

# A JOURNEY ON THE SILK ROAD



*Written by Xiao Yunru*

*Translated by Yang Huiying*



**HORIZON RESEARCH PUBLISHING, USA**



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## Contents



## Foreword

### *Passions on the Silk Road Journey*

For some it is no more than a dream; for others it is a way of life.

Zhang Qian<sup>1</sup> spent 17 years walking on the Silk Road, although his life span was only 50 years. Along with the extra years he spent on the preparation and the follow-up, he dedicated almost half his life to the Silk Road.

It has been 2,152 years since Zhang Qian was first sent on his diplomatic mission to the Western Regions in 138 BC. On July 12, 2014, a motorcade comprising figures from the major Chinese media set out from Chang'an (Xi'an). Following Zhang Qian's route, they passed through eight countries in Asia and Europe in 60 days, before triumphantly arriving in Rome on September 13, 2014.

This was our Silk Road Journey, during which everyone, no matter whether they were travelers, reporters or drivers, came together for the purposes of writing, photographing, observing, reflecting and sharing the magic of it all.



# *1. Heading West from Chang'an<sup>1</sup>, the Starting Point of the Silk Road*



The departure ceremony of the Silk Road journey was held in the Lakeview Garden at the foot of Chang'an Tower in the World Horticultural Exposition this morning. Besides a live broadcast by Shaanxi TV, the authorities from the governments of Shaanxi and Xi'an were present, seeing me off with a willow branch for good luck, just as in ancient times. With a smile in my heart I recited "Year after year green willows grieve; as from the Bridge the people leave", the verses from Li Bai's<sup>2</sup> poem Tune: Dream of a Maid of Honor<sup>3</sup> in response to this farewell scene. Before my departure, I visited Cheng Gu County in Han Zhong City and the Mao Mausoleum<sup>4</sup> on the central Shaanxi plain with some members from the media; the former is the hometown of Zhang Qian, the Silk Road pioneer who explored the way to the West; the latter is the tomb of Emperor Wu of Han who appointed Zhang Qian to do the exploration. We would follow in their footsteps, hoping for blessings from them all the way. By accident or by fate, when we were grouped for the journey, I happened to be in the group whose leader was Mr. Zhang Lijun, a great-great-grandson of Zhang Qian going back 67 generations. I told him: "With the leadership of 'Young Zhang Qian' and the blessings of 'Old Zhang Qian', my journey to the West will be a success!"

My journey begins, heading for the West, leaving the East in the dust.....

In addition to an opportunity to observe and explore cultures on an unprecedented scale, our Silk Road Journey can also be regarded as a full media activity which has been listed as a major program in the 2014 "Silk-Road National Film and Television Bridge Project" by Central Publicity Department and General Administration of Press and Publication, Radio, Film and Television, and an excellent cultural project identified by the Publicity Department of the Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee. It is undertaken by SXTVS, and more than 40 members from around 10 media organizations attended this journey, namely Xinhua News Agency, Guangming Daily, China Radio International, Phoenix TV, Shaanxi Satellite TV and so on. Passing through 3,000 years of history, a

## 1. Heading West from Chang'an, the Starting Point of the Silk Road

motorcade of 15 Mitsubishi off road vehicles will cover a distance of 15,000 kilometres in 60 days, including 8 countries and 38 cities.

The full media activity means not only using a variety of media for reporting, but also adopting four forms of TV shows, such as On Foot, Dialogue, Entertainment, and Economics, comprising 7 programs, including a live news program “the on-going Silk Road,” a top interview program “Dialogue between Chang’an and the Silk Road,” a cultural documentary program “Shaanxi People on the Silk Road,” and four aerial photography-based programs “Bird’s Eye View of the Silk Road”, “Drive to Rome”, “Holiday in Chang’an and Rome” and “The 10,000 Km Challenge.” All the programs will be hosted by the famous cultural journalist Wang Zhi.

I majored in journalism 50 years ago and worked for a newspaper as a literary supplement editor and a non-professional journalist for almost 20 years after my graduation. Then I become a scholar indulging in books. I had never thought that I would have a second opportunity to be a journalist in my seventies. I feel so excited to be able to participate in such a significant venture. I plan to write something every day, to record my experiences along the Silk Road, and report them to the readers in Xi’an because I think the immediate and personal reporting can bring readers so much closer to the Silk Road. As for me, through my daily records I can get to know different cultures, enjoy their friendship and hospitality, and appreciate their beauty. I also hope, with the help of the media, that more people will be able to share this unique experience of the journey.

The development of the western regions and the re-opening of the Silk Road are not only great hopes for China’s national and cultural rejuvenation, but also my life’s dream. I have been looking forward to this journey for nearly half of my life. I remember 30 years ago, I started my studies on China’s western culture,



which constitutes the domestic culture of the Silk Road. 28 years ago I organized and gave the keynote speech at the first seminar on China’s western culture. Two years later I wrote China’s first book *China’s Western Culture in Literary Theory*, which has been republished twice, and highly praised by educational circles. Now

## 64. *Pompeii, the Ancient City Buried Alive*



Naples was the last stop of our journey on the Silk Road. After that our motorcade of 15 numbered cars and one Satellite News Gathering vehicle would be directly transported in containers to China from the port and we would go back to China by air from Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport.



In Naples, what I wanted most to see was Pompeii and what I wanted most to hear was *Santa Lucia*.



Before my eyes spread a long scroll of a painting of Pompeii remains, on which main streets, alleys, squares, stores, theaters, hospitals, and even brothels in the stone city were displayed clearly. Here everything was still unchanged, the sky, the cloud and the spring, except that the noise from the market has been replaced by the chatter of tourists. I was really shocked when I saw several human body remains in the vitrine. Standing quietly aside, I tried to get as close as possible to stare at these unlucky ancestors who had died instantly. Some of them were crawling on the ground with their waists arching highly due to the burning pain; some were burnt in curled postures; some were trying to cover their naked bodies when the blazing magma gushed down on them as they were taking a bath. The

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