

Hundreds of fictional historical stories appeared on Wikipedia for 10 years without anyone knowing

With a huge number of articles and stories and characters that were made up to seem real, many people gave this woman the title of novelist.

It was a beautiful day when Yifan, a fantasy novelist, was searching through Chinese Wikipedia for historical inspiration. He found the story of the Kashin silver mine, which he had heard for the first time.

According to Wikipedia, the silver mine was operated by the Principality of Tver, an independent state from the 13th to the 15th centuries. It later developed into one of the largest modern industries in the world, the size of a city. The mine was operated by 30,000 slaves and 10,000 free workers.

The wealth of the Kashin silver mine made it an important resource for the princes of Tver but also tempted the powerful dukes of Moscow. A series of wars broke out between 1305 and 1485. After the fall of the Principality of Tver, the Grand Duchy of Moscow took over the Kashin mine until the 18th century, when it was closed due to exhaustion.

Yifan was fascinated by the story of the Kashin mine and the Tver-Moscow war. He dug deeper to learn about the personalities of the nobles and engineers and the history surrounding this forgotten mine. Yifan found hundreds of related articles describing this obscure period of Slavic history. All of them had a dull and suggestive tone, typical of Wikipedia.

The more Yifan looked into it, the more he felt something was wrong. The Russian versions of the articles from that period were all shorter than their Chinese counterparts. Some Russian versions of the articles did not even exist.

Eventually, after careful cross-referencing, Yifan realized that the Kashin Silver Mine (despite the fact that it is a very real town in Tver Oblast, Russia) did not exist. Yifan had uncovered one of the biggest hoaxes in Wikipedia history.

特维尔 - 莫斯科战争	
	日期 1305年–1485年9月10日 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 第一次战争：1305年/1313年–1327年 • 第二次战争：1368–1375年 • 第三次战争：1485年8月21日–9月10日
	地点 东北罗斯、立陶宛大公国、钦察草原等地
	结果 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 第一次战争：特维尔起义被镇压，伊凡一世成为全罗斯大公 • 第二次战争：特维尔大公米哈伊尔·亚历山德罗维奇向莫斯科大公德米特里·顿斯科伊称臣，承认莫斯科大公在全罗斯的领袖地位 • 第三次战争：特维尔大公国被莫斯科大公国征服

"The articles on Chinese Wikipedia are more detailed than those on English Wikipedia and Russian Wikipedia," Yifan wrote. "Characters that do not exist in Russian or English Wikipedia appear in Chinese Wikipedia. In fact, these characters are mixed with real historical figures so that no one can distinguish between real and fake. Even the years-long war between Tver and Moscow over the Kashin silver mine does not exist."

An investigation was soon conducted by Wikipedia. It turned out that the whole incident was orchestrated by a Chinese woman.

Since 2010, this woman, nicknamed Zhemao, has used multiple accounts to distort the history of the Qing Dynasty and Russian history. Currently, all accounts related to the incident have been banned on Chinese Wikipedia.

Over the past 10 years, Zhemao has written 206 articles and contributed to hundreds of articles related to Russian history. Millions of words have been written by Zhemao to create stories, fictional historical figures. She imagined wars, historical stories and economics in great detail.



All of that was put into Wikipedia by Zhemao in a boring, encyclopedic style. Some people suggested giving Zhemao the title of novelist.

According to unconfirmed sources, Zhemao is the daughter of a Chinese diplomat working in Russia. She has a degree in Russian history and became a Russian citizen after marrying a Russian.

She started her career in creating historical fiction in 2010. She first created articles and false stories related to Heshen, a famous corrupt official of the Qing Dynasty. She started distorting Russian history in 2012. Based on the real bloody wars between the two first Slavic nations, Zhemao created many fabricated stories about Russian history on Chinese Wiki.

On the English Wiki page, Zhemao posted an apology. She admitted that she was just a housewife with a high school degree. Zhemao's articles were created to fill in the gaps left by the first articles she edited.

"It is often said that it takes a thousand lies to cover up one lie. I reluctantly deleted the hundreds of thousands of words I wrote, but as a result, I lost millions of words and a circle of academic friends collapsed," Zhemao wrote. "It is difficult to make up for the trouble I have caused, so a permanent ban is the only option. My current knowledge is not enough to make a living, so in the future I will learn a trade, work honestly, and not do such fanciful things again."

Some Wikipedia editors warned that the incident had shaken the reputation of the entire Chinese Wikipedia. On the other hand, most Chinese netizens turned to praise Zhemao's talent and perseverance and encouraged her to release a novel in the future.

"It's really amazing how she came up with all the historical stories with such high logic, even the details like clothes, money and utensils are very consistent," said one Weibo user.

As of June 17, most of the fictional historical articles created by Zhemao on the Chinese Wiki have been deleted. Some of the erroneous articles have been corrected by other contributors. Zhemao's edits to other articles have been retracted.

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