

yasuto kitahara

學習



天天

R E M E M B E R I N G

# CHINA

三、非洲政治地圖的巨大變化  
有五十個國家和地區  
過去有三個獨立國  
現在有四十個國家

A CULTURAL REVELATION OF FORGOTTEN LIVES AND TIMES





憶中國

REMEMBERING  
CHINA

by yasuto kitahara

PAGE ONE

AUSTRALIA HONG KONG MALAYSIA SINGAPORE TAIWAN THAILAND



REMEMBERING CHINA

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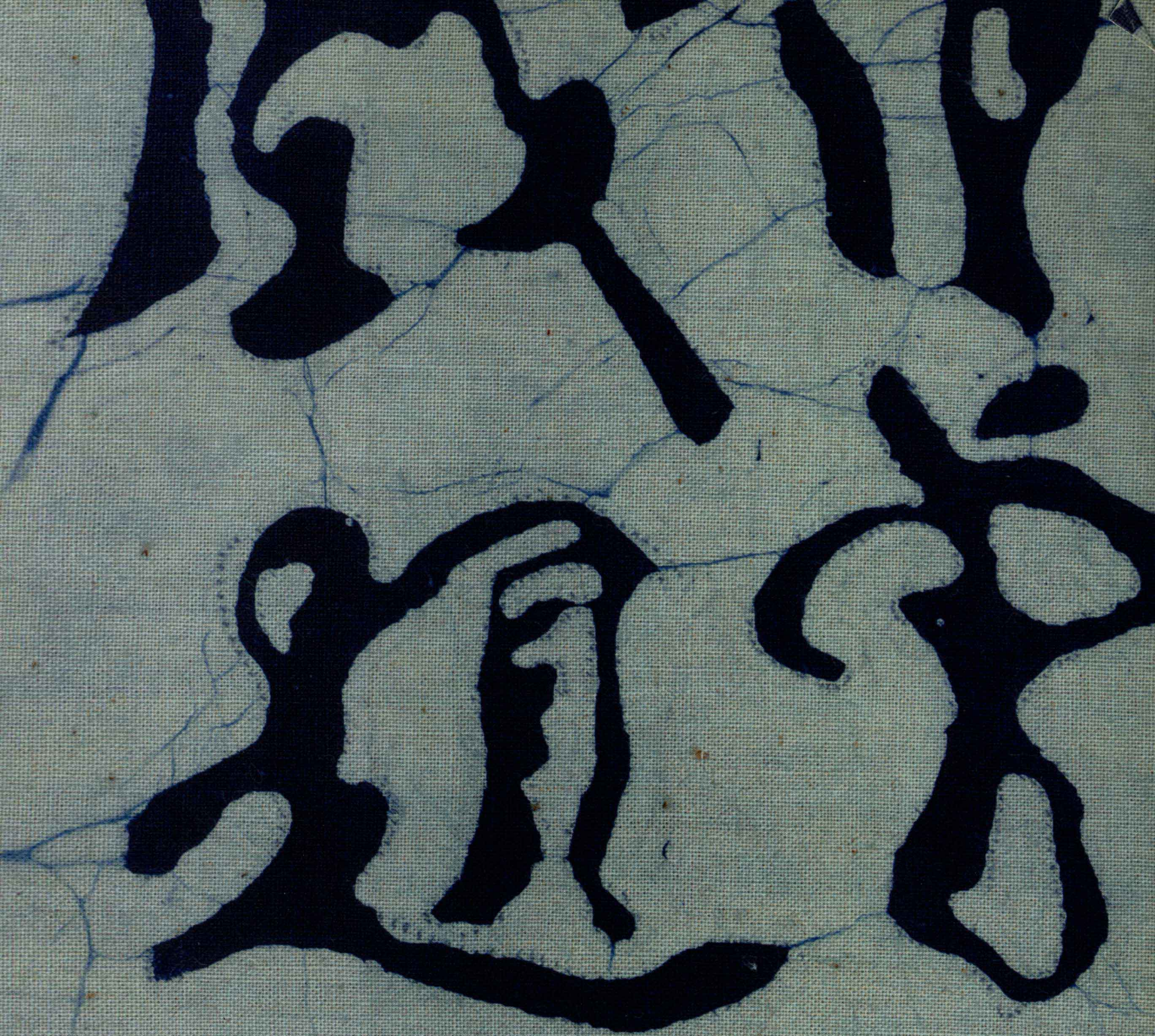
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*Living in the Hills: Impromptu Verses*  
I close my brushwood door in solitude  
And face the vast sky as late sunlight falls.  
The pine trees: cranes are nesting all around.  
My wicker gate: a visitor seldom calls.  
The tender bamboo's dusted with fresh powder.  
Red lotuses strip off their former bloom.  
Lamps shine out at the ford, and everywhere  
The water-chestnut pickers wander home.  
- Wang Wei





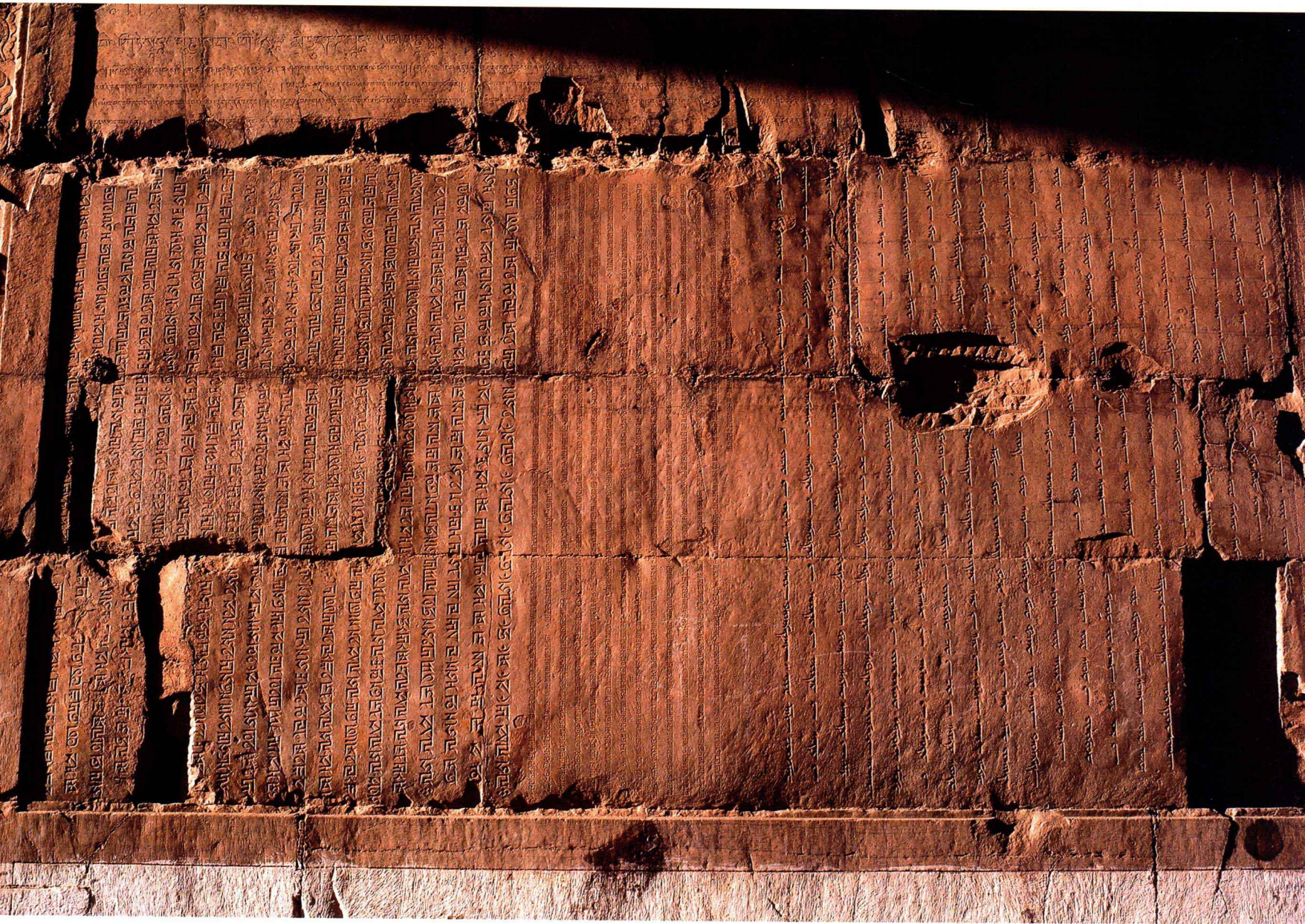
ON THE COVER:  
Cormorant fishing on the Li River in Guilin, 1979

THIS SPREAD  
Background image: hand-painted fabric from Wuhan  
FACING IMAGE  
Winter in Shaoxing: a rare snow aqueduct

葉壹堂



刻



THIS PAGE  
Buddhist dharani (sutra passages) carved in stone at Juyong  
Pass on the Great Wall, one of the nine great strategic frontier  
posts of China



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## CHINA REMEMBERED

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憶  
中國



## FOREWORD

China is a vast land that stretches eastward from the Himalayas for some 250 million acres and a country whose population exceeds 1.26 billion people. Its land area is some 3.7 million square miles—which is approximately one fifteenth of the total area of all the continents of the world added together. Its size is equivalent to that of the whole of Europe and 26 times that of Japan, making it the fourth largest country in the world after Russia, Canada, and the United States.

China is a vast country whose climatic conditions, natural features and built forms are very diverse. Apart from the distinctive building forms in each region, building materials also vary from region to region. For example, there are regions where houses are made of sun-dried bricks, and others where homes are simply caves enveloped in yellow earth. China is truly a country of infinite variety, where there are always new and unexpected things to discover.

On 25 October 1999, I visited China's administrative capital, Beijing, with the students of Shibuya Makuhari Japanese School in Singapore. When we arrived, we were appalled to find that the road from the airport was lined with skyscrapers. As with every big city, Beijing was filled with a lot of people and traffic. It felt almost as if we were in Europe or America.

At the time, the excitement of the October 1 National Day celebrations commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China still had not died down. There were also tourists everywhere—both from other parts of the world and other provinces of China. At the time, Beijing was not the only city in China that was undergoing drastic changes and experiencing the gradual rejection of significant cultural elements. The evolution of China could also be felt in other cities such as Shanghai and Tianjin. While this rapid development was worthy of admiration, it felt to me that a part of China had somehow been lost in the process.

The famous district of Wang Fujing, which used to be lined with Chinese seal shops and bookstores, had been transformed into an upscale shopping district lined with brand-name boutiques. One no longer saw the life that filled the alleyways of Wang Fujing, which had left a deep impression on me when I first visited China twenty-five years ago with children playing jump rope and peddlers selling food and daily necessities on their carts—things that once gave Beijing its special character. Even the *sihetang* (which literally means four-sided halls in Chinese as it encloses an open courtyard in the center) where the majority of Beijing residents lived a good part of their lives were no longer in sight, except in the specially preserved heritage districts. I told the students that I felt like Urashima Taro\*.

As with most cities that were developing fast, the cultural heritage of Beijing seemed to be slowly fading. But the rural population of China, as at the end of 1998, still constituted some 70% of the Chinese population. Over a period of twenty-five years, I observed that while the cities had changed radically, the drastic development was not paralleled in the countryside, which still maintained the strong characteristics of Chinese culture, traditions and practices.

I happen to be a geographer, and my life has been intertwined with geography for a long time. Being a geography teacher, my trips to China began when I first travelled there to scout for teaching materials. With that purpose in mind, I began taking a lot of slides in order to show my students, but after a few trips, I became intrigued with the country as I became really interested in the way the Chinese live. So I began taking a lot of other slides beyond pure geography. I began photographing life in China.

I am extremely delighted that finally I can share some of these images and my experiences through this book, which documents my multiple visits to China, witnessing the evolution of what I believe will be a great nation one day.

## 北原安門

Yasuto Kitahara  
June 2002



\*Urashima Taro is a legendary Japanese hero, who was carried by a sea turtle to the palace of the Dragon King at the bottom of the sea. After three years of luxury in the palace, he returned to his village to find that a whole generation had passed on land and the village had become a totally different world.



序

INTRODUCTION

不得體君為其  
女子子為其父  
以期也不敢降  
大之子為其父  
昆弟昆弟之

月不敢降其祖也  
大功布衰裳牡麻經無受  
者子女子子之長殤中殤  
傳曰何以大功也未成人  
也何以無受也

者大  
子子  
母叔  
者其  
者成



居爲夫之君傳也從服也姑姊適人無主者姑也何以期也爲故也爲君之父祖父父母傳曰何服也父母長子則小君也父卒後者服斬要爲何以期也妾之婦之事舅姑等傳曰何以期也昆弟之子傳報之也公妾

弟之不敢以兄弟之服服傳曰大夫爲宗子齊衰三月也傳曰大夫爲舊君何以服齊衰三月也大夫去君婦其宗廟故服齊衰三月也言與民同也何大夫之謂乎言其以道去君而猶未絕也曾祖父母爲士者如衆人傳曰何以齊衰三月也大夫不敢降其祖也女子子嫁者未嫁者爲曾祖父母傳曰嫁者其嫁於大夫者也未嫁者其成人而夫者也



道也嫂亦人治大夫昆弟傳曰也尊之庶母妻也先過大乎大降子從父夫之

THIS SPREAD  
TOP: A poster at a Shanghai middle school with a welcome message.  
BACKGROUND: A sutra passage carved in stone.





# INTRODUCTION

The difference in longitude from the easternmost tip of Heilongjiang Province and the westernmost tip of the Xinjiang Uigur Autonomous Region is about 60 degrees. The two regions are separated by a distance of about 3,225 miles with a time difference of over four hours.

When the morning light shines in full brilliance over the Ussuri River, which forms the border with Russia in the Northeast, the sky is still pitch black and filled with stars over the Pamir Plateau in the West.

While snowflakes fall over Heilongjiang, Hainan Island in the south feels like the peak of summer. From the northernmost tip of Heilongjiang to the Nansha archipelago far down in the south, the difference in latitude is about fifty degrees, over a distance of 3,420 miles that stretches from the frigid zone to the tropics.

To illustrate the diversity of culture and practices in China, there is a saying that goes "Boats in the South; Horses in the North." The rivers to the south of the Qinling Mountains and the Huai River maintain a relatively steady quantity of water flow throughout the year. They rarely freeze, so they can be used for transportation all year-round. Moreover, in this region, vegetation flourishes. The water is clear as there is relatively little silt in the rivers. There are also many lakes and marshes, which have been connected for some time to make navigation easy. Due to these climatic differences, transportation by boat has long dominated in the south, whereas in the north people depended largely upon horses.

There is another saying in China that goes "Mild in the South; Salty in the North; Sour in the East; and Hot in the West." This is said with reference to the characteristic cuisines of the different regions. Types of cuisine develop in close connection with the climate of that particular region where the cuisine is conceived. Cantonese food is comparatively plain, lacking in strong and spicy flavors, with the emphasis tending towards sweetness. Beijing, being in a cold climate, presents a cuisine that tends to be on the salty side. Shanghai cuisine, on the other hand, tends to be sour, while Sichuan cuisine, to help fend off the oppressive summer heat, is hot and spicy.

All these differences in geography and culinary preferences are only small examples of the variety of life in China. There is still so much more to China that this book alone certainly does not suffice.

RIGHT:  
*The Xia River People living near the front gate of the Labuleng temple*

FOLLOWING PAGES pp. 6-7  
*Images of a parade celebrating the 11th National People's Congress in Shanghai*







承





人人为我





我为人人



THIS PAGE  
Picture of a small town taken from a train window on the  
Beijing-Baotao railway

FOLLOWING PAGES pp. 10-11  
p. 10 TOP A Beauty Parlour in Harbin; BOTTOM A dentist's  
poster seen in downtown Kashgar  
p. 11 TOP The train station signs at Tiexi are also written in  
local minority languages; BOTTOM Movie posters seen in  
Kunming



A Quartrain

*Under the late sun, the scene is beautiful.*

*The Spring breeze bears the fragrance of flowers and grass*

*The mud has thawed, and swallows fly around.*

*On the warm sand, mandarin ducks are sleeping*

- Du Fu

絕句

遲日江山麗

春風花草香

泥融飛燕子

沙暖睡鴛鴦

- 杜甫





