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The Silk Road on the National Card: Just Like Rainbows over the Silk Road, the Stamps Are Messages of Friendship



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IN THE LONG HISTORY OF HUMAN civilization, the Silk Road, with a history of over 2,000 years, is like a ribbon, dancing in the wind, constantly changing its direction of travel, emitting a long and mysterious echo like the sound of camel bells in the vast Gobi. The Silk Road began in Chang'an, the thousand-year-old imperial capital of the great eastern country of China.

In the second half of the 19th century, a German named Richthofen discovered in his geog-

raphical survey that a mysterious and ancient international trade channel was hidden between Asia, Europe and Africa. With the change of time and years, it appeared and disappeared and showed great vitality. All this seems to have something to do with an ancient civilized country in the East. With this discovery, he came to China alone and investigated the ancient land for four years. Ultimately, he named this business road "the Silk Road".



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In 2013, when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited four Central Asian countries, he said with affection: “My hometown, Shaanxi, is located at the starting point of the ancient Silk Road...” During this period, President Xi Jinping put forward the initiative of building a “New Silk Road Economic Belt”, which received widespread attention from the international community. Thus, the “Belt and Road” came into being. Borrowing the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road, it has sounded the great call for a community of interests, destiny and responsibility for humanity. Against this background, General Publishing House Co. Ltd., Shaanxi Normal University, has published *The Silk Road on the National Card* (Volume I and Volume II) after several years of careful planning. It is a gift to the “One Belt, One Road” initiative.

Taking the ancient Silk Road as the medium, the book intends to promote to the world the great achievements of Shaanxi in history and culture, natural scenery, cultural heritages, urban outlooks, and economic construction.

This is a beautifully bound, well-designed book. From the content of the articles, the stamps, the choice of paper, the layout of the handwriting, the design of the plates and the layout of the illustrations, it is clear that the book has been crafted with great care and attention to detail, showing its antiquity and elegance. The book is divided into two volumes, with a total of ten series, spilling 600,000 wor-

ds. The book is a blend of knowledge, history and scholarship. It closely follows the characteristics of “Silk Road Culture” to showcase the essence of Silk Road culture and the integration of traditional culture and modern civilization along the Silk Road.

Volume I focuses on the human history and customs of Chang’an, the starting point of the Silk Road. Altogether there are five series in Volume I about Shaanxi. Series I, Chinese Civilization and Beautiful Landscape. The stamps include Nuwa Creating Human Beings, Tomb of Yellow Emperor and Xuanyuan Cypress Tree, Xi’an City Wall, Master Monk Xuanzang and Big Wild Goose Pagoda, and Bell Tower of Xi’an. Series II, Beautiful Scenery and Chinese Treasure. The stamps include Hukou Waterfall of the Yellow River, Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, and more. Series III, Great Men and True Talents, All Gathering in the Land of Three Qins. The stamps include Laozi and Taoist Louguan Temple, and Zhang Qian: Diplomat to the Western Regions. Series IV, Paintings and Calligraphy, Treasures of Shaanxi. The stamps include Stone Tablet of Cao Quan, Painter Yan Liben and His *Bu Nian Tu*, Chang’an Pomegranate: Best of the World, and the works of famous Tang Calligraphers Yan Zhenqing and Liu Gongquan. Series V, New Silk Road and Great Achievements. The stamps include Silk Road Starting Point: Exploring the Universe, The Day Begins from Silk Road Starting Point.

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Volume II introduces the historical and cultural deposits and the landscape of the mountains and rivers along the Silk Road in Henan, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and Xinjiang. World Cultural Heritage Dunhuang is worth particular attention. According to Xiao Yunru, a famous cultural scholar, “The Silk Road is like a golden dragon flying in the western sky, where Dunhuang is the eye of the dragon; or that the Silk Road looks like the scale, where Chang’an the starting point is like the holding rope, and Dunhuang works as the weight. Only with the two together can we know the value of Chinese culture and Silk Road Culture. Rarely is there a place like Dunhuang that best interprets the core of the Silk Road culture, that is, openness and integration, and it is a living example of human cultural integration.”

Through the magic “window” of stamps, this book will bring the readers back to the history of the Silk Road and forward to its future. It can be said that the history of the Silk Road continues here. The spirit of the Silk Road is inherited here, the culture of the Silk Road is carried forward here, and the majesty of the Silk Road is surging here. The Silk Road dream is connected to the Chinese dream, inheriting the past and opening up the present. The Silk Road dream is spreading the bridge, which brings a more confident and open China striding towards the world. The Chinese dream contains the dream of the Silk Road. The Belt and Road depicts the future, realizes the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and writes a more magnificent chapter of the century. This is the fundamental significance of The Silk Road on the National Card (Volume I and Volume II).

The book features a grand presentation of history in the form of stamps, which makes it lively, well-illustrated and readable. The dazzling array of stamps exudes a strong message of history and culture. Zhang Qian, the pioneer of the ancient

Silk Road, was canonized as “Duke of Bowang (Great Virtue)”, which symbolized the great virtue derived from the moral of tolerance, with which Zhang Qian won the goodwill and friendship of fraternal nations and countries along the Silk Road. Bowang, or Great Virtue, also indicates a pursuit of friendship and cooperation. Never shall we forget Zhang Qian, the pioneer who traveled through the Western Regions and opened the Silk Road, nor his decision-maker Emperor Hanwu, nor Monk Xuanzang of later generations who journeyed westward for Buddhist Scriptures, nor the starting point Chang’an City on the Silk Road. A famous Tang Dynasty poet described the ancient city as “numerous palace gates opened one after another, and countless ambassadors came to the Emperor’s meeting”. The ancient Silk Road promoted cultural exchanges and economic and trade prosperity between the east and the west, directly led to the glories and splendors of the prosperous Han and Tang Dynasties, and enabled Chang’an to become one of the four capitals of ancient world civilizations.

Stamps are the country’s name card. The small stamps, which unite Chinese culture and bear witness to the nation’s development, are full of Chinese stories. Using stamps to tell the story of the Silk Road reveals its longevity and profundity. We understand that the book *Silk Road on National Card* is a typical and representative piece of work, and the stamps, known as national cards, showcase the elite and essential charms of the cities and provinces along the Silk Road. However, due to limited pages and the prolonged continuation of stamp issuance, we cannot promise to totally display the overall landscapes and comprehensive images of these cities and provinces. We are sure there must be some missing or pitied, which we hope could make up in reprinted editions. 🌸