

Zhou, Weizhou 周伟洲 et al, eds. *Sichou Zhi Lu Dacidian 丝绸之路大辞典 (Encyclopedia of the Silk Road)*. Xi'an: Shaanxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2018. ISBN 9787224130416.

Silk Road studies have attracted much scholarly attention for centuries, intensifying in recent years. As the Chinese economy grows, the history of the trade routes attracts a larger audience. Indeed, the old “Silk Road” linked China, India, and the West. There was a continual flow of pilgrims, missionaries, and merchants between China, India, and other Central Asian states. However, the first point is that the so-called “Silk Road,” a term coined by Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen (1833 – 1905) in 1877, is somewhat misleading as there were multiple trade routes. Moreover, this region is a network of unmarked footpaths instead of a single straight and well-traveled route. The “Silk Road” encompasses a far wider area than previously envisioned by von Richthofen; therefore, the present encyclopedia enlarges its scope to the looser definition of the ‘silk roads,’ including the land route—the oases towns along the silk roads—as well as the sea route. On the other hand, the trading items were not limited to silk alone, but many luxury goods. Considering that this vast region encompasses such complexity and richness of the cultures, one certainly needs a good encyclopedia in hand before conducting any serious study.

The current encyclopedia of the Silk Road comprises fifteen sections, divided thematically, and contains 11,529 entry terms. This volume of 1,060 pages is a revised version of the 2006 printing of *Sichou Zhi Lu Dacidian 丝绸之路大辞典 (Encyclopedia of the Silk Road)*. This revised encyclopedia is the most up-to-date and comprehensive encyclopedia for the field of the Silk Road studies. While other dictionaries of this kind may follow an alphabetical (or pinyin) order, this encyclopedia is divided by topics and themes. All of the fifteen sections address essential themes, each of which will be introduced individually below. The first two are related to geography. The first section is titled “Roads and Transportation.” It contains information taken from premodern records, from the first century BCE to the late imperial period, about official roads, trade routes, bridges, animal carriages, hotels, border policy, checking points, and so on. The second section is “Geography and Environment.” This section, though similar to the previous one, focuses more on those terms related to natural landscape and geography, such as mountains, rivers, plateaus, basins, deserts, and oases. These two sections together give an overview of the land silk roads.

The following three are related to the development of civilizations in this region. The third section is “Administration and Township.” It includes all names of states, prefectures, towns and cities, military troupes, etc. The fourth section is “Economy and Trade.” It includes terms relating to the trading system, markets, merchants, commercial goods, currencies, and even stories and narratives. The sixth section is “Culture and Technology.” It includes literature, Dunhuang manuscripts, the Buddhist canon, Confucian schools, languages and scripts, Buddhist caves and sculptures, murals, dance, music, science and technology, and utensils used in daily life. These

sections shed light on the foundation of these civilizations and the infrastructure built up in the past.

The following three touch on the broad cultural aspects of this region. The seventh section is devoted to "Ethnicity and Religion." It provides information on the diversity of the ethnic groups, bureaucracy, officialdom, miscellaneous Buddhist and Daoist terminology, and Islamic vocabulary. The eighth section is "Artifacts and Cultural Heritage." This section collects terms relating to all the archeological sites, remains, textiles, inscriptions, steles, cliff carvings and paintings, bronze and iron vessels, jade and jewels, gold and silver wares, glassware, pottery, wooden tablets, and so on. The ninth section is "Dialect and Customs." This section provides explanations of the idioms and phrases commonly used in Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and Xinjiang. The dialect section is then followed by explanations of the customs practiced in these regions. These sections enhance our understanding of cultural activities and the traditions transmitted throughout history in this region.

The following three contain necessary biographical data and information about the silk roads via the sea and the South-West. The tenth section is "Figures on the Silk Road." It includes many of the names of famous figures, such as monks, heroes, rulers, and scholars. The eleventh section is "The Silk Road via the Sea." It lists all country names and terms related to the sea route of the silk roads. The twelfth section is "South-Western Silk Road." This section, again, collects those country names and terms related to the south-western route of the silk roads. These sections illuminate the multiple silk roads and their significance.

The last three sections contain a substantial quantity of updated information and will be of particular benefit to academia. The thirteenth section is "Textual Resources of the Silk Road." It follows the chronological order to list the text titles regarding the silk roads, beginning from the pre-Qin and Han dynasties down to the Qing dynasty, and some relevant scriptures composed by European missionaries and merchants. The fourteenth section is "Silk Road Studies." It starts with those phrases relating to the discovery and investigation of Dunhuang, a secret depository between two caves, at the beginning of the twentieth century. It then offers summaries of a number of major modern scholarly works concerning Dunhuang and the Silk Road. The last part of this section lists the names of quite a few representative scholars of Silk Road studies. The fifteenth section is "The Silk Road Today." It provides several crucial phrases describing modern development in the Shaanxi, Gansu, Xinjiang, Qinghai, and Ningxia provinces. These sections bring the reader's attention to the modern world. A modern perspective adds to the value of this encyclopedia across the disciplines of historiography, textual analysis, social-economic studies, and political science.

For the general reader, the most striking feature of this encyclopedia might be its enormous number of entries and the tedium of finding one's bearing among the numerous subdivisions. It may take the reader quite some time to glance through the long list in the table of contents—it runs to over 100 pages—before eventually finding the exact term one is looking for. Nevertheless, it is so precisely because this

encyclopedia conveys a vast sweep of history and geography. One cannot but admire the exemplary thoroughness of this encyclopedia.

Overall, it is much appreciated that such a division in the fifteen sections mentioned above includes rich information concerning social and economic history along the silk roads. Furthermore, this is a practical encyclopedia for those interested in the past and those keen to understand the present. Given the magnificent infrastructure development under the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative the current Chinese government carried out, it is interesting to see how the past resonates with the present. In particular, the fifteenth section, “The Silk Road Today,” reminds the reader that the “Silk Road” does not exist merely in history and that it is continuously flourishing.

The book reviewer would also highlight that this encyclopedia offers guidance to copious primary sources and covers secondary studies produced in modern times. In particular, the fourteenth section, “Silk Road Studies,” is a unique part of this encyclopedia. It encompasses secondary sources mainly in Chinese and several works in English and European languages. Not all the book titles listed are directly on the Silk Road or Dunhuang areas; instead, the editors provide a succinct summary, sometimes even the page numbers, whenever a passage or portion focuses on related subjects. Nevertheless, a cautionary note to be made here is that, for those works in non-Chinese languages, the book title in its original language is not provided in most cases but only occasionally offered in the explanation. This inconsistency is probably due to the volume’s multiple editors. Admittedly, it is by no means an exhaustive list of secondary works on the topics included in this encyclopedia. However, it is praiseworthy for its endeavor to devote an entire section to this valuable information.

As a whole, the contribution of this encyclopedia is enormous, and the evidential knowledge is precise and well-edited. There are plenty of images and illustrations accompanying the explanations in this encyclopedia. While one might always wish for even more illustrations, those given are of high quality. This encyclopedia is undoubtedly one of the most valuable tools for university students and scholars interested in the Silk Road studies. This revised encyclopedia version is very welcome: it represents this team of contributors’ high performance of scholarly work. It will also become an indispensable tool as reference work for all those who work on the publication of encyclopedias dealing with the silk roads.

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