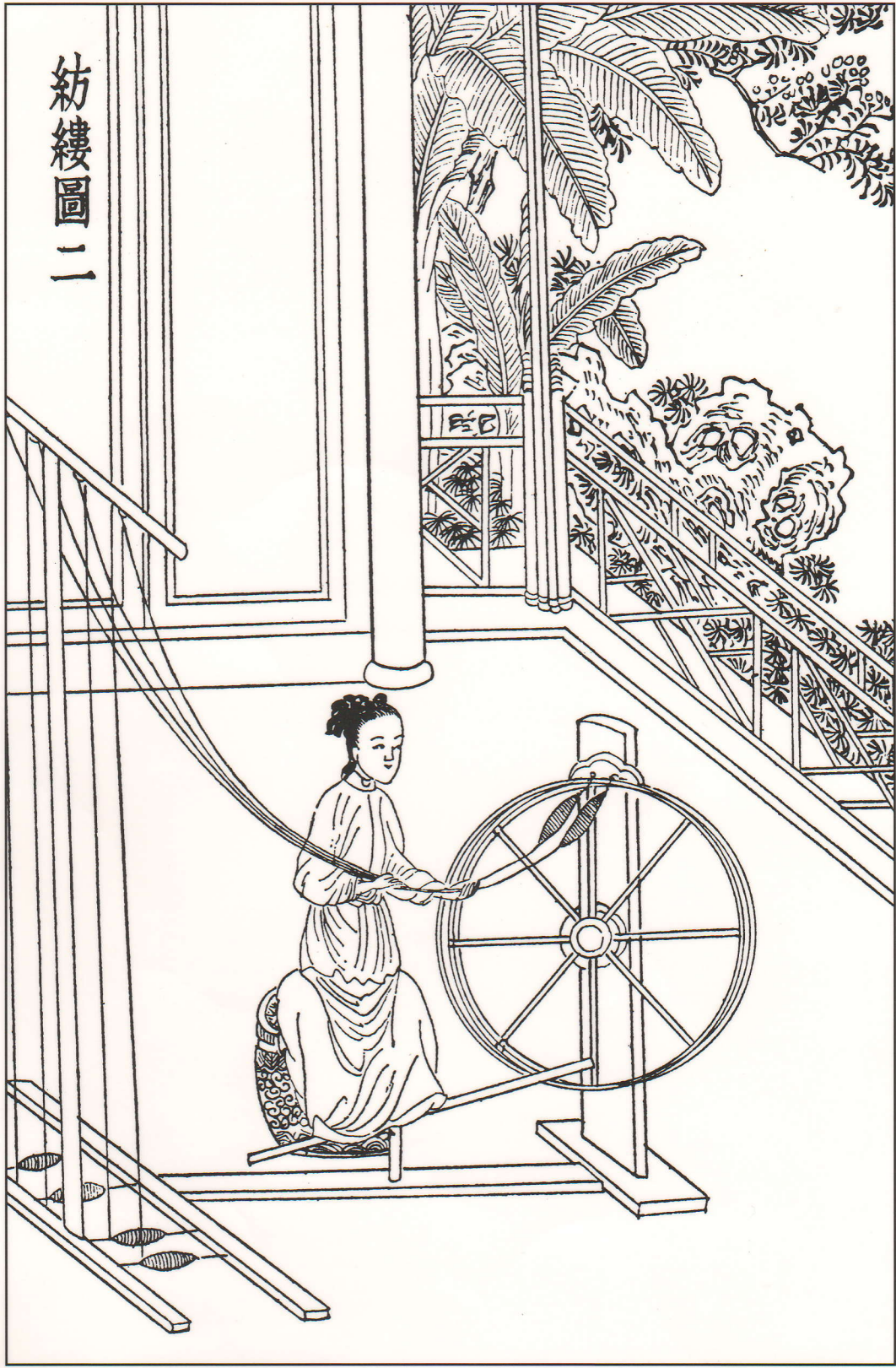


紡縷圖二



紡車

Spinning Wheel

To meet the increasing demand for silk, China's greatest export, the Chinese developed the spinning wheel in A.D. 1035.

Processing silk fibers was difficult because silk strands can run for hundreds of yards and can withstand the weight of 65,000 pounds per square inch. Chinese silk winders needed a machine to deal with the tough, long fibers. The answer was the spinning wheel, a simple circular machine—easily operated by one person—for winding fibers of silk into thread. The invention had two rimless wheels that were laced together with a criss-cross pattern of string (cat's cradle). A drive belt made the wheels spin. Italians who traveled to China during the Mongol dynasty brought the clever invention to Europe. The earliest picture of a spinning wheel in Europe dates from the fourteenth century; later, it came to America with early immigrants. The spinning wheel is still in use in China.