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Front Covers:

WHITE SILKIE BANTAM

The first documented description of Silkies is accorded to Marco Polo during his travels in Asia in the 13th century. Silkies most likely made their way to the West via the Silk Route and maritime trade. The Silkie bantam is a miniature variety of the Silkie. They are a popular ornamental breed of chickens. Silkies have black skin, bones and grayish-black meat. Their Chinese name is *wu gu ji* literally meaning "dark boned chicken". Melanism which extends beyond the skin into an animal's connective tissue is caused by fibromelanosis, which is a rare mutation believed to have originated in Asia. Silkies are also known for their polydactylia. Silkies are well known for their calm, docile and friendly temperament and they are considered as ideal pets.

BLACK PEKIN BANTAM

The Black Pekin is of Chinese origin. The first Pekins are alleged to have been looted from the private collection of the Emperor of China British by soldiers during the Second Opium War (1860). However, some sources suggest that a consignment of birds from China around 1835 were given to Queen Victoria. The birds are short and often only 20-30 centimeters tall. The Pekin possesses a wealth of feathering about its feet and legs, quite nearly obscuring them. They are very docile, and they make ideal pets, especially for families with younger children. The cocks can be aggressive and defensive of their territory.