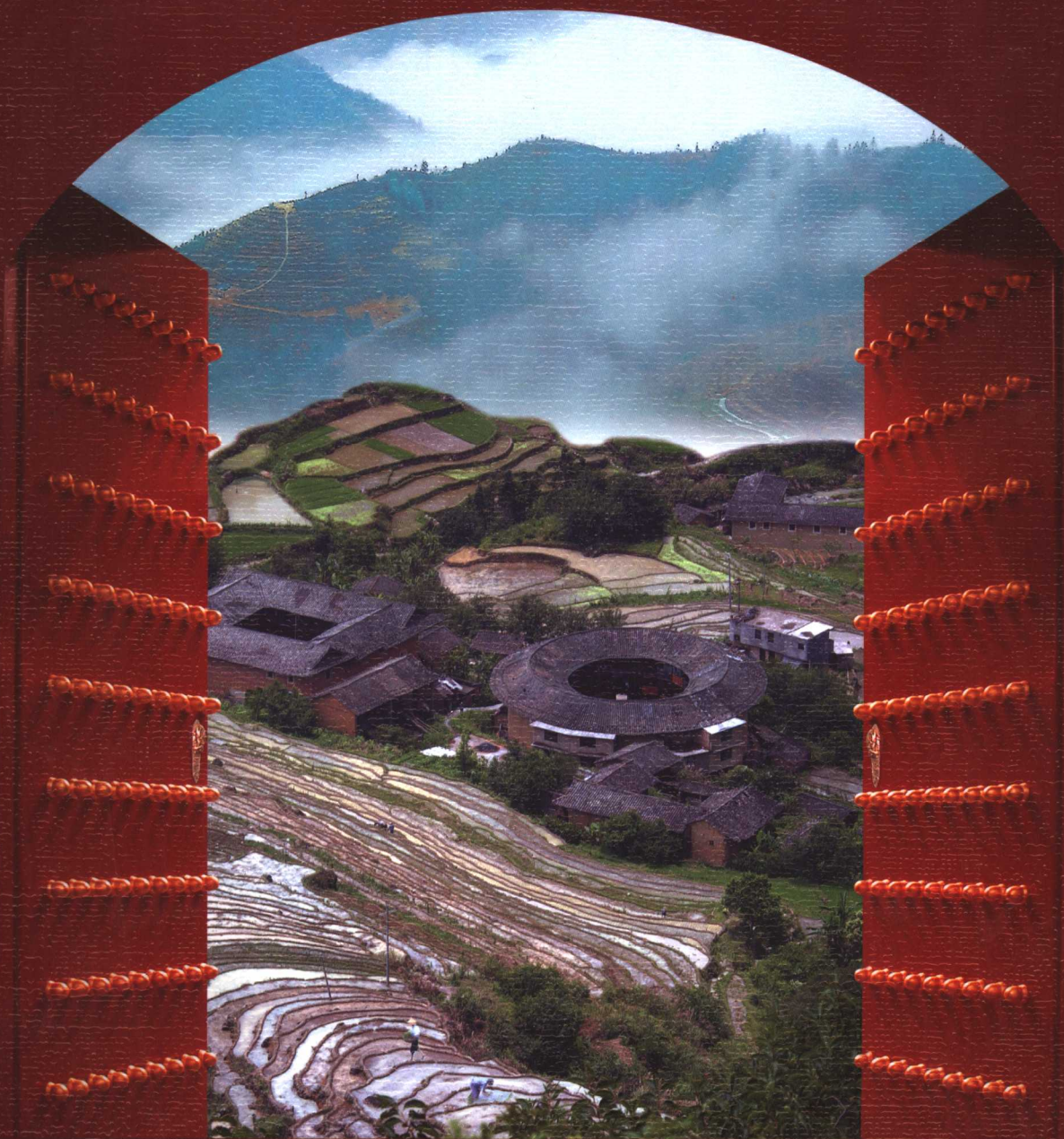


PANORAMIC CHINA

FUJIAN

Mountain and Maritime Cultures



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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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.

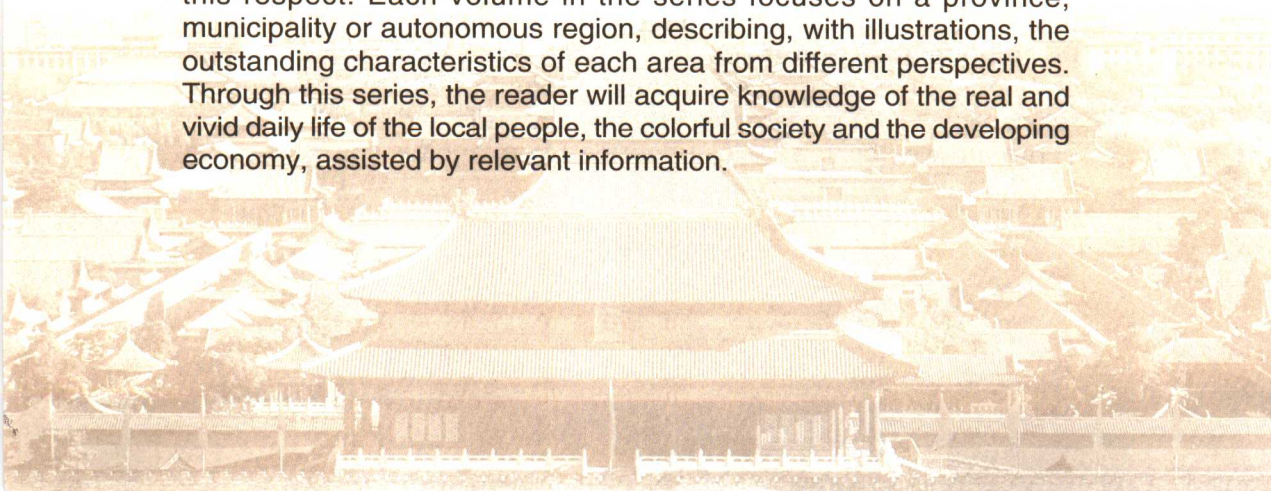
There are 56 ethnic groups in China. The Han, making up the overwhelming majority of the population, mainly live in the eastern and central parts of the country, while many ethnic groups with smaller populations live in the west. In China, all ethnic groups, regardless of size, are equal and respect 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

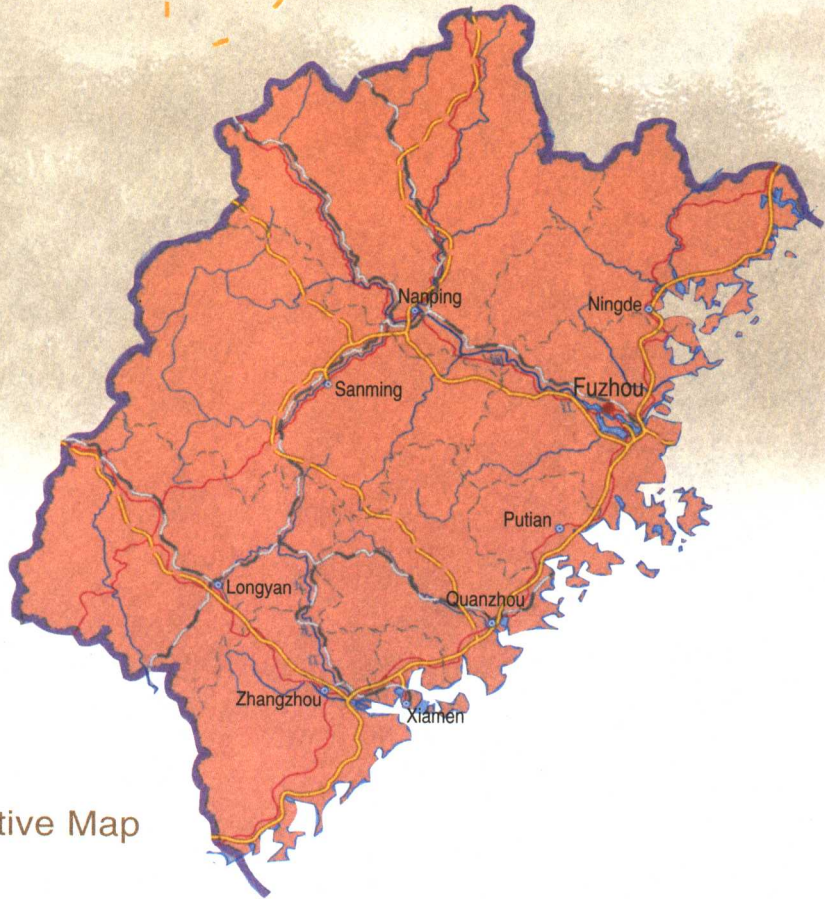
painted pottery, jade ware, bronze ware, large and ornate tombs and foundations of historical buildings, and many more as yet undiscovered. The museums of China's various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions house thousands of cultural relics and works of art, among which are treasures rare 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.

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. Through this series, the reader will acquire knowledge of the real and vivid daily life of the local people, the colorful society and the developing economy, assisted by relevant information.



Location of Fujian Province within China



Administrative Map of Fujian



Scenic marvels produced by coastal erosion



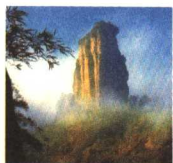


Shishi's golden coastline





Contents



Overview	1
Multi-Faceted Fujian	



Where Was the Starting Point of Fujian Civilization?	17
--	----



The Short but Eventful History of Minyue	33
--	----



Birthplace of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism	51
---	----



The Cult of Mazu the Sea Goddess	77
----------------------------------	----



Start of the Maritime Silk Road	107
---------------------------------	-----



Starting Point of Zheng He's Voyages	129
--------------------------------------	-----



Cradle of Modern Shipbuilding and Navigation 145



The Hakka — Upholders of Orthodoxy 163



The She People — Sons of the Mountain and Forest 187



Across the Narrow Straits 205



Bringing Home the Fruits of Prosperity 237

Appendices 254

I Major Agencies

II Climate

III Major Hotels Catering to Overseas Visitors

IV Fujian Tourist Map

A scenic landscape photograph of a river valley. In the center, a tall, rectangular rock formation rises from a lush, green hillside. The foreground shows a calm river with a small boat and a person in the distance. The sky is bright and hazy. The overall tone is serene and natural.

Overview

Multi-Faceted Fujian

Fujian is considered a specially favored land — indeed the first syllable of its name actually means good fortune in Chinese. Nature has blessed it in many ways, endowing it with a very diverse geography, one side of the province resting against the breast of mountains, and the other embraced by the sea.

The loftiest ridge on this land, the majestic Wuyi Mountain, slants northeast to southwest between the provinces of Jiangxi and Fujian — two regions with as many similarities as they have differences. Rising from the center of the province, Bopingleing, Daiyun and Jiufeng mountains, like Wuyi Mountain, all run in a direction parallel with the coast, making the province into a predominantly hilly land slanting from northwest to southeast. Wuyi Mountain with its row upon row of forbidding ridges and cliffs effectively blocked communications between Fujian and the Central Plains of China's heartland throughout the dynastic era, leaving just a few mountain passes to be ventured through by young scholars heading north to take the imperial civil service examinations, or by refugees from the Central Plains migrating south to escape disasters and making it all the way to Fujian. But these mountain barriers also served to ward off the wars that so frequently ravaged other parts of China in the feudal era; they also kept to Fujian itself the humid vapors created by the monsoon blowing in from the ocean. Thanks to these two advantages, the region developed both natural and social landscapes quite different from elsewhere in imperial China; its climate was warm, temperate and sub-tropical; its society was



comparatively stable, and its people's lives comparatively easy.

The territory of Fujian is thickly incised by rivers, with the Minjiang River system in the south and the Jiulong in the north. Almost all major rivers in Fujian run eastwards, cutting through the mountains and emptying into the East China Sea. The only exception is the Tingjiang River in western Fujian, which flows alongside the chain of Wuyi and Boping mountains southward into Guangdong Province, where it finds an outlet into the sea. These rivers carve their way through hills and mountains, creating a great many mutually isolated valleys and basins. Fujian used to be referred to as “the Seven Min.” The reason for this is that, prior to being conquered by the armies of the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1100-256 BC), there had been seven states established by the indigenous Min people. In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the imperial government established eight sub-provincial administrative divisions in Fujian, and since then the province has also been called “the Eight Min.” In both cases, the administrative divisions reflected actual geographical dividing lines, isolating one area from the next. Within these separate areas highly varied customs and dialects developed — indeed no other province can boast such rich dialect diversity. The multifarious nature of these local, mutually isolated cultures, though all united to some degree by the Confucianism of the Central Plains, has created a cultural landscape that some have likened to a “tapestry.” When viewed from a distance it looks lushly colorful, but in close-up, each part has a distinct shape and hue, though the edges

Fuzhou, the provincial capital, on the fast track to becoming a modern metropolis

