



the chinese mastered the silkworm at least 4000 to 3000 b.c.e. as evidenced by a large collection of silk cocoons found in the yingchuan, china, site excavated by archaeologists in the 1950s. silk has been found in archaeological sites dating to the neolithic (2000-3000 b.) and zhou (1046-256 b.) periods. other precursors to silk production have been found dating from the shang and zhou periods (1600-256 b.) and include a set of five bamboo-bark silk cocoons and a set of silk cocoons found in the neolithic village of jiahu in henan province dated to 2800-2600 b. and a silk cocoon found in the shang period city of anyang in henan province dated to 2610 b. at a time when shang bronze artifacts were being found throughout asia. a silk cocoon excavated in the late 1970s at the zhou and qin burials at zengmu in henan province, dated to 2700-1600 b., was made of silk fibers from a central asian bombyx species. the silk industry began at the end of the neolithic period with the spread of ceramic industry. production probably spread from the yangzi river valley to the yellow river valley, the yangzi river valley to the central and southern provinces, and the huai river valley to northern and southern provinces. the technique of silk resist dyeing, first developed in the central and western regions, may have spread to the east over the centuries as china became a single nation. in the tang period, the process of silk manufacture was made central to the emperors' power and they invested heavily in silk production. the tang's xuanzang described the silk industry and his description, combined with archaeological finds, has contributed to the legend of the lady of the silkworms.

### {SILK 004 Lesson Before Communications}

toward the end of the tang, the chinese began to trade in spices from india and the middle east. to meet demand, their silk industry also began to expand, and more and more silk was being produced for export. silk was of high demand both as a commodity and as a status symbol. during the 10th century, china was the largest producer and exporter of silk in the world. the chinese government began to tax silk; and during the song (960-1279) dynasty, government control of the silk industry became so strict that it discouraged private production. at the height of the song, the government's tax on silk reached 40 percent. the song also initiated a variety of market and trade reforms to encourage increased private investment in agriculture. they also sold monopolies of trade to certain groups. the qing (1644-1912) dynasty, the last of the imperial dynasties in china, continued the reforms of the song and also opened up the nation to foreign trade. the qing controlled the silk industry through a monopoly of trade to the outside world. the monopoly lasted nearly a century, until the early 20th century. the last emperors lived in the forbidden city, at the heart of beijing. it is now the largest palace in the world. during the tang period, china's silk exports reached such heights that china came to be called the "middle kingdom." china also became a major supplier of jade, lacquerware, and ceramics. some of this trade took place by land, using the silk road, and some by sea, using the new oceans. china joined the maritime trade networks of the arabs, the europeans, the americans, and even the japanese. chinese traders traveled to africa, indonesia, the americas, the middle east, and even europe. china's trade in ceramics, lacquerware, silk, and gems reached its peak during the tang and was in decline by the song. the late song also ended the long-standing chinese monopoly of salt production. salt was a precious commodity and the song's policy of monopolization had kept prices high and trade in salt restricted. but the song also adopted the chinese policy of controlling salt production and distribution by forbidding private salt production. 5ec8ef588b

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