

Literature and its Characters – Luo Shen Fu

Cao Zhi (192 – 232), courtesy name Zijian, was a litterateur of the Three Kingdoms period. He was from the Qiao County of Pei Commandery (now the Bozhou of Anhui Province) and the son of Warlord Cao Cao. Cao Zhi was honored as Prince of Chen, and was conferred the posthumous title of Si, therefore he was also known as Prince of Chen Si. Because of his talent, he was loved ardently by Cao Cao in the early stage of his life. Being suspected, ostracized, persecuted and difficult to exert his ambitions, Cao Zhi died of depression at the age of 41 after Cao Pi and Cao Rui became kings. As the founder of Wuyan poetry, he made great achievement in literature. In addition, he is also good at writing ode and prose, represented by “Luo Shen Fu” (Ode to the Goddess of the Luo River). In the third year of Huangchu Era (222), Cao Zhi went to the capital city of Luoyang to make the pilgrimage to Cao Pi. On his return to the fief, he passed through Luo River. On unsteady carriage pulled by fatigued horses, he gazed at the sun dipped in the west, recalling the legend of Fu Fei, the daughter of Fuxi, who was drowned and became the Goddess of the Luo River. Inspired by the example of Song Yu, who described a goddess of Wushan to the king of Chu in proses "Gaotang County" and "Goddess", he recalled his memories at familiar sights of rough and dangerous life. Eventually, he composed the immortal ode named “Luo Shen Fu”, which lasts forever.

The stamp issue “Luo Shen Fu” is designed by the famous Macao painter Poon Kam Ling, is adapted from the story line of the “Ode to the Goddess of the Luo River”, which is unable to distinguish whether it is true or not, virtual or real, so as to promote traditional Chinese culture and to pay tribute to Cao Zhi and his “Luo Shen Fu.”

“Adventure” – In a daze, “I” see the graceful Goddess of the Luo River: “her body soars lightly like a startled swan, gracefully, like a dragon in flight, in splendor brighter than the autumn chrysanthemum, in bloom more flourishing than the pine in spring.”

“Tokens of love” – “I” am charmed by her modest beauty, her elegant and graceful appearance, even her decorous and noble disposition. Desiring that my sincerity is the first of all to be known, I trust these “little waves” to bear my message, and undo a girdle-jade to offer as a pledge.

“Farewell” – There is always a line between human and gods, and “I” can never spend the rest of our lives together. The Goddess of the Luo River covers her face with tears that wet her clothes. Sorrow at the thought of our last reunion, she gives me her pearl earrings as a permanent memento.

“Romantic attachment” – “I” have always thought of this love, imaging the meeting and the face of the Goddess of the Luo River from time to time; my heart is filled with sorrow and romantic attachment when recalling the past. On my way out, I wander up and down, feeling lost and empty inside.

Souvenir sheet “Luo Shen Fu” – The artistic modeling of the Goddess of the Luo River is the embodiment of beauty. “My” earnest pursuit of the Goddess of the Luo River and its tragic end are the reflection and metaphor of Cao Zhi’s life, which is full of ideals but ends in suffering. The “Luo Shen Fu”, depicting life with poetic wisdom and imagination, allows thousands of readers feel the beautiful melancholy.