

CONTEMPORARY
CHINA

A GLIMPSE OF CHINA

By Jin Bo



China Intercontinental Press

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著 者: 金 帛

译 者: 王国振 关威威

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电 话: 010-82005927, 82007837

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Foreword

China is a country the outside world sometimes struggles to understand. It is experiencing the fastest economic growth and social change in human history. This rapid development of the most populous country in the world provides economic opportunities for other countries; and this in turn brings China increasingly closer to the outside world. China's development calls for a peaceful international environment, and global prosperity needs continuing development in China. In this environment it is necessary for those outside China to come to a better understanding of this vast country.

China has a history of over 5,000 years. Throughout China's long history, China has developed a unique culture which has greatly enriched world civilization.

Currently China is powering ahead to open its door to the outside world and to learn from others. China is dedicated to peaceful relations, and is always sincere in its dealing with others.

Throughout history, many people have come from the outside world to



explore China. Some of them gained a good understanding of the country. Of course, impressions of China varied according to the period.

Some 400 years ago, Alvaro Semedo (1585–1658), a Portuguese missionary who came to China, described China in the following way in his book on China:

It is a big country with a large population, with endless villages and towns, each in close proximity to the next. Houses fill the horizon. China has varied climates according to latitude and region. The country abounds in fruit, giving the impression of being a warehouse of fruit gathered from around the world. It is self-sufficient in food production, and in fact produces a surplus to trade with other countries. Many countries yearn for the chance to visit China. It produces mainly rice and wheat. Many countries consume mainly wheat or rice, and China grows both in large amounts.

When talking about the Chinese society Decades ago, John King Fairbank (1907–1991), said in his book *China: Tradition and Transformation*:

In viewing China, however, foreign advisors must remember the following: First, the Chinese society has families, instead of individuals, government or churches, as its basic unit. Each family provides its members with major support for their financial needs, education and recreational activities. China's ethic system also has families as its center, instead of God or country. The family system calls for its members to be faithful in social behavior. Law is the indispensable tool for management while individual morality constitutes the foundation of the society. In China, there will never be anarchy due to a lack of importance being attached to the law in mind; Chinese society is closely united under Confucianism.

Several years ago, William Overholt with the Asian-Pacific Policy Center of the US Research and Development made the following comment in *China and Globalization* on the changes in China:

China is making social adjustments which are beyond description. China

does so quite willingly, with the result being that no large country in the world can match her in terms of achievement in improving the life and labor conditions of its people. China follows the rule of law, and its people have strengthened awareness of competition; English is used extensively, and foreign modes of education are widely followed. All these, plus the introduction of many foreign legal systems, help improve the Chinese system and, at the same time, make Chinese culture more sophisticated.

With the deepening of the ongoing reform and opening-up, and with more efforts made to deepen economic globalization, China has become more closely connected to the rest of the world. In this context, getting to know more about China has become a vital priority. This book has been created with the expectation of being of some help in this regard.

