

2017

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Recommended Citation

(2017) "Lei Zu and Can Cong Weaved the Splendid Brocade and the Belt and Road Is Writing a Brilliant Chapter—The Chengdu Consensus of the Academic Seminar on the Land of Abundance and the Silk Road," *Contemporary Social Sciences*: No. 3, Article 5.

Available at: <https://css.researchcommons.org/journal/vol2017/iss3/5>

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Lei Zu and Can Cong Weaved the Splendid Brocade and the Belt and Road Is Writing a Brilliant Chapter

—The Chengdu Consensus of the Academic Seminar on the Land of Abundance and the Silk Road

Li Mingquan*

“Dawn sees saturated reds; the town’s heavy with blooms.” We, more than 90 experts and scholars from home and abroad, attended The Academic Seminar on the Land of Abundance and the Silk Road held by the Association of Chinese Historians, the Guangming Daily Press, the Society for Chinese Archaeology, the Chinese Society on Ancient Capitals, the School of Archaeology and Museology of Peking University, and Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, on April 8, 2017 in Chengdu. We are to conduct in-depth exploration of the history between Sichuan and the Silk Road, the development context, as well as jointly discuss the strategies for the development of Sichuan and the Belt and Road. We reached the following consensus..

1. Mulberry growing and silkworm breeding enjoy a long history and our brocade weaving techniques lead the nation

Sericulture and rice culture together mark the maturity of agricultural civilization in East Asia. Sichuan is one of the origins of Chinese silk culture. The oral history indicates that the primary wife of the Yellow Emperor, Lei Zu, created the mulberry growing, silkworm breeding and silk production, which

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have been propagated by our ancestors in Sichuan. The silk dresses of the standing bronze statue of the Sanxingdui Ruins Site serve as the intuitive evidence of the superior workmanship of silk weaving in the Shu area during the Bronze Age. In 2012, in Chengdu Tianhui Town, four wooden loom models and 14 textile craftsmen painted figurines were excavated in the Han Dynasty Tomb in Laoguan Mountain, which are so far the earliest known jacquard loom models. It filled the gaps in China's history of textile science and technology, representing the world's highest level of textile and brocade technology at that time. Zhuge Liang's governance philosophy of the Ancient Shu is "The supply in the war against enemies entirely depends on the Shu Embroidery industry," which shows the vital importance of silkworm breeding and brocade production for the prosperity of a kingdom. *Odes of the Shu Kingdom* by Zuo Si depicts the splendid scene the Shu embroidery production as, "The sound of looms in numerous households has created great harmony. And the brocade, as splendid as shells, the wash water of which has dyed the river its color." Liu Yong also echoed and chanted, "Shu is spectacular and silkworm trading market is bustling." Known as "the mother of the world's brocade," together with the Song and Yun Brocades of Jiangsu province and Zhuang Brocade in Guangxi, Shu-style is one of China's four most famous schools of brocade. Thus, Shu brocade is recognized in history as "exclusive to Shu." Taken as an important production base of mulberry growing and silkworm breeding, Sichuan excels in silk waving nationally. Chengdu enjoys fame as the world's embroidery capital. Since ancient times, the Land of Abundance has been acting as a steady provider of silk goods along The Belt and Road, contributing remarkably to world culture through its exquisite craftsmanship and splendid artistic creations.

2. Numerous transport routes in Sichuan have made the region pivotal for countries along the Silk Road

As early as the Han Dynasty, Zhang Qian, the Chinese imperial envoy, confirmed, "The Ancient Shu-Hindu Road" is actually the "South Silk Road," which reached South Asia as well as West Asia from Chengdu through Yunnan and Myanmar. Sima Qian, the historian, described the ancient path, "extending as far as a thousand li and as an access to all directions"; the ancient Shu Road to the North, such as the Jinniu Route, the Micang Route, and the lizhi Route which were closely linked to the "Northern Silk Road." In 1995, in the ruins of the Niya, in Xinjiang, an unearthed Shu brocade arm-protector with the Chinese characters "Wuxing chu dongfang li zhongguo (The appearance of the five stars in the east is favorable to China)" embroidered into the fabric has been dated back to the Eastern Han Dynasty to the Wei and Jin Dynasties, corresponding to Chengdu's early emergence into the North Silk Road as well as its early introduction



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of the Great Unity philosophy in Chinese culture to the Western regions and overseas. In ancient Sichuan, when travelling from the west to north through the Central Shaanxi Plain, the Hetao Area and the Mongolian plateau, were connected to the “Prairie Silk Road.” When heading east, extensive exchanges with the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River were also recorded, for example, in Su Xun’s poem, “Mountains and rivers extended for thousands of miles, so fast as going straight from Shujun to Chu as if it were a thoroughfare.” Via this route, commodities such as silk, lacquerware, porcelain, tea, and Chinese wolfberry jam were sold all over the world. History records that since ancient times Sichuan has been closely connected to the Northern, Southern, Prairie and Sea Silk Roads. Today, it is still the western hinterland of the building of the Belt and the Road. These “Cultural Canals” which made up the transport routes in the Silk Road have been boosting world economic development.

3. The culture of the Silk Road is bright and colorful, and the integrated resources will add brilliance to the present splendor

Du Fu, a great poet in the Tang Dynasty, wrote “The linen of Shu and salt from Yangtze River and Huai River have been exchanged since ancient times, the speed of the giant boats on the river are as fast as the wind.” Sichuan, through its extensive contact with the Silk Road, not only spread its Bashu culture, but also witnessed the influx of exotic customs and commodities. Starting from the Tang Dynasty, the horse-tea trade along the Silk Road found itself thriving in the Song and Ming Dynasties. Thanks to this, Mengding Tea, produced in Sichuan, was not only offered to the emperor in Chang’an (capital of

the Tang Dynasty), but was also able to suffuse its exquisite fragrance all over the world. The “Hollyhock” was also introduced to Europe in the fifteenth century from China and its presence can be found in paintings of Tiziano Vecelli, the father of Western oil painting. The musical instruments in Shu Yongling’s “Twenty-four Gigaku” such as the Jie Gu, Bei, and Standing Konghou also were bought from South and Central Asia. Pepper, celery, onions and other foreign foods arrived in China via the sea-land Silk Road and were first introduced into Sichuan, shaping and helping the Sichuan cuisine to prosper. As far back as the Western Jin Dynasty, Chinese monks went to India to seek the Dharma via “Zangke Road” in Sichuan and Chongqing. The Monk Xuanzang of the Tang Dynasty took his journey to the Western Regions and South Asia through Chengdu. The Zen Master, Wu Xiang, first seek the Dharma in Shu as the prince of Silla Kingdom, was honored as the founding father of the Daci Monastery. The respected Monk, Lanxi Daolong, who was born in Fujiang County which was within the old regime of Sichuan, went to Japan to carry forward the teachings of Buddhism and enjoyed a reputation comparable to Monk Jianzhen. The Tang Dynasty witnessed the emerging of engraving in Chengdu, known as the Xichuan Printing Technique, which also prevailed overseas. In the Song Dynasty, the first Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka *Kaibao Tripitaka*, overseas engraved as Korea Tripitaka, appeared. Looking back at the development of the Silk Road, the Bashu Culture has made its unique contribution to the exchange and integration of the world’s diverse cultures. Reviewing the ancestral glory of Bashu, it is imperative to highlight the unique functions and values of Sichuan as the intersection and hub of the Silk Road, to profoundly explore and utilize the cultural resources of the Bashu Silk Road, and to take the

initiative to join in the magnificent symphony of the Belt and the Road.

4. Vigorously promote the Silk Road spirit and effectively promote the People-to-People connectivity

Since ancient times, the geographical environment of being surrounded by high mountains and deep valleys has constantly inspired the Sichuan people's dreams and desires to cross those mountains and discover what was beyond.

This has cultivated the willpower of the Sichuan people to “restlessly collapse the mountains and earth to build the link between the heavy stairs and stone routes”, which fostered the willingness to conduct friendly exchanges as, “Boats from Shu restlessly go south while southern boats also come frequently to Shu.” It has been building the lofty pursuit of “The Min River flowed day and night and the waves reach to the sea in the East”. It has been given expression to the brocade craftsman's spirit of “the splendid and mesmerizing brocade and silk is the ultimate manifestation of distinction.” It has also demonstrated the inclusive and open-minded thinking of, “At times all the countries share the similar style, and the view from the Jingjiang River is comparable to that of the capital city.” Sichuan people, with their wisdom, courage and aspirations, have acted as a connection between civilizations, commerce and trade as well as the traffic roads in Egypt and the African continent to jointly foster the Silk Road Spirit characterized by “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit.” Standing in our new historical starting point, Sichuan people bear in mind the philosophy of “the calculating of losses and gains should be applied to all people under the heaven” and aim at

promoting practical cooperation in all fields, and building a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness. Sichuan will more proactively and confidently engage in the extensive cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges and cooperation, and promote the people-to-people connectivity. Sichuan will build the Silk Road 4.0 version characterized by promoting policy connectivity, infrastructure connectivity, trade connectivity, and financial connectivity, thus ultimately distinguishing itself in the process of globalization and modernization.

5. Promote the advancement of regional development and jointly build the Belt and Road

Located in the important linking part of the Belt and Road and the Yangtze River Economic Belt, Sichuan serves as the frontier of reform and opening-up in China's interior as well as the strategic base of China's Western Development. It is imperative to include Sichuan in the top-level design and development strategy during the planning process of building the Belt and Road. “The Jingjiang River extends as far as ten thousand miles and the emperor's boat could reach Yangzhou by river.” The people in Sichuan, whose wisdom is as splendid as the Shu brocade, with enthusiasm as intense as Sichuan Spirits, together with their exquisite character and bearing, are devoted to the building of the Belt and Road and are looking westward to make full use of the advantage of the Alashankou domestic land ports, to speed the formation of the economic corridor leading to Central Asia and Pakistan, to optimize the “Chengdu-Europe Express,” and the “Central Asian freight class.” Looking to the south, to align the southwest open

bridgehead construction and establish the China-India-Bangladesh Economic Corridor and the sea transport routes in the Southeast. To the north, the Chengdu-Xi'an-Bohai Rim railways and roads are to be built, connecting with the Eurasia Land Bridge. To the east, the integration of Luzhou Port and Yibin Port are to be built and promoted. At the same time, to establish the efficient and convenient Eurasian aviation logistics channel and place itself in the center of the Air Silk Road. On April 1st, China's third batch of seven pilot free trade areas were listed

and the Sichuan FTA opened the prelude to the new, comprehensive and all-round opening-up pattern featuring the coordination of the East-West, of the development of the land and the sea.

“To mount a long wind and some day break the heavy waves, we will sail straight and bridge the deep, deep sea.” Sichuan, with an air of invincibility and the spirit of endless trying until winning, is taking solid and steady steps to jointly build the Belt and Road and to contribute to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

(Translator: Qiao Qian; Editor: Xiong Xianwei)