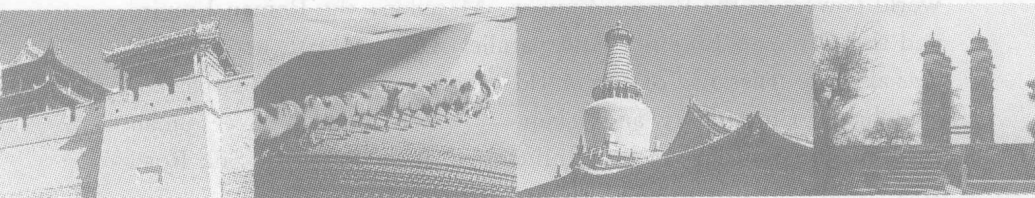
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丝绸之路



The Silk Road

The Silk Road had served for tens of hundreds of years as the main route of business over the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, an artery of commodity flow and cultural exchange that gave immense impetus to the rise of major economies and civilizations of the world. The Silk Road linked such ancient civilizations as China, India, Greece, Egypt, and Babylonia, and in its path rose such world powers as the Persian Empire, Macedon, the Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire. And parallel with its birth and growth was also the naissance of the world's three major religious beliefs—Buddhism, Christianity and Islam—which were to give human thought deep and far-reaching influences. In a sense, the Silk Road was no other than a route of culture and civilization.

This booklet contains a wealth of pictures and historical documents, which, matched with plain and vivid language, plus the unique perspective of the author, present the reader with a comprehensive account of silk. It is mainly about its original homeland, applications, place of production, the formation and pathway of the Silk Road, the thriving of silk trade in both the East and the West, cultural beliefs and legends along the Road, two routes of the Silk Road, overland and by sea, and, finally, the significant position of the Silk Road in the history of civilization. This booklet will not only acquaint the interested reader with necessary knowledge of the Silk Road, but also will enhance the reader's experiential sensitivity to the distinctive features of Chinese culture. This is, of course, beneficial to the mutual understanding and exchange between the West and the East, particularly in a world at present lost in harsh realities and eager to find its historical orientation for the future.

作为一条延续几千年、横跨欧亚非大陆的交通干道,丝绸之路对世界经济的发展与文明的进步产生过巨大的作用。它曾经连结了中国、印度、希腊、埃及、巴比伦等世界文明古国;在它所经过的地区,出现了波斯帝国、马其顿帝国、罗马帝国、奥斯曼帝国等世界性的大帝国;在它形成、发展过程中,诞生了对后来人类思想产生过深刻影响的佛教、基督教和伊斯兰教。因此丝绸之路实际上是一条文化之路、文明之路。

本书通过大量图片与史料,以通俗易懂、生动有趣的语言,以独特的文化视角,讲述了丝绸的起源、用途、产地,丝绸之路的形成及路线,东西方丝绸贸易的繁荣,丝绸之路上的文化与传说,海上丝绸之路与陆上丝绸之路,以及丝绸之路在人类文明史上的重要贡献等内容。通过学习,学生不仅可以了解丝绸之路的相关知识,同时可以使其对华夏文明的特殊风貌有一个感性的认识,从而激发起进一步了解中华文明的浓厚兴趣,对于弘扬爱国主义精神,促进新时期东西方文明的交流,都具有重要的现实意义与深远的历史意义。



I . The Horse-Head Damsel: Stories of Silk and its Origin

Among the numerous myths and legendary tales engendered by the long, long history of the Chinese civilization, the story about the origin of silk is particularly fascinating because it was documented in more than one ancient writings. One story goes like this: During the legendary Diku Gaoxin's (帝嚳高辛) period (the third of the five earliest historical periods of ancient China), what is now China's Sichuan Province in the southwest, was still in an anarchic primitive existence without a sheriff or any form of government. Therefore, tribes and families in the vicinity were living in constant battles and wars between one another.

Among these miserable residents of the region was an extremely beautiful girl, whose name was forever lost to story-tellers. She had the misfortune of having her father kidnapped by rival tribes. The white horse that her father traveled on came back home alone. With the father missing, mother and daughter had to spend days and nights in great distress with the father's horse. Missing her father, the daughter could not eat or sleep in peace and was pining away. Her mother, heart-stricken by the loss of her husband and illness of her daughter, tried every means to save the family. One day she made up her mind and declared to the neighborhood and travelers that she would marry her daughter to whoever could save her husband and get him back.

However, everybody knew that it was something with little chance of success, seeing the circumstances at the time, and so the mother's pledge went unheeded. No one had any vain hope of finding her father, even though the daughter was the most

一、美丽善良的“马头娘”： 丝绸的传说与起源

历史悠久的华夏文明，孕育了许多美丽动人的传说，在这些众多的神话传说中，关于丝绸起源的传说尤为引人注目。中国的许多古籍中，都记载了这样一个美丽动人的故事：早在上古帝誉高辛氏时代，地处中国西南的四川还没有设立官长，也没有统一的领导。于是居住在一起的每个家族之间，常常互相侵扰攻击不断。在这些当地的居民中间，有一个不知其姓名、美丽异常的女子，她的父亲被邻国抢掠而去，只剩下他平日骑乘的白马独自返回。过了一年多，丝毫没有父亲的音信。孤立无助以养蚕为生的母女，只好与她父亲常骑的白马相依为命。女儿想到父亲远在异乡，常常饭也吃不下、觉也睡不着。她的母亲见不到丈夫，又看到女儿如此伤心，于是为了安慰她，就向众人立誓说：“如果有谁能把女儿的父亲活着救回来，就把女儿嫁给他做妻子。”

周围的人，知道这件事不容易做到，于是只能听听那个誓言，而没有谁能把她父亲找回来。



attractive. But strange as it were, the white horse seemed to have understood its mistress's offering, since it kept kicking the ground and leaping all over, and finally, breaking its rein, the horse galloped away. Mother and daughter were both greatly perplexed.

Several days later, the white horse came back home, with its master, the girl's father, on its back. The reunion of the family brought such a joyful mixture of emotions—kisses and embraces, smiles and tears—that no one had thought of the mother's promise. The white horse, however, seemed different: it got agitated and restless, neighing and fidgeting all the time, and refused to eat or drink ever since then.

The father was quite puzzled at the unusual behavior of his horse, who had saved him from the kidnappers, and so he asked what had happened. The mother remembered her oath and told her husband everything about the pledge. The father said, "That pledge was offered to man, not to a beast. And what's more, how could a girl be married to a horse?" And with this remark he dismissed the matter out of mind.

The white horse, however, was indignant with such breach of faith, and it protested his master by digging at the ground and neighing at the family. Seeing this, the father got exasperated and in a fit of anger he shot the horse to death with a arrow. The dead beast was then skinned for its hide, which was to be dried in the courtyard. No one suspected that something unusual was in store for the family.

One day, as the girl walked past the tanned hide, it suddenly came floating over, enfolding the girl inside it and flew away in the blink of an eye! A few days later, the girl was found on a tree, still trapped in the horse hide, but her head had now turned into something like a horse's: she had changed into a worm-like creature, feeding on the leaves of a mulberry tree.

The father and mother were so sorry for breaking their word, but it was too late. Hoping their daughter could one day be back



家里的那匹白马听到这个誓言，惊喜异常，不停地跳跃躁动，随即便挣断缰绳，撒腿疾驰而去。看到这一情景，母女俩感到莫名其妙。

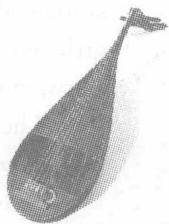
过了几天，白马驮着男主人回到了家里，家中亲人久别重逢，悲喜交集，不胜感慨，于是谁都忘了先前的誓言。然而从这一天开始，这匹白马就烦躁不安、嘶鸣不已，不肯吃草料，也不肯喝水。

看到救了自己的宝马这个样子，蚕女的父亲感到很诧异，于是便向家人问起原因，蚕女的母亲就把向众人立下誓言的事告诉了他。蚕女的父亲说：“这是向人立誓，不是向马立誓，哪有把人嫁给马的呢？”

白马听到这番话，十分激愤，一边不停地用蹄刨着地面，一边不停地嘶叫哀鸣。看到这种状况，蚕女的父亲很生气，一怒之下，取箭挽弓，射死了白马，并剥下马皮，放在院子里晾晒。

当女儿从马皮旁边走过的时候，马皮突然飞了起来，卷起女儿，眨眼间飞得无影无踪。数日后，家人在一棵树上找到了这位姑娘，只见她还被那马皮紧紧地包裹着，而她的头已经变成了马头的模样，成为了一只正伏在树枝上吃着桑叶的虫。

看到这种情形，她的父母非常悔恨，苦苦思



into her human figure, the parents took their worm-like daughter home and kept her alive with the tree leaves.

One day, the sky unexpectedly changed its gloomy hue and was full of colorful hazes and bright rays, and with this propitious omen appeared the image of their daughter: she was mounted on the white horse among fleeting clouds, escorted by dozens of footmen and maids. The fairy party descended from heaven to the girl's house. The daughter thus said to her parents, "The Jade Emperor at Heaven approved of me as a dutiful child and a person of gratefulness, and therefore his Majesty granted me to inherit a celestial position in the Ninth Palace of Heaven. I shall live in heaven forever, and please do not think of me any more." With these words, she and her celestial company rose up into the sky and thereafter people in her native place had never seen her again.

And ever since then, people in her native place began to use the silk that the worm spat to make clothes and beddings. That is the beginning of a long history of silkworm raising and silk reeling in human agriculture. As the worm liked to wrap itself in silk cocoons, people called it *can* (*tsan*), a homophone of "entwinement" or "reeling", and since the damsel lost her life on the mulberry tree, people called the tree *sang*, a word sounding the same as "loss" or "funeral".

The hometown of the silkworm damsel in the story was located in what is now the boundary region of Shifang, Mianzhu and Deyang counties of Sichuan Province. Farmers who hope for a good harvest of silk come to the place every year to pray to the damsel for favorable weather conditions. It is said that the prayers work quite well. In both Buddhist temples and Daoist monasteries of the place, statues of a goddess in horsehide are raised in honour of the silkworm girl, who is then known as "the horse-head damsel", goddess of silkworm harvest.

The story of the silkworm damsel was reflected in an essay *On Silkworm* by Xun Zi (325 or 298 — 238 B.C.), a well - known

念自己的女儿,希望有一天她还会变回自己的身子,于是便将其从树上取回饲养。

有一天,原来暗淡的天空突然变得云蒸霞蔚、五彩缤纷,刹那间,看见蚕女驾着飘浮的云彩,乘着那匹白马,带着几十名侍从从天而降,来到家中。蚕女对父母说:“玉皇大帝因为我孝顺长辈,为了父母可以献身,并且心中念念不忘报答别人的大恩大义,所以让我继承了九宫仙嫔的职位。从此以后,我将永远在天上生活,请你们不要再想念我了。”说完便带着随从升空而去,从此后家人便再也没有见到过她的身影。

从此以后,家人使用她吐出的丝来缝衣做被,人类养蚕、缫丝的历史也就从此开始。由于这种虫子总是吐丝缠绕自己,人们就把它叫做“蚕(缠)”;又因为姑娘是在树上丧失生命的,大家就把这种树叫“桑(丧)”。

传说中的蚕女的家,在今天四川什邡、绵竹、德阳三县的交界处。每年祈祷蚕茧丰收的农人,总是定期从四面八方赶来,像云彩般聚集到这里来,向蚕女祈祷,希望她能保佑一年的风调雨顺。所有的祈祷,总是都能获得灵验的效果。而在当地的道观佛寺中,都塑了一个身披马皮的女子的神像,于是人们称她为“马头娘”,向她祈祷蚕桑的事。



明代马头娘木刻



ancient Chinese philosopher. He described the silkworm's appearance as "with a body as soft as a lady's but with a head like a horse's". Though the metaphor typically characterizes the silkworm's physical appearance, it is also suggestive of the original legendary tale of the "horse-head damsel".

People of later generations are grateful to her offering of silk clothing and regard her as goddess of silkworm, calling her "horse-head goddess" or "horse-head damsel". In southern China, she is also known as "Flowery Damsel Silkworm". In places of central Sichuang, Jiangsu and Zhejiang before 1949, there used to be temples housing the silkworm goddess: the statue of a beautiful girl on a white horse.

According to the legendary tale, silkworm raising and cocoon reeling in China began approximately from Diku Gaoxin's period, that is, by descendants of the Yellow Emperor. To date, sericulture in China has a history of nearly 5,000 years.

中国古代著名的思想家荀子写过一篇《蚕赋》，其中描写蚕的形态时有一句“此夫身女好而头马首”，原意是说蚕的身体像女性的躯体一样柔软婉转，而她的头则长得像马的头一样。这一比喻恰到好处地描绘出了蚕的形态特征，这种特征正是来源于远古时代的这一有关蚕桑起源的“马头娘的传说”。

后世的人们为感激这位美丽的姑娘为人们带来了丝绸锦衣，便把她尊为蚕神，称为“马头娘”或“马头神”。在江南地区，人们还称她为“蚕花娘娘”。无论是在蜀中还是在江浙一带，解放前都可见到塑有马头娘塑像的蚕神庙：一个骑在白马身上的美丽的姑娘！

从这个神话传说故事看，中国的养蚕、缫丝大约从黄帝之后裔帝誉高辛氏时期开始，至今已有将近五千年的历史了。

