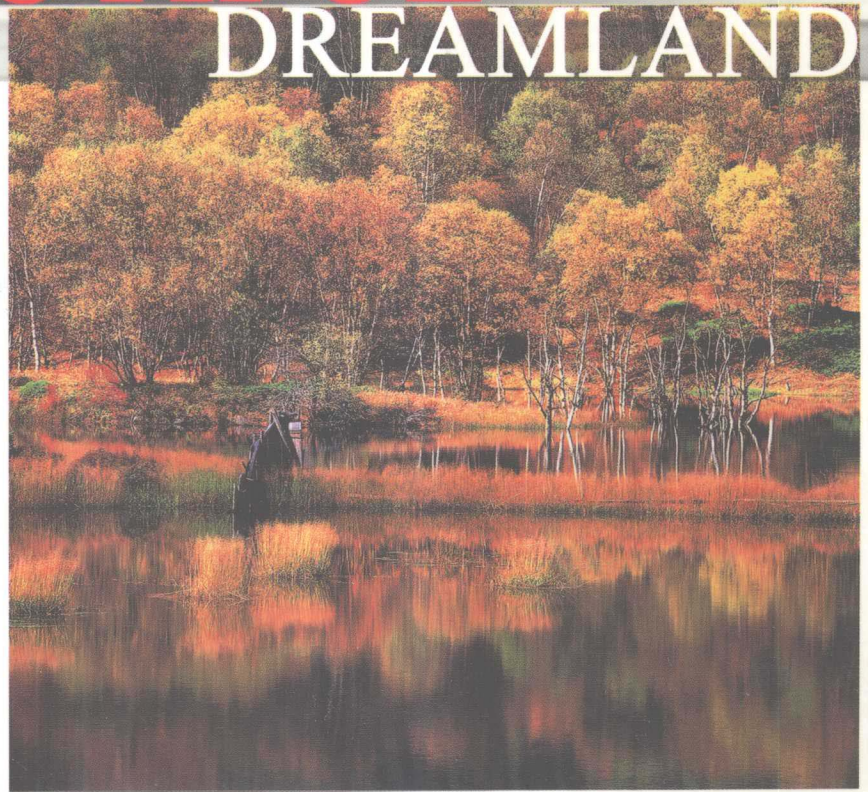


Editor and Writer: Zhou Liangpei

English Translator: Li Xiwen

YUNNAN, A BEAUTIFUL DREAMLAND



Yunnan People's Publishing House

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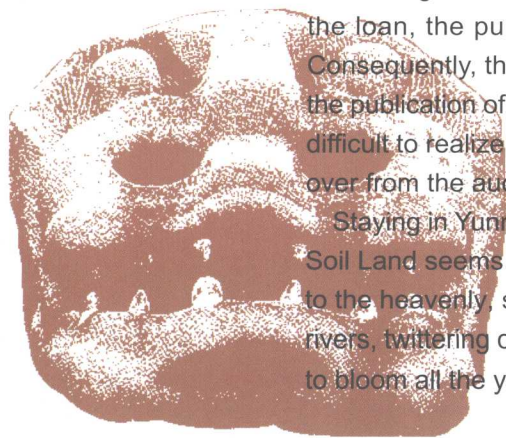
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PREFACE

Life is so full of ups and downs; one could easily find behind himself footprints of the sweet days as well as the sad times which he could not bear to recall. What deserves commemoration is, after all, valuable. Yet, it is bound to flow away like the water in a running stream. Thus, our warm memory is as a rule mixed with a feeling of emptiness. Occasionally, an old picture can reveal the past vividly right before one's eyes, making them brim with tears in excitement. It might have to do with the romantic past. Or, it might have to do with the storms of the times or some historic event. If the latter is the case, the picture is definitely a historic document and an authoritative witness of history. In this light, photography has made important contributions to society. Furthermore, any picture which is really moving must focus upon a specific scene which works as a complex for those who are moved. In connection with Yunnan, no matter whether the pictures depict the historic storms in the recent century, the landscape of the province, its humanistic geography or the dreamlike mystery of the land, many of them have become carriers of the province's traditional epics and romantic stories. Precisely for this reason, the present album of old and new pictures of Yunnan is here presented to the readers as a bouquet of fresh flowers.

The editor has edited a series of five books entitled *The Beautiful, Abundant and Mysterious Yunnan*, containing *Yunnan in Poetry*, *Yunnan in Prose* and others. The Yunnan Educational Publishing House, using a loan from the World Bank published the series. After paying back the loan, the publishing house succeeded in getting new support from various quarters. Consequently, three musical compact disks of *Yunnan as Portrayed in Songs* came out. Now the publication of this album enables the editor to realize another of his dreams which has been difficult to realize without raising another fund. The realization of this dream shows a spanning over from the auditory field to the visual field.

Staying in Yunnan for a long time, the editor feels the perception or understanding of the Red Soil Land seems to proceed from merry and sorrowful songs heard or sung in the wilderness, to the heavenly, symphonic sound of nature, such as the breeze over trees, the murmuring of rivers, twittering of birds and so on; from the unfading gorgeous colors of fresh flowers opening to bloom all the year round, to the dimly moving figures in the numerous courtyards of monas-



teries and other rich, enchanting and indistinguishable black and red colors. It seems that the symphony of nature could gradually be reduced to silence for meditation. The various colorful ethnic customs and their environments of life, the great changes that have taken place in these years and the romantic, radiant splendor portrayed in their cliff paintings and legends genuinely open up the mind to perceive all things in every direction, so that our child's mind may not yet vanish but fly up like a kite to an unusual height of romance. In such circumstances, one is excited by a turmoil of luxuriant, artistic sentiments, unable to sit down or sleep at ease and lacking self-control so as not to be worked up. With a hope that latecomers may approach Yunnan in a similar way, I feel certain that I have no right to abandon visual means of art in this respect.

The reason why every form of art and literature can exist independently by itself is that every form has its own irreplaceable characteristics. A famous poet in the past wrote, "sunset clouds fly together with a solitary wild duck, autumnal waters merge with the limitless sky." The scenery depicted by these two lines can well be the subject of a very beautiful picture. But, as a work of linguistic or verbal art, it is portrayed with the medium of words, a completely different means of expression from the painter's brush. Similarly, photography is also like this. Sometimes, a good shot is happily caught by a photographer, achieving the effect a writer cannot achieve. Yet, a successful work of photography is accomplished mostly by happy coincidence, not through searching on purpose. Some very rare scene occurs, say, "once in a thousand years". Further, a piece of artistic photographic work is different from a newspaper photograph in the utilization of shade and light, the way of finding a view and so on. On the one hand, a photographer depends upon good opportunities out of the reach of his subjective wishes and personal efforts. On the other, he has to understand or be very sensitive to the ideas and feelings or even passions of the person or persons whose picture he is going to take. In addition, technique is important in fully using all favorable climatic and environmental conditions. In dealing with such an extensive subject as Yunnan, there should naturally be an overall conception at first, utterly different from a routine desk plan that covers all aspects, but unfortunately falls into generalities. Certain previous cases show that large sums of money were invested by departments concerned,

but what came out at last were referred to by photographic circles as "cultural rubbish". Therefore, it is imperative not to submit to certain executives' baffling needs of every hue to make way for any unqualified pictures. Yet, sometimes, the principles established are not abandoned. Frankly, the editor has no complete freedom of choice, for he can only choose pictures within his reach. The pictures chosen cannot cover all necessary subjects in sufficient quantities in the present album, there is no lack of pictures awarded with big international prizes or pictures taken by international prizewinners and at the same time there are also works of very inexperienced amateurs including their maiden works. The choice has been made through repeated comparison and selection, paying attention to suggestions from various sources. It is absolutely a selection of photographs, not one of photographers. Here we have a display of a hundred flowers, in the real sense of the words. It is far from appropriate to assume every photograph here is an immortal masterpiece. Nevertheless, the works selected are permeated with the enthusiasm of the photographers engaged in portraying picturesque and poetic Yunnan. Not the slightest degree of affectation of a masquerade resplendent in jewelry is tolerated. Some of them do not look "beautiful". But, in portraying truthfully everyday life and the joys and sorrows of a life willfully lashed by the waves of the long river of time and space, and the ups and downs that we have got used to in the progress of ethnic cultures and the struggles for personal existence in nature, the photographs here do not fail to turn out something "new" for us to understand the present by reviewing the past. At a time when "cloned" photographs of famous scenic spots appear in increasing numbers, this album hopefully exhibits an amount of originality that belongs to the photographers themselves. As long as they are able to offer the readers truthful and beautiful visual impressions for understanding Yunnan, they would prove valuable in contrast with the activities of those described euphemistically as "development" which seeks for immediate petit profits at the sacrifice of ethnic cultural legacy, leaving troubles to posterity. For the photographers cherish a tender love for Yunnan with a keen sense of responsibility for environmental protection. It is what the editor of this album has tried his best to achieve; what he has achieved lies within the realm of his limited ability.

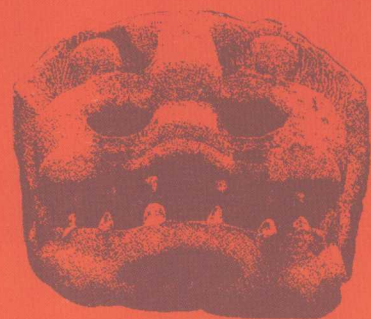
Recently when the editor went from door to door to solicit contributions of pictures, he put

forward a tentative title of the album-*Yunnan in front of Cameras*. So, many photographers have already become familiar with it. Later another album came out under this title. Naturally, there should be a new title. In *Yunnan, a Beautiful Dreamland*, the word dreamland implies a lot of romantic, subjective and illusionary warm sentiments .It is clear that photography today is able to copy down almost anything with utmost precision. However, in portraying picturesque and poetic Yunnan, we should not be satisfied with the exact likeness of outward forms. We aim at higher inner artistic truth. Besides, photographers have the responsibility to refuse whitewashing. They should be both truthful and objective. In depicting the inner beauty and ideas of philosophical depth, the prerequisite is absolute truthfulness. In this respect, it is not necessary to arouse the romantic, subjective and illusionary warm sentiments on the part of the readers. The photos themselves are already enough to give them an instinct of dreaminess. The editor has aimed high, but the aim might not be fully attained. Besides, the publisher demanded succinctness and economy of words to provide wider space for pictures. Besides, some photographers furnished captions of their own. In this connection, the editor consulted sources concerned and rewrote some passages for the unity of style. Conscientious as the editor is, he is not so naive as to think the task can be accomplished in a short period of time due to the extensive scope of the subject. He worked very hard in editing the album as he did for the publication of the series of books mentioned above. For cultural development in Yunnan, solid work is of much greater use than idle talk or bubble blowing. No matter how far away what the editor has done lies from what he is hoped to do, he still feels gratified for being able to advance along the same road together with so many comrades.

周良沛

(Zhou Liangpei)

The topic of Yunnan is naturally one of poetry.



In Chinese, "Yunnan" means "the south of clouds."

The clouds over the highland of red soil seem to be a floating landscape of purity, nobility and unsulliedness. According to *The Annals of Yunnan*, "During the years of Yuanshou of Emperor Wudi in the Han Dynasty (122B.C.-117B.C.), rosy clouds appeared in the central south. Envoys were sent to trace them. The place to which the rosy clouds were traced was called the South of the Rosy Clouds (Yunnan)." Shen Congwen wrote in his prose entitled *Looking at the Clouds in Yunnan*, "The clouds in Yunnan seem to be made of the snow from

Tibetan mountaintops and the tropical waves in south seas through a mysterious process. The tone is extraordinarily simple. Right in here its simplicity and its greatness lie. Especially in the twilight of a fine day, the scene is particularly moving. It is purely a piece of Chinese ink and wash painting, unconventional and audacious. Even when it is pitch-dark in the sky, you still feel relaxed. "Dark clouds blot out the sky, is normally symbolic of a heavy heart. However, in Yunnan, the darker the more relaxing. It's black and lovely."



Photo by Ce Quan



Photo by Zhang Yifei



photo by Zhu Yunkuan

The clouds in the southern sky is a dignified and imposing oil painting or a free hand brush work of ink and wash. They can change magically into scenes of many a wonderful story.

In the picture above, the camera focuses the Jade Dragon Mountain which looks exactly like the dragon's head. Therefore, it is believed to be a picture of the Jade Dragon making its presence.

The upper picture on p.5 is recognized as a "strange picture" not only by photographers, but also by the film producer the Lekai Company and notary lawyers, who all confirm that the picture has never been processed in a

darkroom or on a computer. The photographer grasped an extremely rare opportunity to take this picture of Meili Snow Mountain which looked exactly the same like the totem of the Mystical Seal of the Kalicakra in Tibetan Buddhism, worshipped most piously by Tibetan lamas and Buddhists. This celestial phenomenon under certain natural conditions of time and space, rare as it is, is by far from taking place once only. Those who saw it for the first time thought it was "the will of Heaven" and copied it down as a totem. Later on, other people who saw it regarded it as "a divine presence". The clouds all over the sky tell numerous new stories and myths.



Photo by He Jinwu





Photo by Zhang Xiaomei

On a red soil plain in the high mountains, under the clouds flying in the south of Yunnan which make the sky higher and the land more extensive, a path lies there, seemingly at the very starting point or the end of heaven. The clouds flow into the doors and windows of the cottages of the mountain people, remindful of the waves that lull the people on a small isle.

Photo by Cui Jie



Look, the cloud's
passion and the affec-
tionate land!

Look, the land's af-
fections and the pas-
sionate clouds!



Photo by Lu Jiangtao

The clouds drift over, reflect-
ing the azure of the water. They
merge together. Down below
there is a full net of pure and
clean clouds. High up you find
the transparency of flowing
water.

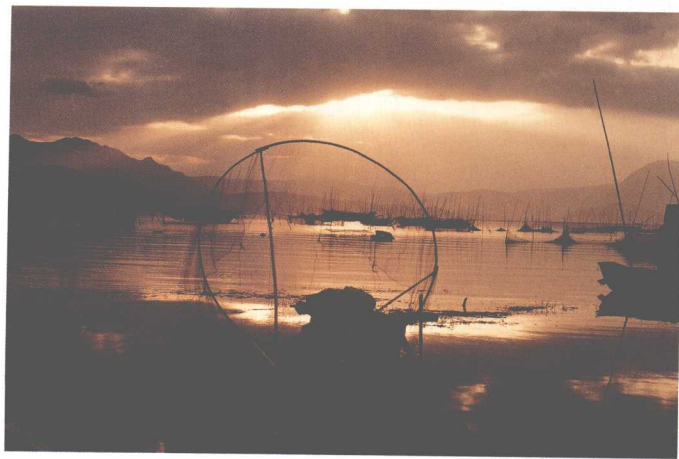


Photo by Yin Xin



Photo by Yang Hongwen

With the red soil under the red clouds, the firmament and the earth share one color. Although the red soil here is what life relies on, it does not contain sufficient nourishment. Numerous hardships arose. Nevertheless, it is the eternal cradle of life. Right here, existence takes root. It is the hot soil of blood and fire for life.

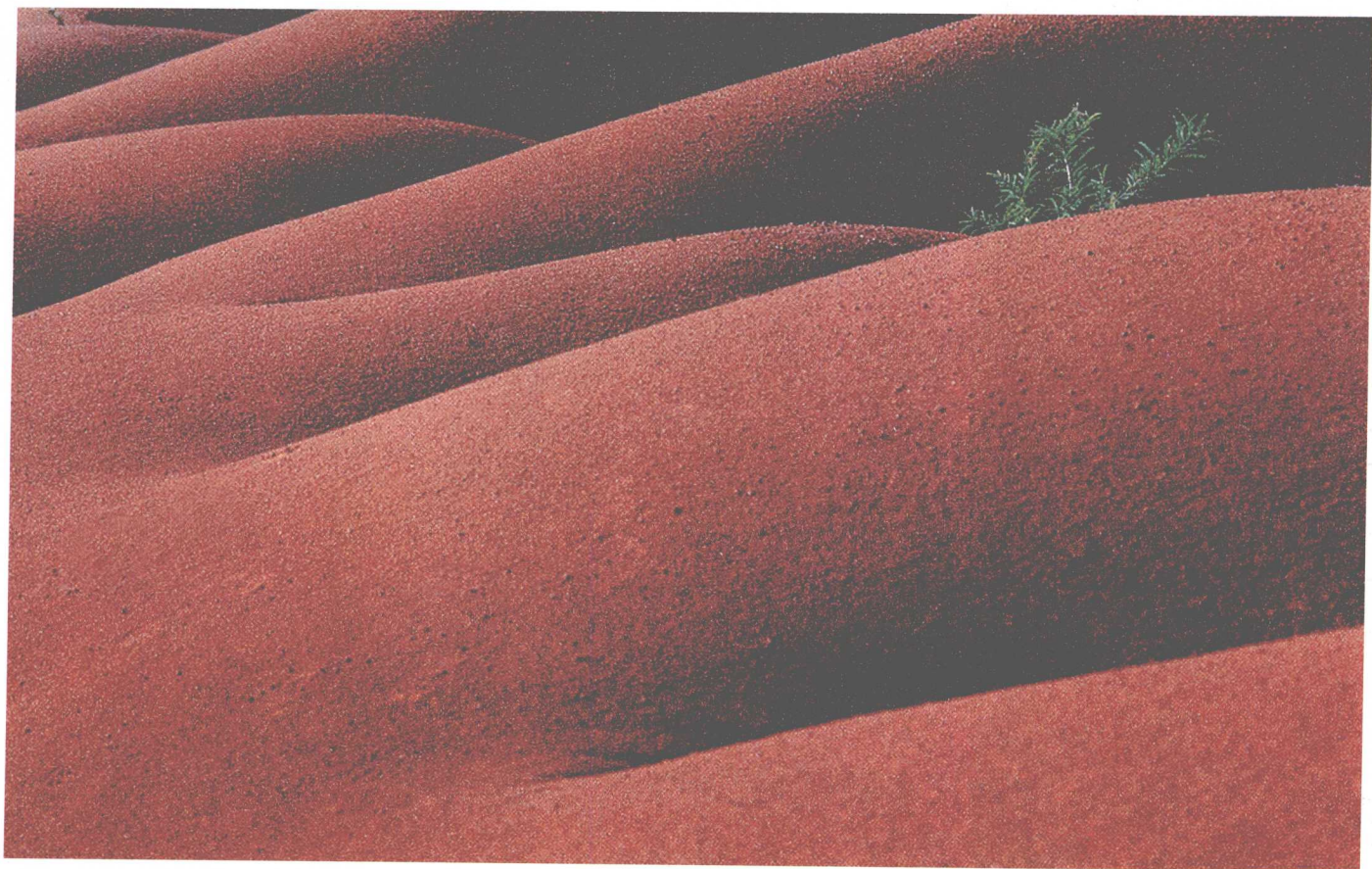


Photo by Tao Songsheng

This is the red soil in the South of the Rosy Clouds.
It is bright red everywhere, like a blazing prairie fire.
Underneath, basalt rock, the reinforced structure seems to disintegrate in high temperature.
Dry and loose earth can hardly keep moisture and a flood or a rain will cause soil erosion.
However, seeds falling into the soil are unyielding. They are the soul of the red soil.
When they take root, there will be green shades of trees.

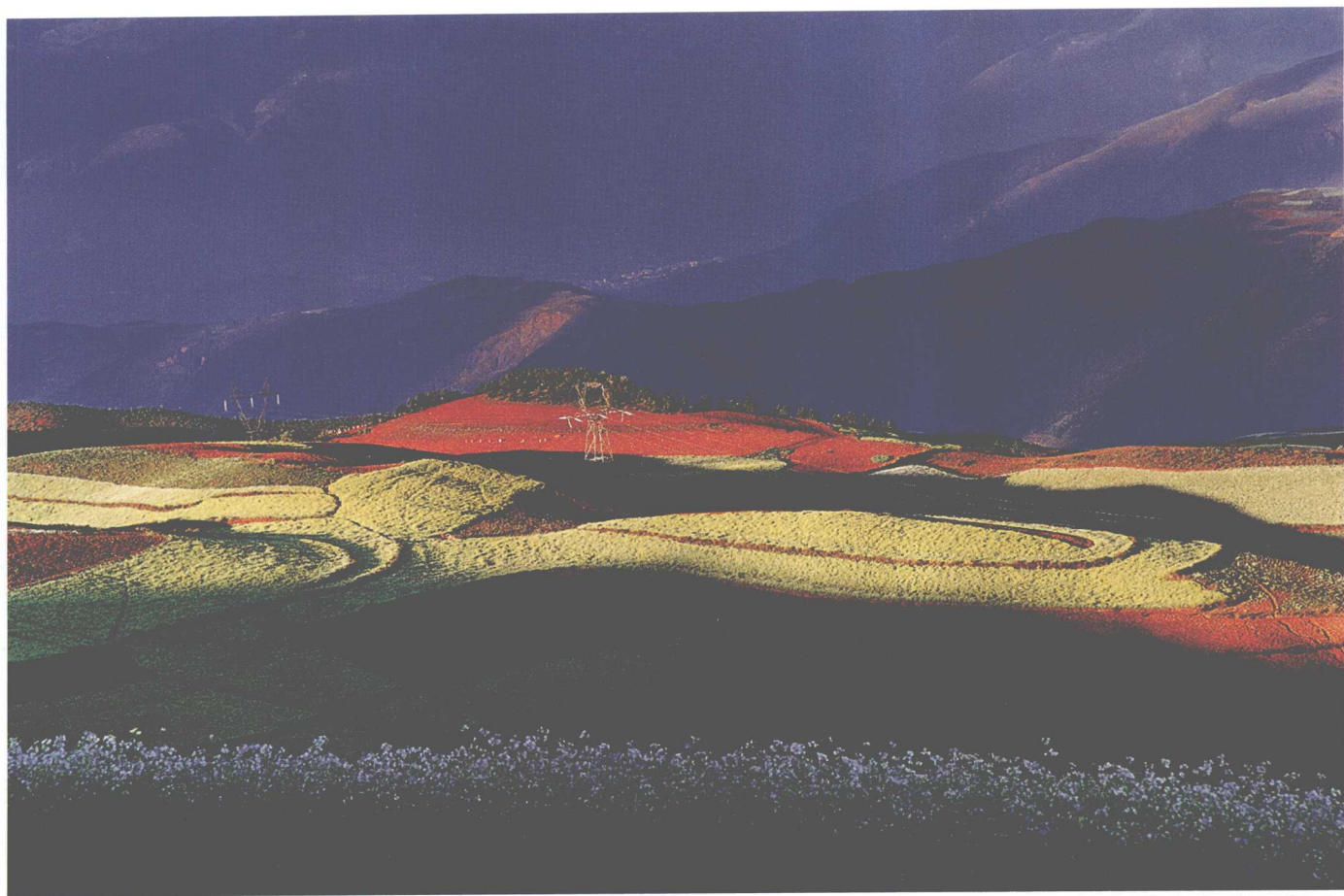


Photo by Ren Qirui

With flower seeds sown, flowers will blossom eventually.

It is a colorful land and an immense flower garden, “beautiful, abundant and mysterious”, as a poem has it. The photographer who took this picture at Dongchuan District now turns the poem

into something visible. Legend says the land was made red by heroic hills-men who bled on it. Yellow rape flowers, white buckwheat flowers, green mountains afar and green trees nearby evoke a picture of interlocked wreaths.