



C011 ^{wáng zhāo jūn} 王昭君 (Wang2 Zhao1jun1)

Wang2 Zhao1jun1 was one of the concubines in the court of Yuan2di4 ^{yuán dì} [元帝] of the Han4 ^{tān} [漢] Dynasty. In addition to her being one of the most beautiful women in Chinese history, her achievements ranked her as one of the best diplomats too. She was beloved by the people in the border tribe that she married into, Xiong1nu2 ^{xiōng nú} [匈奴].

Her marriage to the Chief of Xiong1nu2 was an accident. This Chief, Hu1han2xie2 Can2yu2 ^{hū hán xié shàn yú} [呼韓邪單于], was one of the two competing chiefs of that particular tribe. He came to the Han4 court to make peace with

(Picture obtained through the Internet)

China and ask for a wife. The Emperor opened the scrolls of pictures of the concubines and picked one. However, when she had herself prepared and came to bid goodbye to the Emperor, alas! the Emperor realized how beautiful she was. The Emperor not only regretted, he was outraged! The artist who did the painting was summoned and decapitated. That unfortunate artist's name was Mao2 Yan2shou4 ^{máo yán shòu} [毛延壽].

There is even a poem that tells this story. The most famous verses of that poem can be translated as “if an Emperor cannot even manage what happen in front of his own eyes, how can we expect him to rule the numerous border tribes thousands of miles away! Yan3qian2 suo3jian4 shang4 ru2ci3, qian1li3 he2neng2 zhi4 Yi2di2! ^{yǎn qián suǒ xiàn shàng rú cǐ qiān lǐ hé néng zhì yí dì} 眼前所見尚如此，千里何能治夷狄!”

If you see a painting that depicts a woman with a pi2pa2 ^{pí pá} [琵琶] – the Chinese equivalent of a guitar – it is most likely her. By the way, the camel in the picture has two humps; it – the Bactrian camel -- has been a popular beast of burden for thousands of years in that area. If you look closely, she carries on her shoulder something that is wrapped and tied with a bowtie; that “something” must be a pi2pa2.
