

Glimpses *of* Chinese Culture

中 国 文 化 掠 影

丁往道 (DING WANGDAO) 著



外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

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DING WANGDAO

Professor Ding Wangdao was born in Wuwei County, Anhui Province in 1924. He graduated from the English Department of Sichuan University in 1946 and started teaching in the English Department of Beijing Institute of Foreign Languages (now Beijing Foreign Studies University) in 1950. He was secretary general of China English Language Education Association and was a visiting professor of Western Washington University and Moscow Foreign Languages University respectively for one year. He retired in 1991. Among the works solely or jointly by him is as follows:

Readings in Modern English Prose

Introduction to English Stylistics

A Handbook of Writing

A Basic Course in Writing

Introduction to English Poetry

100 Sayings of Confucius

100 Chinese Myths and Fantasies

Understanding Confucius

Continuing Climb





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出版说明

全球一体化的趋势,让中国与其他国家的距离越来越近。而随着近年来中外交流日益频繁,越来越多的外国朋友迫切渴望探知这个神秘国度的文化。为此,我们呈献上这本《中国文化掠影》。

本书没有厚重的中国历史,没有繁复的文化全景。它只是用随笔的形式,为读者在悠久漫长的中国历史长河中撷取最为精彩、最为耀眼的片断。

全书语言优美,风格清新,即使在此之前,对中国文化一无所知,也可以很容易地走进中国文化所经历的五千年,从而从古老的历史中读懂今天中国的一点一滴。

本书对于外国朋友来说,是可以轻松了解中国文化的一条捷径。而其平易流畅的英语,对于希望提高英语水平,增进翻译能力的大、中学生来说,也不失为一个优秀的读本。

本书第一版为中英文双语出版,受到广大读者的欢迎。此次邀请作者进行修订,增加了一些新的内容,并增添了相应的图片,以便让国外的读者能对中国文化有更为直观的认识。

Preface

The global integration has brought China closer to the rest of the world. With the frequent exchanges between China and other countries in recent years, more and more foreigners are eager to have a better understanding of the culture of mysterious China. *Glimpses of Chinese Culture* is designed for this purpose.

Instead of elaborating on the complicated Chinese history and culture, the book, in the form of short essays, describes the most gorgeous episodes in the long history of China for readers.

The subjects are presented in a way that is fresh and vivid. Even readers without prior knowledge of Chinese culture will find it easy to delve into China's long history of five thousand years and to understand contemporary China from the historical perspective.

The book provides for foreign readers a shortcut to Chinese culture. Its highly readable language makes itself a good reader for university and high school students who desire to improve English and translation skills.

The first edition of the book comes in both Chinese and English, which has gained popularity among readers. With the author's revision and new contents and pictures, the present second edition will enable foreign readers to have an intuitive understanding of Chinese culture.

A Chronological Table of Chinese History

Xia	c. 2070—1600 BC
Shang (Yin)	c. 1600—1046 BC
Zhou	
Western Zhou	c. 1046—771 BC
Eastern Zhou	770—256 BC
Spring and Autumn Period	770—476 BC
Warring States Period	476—221 BC
Qin	221—206 BC
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Qi	479—502
Liang	502—557
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Northern Wei	386—534
Eastern Wei	534—550
Northern Qi	550—577
Western Wei	535—556

Northern Zhou	557—581
Sui	581—618
Tang	618—907
Five Dynasties and Ten States	
Later Liang	907—923
Later Tang	923—936
Later Jin	936—947
Later Han	947—950
Later Zhou	951—960
Ten States	902—979
Song	
Northern Song	960—1127
Southern Song	1127—1279
Liao	907—1125
Western Xia	1032—1227
Jin	1115—1234
Yuan	1206—1368
Ming	1368—1644
Qing	1644—1911
Republic of China	1912—1949

Glimpses of Chinese Culture

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Beginnings of Chinese Culture

The Chinese people are proud of their long history.

About 5,000 years ago, Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor, according to legend, ruled part of the Yellow River valley. He and another leader, Yandi, or the Fiery Emperor, made great contributions to the progress of civilization. Huangdi is said to have invented the cart, the boat,



Yandi

the clothes, the script and the medicine, and Yandi to have taught people how to turn the soil with a plow. Today, Chinese all over the world regard them as their earliest ancestors, calling themselves "Yan-Huang's descendants".



Yao

Many, many years after them, Yao, Shun and Yu led the people one after another. Yu was popular and prestigious, for legend has it that he had tamed the flooding rivers by channelling their waters into the sea. Upon his death, Yu was succeeded by his son Qi. Thus the first dynasty in Chinese history was founded. It was called the Xia.

This event marked the change from primitive society, where there was no family, private property, or class distinction, to a class society based on

the family and private ownership.

The Xia, which lasted about 400 years, was overthrown by the Shang, a state in the east. The Shang dynasty was to rule the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River for about 500 years before it was replaced by the Zhou.

It should be noted that Chinese history before the Shang dynasty, though recorded in several ancient classics, is mainly legendary. So far no material evidence has been discovered to prove that Huangdi, Yao, Shun, Yu and the Xia dynasty really existed. However, the existence of the Shang has been proved by the oracle bones and other things unearthed in Anyang County, Henan Province, about a century ago. According to recent research, the Xia was founded in about 2070 BC, and the Shang in about 1600 BC.

The Shang rulers were superstitious. Before they made an important decision, they would ask their court diviner to discover if the occasion was favourable. He would take an ox bone or a tortoise shell, drill a hole in it, and put it over a fire until cracks developed. Then he would study the cracks, from which he could foretell whether the action considered would have good or bad results. Both the conclusion he drew from the cracks and the real result of the action, if it was performed, would be recorded in a few words on the bone or shell. In this way the Shang diviners wrote faithful accounts of many important events of their time.

Over the years about 100,000 pieces of oracle bones have been discovered and collected in Anyang. The place was certainly one of the capitals, probably the last one, of the Shang, which moved its capital several times. Over 3,000 different words have been found on those



bones, indicating that written Chinese was already highly developed more than 3,000 years ago.

The Shang ruled over a slave society. Slaves, most of whom had been captured in battles with other states or tribes, were forced to till the land and do household work for their masters. What was more tragic was that slaves might be killed as sacrifices to the gods and their master's ancestors, and might even be buried alive to accompany their master when he died.

During the 11th century BC, probably in 1046 BC, the Shang dynasty was conquered by Zhou, a state in the Wei River valley in present-day Shaanxi Province. King Wen of Zhou had made his state strong and planned the conquest. A few years after his death, his son, King Wu, led an army in an attack on the Shang capital and quickly defeated the Shang troops. King Wu became the first king of the new Zhou dynasty.

When King Wu died, his son was still too young to rule the country, so for several years state affairs were directed by King Wu's younger brother, the Duke of Zhou. The political and social systems of the new dynasty were mainly designed by these three founders: King Wen, King Wu and the Duke of Zhou.

They established a feudal fief system. The whole country was divided into a number of areas, each of which was assigned to a member of the royal family or a noble related by marriage to the rulers, or to the chief of a small state that had been loyal to the Zhou. Not only land, but the people on it, were given to such a man and became his and his descendants' property. This man subdivided his fief into several areas and gave them to members of his family and their descendants. They in turn