

The Big Picture Book of Chinese Culture

Creative Spirit

Written by Ye Lang and Zhu Liangzhi

Illustrated by Sunki and Leftleft

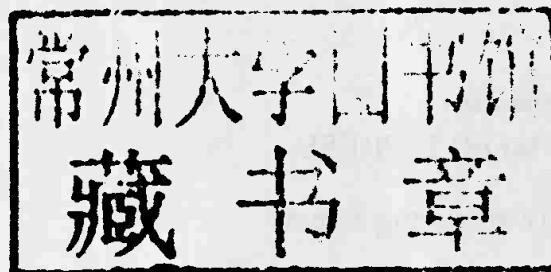


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弥勒说法图



Preface

This book introduces Chinese culture in an amusing way. We hope that readers can feel the “living” Chinese culture. Through the book, readers will not only gain knowledge of Chinese culture, but also understand the Chinese spirit, the vitality and creation of the nation, and the character, national spirit, and aesthetic pursuits of the Chinese people.

The Analects and the Temple of Heaven explain that the Chinese people hold nature in awe and gratitude;

Confucian thought and Chinese paintings show that Chinese people cherish life and that they have a holistic concept of life in which man is part of a unitary force with other living creatures;

From Laozi, *Book of Changes*, Zen philosophy, traditional Chinese medicine, shadow boxing and the game of Go, we can understand the Chinese wisdom of living in harmony with the way of nature;

With Sunzi's *Art of War*, the Great Wall and Zheng He's voyages to the Western seas, it becomes apparent that Chinese people hope for eternal peace;

The “Minority Folk Fashions,” which is highly popular in Chang'an, and the Western fashion in old Shanghai offer strong evidence of the open and inclusive spirit of Chinese culture;

The long travel of Xuanzang and Yijing to South Asia and the large-scale translation team demonstrates the openness of Chinese people to foreign cultures;

From the smiling Buddha in the Maiji Mountain Grottoes and the indomitable character of Monkey King in *Journey to the West*, we can see that Chinese people always keep an optimistic and easy-going

spirit. They never lose hope despite the hardships of life and find ways of coping with the vicissitudes of human existence;

Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival depicts the joyful and harmonious atmosphere of the capital Bianliang of the Northern Song Dynasty, exemplifying Chinese soulful contentment of a peaceful and harmonious life;

From the pigeons soaring across the blue sky in Beijing and the leisure in tea-drinking, it is hardly arguable that the common Chinese people enjoy a sense of self-worth and find meaning and happiness in their everyday life;

The New Year Pictures of Yangliuqing in Tianjin and Taohuawu in Suzhou express Chinese people's strong wishes for peaceful and affluent life;

The bronzeware of the Spring and Autumn Period, the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi and the poems of Li Bai all demonstrate the Chinese dynamic and graceful artistic pursuit;

The pure porcelain, fascinating gardens and women's graceful cheongsam provide stunning evidence of Chinese aesthetic tastes;

From the delicate romantic atmosphere created by Chinese zither (a traditional Chinese musical instrument) to the art of tea-drinking, we can clearly see the aesthetic appreciation of beauty.

The Big Picture Book of Chinese Culture is adapted from the earlier published *Insights into Chinese Culture* (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2008). In a more vivid comic way, the readers soon understand the inner world and aesthetic tastes of Chinese people and get a better understanding of Chinese culture.

Ye Lang and Zhu Liangzhi

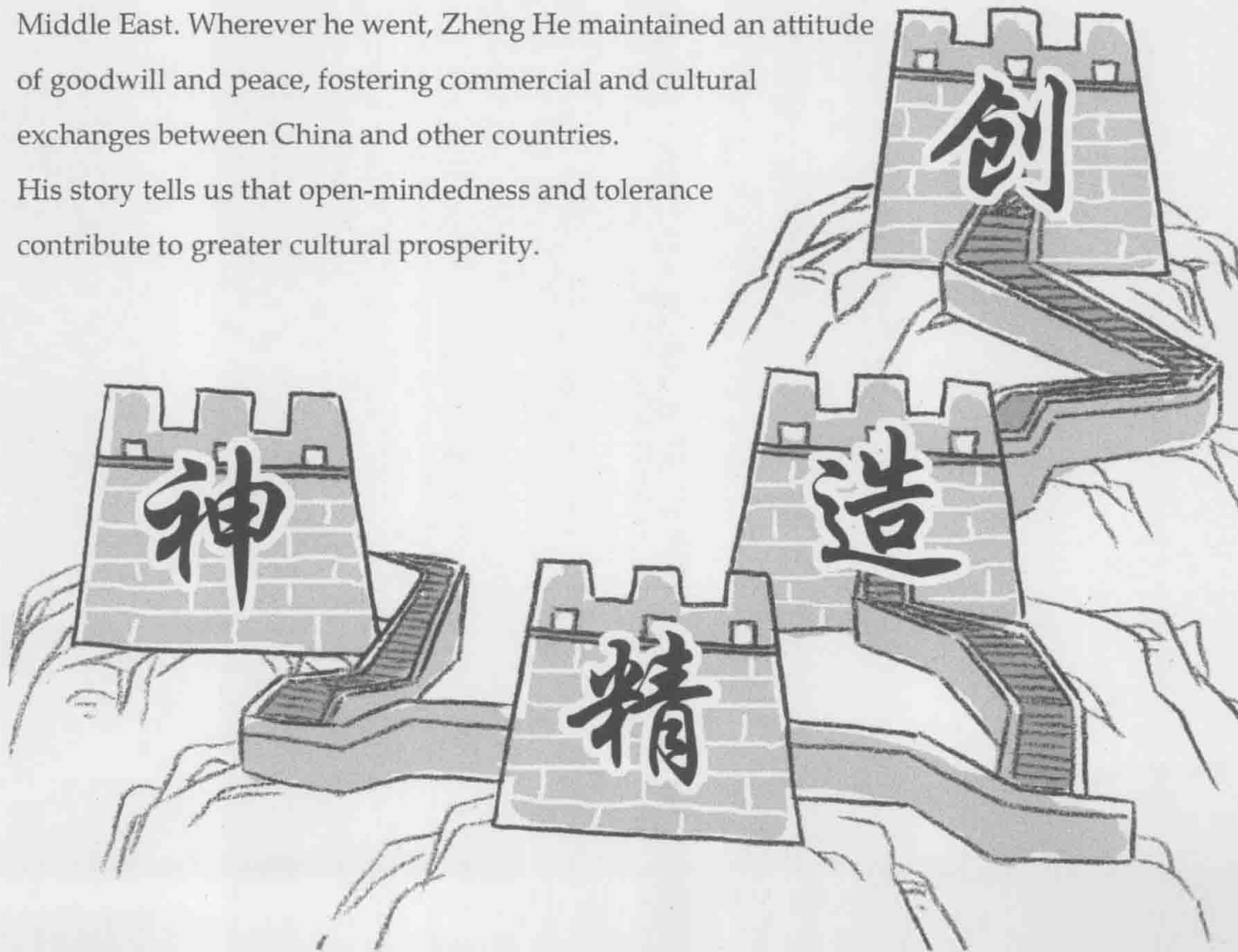
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Introduction

Over thousands of years, China has produced many significant inventions, such as Chinese characters, traditional Chinese medicine, silk, porcelain, compass, paper, or printing. It is obvious that Chinese people are creative and have made great contributions to the world. Famous historic landmarks such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City are two examples of that inventiveness.

At the same time, Chinese people are open-minded and welcome friends and cultures from other lands. The foundations for the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty, which could be characterized as a Golden Age for China, lay mostly on Emperor Taizong's open attitude toward the outside world. In the early Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle sent Zheng He to explore the Western Seas seven times. Zheng He's fleet reached as far west as Mozambique in East Africa and went as far as the holy city of Mecca in the Middle East. Wherever he went, Zheng He maintained an attitude of goodwill and peace, fostering commercial and cultural exchanges between China and other countries.

His story tells us that open-mindedness and tolerance contribute to greater cultural prosperity.



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The Stories of Chinese Characters





Chinese Characters

In recent years, China's economy has grown rapidly, and its international influence has gradually increased.

The number of people around the world learning Chinese has also increased.

Love

Love!!

Those whose mother tongue is English, French, German, or other alphabet-based languages think that Chinese characters are difficult to learn.

How can one understand the Chinese writing system?

Chinese characters are based on ideographs, and are completely different from alphabetic letters.

Of course, learning Chinese characters is not so hard as one thinks.

A growing number of learners claim that learning Chinese characters is an enjoyable and enriching experience.

我爱你!

These unique symbols are different from the words that can be spelled by grouping letters together.

BOA

They contain many lively stories and epitomize people's rich emotions.

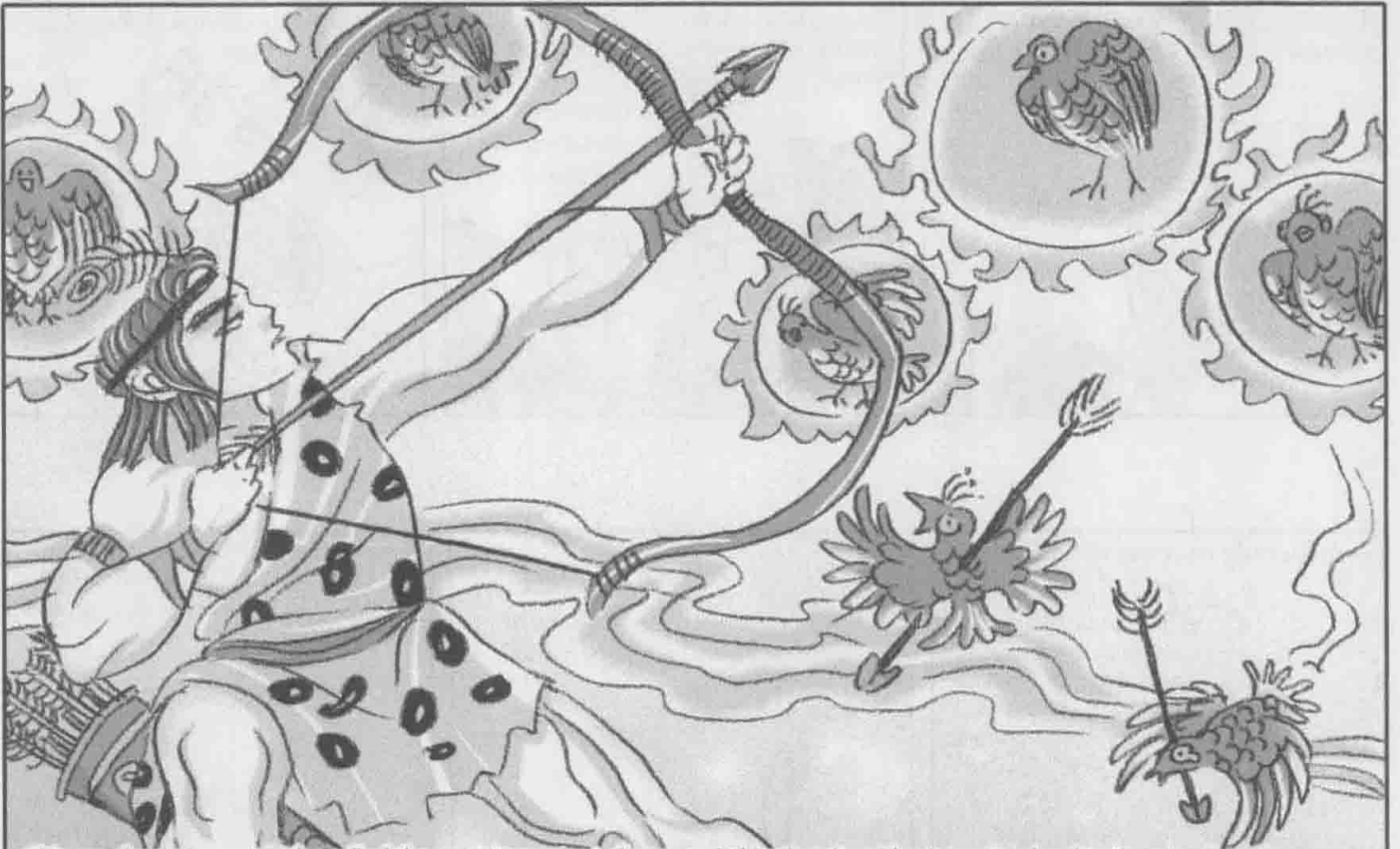
白日依山盡 黃河入海流 欲窮千里目 更上一層樓

大唐王之漢詩 登鶴雀樓甲申秋 北京王之宏

Chinese ideographs also seem to carry the warmth of the ancestors of this oriental nation.

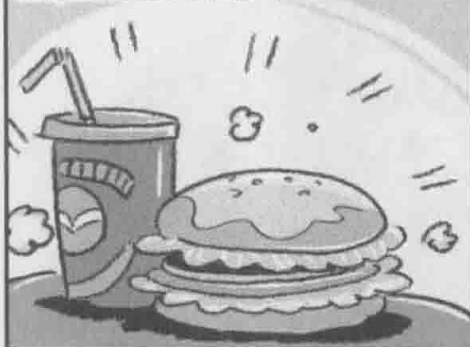


Through studying Chinese characters, one can also gain a better understanding of the subtle spirit of this nation.

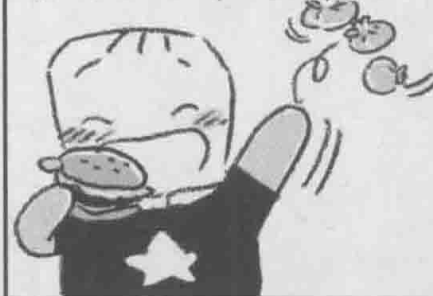


Chinese characters might be called the most important element of China's cultural heritage; it is hard to imagine how the Chinese culture would have developed into what it is today without Chinese characters. It might even be contended that Chinese characters are China's "Second Great Wall." In my opinion that's no exaggeration.

At the beginning of this century, with the influx of Western culture,

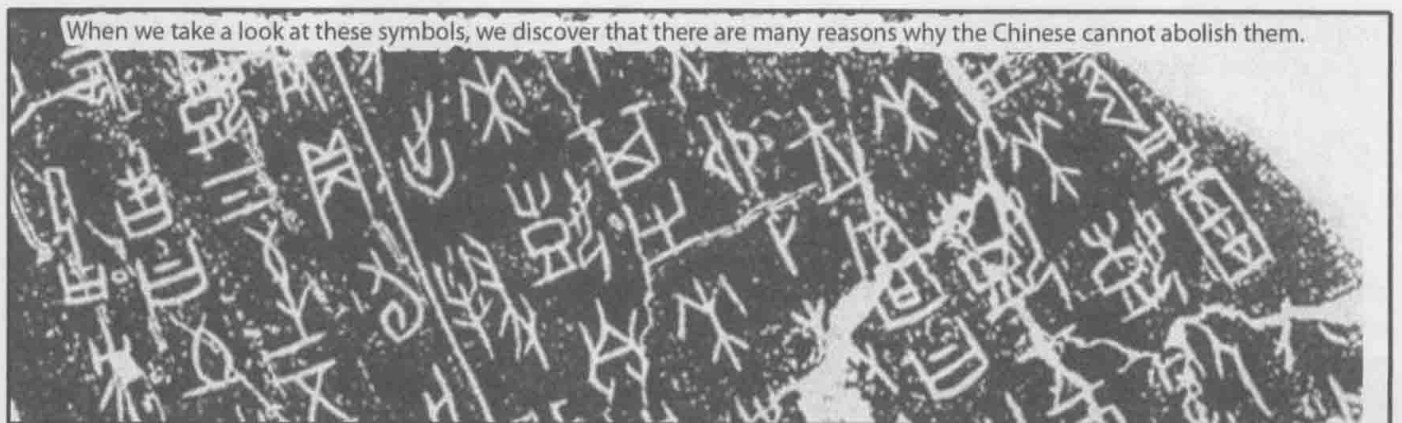
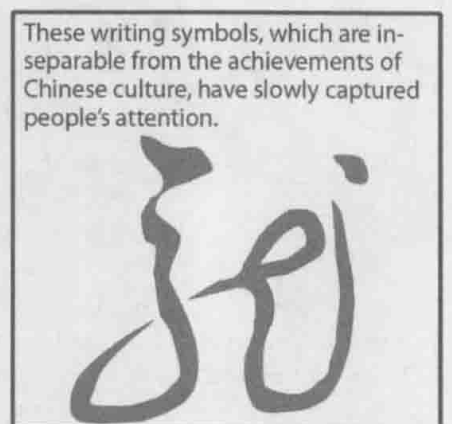
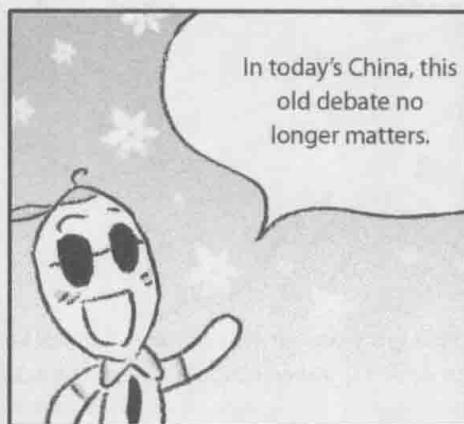
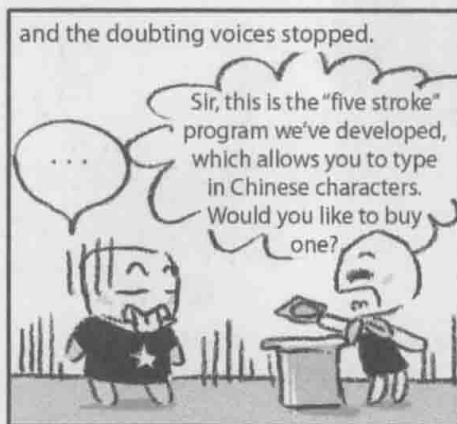
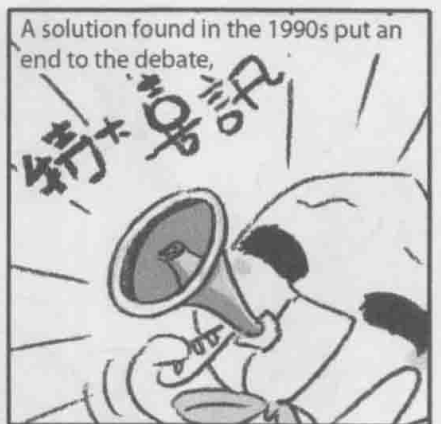
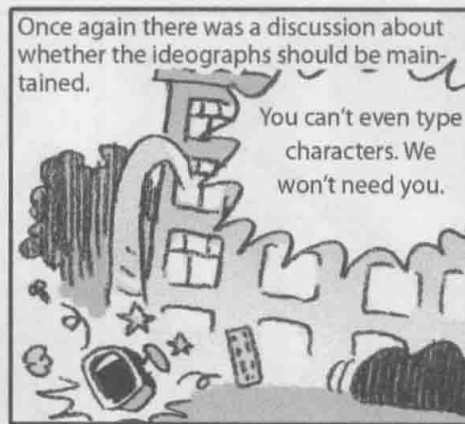
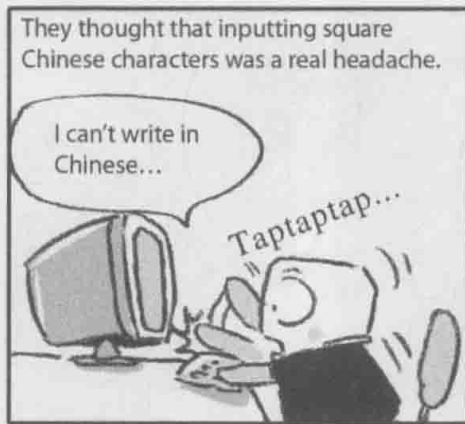
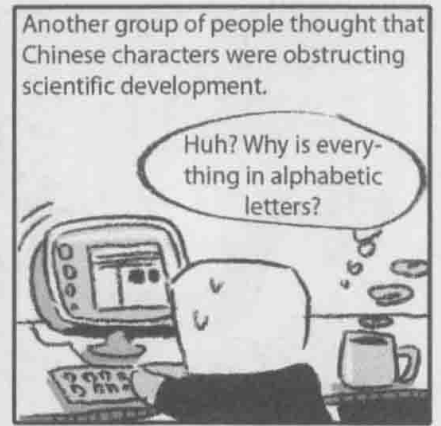
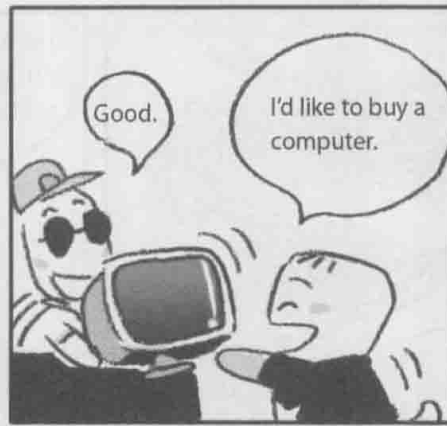
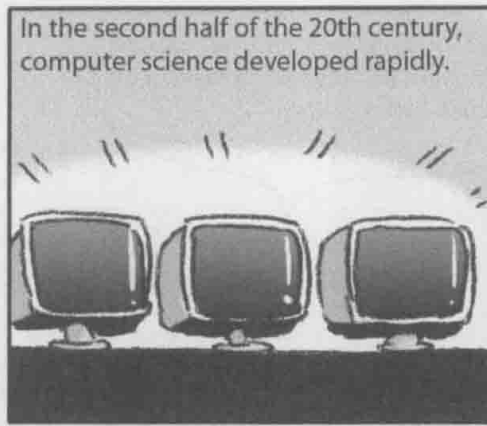


some people thought that China lagged behind due to its language and advocated the abolition of Chinese characters in favor of an alphabetic system.



For a number of reasons, their efforts were never successful.





The Mysterious Power of Writing

In the old days, China had a tradition of "cherishing paper with writing on it."



Paper with writing on it couldn't be carelessly thrown away, but had to be placed in a bamboo basket.

Haha!



This was called "respecting paper basket."



The paper was collected together and burned.



As it was burned, people would bow toward the fire.



On occasions, the paper could also be buried.



This was called "respecting character's tomb."



There was once a student at a Confucian school.

Hmm?



He used discarded paper to wipe his bottom.

I can't find any toilet paper! I can't hold it in!



And he threw the paper in the toilet.

It shouldn't be a problem to use a piece once in a while...

