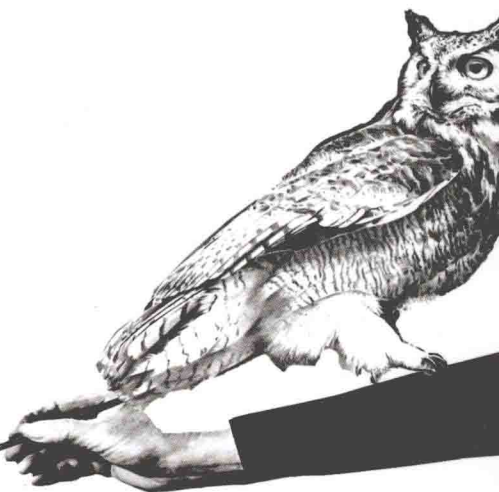
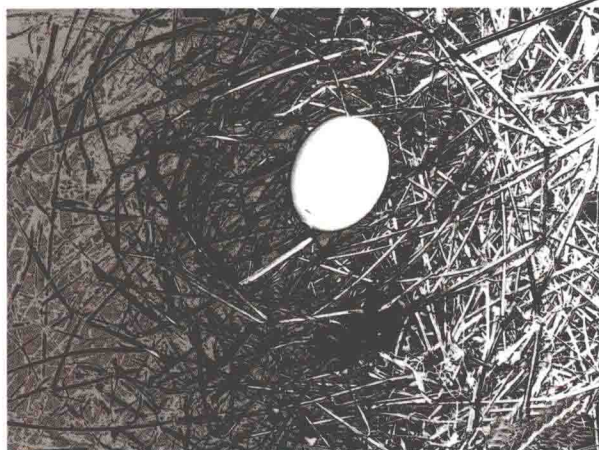


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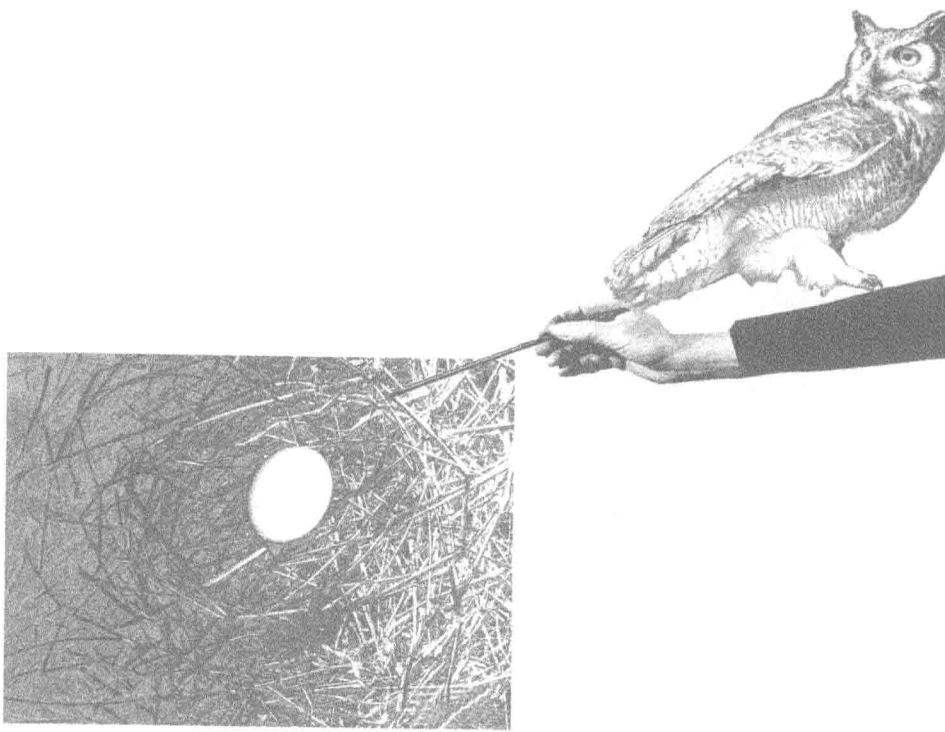
The Chinese Dream

Real-Life Stories of Creative People

13 people sharing their life stories, telling what they think about culture and society, and offering their dreams and insights into the future of China



NEW WORLD PRESS



The Chinese Dream Series

Real-Life Stories of Creative People

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Foreword

Every nation has its own dream. The dream of public-spirited Chinese at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) was to make China an independent nation which could hold its own in the world. After overthrowing the Qing Empire, the Chinese dreamt of removing the “three big mountains” of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, and establishing a new China. Today in socialist China, our dream as a nation is to achieve the goal of a vibrant prosperous society, step by step, by the 100th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China in 2049. A nation without a dream is a tragic one, for without goals there can be no challenges. A nation’s dream has to be the dream of her people, otherwise it is just “a castle in the air,” and can not be realized. The success of the Chinese revolution lies in the fact that the basis of the nation’s dream was the dream of its people.

Many Chinese have been successful in this new era of reform and innovation, and their dreams are all closely related to the dream of our nation.

But what about the dreams of the rest of us? The answer lies at a deeper level. To our joy, the author of this book has filled this gap that couldn’t be ignored by interviewing ten ordinary people who are not “elites” yet cherish their own dreams. They, too, represent the wishes of the majority of the Chinese people.

These ten people struggle to recognize their dreams, experiencing success and failure, learn lessons and sometimes feel regret. Their stories are presented without embellishment. They are mostly about

migrant workers from the country who come seeking opportunities. From Henan, Shanxi, Yunnan and elsewhere they work in the lowest-paying jobs, eke out a living and worry about the future. Or they have found a way to make the lives of their fellow workers better. Many are still struggling in a system that is changing but may not be fast enough for them. Many have kept their sense of dignity but others have deep regrets. Their dreams push forward both themselves and our society. I hope they will always be confident and courageous. Their dreams are all part of the Chinese dream. They are just like thousands of “CZ carrier rockets” soaring aloft into the skies. With such strong engines, China’s dream for the Chinese people will certainly become true.

In March 2006, several friends and I were introduced by Zhang Hai’ou*, deputy editor-in-chief of New World Press, to An Dun. We talked about sincerity in communication, how to dialogue with others, and the relationship between self-confidence and being bold and assured because of the rightness of one’s cause.

An Dun looked at me and said, “I’m not going to ask anything about your distinguished past. Let’s just talk about your daily life.” She expressed her interest in knowing about my friends. So, pointing at Zhou Mingwei**, a learned scholar and executive deputy director-general of the China Foreign Languages Publishing and Distribution Administration, I said that he was one of my best friends. Then she asked him, point-blank: “Tell me about Zhao Qizheng’s shortcomings.” Only at the end did she tell us that she had been interviewing us.

Before long, her “oral record” was published. My elderly mother, a retired professor, after reading it through, commented, “I could guess it’s about you and not anyone else, even if your name is not mentioned. It’s simple, sincere, and excellent!” An Dun’s “oral record” shows her great

* Zhang Hai’ou is now editor-in-chief of New World Press.

** Zhou Mingwei is now director of China Foreign Languages Publishing and Distribution Administration.

originality. She is good at introducing a topic and summing up its essence. She has a subtle approach to both her interviewees and readers. All in all, her work is truly unique.

This book highlights the uniqueness of her style: she understands something great from something seemingly trivial. When I read these true, moving stories, I felt as if I were joining their conversation. I was delighted to make ten precious new friends who I would normally never meet and befriend.

I believe readers will share my feelings.

Zhao Qizheng
January, 2014

Note: Zhao Qizheng is former director-general of the State Council Information Office, director of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and dean of the School of Journalism and Communication of Renmin University of China.

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A Troubadour's Ode to Tibet

Profile:

Fan Wen was born in 1962 and hails from Zigong, Sichuan Province. He graduated from the Department of Chinese Language and Literature of Southwest China Normal University in 1985. He used to be a cadre of the publicity division of the Yunnan Provincial Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, an editor of the Yunnan Writers' Association and deputy chief editor of *Bianjiang* (which means frontier) *Literature*. Currently he serves as director of the Yunnan Writers' Association. In 1986 his literary works started to appear, among which were his masterpieces, *One Century in Tibet*, which was nominated for the seventh Mao Dun literature prize, *Hai Rui the Uncorrupted Official*, *Half a Century in Tibet*, *People in Tibet*, and *Green Village*.

Whenever I have problems writing, I start thinking about city life. City noises, intrigues, the bustling as well as the expressed and hidden competitions. These make me think of Tibetan life, of my Khampa brothers and of the peaceful villages. The deeper I fall into city life again, the more my mind gets complex. The only way out is to pack my luggage and return to Tibet.

—Fan Wen

The writer Qiu Huadong writes of Fan Wen, "He is weak in looks, a 100 percent intellectual, but inside him is a restless, magnanimous soul. He has a propensity for wine and meat and for singing ethnic songs in a husky voice. He travels in and out of Yunnan and Tibet by car a lot. He has a tender heart. He used to live in Beijing to support his daughter's studies before she went to France for further education. Sober, he is a gentleman. Drunk, his eyes get cloudy and his voice even huskier and becomes as casual and relaxed as a shepherd on the plateau. "

After several meetings with Fan Wen in Beijing, the strongest impression that I have of this writer is him with a cowboy hat on, sipping his strong tea and smoking strong cigarettes.

Reading his novels is a pleasant but somewhat suspenseful journey. His trilogy reveals much about the man who wrote them. *One Century in Tibet* is about how different religions, ethnic groups and cultures melted and clashed on that amazing land that is Tibet. The story conveys the persistence of long-held beliefs, the importance of such beliefs, and their effects on the exchanges and conflicts between different cultures. *Half a Century in Tibet* depicts a transition from man to a Buddha and analyzes the social environment of and the reason for Tibet's universal belief in Tibetan Buddhism. *People in Tibet* is a story about love saved by belief and of fate changed by love, even among people of different cultures.

Fan Wen summarizes his Tibetan Trilogy this way. "I do not know how many readers can be attracted by what I am about to say, but I know how I feel. These three books are three wonderfully grand

stories, with each containing smaller stories that go from simple to complex, apart from depictions of the mysterious Tibet, the ancient religions, the long history or the unique local culture. They are for the ordinary reader who is reading for pleasure. I think the three novels are very Hollywood. There is a conflict every three minutes without fail, similar to the principle of how Hollywood movies are made.”

At this point, Tan Guanglei from Taiwan Guanglei International Copyrights Organization, also Fan Wen's overseas copyrights broker, comments, “*People in Tibet* is composed in beautiful words, but not as literary the way many books in China are written when it comes to Tibet. He is an excellent storyteller. His stories twist and turn, touch your heart, create intrigue and lead readers forward step by step. At the end of the story, readers will close the book and regret the abrupt end and then decide to reread it. This is what makes a good novel, but honestly, how many novels can do all this? I think *People in Tibet*, especially, accomplishes it.”

About Karma

Fan Wen is from Sichuan but now is living in Yunnan. He is of the Han nationality. He spent a good 10 years finishing his Tibetan Trilogy. This literary project transcends ethnic characteristics. Sometimes man meets his career like one meets a stranger and a tiny detail may be a decisive moment. Fan Wen prefers to call this kind of moment “a chance” or a “revelation.” The word “revelation” is highlighted in *Book of Revelation*, which is where he began to pick up Tibetan culture, the Tibetan land and the Tibetan people.

The chance, or revelation, came to him in 1999 when he joined in

a project named “Go to Tibet” organized by the Yunnan People's Publishing House. Seven writers were to walk in seven different directions and write what they saw. Fan Wen walked to Lhasa from Yunnan along the Yunnan-Tibetan Road. Like a geological team's initial survey, the project marked some potential sites on the map and selected others for further examination. He found a gold mine as it were at the Yanjing (Salt Well) Church, a Catholic church hidden in a gorge of the Lancang River, Mangkang prefecture. It is the birthplace of *One Century in Tibet*.

To Fan's surprise, he found not only Catholics and a Catholic church in Tibet — a place characterized by its universal belief in Tibetan Buddhism — but also the tomb outside the church of a foreign missionary, who had been killed in a religious conflict. This was his first encounter for his book.

It was an encounter beyond present space and time around differing races and political viewpoints. Fan Wen said, “I remember hearing something calling out from inside me as I stood before the tomb on that rainy dusk evening. So I decided to dig for the meaning behind this religious tragedy and represent the exchanges and conflicts among different beliefs and cultures. I've gone back to that place again and again.”

He'd never been to Tibet when he began to create his literary work. Even his first chance meeting with Tibet was at most a superficial one. How was he going to learn the literature and art, culture and history that he'd need? This question about basics was also the one I asked him during the interview.

“I'm a devout disciple of reading and experiencing — this is the simplest golden rule of intellectuals. Since I fell in love with Tibetan

culture, reading in my study to me is a welcome education in ethnic cultures. Walking on the earth of these people has created wisdom and developed my sense of them through my life experiences with them.

“I was well aware that if I would write such a novel, I’d have to overcome numerous hardships including differentiations among cultures and religions such as Tibetan Buddhism, Catholicism and even Naxi’s Dongba Religion. I’d have to learn local tribal cultures and histories. Everything was waiting there for me to learn what I needed to know. Fortunately, I have a strong desire for knowledge and I am really interested when I read their religious classics and history.”

So after his declaration to write his novel, he started a series of travels to and interviews in Tibet. Some scholars are more enthusiastic about indoor paperwork, but Fan Wen is a man of action. He always believes that the secret to making a great story is to immerse himself into his story prototypes and settle down in their realm of life. Writers fall into two groups. Some write to preserve culture and others to find culture. Fan Wen went to Tibet to find culture. This is a brand new lifestyle for him. To appreciate its beauty requires an eye both Tibetan and keen.

This guy, who is always smoking and thinking, likes being interviewed in a one-to-one and personal way. “I usually go alone and deep into the places that I have selected. For instance, I chose Nixi Village near Shangri-La and spent nearly three months there because I believed only such a long period could allow me to gradually sense the secrets and details of life of a village — its farm work, marriage traditions, folk customs and taboos. Each villager became

my teacher.

It's actually simple to make friends with Tibetans. Just have a drinking competition with them. In point of fact, I never drank before I went to Tibet. One bottle of beer was enough to get me drunk. When I first went to Nixi, I'd lie under the table drunk while they were still drinking and singing. But now I'm proud to say we lie down under the table together. I'm the kind of guy without capacity for liquor but with the courage to drink when I need to drink. It does make me a troublemaker on occasion. It is a horrid habit."

The three works of his Tibetan Trilogy are both independent and indivisible. The close tie among them can be described as a spiritual aura, or Fan Wen's explorations into the Tibet that he loves so much. Themes involving religion are hard to pull off, but Fan Wen's works are closely related to religion, and he is incredibly good at this. He thinks this is because of his deep respect for the temples and churches that were so much a part of the lives of the people he interviewed.

He spent time in both kinds when he was in a village. To live in a temple is relatively easier with an official presentation. "When I was writing *Half a Century in Tibet* I chose Yundeng Temple in Dongwang Township, Xiangcheng Prefecture, Sichuan Province, a temple of Mongolian Lamaism where there was a very profound and pure religious atmosphere. I made friends with a disciplinarian and after that his fellow lamas treated me amicably. People from local churches are mostly kind but lonely, so they welcomed me with open arms even though I'm not a native. I became friends in each place of worship. I appreciate those kindhearted and unsophisticated Tibetans so much. They have faith. They have different attitudes than ours, and they teach me how to face ubiquitous gods and how to revere, feel and

worship nature's gifts. ”

Fan Wen is taciturn but has a natural charisma. He is honest and considerate to friends as well. He often pays the bill without being noticed. This good quality gathers numerous Tibetan friends around him and has saved him from danger in Tibet time and again.

“In the past I spent half my time traveling in Tibet, and I was happy and thrilled each time I went there. In 2003, I worked in Tibet as a government cadre for half a year and made many Khampa friends. Together we got drunk and traveled around. Villages, pastures, salt pans, snowy mountains, river valleys, lakes, temples, churches — everything was a textbook open to me.

“I like roaming the zigzag, rugged Tibetan roads in a car, and I enjoy the feeling when I drift around with a mountaineer bag and rest wherever I like. Recalling these times, I think they are the best times of my life. Back then, my safety was my biggest problem. I have faced various dangers, debris flows, landslides, flying stones and mountain collapses. More than once I have been one step from death.

“I never knew how horrible a mountain collapse could be until one day a collapse rained down in front of my car. The mountain exploded from its inside as if it was hit by a cannonball. The deafening noise from it was like a steel plate snapping in half.

“My car once almost skidded into the turbulent Jinsha River. When I stopped and got out, I was weak-kneed even after two cigarettes. I never think of myself as brave, but still I like the feeling of the unknown journey that is waiting for me. Life is fearless and the future is unknown. ”

During my long interviews with him, Fan Wen told me about people whose stories he could tell very casually because some of

them live in his characters. Some are in his heart and others never leave his life.

“One of my most impressive persons I interviewed is a lama who was on a kowtowing pilgrimage when I first met him on White Horse Snow Mountain. He is the prototype for *Half a Century in Tibet*. It was a special form of journey, which is done by performing kowtows, reverently prostrating oneself on the paths and roads, no matter the weather, to the sacred monastery of choice. I followed along with him and his only backup, his mother, who carried a big bag. Usually a lama on a kowtow journey needs three or five young men as backup.

“We talked when he rested. His and his mother’s faces were hard to describe. On his face I only saw peace, and on his mother’s I saw pride, which surprised me very much.”

If possible, such a depiction could be the inspiration for an oil painting, and as a writer, Fan Wen converted it into the spiritual aura that is embedded throughout the whole story.

If the three books are sorted by types of readers, *People in Tibet* absolutely caters best to the young readers and the only reason for this is that it focuses more on love. In fact, it is just a coincidence because Fan Wen never aims at talking about love. It is about a person who gave him the chance to encounter a personal goal he had concealed long in his heart. He encountered the idea of “karma.”

“I could never forget the prototype of *People in Tibet* — one of my interviewees and a Tibetan veteran returning from Taiwan,” he said. “In 2006, I went from Lancang River valley to Nujiang River valley and arrived after climbing over two snow mountains. I went there to see a church, but while there, heard in the village about a reclusive veteran from Taiwan who lived up on an alpine pasture.

"His ex-wife lived in the village, but he wasn't able to live with her since he'd returned. I was surprised at this. I decided to pay a visit to him. The village and the pasture were connected by a telephone wire, which the man had gotten installed. I spoke with him and he refused to do the interview. So I went anyway, of course, and we chatted for two days and nights in his shed. I had had no intention to tell a love story in *People in Tibet*, but after I met him, I decided that the book deserved to have one. His story about love and faith helps awaken a picture of an entire era."

Fifty-year-old Fan Wen reveres destiny and believes he is fortunate as a writer. It isn't because he has had so many books published. It is because a number of doomed encounters were surreptitiously advancing what he was going to do as soon as he began to write. "I'm lucky, for without so many difficulties, I was able to find the prototypes for all three books. Sometimes I wonder why. Heaven must be helping me," he said.

About Integration with the Rest of China

Before writing about Tibet, a Han must break down his own mental preconceptions, his cultural screen and his preconceived screen to make moral judgments on what he saw in Tibet. On many occasions these screens became cliffs making it difficult for Fan to be the kind of human being who can really connect with Tibet.

Fan Wen believes these screens can be attributed to the differentiations between the Hans and Tibetans. He was well aware of these difficulties from the very beginning. For example, a Han child grows up with stories like *Journey to the West*, *Outlaws of the Marsh*