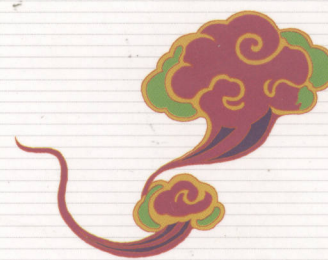




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TIBETAN COSTUME AND ORNAMENTS

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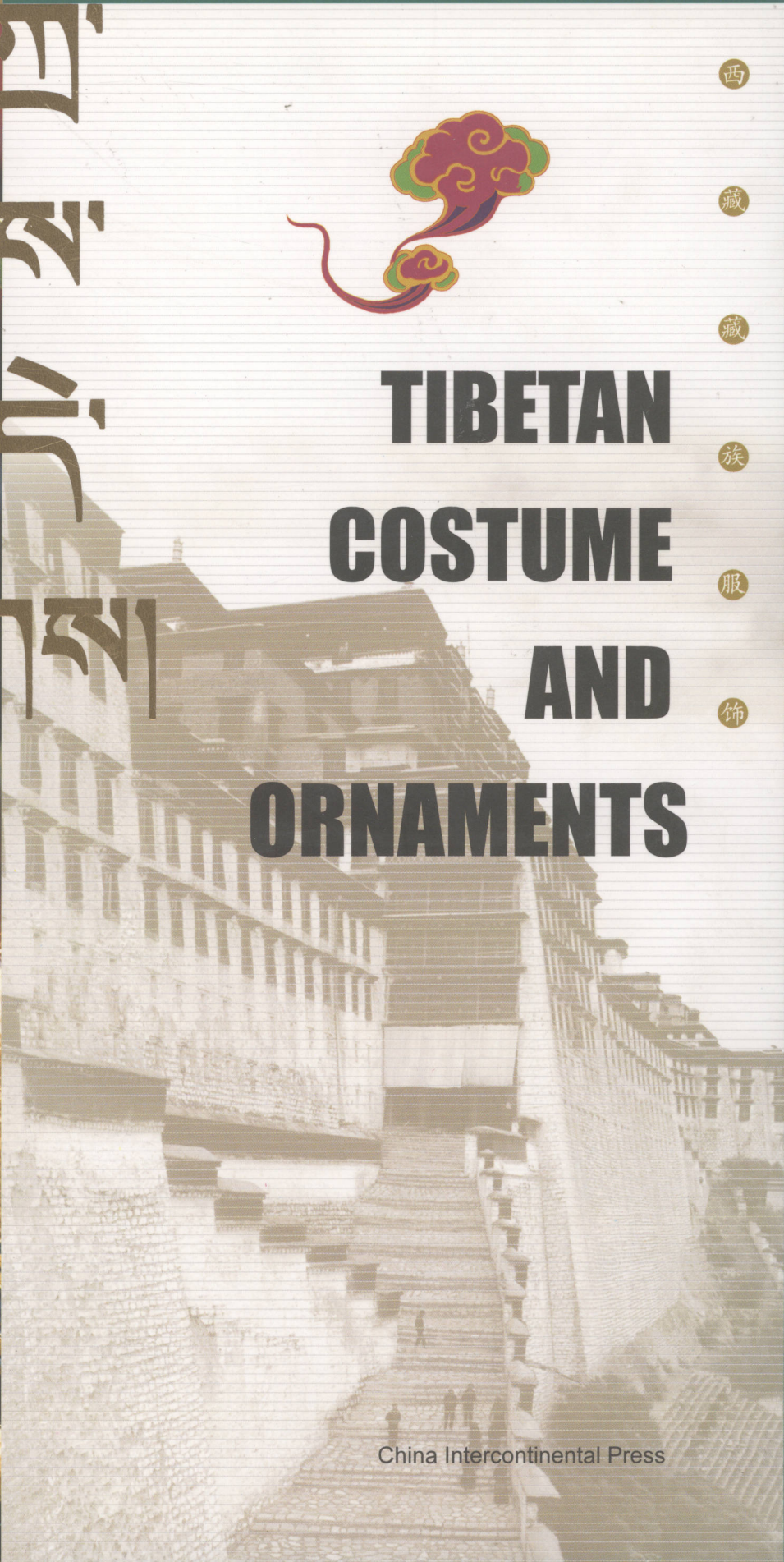
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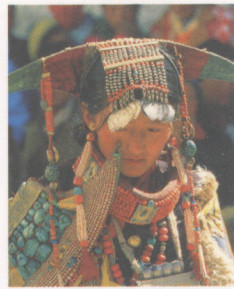
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PREFACE

In 1999, when the 40th anniversary of the Democratic Reform in Tibet was being celebrated in China, Tibet included, the Information Office of the State Council joined hands with the Department of the United Front Work of the CPC Central Committee and some other departments concerned to sponsor the Pearl of the Snow Land—Cultural Exhibition of China's Tibet. The exhibition attracted a large number of visitors and won wide acclaim. As most people in the capital have never had a chance to visit Tibet, the exhibition provided them with a great opportunity. For those who had been to Tibet, the exhibition offered them a rewarding chance to see what they had failed to see while they were there. Many complained that the exhibition closed before they could have a chance to visit it. Those who did so said one single visit was not enough to satisfy their interest in Tibet. I know a lady who came to the exhibition from Inner Mongolia. Since more people living in other parts of China were unable to attend, many urged us to publish an album series of the exhibits as a form of compensation. We have selected the cream of the Pearl of the Snow Land, supplemented by many other treasures not displayed at the exhibition, to bring forth this pictorial series also as a gift to the 50th anniversary of the peaceful liberation of Tibet this year.

My doctor once advised me not to go to Tibet because of its high elevation. However, like many others who visited the exhibition, I found I could hardly refuse not to go after viewing the exhibits. My dream was fulfilled last year. During my stay in Lhasa, I made the most of my time by enjoying a bird's eye view of Lhasa from the Potala Palace; strolling leisurely in the Norbu Lingka; taking photos before the willow legend says was planted by Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), who married Tubo King Songtsan Gambo, and the Tang-Tubo Peace Alliance Monument in front of the Jokhang Monastery; as well as visiting the famed Barkor Street. I also took time to meet leaders and ordinary people of the Tibetan and Han ethnic groups, and visit ordinary Tibetans in their home. These experiences fortified my understanding of the splendid history of the interchange and merging of the Han and Tibetan cultures, and the importance of unity between the Han and Tibetan peoples.

In the past 50 years, Tibet has gone through great historical changes after expelling the foreign imperialist forces from the region, with the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the Democratic Reform, economic reconstruction and the reform and opening program. Achievement made during the 50-year period is the result of efforts made jointly by peoples of the Han and Tibetan ethnic groups. They constitute an historic monument in the recorded history of Tibet.

Tibet today continues to experience enormous changes. Tibetan society is moving ahead from seclusion to openness, from a planned to a market economy, and from a tradition-dominated culture to modernity. These changes will surely lead Tibet to unprecedented prosperity and eternal glory.

Zhao Qizheng

May 2000

PREFACE



On the beautiful and magic Tibetan Plateau dwell the various ethnic groups of Tibetan, Han, Hui, Monba, Lhoba, Deng and Xiarba with the Tibetans making up the most part. The Tibetan costume and ornaments have a long history and are characterized by its unique structures and artistic features. Cultural relics and archaeological data show that the basic style of Tibetan costume today took shape as early as the 11th century.

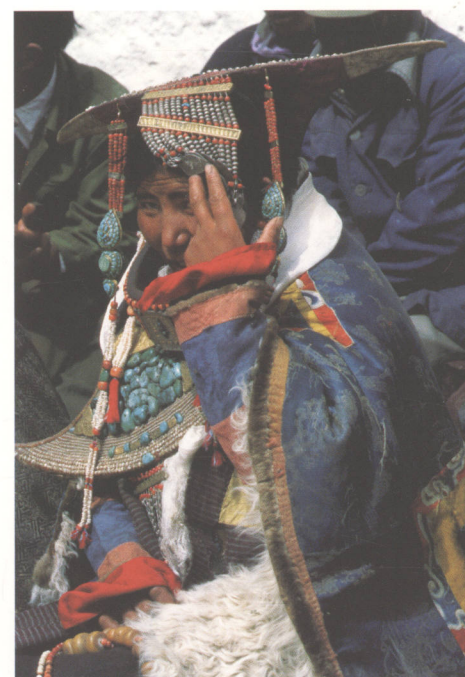
Owing to the differences in natural conditions and working and living styles of various places in addition to the factors of economic and cultural exchanges, Tibetan costume and ornaments are really rich and colorful. The structure of costume, ornaments and way to wear them all show strong local features. Take Gongbung Area for example. Large primitive forests grow here and rainfall is ample. To adapt to such natural conditions, the local people created a costume called *guxiu*, made

of pulu or animal skin, with a broad shoulder but sleeveless, suitable for people who fell trees or transport timber. It can also protect the wearer from



rain. But in the valleys in South Tibet where the climate is warm and mild, with the average temperature around 8 degrees centigrade, the costume for people in this area is generally light. For people living in Xigaze, Shannan and Lhasa the City of Sunlight, their costume is generally made of pulu.

The basic features of Tibetan costume are loose





waist, long sleeve and broad breast. Lined gowns, official robes before the democratic reform in 1959, silk robes of the nobles and ceremonial robes for monks and priests at religious activities all have such features.

The prominent artistic feature of Tibetan costume is the regular progress in color and pattern. The *jian* (lace) of the fur coat of people in the pastures are often made of rectangle color materials of blue, green, purple, black, orange, yellow and red. The combination of colors of sharp contrast gives people an impression of jumping liveliness.

The combinations of colors of sharp contrast, such as red and green, black and white, crimson and blue, yellow and purple, are boldly used in Tibetan costume, which, together with deftly used multiple colors and gold and silver threads, make the garments bright and harmonious.

Another marked feature of Tibetan costume and ornaments is the extensive use of gold and silver, jewelry, ivory and jade ornaments or substitutions. Many ornaments are heavy and intrepid, yet their patterns and carving are refined and elegant. They can be carried on the various parts of the body, from head and hair plaits to ear, neck, wrist, finger, back, and waist. The typical ornaments include elegantly carved and gold- or silver-coated dagger, buckle and steel for flint, as well as various kinds of ear-rings and hair ornaments embedded with jadeite and turquoise.

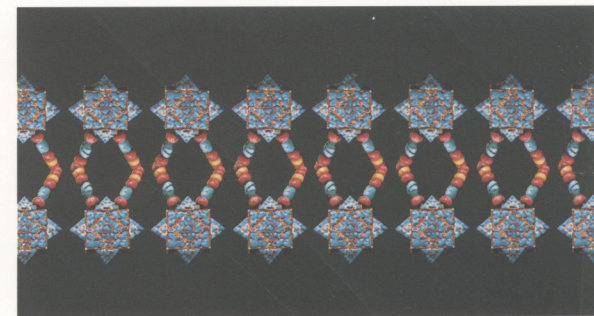
The Tibetan costume and ornaments have been created, developed and changed in the long course of people's life and work. In the pastures of North Tibet, there is an ornament called *xueji*, which is worn at the waist. Its shape is like a little anchor, hung from the belt when women are milking the cow. The upper end of it is fastened to the belt and



the lower end is used to hang a pail so that the pail will not be overturned by a startled cattle. By and by, it becomes an indispensable ornament for Tibetan women in the pastures. They wear it ordinarily or during holidays, working

or having a rest, at home or going on a pilgrimage. Gradually, it falls into a pattern and is carved and embedded with jadeite and turquoise.

In the process of its development, Tibetan costume and ornaments became complex from simple design and then became simple again. Tibetan costume in the middle ages was very gorgeous. But it has turned to be simple in the modern era. Western-styled suit and fashionable dresses are now popular among the Tibetans, especially the younger ones. But at festivals or on important occasions these young people generally wear national costume. The dresses for Tibetan women also tend to be tight rather than loose and the long gowns in Lhasa manifest clear curves. There are research



institutes and manufacturing institutions for garments in Lhasa and fashion models have been on the stage wearing Tibetan costume. More and more international fashion designers are finding inspiration from features of Tibetan costume. The unique style and artistic features of Tibetan costume and ornaments is a very valuable ingredient of the cultural treasure house of our country and a beautiful flower in the artistic garden of national costume of the motherland.



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Features of Costume and Ornaments

TIBETAN COSTUME AND ORNAMENTS

Features of Costume and Ornaments

The basic features of Tibetan costume existed before the Tibetans emerged as a race. Archaeological findings show that the Qiangs, which later became part of the Tibetans, once lived in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang regions. Historically, the Qiangs in Gansu and Qinghai and local inhabitants in Tibet had frequent cultural exchanges and often migrated to each other's areas. The dry corpses discovered in a cemetery of a primitive commune in Hami, Xinjiang, which is near Qinghai Plateau, can be dated back to 3,000 years ago. When unearthed, the hair of the corpses was plaited, the male wearing fur or fur-coat and high boots. Their clothes share the costume style of the Tibetans. Their hairdos belong to the same category as that of the Qiangs recorded in documents. Their costume and ornaments can serve as important references for the origin of Tibetan costume and ornaments. It can be logically induced that as far back as 3,000 years ago the costume and ornaments of the tribes and races as ancestors of the Tibetans had the basic features of the later Tibetan costume and ornaments.



The most striking feature of Tibetan costume and ornaments is its large variety, including silk robes, sleeveless robes, jackets, waistbands, hats, boots, aprons, hairdos and ornaments on the head and on the body. In terms of quality, the robes can be divided into brocade robe, silk robe, embroidered silk robe, jacquard leather robe, leather robe with fancy lace, leather robe with plain lace, leather robe with leopard skin lace, animal skin robe, pulu robe, lined woolen robe and cotton cloth robe. In terms of local features, there are the pasture leather robe, robe with fancy lace, and pulu robe of the agricultural area. In terms of style, there are the long-sleeved leather robe, Gangbung broad-shouldered sleeveless robe, sleeveless robe for women and Jialuo fancy-collared pulu robe.

Tibetan costume and ornaments are closely associated with productive labor and many ornaments, which still have dual function of ornamentation and practical purpose, have taken shape gradually from practical

usage in work or life. In North Tibet, the altitude is high and the weather cold. The period is long when the ground is covered with ice and snow. The annual average temperature is low and the temperature does not vary much throughout the year. Even in the hottest month of July, there is frost at night. The difference in temperature between the day and the night is great, however. But the vast area in North Tibet is grassland, natural pasture since ancient times. The Tibetan inhabitants here should have clothes easy for travelling as well as for their daily life, capable of protecting themselves from the cold and dissipating heat. The robes of the herdsmen here are loose enough to serve as a quilt at night and allow the free movement of the arms during the day. When the ample sunshine raises the temperature, they can easily free one arm from the sleeve to help adjust the bodily temperature. By and by, the way to wear a robe with one arm stripped has become a symbol of the Tibetans' uninhibited character.

In terms of the application of colors, Tibetan costume and ornaments feature sharp contrasts as well as a harmony. Many white pulu robes have black neckband, wristband and lower hem, the width of which can reach a foot. To give prominence to the black hem, white trousers are worn. Binding materials and clothes are often in contrastive colors. Women often use woolen threads of contrastive colors, such as bright red and emerald green, vermillion and ultramarine, pink and azure, as ornaments for their hair. The robes in Qamdo Area are colorful, such blue robes with a red belt. Gold and silver colors and multicolor are used together with colors of sharp contrast to obtain a harmonious effect in the color arrangement of the robes. The gold thread brocade on the Gold Flower hat, the gold and silver hem of Gangbung hat, the colored pulu on *songba* and *galuo* Boots and the gold thread rim of *jjalao* (colored lace) are all examples of the color arrangement, which are harmonious and uniform and at the same time give the costume a gorgeous and resplendent national feature..

A more typical example for the application of colors is the women's *bangdian* (apron). On this unique article of Tibetan costume, numerous folk artists have demonstrated their outstanding ability. Some *bangdian* use broad color strips of sharp contrast, bold and vivacious. Some use fine strips of related warm colors, looking elegant and refined. Some have primary color or black or white thread among the multicolor strips and some use a single color phase as the keynote to form uniform colors of purplish red, reddish brown and greenish lime. As to the successive matching of color strips, some organize the patterns into groups in a progressive manner while others just apply a mixed arrangement. All the narrow or broad strips, the bright or dark colors, the change of color phases and the matching of primary with secondary colors are bold, elegant and artistically unique.

