

ZHU QIXIN
ZHANG XIUGUI

A COLLECTION
OF CHOICE SPECIMENS FROM
CHINESE CULTURE

朱岐新 张秀桂

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FOREWORD

With the steady growth of tourism in China, an ever-increasing number of English-speaking visitors have come to see China. They come to visit our historical sites and cultural relics and to enjoy the natural beauty of the scenic spots all over the country. Nevertheless, they also come to seek answers to the questions they have in mind about China and China's culture in particular so as to deepen the friendship with the Chinese people, help other foreigners to develop trade relations with China's firms and corporations and, consequently, to further promote exchange programs with China in the fields of culture, science and technology.

In view of the fact that foreign tourists often express a wish for more information about Chinese culture and their traditional norms and customs, the book "A COLLECTION OF CHOICE SPECIMENS FROM CHINESE CULTURE" is designed to cater for their desires and provide them with a wide range of facts about Chinese culture so that they will have a sketchy understanding of China's rich cultural heritage, the Chinese people's wisdom as well as their greatness in the creation of Chinese history. Since Chinese culture is so abundant, almost as vast as the open sea, a detailed and overall introduction to China's culture in

one book is difficult; therefore, the book intends to offer a collection of choice specimens from Chinese culture to satisfy the readers' demand, including history, arts and crafts, folklore, ethics, architecture, religion, festivals, cuisine, and others.

In the meantime, the book can also help enrich the interpreters' knowledge of our country's culture and offer them some reference materials and ready assistance in their work as interpreters.

However, as it is our first tentative endeavour to collect some of the representative specimens from different aspects of Chinese culture and render them into English, oversights and mistakes are inevitable. We sincerely hope that our readers will give their comments and suggestions without any reserve so that revisions and improvements can be made in the next edition.

Zhu Qixin

Zhang Xiugui

May, 1993, Beijing

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I . Historical Aspect

1. China - A Unified Multi-National State

China has long been a unified multi-national state. The Chinese nation is composed of 56 different nationalities. The majority of the Chinese are the Hans, who make up about 92 per cent of China's total population. But the Hans have not been of a single origin and were formed in the course of thousands of years through merging and assimilation between the Huaxia and many other nationalities. The name Han originated over two thousand years ago during the Han Dynasty.

The unification of all those nationalities into the Chinese nation was a gradual process that took thousands of years. Although the Hans played a major role in the unification, other nationalities, notably the Mongolians and the Manchus played important roles too. The magnificent Chinese national culture has not been the creation of the Hans alone. Such splendid cultural relics as the murals and sculptures in the caves of Dunhuang (Gansu Province), Yungang (Shanxi Province), Longmen (Henan Province) and Kuche (Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region) were the cooperative work of the artists and craftsmen of the Hans and other nationalities.

The minority nationalities - so called because of their relatively smaller populations - differ greatly in size. The Zhuangs

are the most numerous, totalling over 15 million, and live mostly in Guangxi, which has been designated as the Zhuang autonomous region.

There are 12 other nationalities which number more than one million each, including the Mongolians, Huis, Tibetans, Uygurs, Miaos, Koreans and Manchus.

Nine comprise less than 10,000 people, with the Russians and Hoches both less than one thousand people.

The minority people live mainly in western China; a small number live in the north and northeast and on islands off the southeastern coast, including Taiwan and Hainan Province. The vast areas inhabited by the minority people are rich in resources, which will soon be developed as the country's modernization progresses.

At the time of liberation in 1949, the minority nationalities were in various stages of socio-economic development. More than 30 nationalities, totalling some 30 million people, were about on a par with the Hans. Others were comparatively backward to varying degrees. They have since been enjoying equal political rights as the Hans, and have established regional autonomies to manage their own internal affairs in accordance with their ethnic characteristics. Those organs of self-government now include five at the provincial level, 30 at the prefectural and many more at county levels.

Ten special institutes of higher learning have trained over 100,000 administrators and professionals from among the minor-