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Story of Giant PANDA Tan Kai



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PREFACE

People around the world today love giant pandas, perhaps little realizing that the ancient people of China were already familiar with the animal. In famous ancient books, it was successively referred to as "Pi" (a mythical bearlike wild animal), "Pi Xiu" (ditto), "Mo", "Tapir", "Iron-eating Beast" and "White Leopard", and so on. The giant panda is a combination of white and black fur, and these colors can be said to symbolize Chinese culture. From the Tai Chi diagram with the interlacement of black and white to "Hetu" and "Luoshu" with the arrangement of white and black dotted lines, and from the board used to play *Go (Weiqi)* with its black and white squares to Chinese paintings with their infinite charm created by black ink and white paper, all of these show the essence of Chinese culture. This can be summed up in expressions such as "profound truth is the most simple and easiest to grasp" embodying rich philosophical connotations — "be both opposite and complementary (to each other)" and "critical thoughts in plain and simple matters". It seems that the giant panda is born to naturally inherit the characteristics of Chinese culture and become the animal that can best embody them.

The giant panda has captured the hearts of countless Chinese and foreign "fans" for its austere and cute appearance. People's love for panda transcends geographical boundaries, races and ideology, becoming the embodiment of the great love most treasured by humans.

As an ancient relic animal, it is regarded as a "national treasure" by the Chinese people, while the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) takes it as a symbol of global nature protection.

Thanks to the joint efforts of several generations of Chinese and international protection workers, considerable progress has been made in giant panda conservation. Construction of nature reserves is well underway to effectively protect the small population of giant pandas; rescue projects have been implemented to better facilitate protection of the panda's habitat; national surveys are carried out continuously to provide first-hand information for ensuring the animal's conservation; giant panda ex-situ conservation has been conducted; when the captive panda population reaches a certain scale, animals are released back into nature as part of a positive interaction between ex-situ conservation and in-situ conservation. Currently, the population of wild panda is described as "steadily rising", which is really gratifying.

Many people today are eager to know more about the secret life and little-known stories of giant pandas. However, how to make "hard lumps" of scientific knowledge blend into "digestible" literature has long posed difficulties.

However, when I met Mr. Tan Kai, I appreciated and admired him for his attitude of feeling at ease with both science and the humanities and the spirit of sharing knowledge with the public through a down-to-earth approach.

As a veteran in the field of literature and science, Tan Kai served as chief editor of *Science Fiction World* for 24 years and helped it become a popular periodical in China and the world's largest-circulation science fiction magazine. He continues his work of discovery and enthusiastically supports a large number of today's popular science fiction writers. Besides text editing, Tan Kai also adheres to scientific, literary and artistic creation. In this spirit, he has made frequent journeys to China's panda reserves and has written a number of popular science works, scientific poems and literature reports related to the giant panda.

Wu Xiankui, director of the Sichuan Science Writers Association, delivered a keynote speech entitled "Three Primary Colors in Tan Kai's Life". These, he said, were "passion, pandas and science". "I believe that is really a true portrayal of Tan Kai's life," Wu said.

Tan Kai has been engaged in panda protection for 34 years ago. His *Story of Giant Panda* can be regarded as another masterpiece that sum up his work in this field. Through vivid and interesting stories, the book details the history and the origin of the panda, panda's habits, release process and the moving stories of interaction between pandas and humans. Scientific knowledge is organically associated with people's panda emotions in this work in an incisive and vivid way. I think this book will gain many Chinese and foreign readers.

I wish that Story of Giant Panda can become an exquisite gift book and Chinese culture about giant pandas can spread to the world as a whole!

Hu Jinchu

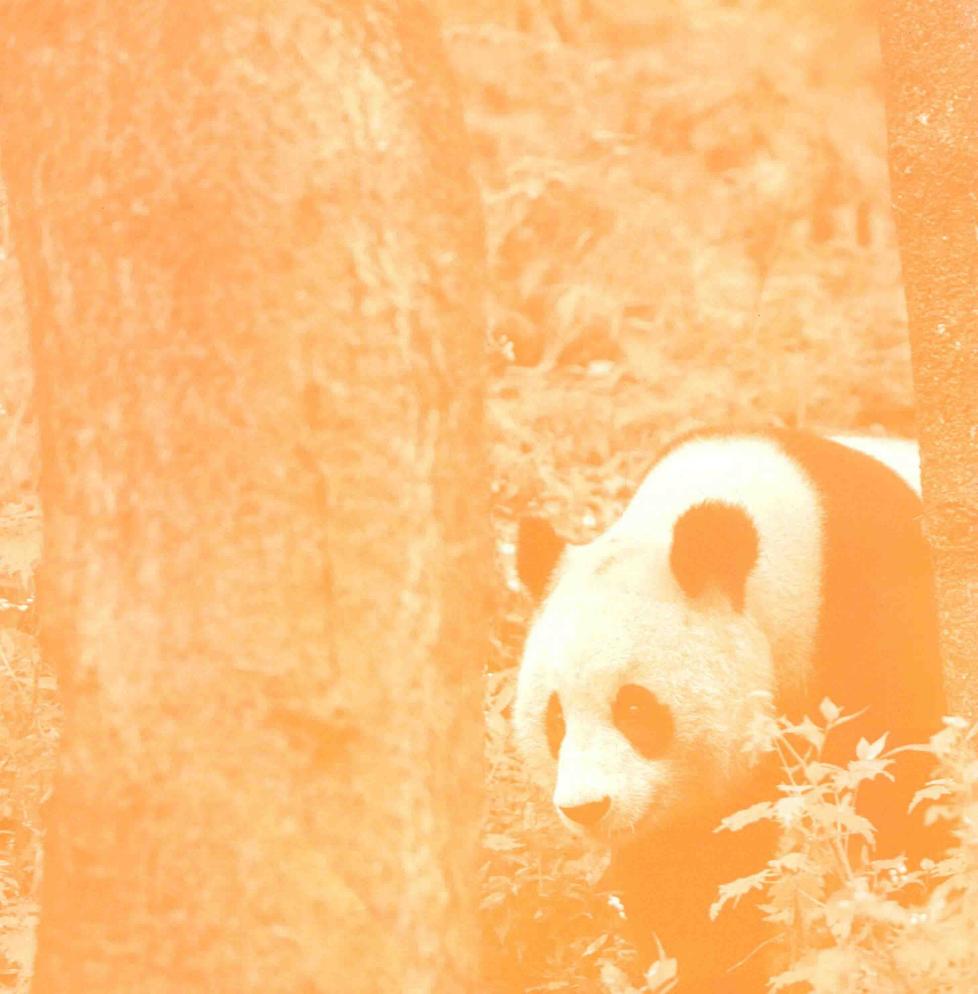
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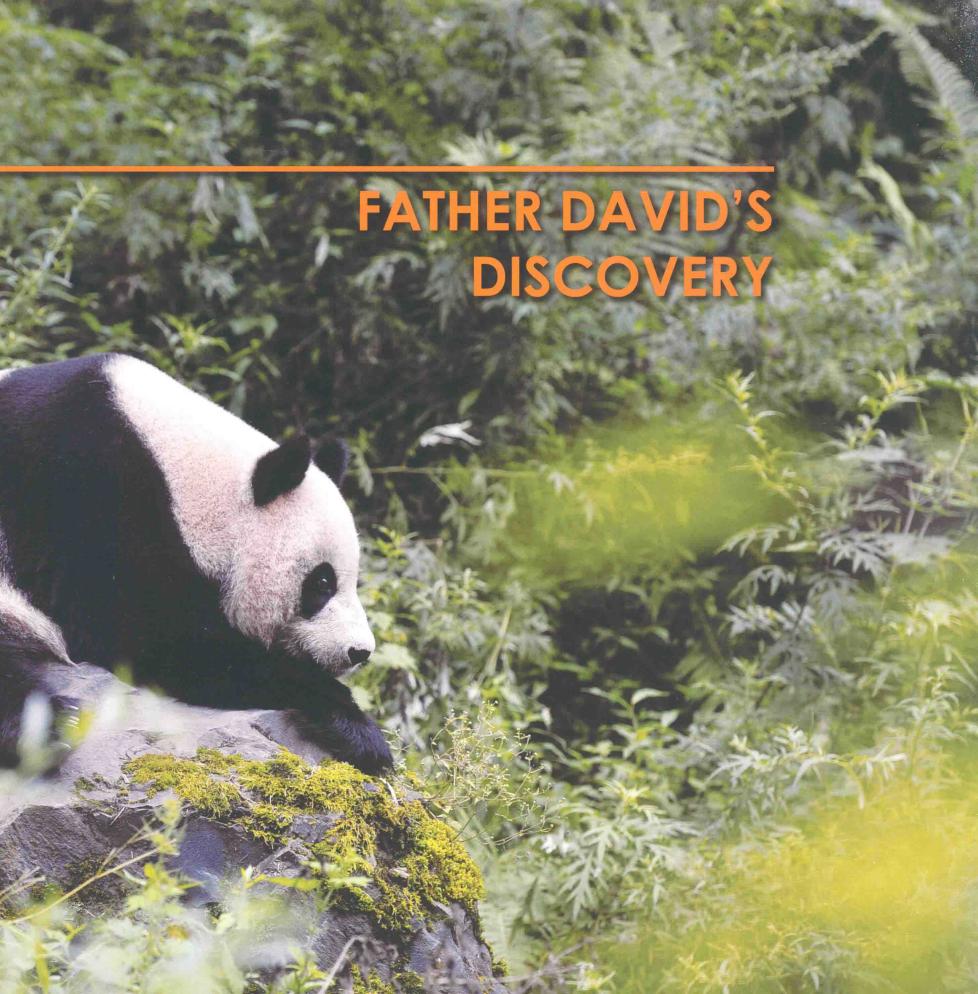
October 25, 2014













Armand David (September 27, 1826-November 10, 1900) was born in 1826 in Ezpeleta in southwest France, a small city neighboring the Basque region of Spain. That particular era was a time of great discovery in terms of flora and fauna. Not so affected by the Quaternary glaciations of the Ice Age, China had been able to preserve so many remarkable rare animals and plants that "going to China" had become a trend among zoologists and botanists. Influenced by his father, David combined religious piety with a strong interest in nature, reflecting in the collection of insect specimens. A decade after becoming a Lazarist missionary Catholic priest, David was finally dispatched to China. During those 10 years, he studied natural history and the handling of specimens in Florence and could vividly mimic the chirps of various creatures, in preparation for his great Chinese treasure hunt.

In February 1869, David arrived in Dengchigou in the Qionglai Mountain, Muping County (today's Baoxing County of Sichuan Province). It was a transitional zone lying between the lush Sichuan Basin and the arid Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Numerous mountains stretch from west to east, but are suddenly traversed by a range running north-south. Consequently, a natural T-junction appears to become home to animals and plants moving in from all directions. A Chinese-style two-storied quadrangle dwelling with a huge roof was perched on hilltop at an altitude of 1,765 meters. That was a church founded in 1839.

As soon as David arrived at Dengchigou, he threw himself into collecting specimens of flora and fauna. On one occasion, he lost his way and stumbled upon "the most breathtaking mountain road". On his return after investigating the area around the summit of the Hongshan Mountain, he stopped to rest at the house of a villager named Li. Near the fire pit, a black and

In November 2004, Andre Derraidou, former mayor of Ezpeleta, made a special visit to giant pandas in Dengchigou.



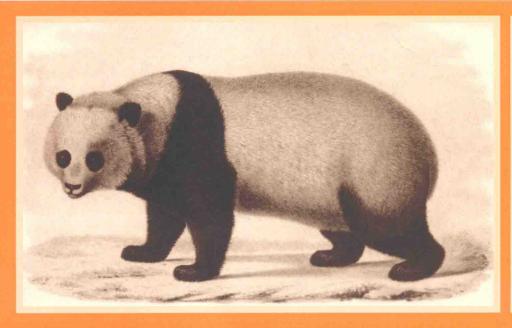
Portrait of Armand David.

white fur hanging on the wall attracted David's attention. The host explained it was a kind of secretive beast that inhabited the high mountains and dense forests on that area that he and his fellow-villagers called "Hua Xiong" (colorful bear). One of the villagers promised to give David a live cub. Unfortunately, by the time the cub reached David, the animal stopped breathing due to the jolting experienced on the rough road.

According to strict regulations of zoological taxonomy, one cannot identify a species without the actual presence of a fur or even body or skeleton. Finally, on April 1, a hunter caught a live "Hua Xiong" and brought it to David.

This was an adult giant panda, and more exuberant, stronger and attractive than those pudgy pandas seen in the zoo. Under the scouring influence of rain, frost and dew, and being swept by branches and grass leaves, its fur sparkled - the black fur looked like black paint and the white fur looked like silver.

That very night, David hurriedly wrote a report to Henri Milne-Edwards, the eminent zoologist who was curator of the National Museum of Natural History of Paris. He thought this peculiar animal was a kind of bear, and named it Black and White Bear. However, Henri Milne-





Portraits of giant panda and Chinese elk collected by Father David.



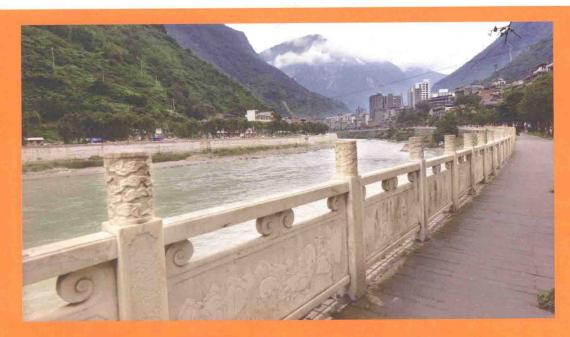
Edwards did not accept the fact that there was any relationship between the panda and bear. After several twists and turns, it was eventually given the name of "giant panda".

It is believed that there are dozens of names in Chinese classics, such as Mo (Tapir), Hua Xiong, White Leopard, Shitieshou (Iron-eating Beast), Pi Xiu (Mythical Wild Animal), White Fox, which are suspected to have referred to the giant panda at different times. So, why was David given the honor of its discovery?

The word is appropriate in the sense of modern science, because the scientific name was based on the requirements of animal taxonomy and abided by the internationally recognized standard. Since April 1, 1869, Dengchigou, Baoxing County, Sichuan Province has been regarded as the origin of the species.

David's report to the National Museum of Natural History of Paris, and Milne-Edwards' expert 27-page analysis were once published by the museum's journal. The two dust-laden documents stored for 140 years are literally the identification papers of the giant panda, whose full texts have never been read by contemporary scientists before.

In recent years, a panda-lover, Sun Qian, the former deputy mayor of Ya'an City, asked his



189 species of plants, found by Father David, now engraved in handrails by the Baoxing River.

The Origin of the Name of 'Giant Panda'

Henri Milne-Edwards studied the fur and skeleton of the panda as well as David's report, and concluded that, although there were some similarities, its teeth and skeletal features were very different. Besides, it had an apomorphic relationship with the raccoon and Chinese Lesser Panda. Considering that the bambooeating Lesser Panda was already found in Himalayan foothills in 1825, this new species was named Giant Panda.





Lesser Panda and Giant Panda