

PANORAMIC CHINA

SHAANXI

Glories and Dreams



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It is easy to have a quick look at China's past and present, but it takes time to gain a panoramic knowledge of China. The "Panoramic China" series is meant to assist readers, especially those overseas, in this respect. Each volume in the series focuses on a province, municipality or autonomous region, describing, with illustrations, the outstanding characteristics of each area from different perspectives.

Statistics show that nearly 36,000 cultural relics have been found in Shaanxi, and that 900,000 items (sets) of unearthed cultural relics are kept in museum collections throughout the province. Of these relics some 50,000 are classed as rare and precious. These dull and dry numbers allow us to catch a faint glimpse of the receding view of China's longest and most brilliant ancient civilization....

But, if you go a little deeper into the study or appreciation of these cultural relics, you will find that what lies behind them is a geological environment of unique beauty, one that conceived and gave birth to a few mighty dynasties. The most spectacular part is the Qinling Mountain range, known as the dividing line between the north and south of China.

For this reason, this book on Shaanxi starts with the ancient Qinling Mountains, which were essential to the survival of the ancestors of the Chinese people, and ends at today's Qinling Mountains, still a lifeline for the people of Shaanxi—of all Chinese even. The subject of environmental changes in Shaanxi runs right through the book.

PANORAMIC CHINA

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Introduction

China has 23 provinces, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions. Due to geographical and topographical differences and climatic variations, each area has its own unique natural scenery. The mountains in the north of the country are rugged and magnificent, the waters in the south are clear and turbulent, the Gobi in the northwest shines brilliantly in the sunlight, the hills in the southeast are often shrouded in floating fog, green waves of sorghum and soybean crops undulate over the vast fields of the northeast, and the mountains in the southwest, with sequestered villages and terraced fields, look tranquil and picturesque.

There are 56 ethnic groups in China. The Han, making up the overwhelming majority of the population, mainly live in the eastern and central parts of the country, while many ethnic groups with smaller populations live in the west. In China, all ethnic groups, regardless of size, are equal and respect each other. Each ethnic group has its own folk customs, religious beliefs and cultural traditions, and most use their own language and script. Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where ethnic minorities live in compact communities. All the ethnic groups call themselves “Chinese.” They are courteous and friendly. In the ethnic-minority areas, the quiet environment, quaint buildings, exquisite fashions, unsophisticated folk customs and hospitality of the local people hold a great appeal to visitors from afar.

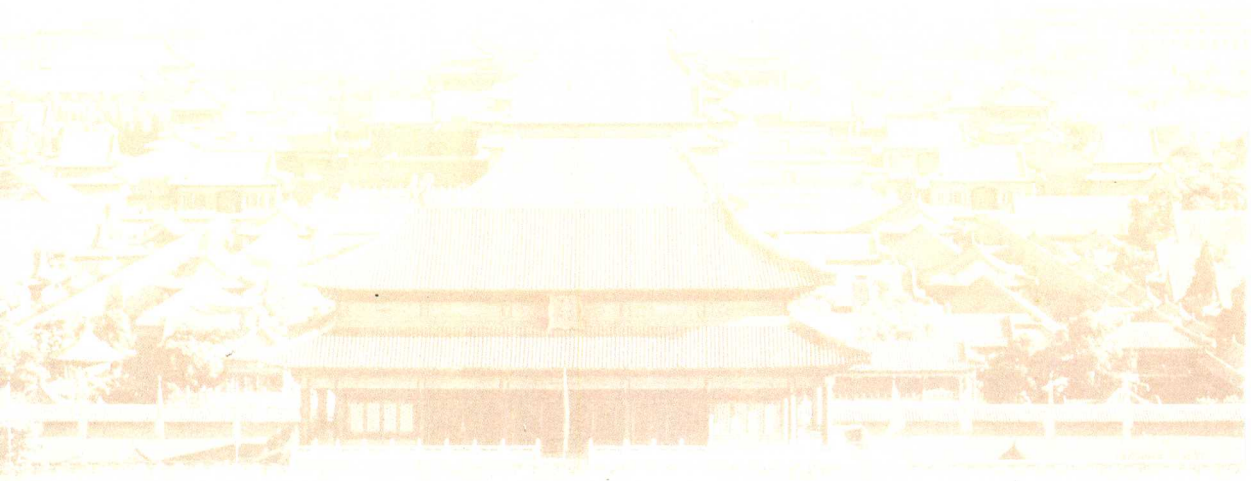
China boasts 5,000 years of recorded civilization and a brilliant culture. The country is home to such world-renowned cultural treasures as the Great Wall, terracotta warriors and horses of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, and Ming and Qing imperial palaces and mausoleums, and large numbers of ancient architectural masterpieces, including temples, Buddhist pagodas, residential buildings, gardens, bridges, city walls and irrigation works. There are also cultural relics unearthed from ancient sites, including painted pottery, jade ware, bronze ware, large and ornate tombs and foundations of historical buildings, and many more as yet undiscovered. The museums of China’s various provinces, municipalities and



autonomous regions house thousands of cultural relics and works of art, among which are treasures rare in the world, displaying the long history of China and the splendid Chinese culture from different aspects. The strong, deep-rooted Chinese culture has always influenced the mentality and moral standards of the Chinese people, having developed continually in pace with the civilization. A careful study of today's Peking Opera, Kunqu opera, shadow plays, calligraphy, painting, paper-cutting, and even the flower-shaped steamed buns on the kitchen range of farmers will reveal elements of traditional Chinese culture as well as replications of the art of the past.

Like other countries of venerable age, China has suffered grievous calamities. During the century and more before the 1950s, the Chinese people made unrelenting struggles for the prosperity of the country, and national independence and liberation. A large number of insightful people and revolutionaries, cherishing all kinds of dreams for a strong China, studied the ways of the West in a quest for prosperity and strength, and borrowed the revolutionary experience of foreign countries. At last, the Communist Party of China, proceeding from the reality of China, and relying on the working people, founded a brand-new country, the People's Republic of China, in 1949. Since then, the Chinese people have made persistent efforts and explorations for the grand revitalization of the Chinese nation. The Chinese people's efforts in the past two decades and more have resulted in outstanding achievements, with rapid social progress, a well-developed economy, and a modern civilization and traditional culture enhancing each other.

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Location of Shaanxi Province within China

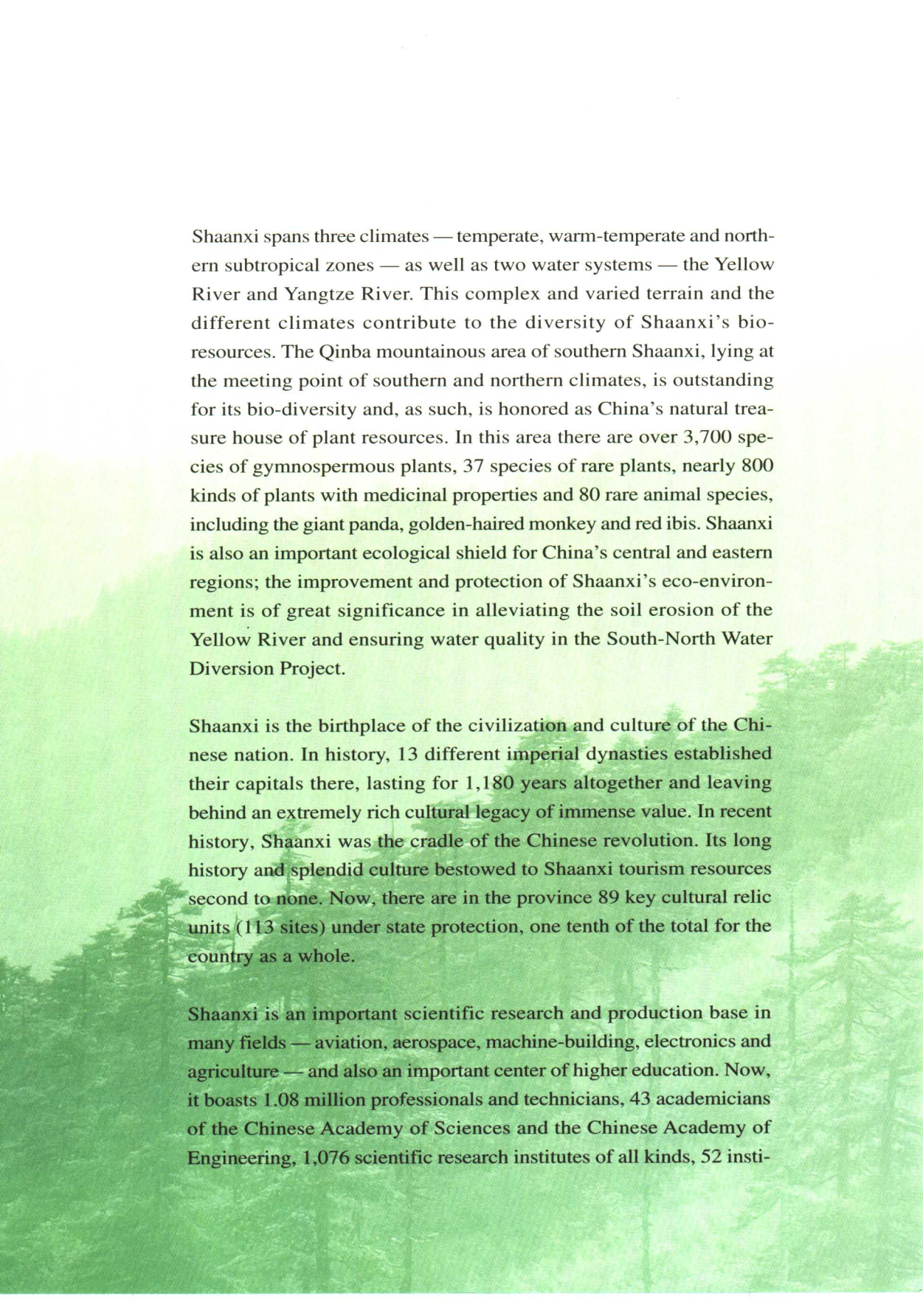


Administrative Map of Shaanxi

Preface

Shaanxi, located deep in China's interior and the gateway to north-west China, has the geographical advantage of being at the cross-roads of north, south, east and west. Within the province's total area of 205,600 sq km lives a population of 37.5 million, distributed across 10 cities and 107 counties, as well as the Yangling High and New Technology Industries Demonstration Zone. Long and narrow in shape from north to south, Shaanxi divides into three natural areas: to the north is the Loess Plateau, which boasts fairly developed animal husbandry and rich energy resources, accounting for 45 percent of the province's total area and 15 percent of its population; in the middle is the Guanzhong (Central Shaanxi) Plain, or the "800-*li*-wide Shaanxi Plain," which is the main center of industrial and agricultural production and of scientific research and education, representing 19 percent of Shaanxi's total area and 60 percent of its population; and at the south is the Qinba (Qinling and Bashan-*ed.*) mountains, which boast abundant hydro, mineral and biological resources, constituting 36 percent of Shaanxi's total area and 25 percent of its population.

The potential value of Shaanxi's mineral resources is estimated at 42,000 billion yuan. This figure, the highest for any province, represents a third of the value of all China's mineral resources combined. For 23 of the 45 main minerals found in China, Shaanxi figures in the top ten. It is especially rich in energy resources: coal reserves stand at 146 billion tons; verified oil reserves, at 1.1 billion tons; and forecast reserves of gas are between 6,000 and 8,000 billion cubic meters, with the verified reserves exceeding 700 billion cubic meters. The Shenfu coalfield is an eco-driven, high-quality coalfield producing coal of high heat but low phosphor, sulfur and dust content.



Shaanxi spans three climates — temperate, warm-temperate and northern subtropical zones — as well as two water systems — the Yellow River and Yangtze River. This complex and varied terrain and the different climates contribute to the diversity of Shaanxi's bio-resources. The Qinba mountainous area of southern Shaanxi, lying at the meeting point of southern and northern climates, is outstanding for its bio-diversity and, as such, is honored as China's natural treasure house of plant resources. In this area there are over 3,700 species of gymnospermous plants, 37 species of rare plants, nearly 800 kinds of plants with medicinal properties and 80 rare animal species, including the giant panda, golden-haired monkey and red ibis. Shaanxi is also an important ecological shield for China's central and eastern regions; the improvement and protection of Shaanxi's eco-environment is of great significance in alleviating the soil erosion of the Yellow River and ensuring water quality in the South-North Water Diversion Project.

Shaanxi is the birthplace of the civilization and culture of the Chinese nation. In history, 13 different imperial dynasties established their capitals there, lasting for 1,180 years altogether and leaving behind an extremely rich cultural legacy of immense value. In recent history, Shaanxi was the cradle of the Chinese revolution. Its long history and splendid culture bestowed to Shaanxi tourism resources second to none. Now, there are in the province 89 key cultural relic units (113 sites) under state protection, one tenth of the total for the country as a whole.

Shaanxi is an important scientific research and production base in many fields — aviation, aerospace, machine-building, electronics and agriculture — and also an important center of higher education. Now, it boasts 1.08 million professionals and technicians, 43 academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, 1,076 scientific research institutes of all kinds, 52 insti-

tutions of higher learning and 57 privately-run advanced educational organizations. The Xi'an High and New Technology Development Zone is one of China's first sci-tech industrial zones opened up to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The Yangling High and New Technology Industries Demonstration Zone is the only agricultural high-tech industries demonstration zone in China. Currently, the Guanzhong High and New Technology Industrial Development Belt has taken shape.

In the early days following the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the Central Government made Shaanxi a key region for development and invested large amounts of funds in the province, thus laying the foundation for Shaanxi's manufacturing and military industries. Efforts in the past few decades have established for Shaanxi a well-developed industrial system covering a complete range of industries, with its production equipment manufacturing industry standing in the leading ranks.

Apart from high-tech industry, tourism and equipment manufacturing, Shaanxi is also a front runner in fruit production, animal husbandry, medicine, energy and chemical engineering. For Shaanxi farmers, fruit production has become one of their major sources of income. The area under fruit tree cultivation exceeds 666,667 hectares, 60 percent of which (400,000 hectares) is planted with apple trees, with the apple output ranking second in China. Shaanxi occupies fifth place throughout the country both for the number of dairy cattle and for fresh milk output. For its abundant plant species, the Qinba mountains in southern Shaanxi have been approved as a growing center for medicinal herbs. The power and chemical engineering base in northern Shaanxi has been developing well and a raft of projects are being commissioned one after the other.

The overall economic strength of Shaanxi has been conspicuously enhanced since the beginning of the 21st century and the province's

GDP has seen an annual growth rate of over 9 percent for six years running, reaching 288.35 billion yuan in 2004.

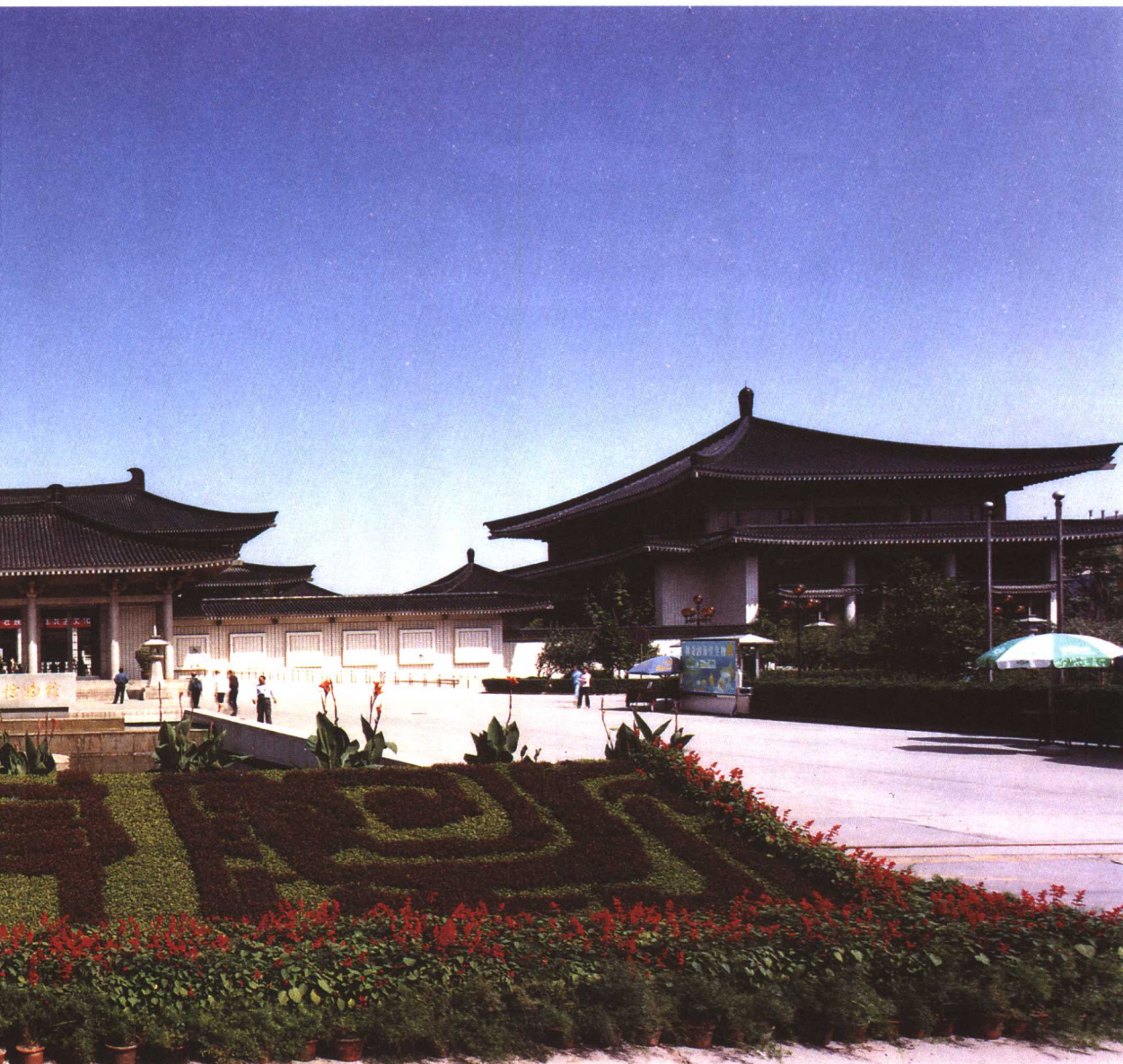
Xi'an sits at the hub of a high-class highway network, which has been basically completed and radiates out in all directions. The total length of expressways in the province exceeds 1,000 km. The Ankang-Xi'an-Yan'an-Shenmu Railroad that traverses the three economic regions of northern, central and southern Shaanxi is already operational, as is the Xi'an-Hefei Railroad connecting Shaanxi with the east coast. Xi'an's Xianyang International Airport has become an important aviation hub for northwestern China, served by 70 airlines flying to major cities in China and abroad. Moreover, the equipment and technology of Shaanxi's communications network have reached international standards, and a high-capacity, high-speed communications transmission network has been established, based on optical cable supported by digital microwave and satellite communications. A comprehensive communications network now covers all the province's cities and counties. Its in-province Internet bandwidth reaches 155 M and the trans-provincial Internet bandwidth is 50 G, making it the communications center for western China.

In order to improve its eco-environment, Shaanxi has in recent years launched such key environmental projects as the protection of natural forests and re-forestation of crop land. By the end of 2004, the total area of crop land re-forested and barren hills and land forested in Shaanxi had reached 170,800 hectares — the most anywhere in China, the proportion of forest cover had increased to 31 percent and there had been improvements in terms of soil erosion and ecological fragility.

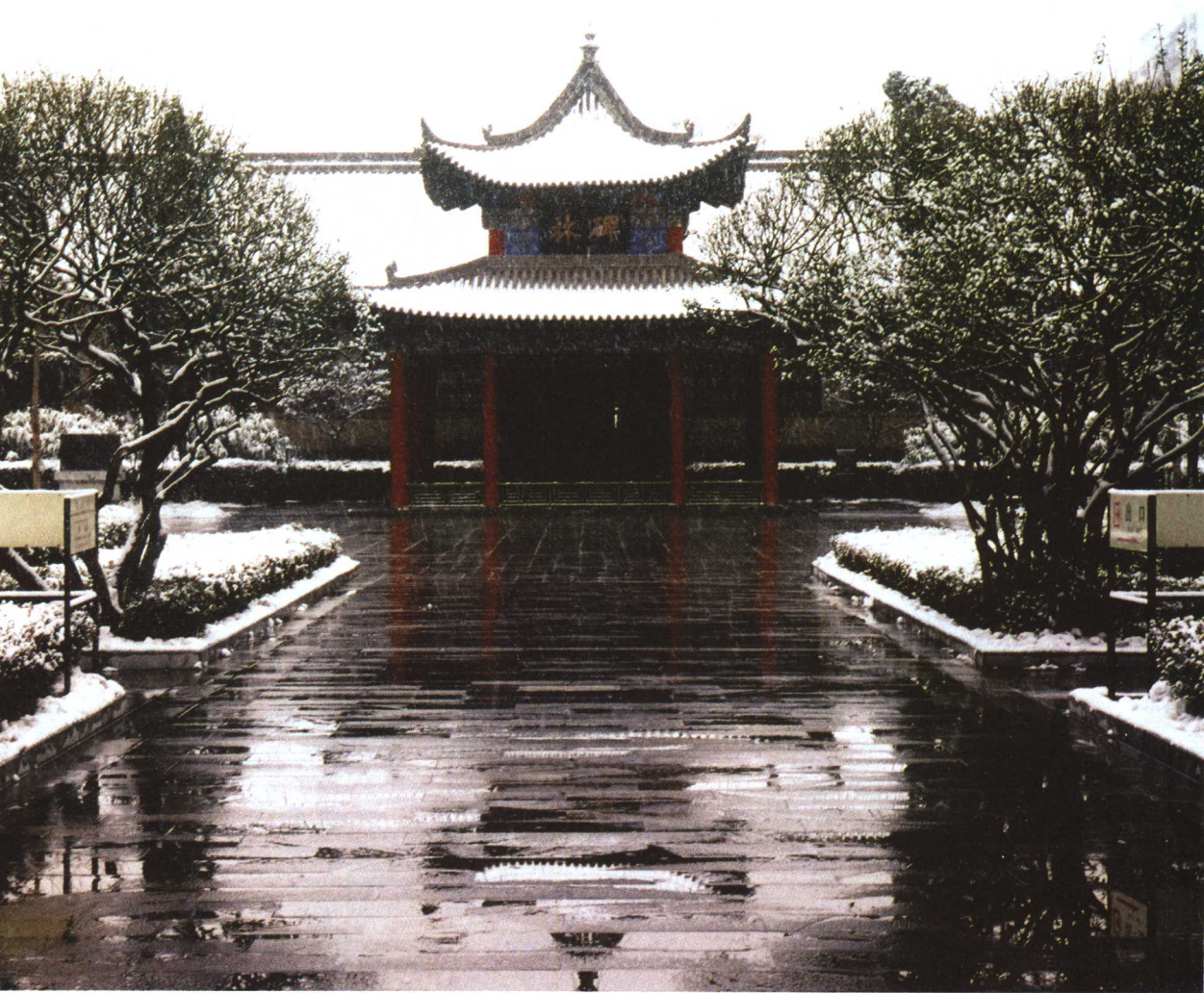
The stories in this book took place in Shaanxi Province, a land rich in history and wonder. When people recount these tales, they can feel the glory of past civilization and the interaction of civilization and environment. The people of Shaanxi take pride in and learn from these things. Now, full of confidence, they are going all out to realize their dreams.



▲ The Shaanxi History Museum, built in 1991, houses 370,000 valuable cultural relics discovered in the province.



▲ The museum's oldest cultural relics are over a million years old, the newest date from 1840.



▲ The Shaanxi Stele Forest Museum, built in 1078, is China's earliest stele collection and has the largest number of famous ancient steles.