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A Window to the Nation A Welcome to the World

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Peizhai: A Village Springs Forward

My Own Private Shangri-La
Hidden Tibetan Buddhism in the Palace Museum

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by Pang Xinglei/Xinhua

Beijing, Hanoi Reinforce Ties

January 12, Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony for Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee. Likening the two countries as “comrades and brothers,” Xi said China views relations with Vietnam strategically and from a long-term perspective. “We should strengthen strategic cooperation and keep boosting mutual trust, so as to lay a more solid political foundation for the settlement of maritime issues,” Xi said at the meeting. “At the same time, we should push forward joint exploration and cooperation in the sea.”

Nguyen said Hanoi will “expand maritime cooperation” with Beijing and seek results in areas like security, trade and youth communication. He affirmed that Hanoi sees relations with Beijing as “the top priority of long-term foreign policy.”

This is Nguyen’s first visit to China since his re-election in January 2016. The two leaders witnessed the signing of 15 cooperation documents, covering areas including national defense, financing, railways and Party cadre training.



Xinhua

Let’s Make a Deal: Trump, Ma Talk Jobs

January 9, New York: Jack Ma, billionaire founder and executive chairman of Alibaba Group, met then U.S. president-elect Donald Trump at Trump Tower.

The two met briefly with reporters after the morning meeting. Trump said that it was a “great meeting” and Ma called it “very productive.” They announced plans to create a million U.S. jobs by allowing small and medium-sized U.S. businesses to sell to China through Alibaba’s platforms.

Ma also told reporters that the two discussed selling U.S. commodities including apparel, wine and fruit on Alibaba’s e-commerce platforms. Ma added that both also agreed on the need for improvement of the overall China-U.S. relationship.

Alibaba, which focuses mostly on facilitating third-party sales, employed 36,446 full-time workers as of March 31, 2016, according to SEC filings.



CFP

Winter Heat in Xinjiang

December 24, Hami, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region: Dancers wait to perform at the 12th Barkol Ice, Snow, Cultural and Tourism Festival. Winter is becoming a popular time to visit Xinjiang, a region of China that borders Russia, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and other countries. Drawn to its snow-capped mountains and diverse cultural attractions, more than 30 million tourists are expected to visit Xinjiang from November to April.

China's 13th National Winter Games, held in Urumqi from January 20 to 30, provided a further boost to winter tourism.



CFP

Decorating the New Year

January 10, Zibo, Shandong Province: Workers make door decorations at a factory. Lunar New Year's Day falls on January 28 this year, the dawn of the Year of the Rooster. Although holiday decorations are dramatically diversified these days, some traditional Spring Festival decorations, such as door decorations, door-god pictures, paper-cuts, and red lanterns still sell well both in China and Chinese communities abroad. Since some production processes cannot be fully mechanized and require manual work, the manufacturers must step up production to keep up with orders.

Comment

Preparing for Trump's America

Text by Wu Xinbo

When Donald Trump first declared his candidacy for U.S. President, he was considered little more than a noisy troublemaker. However, now that he has been sworn in as President of the United States, the world must prepare for changes brought by the Trump administration.

Although Trump didn't systematically elaborate on his foreign policy ideas, some valuable clues can be found in speeches he made during the campaign. First, Trump strongly advocates the "America first" doctrine, and his foreign policy echoes an old isolationism. Compared with his predecessors since World War II, Trump demonstrates a weaker desire for American global leadership. He opposes excessive U.S. involvement in world affairs and objects to so many overseas burdens, arguing that the U.S. should focus on domestic problems. Second, Trump is a nationalist, economically. He cares about U.S. interests and economic holdings and sees globalization in a negative light, opposing free trade. Trump has seemed just as skeptical about global governance and international cooperation. For example, he has asserted that the *Paris Agreement*, which deals with climate change, is unnecessary and that some international organizations are unreliable.

Based on these clues, the Trump administration's foreign policy is expected to veer in a new direction.

First, the U.S. will practice more strategic retrenchment and retreating. The Obama administration (2009-2017) learned a lesson in over-reaching from the Bush administration (2001-2009) and carried out strategic contraction to some extent. For example, Obama ended the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and showed more restraint and prudence in launching


overseas military interventions. It now seems that Trump may go even further. Of course, since the U.S. has considerable overseas interests, Trump will find it hard to practice complete isolationism. Instead, he will likely pursue a policy of selective participation and involvement, focusing on safeguarding American traditional interests in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia, and asking allies to shoulder more security responsibilities.

Second, Trump will put the brakes on globalization and global governance, or even attempt to reverse some aspects of globalization. Trump will pull U.S. participation from both the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), both of which were aggressively promoted by the Obama administration. Trump may also withdraw from the *Paris Agreement*, just as the Bush administration abandoned the *Kyoto Protocol*. Trump has shown apathy towards mechanisms promoting global economic governance and regional trade-and-investment-liberalization such as the Group of Twenty and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Third, Trump could improve the U.S.'s relations with Russia substantially. Based on his fundamental philosophy of strategic contraction, Trump wouldn't be interested in suppressing Russia through NATO expansion. The Trump administration could pass off the Ukraine crisis to European allies. The U.S. will continue to play a role in crisis management, but perhaps not the lead. The Trump administration will likely gradually reduce and lift sanctions against Russia in exchange for U.S.-Russia cooperation in other areas.

Fourth, the Trump administration won't be as aggressive with the Asia-

Pacific Rebalance Strategy advocated and promoted by the Obama administration. Trump will surely continue to attach great importance to U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region, but his methods of maintaining these interests will change. Economically, with less appetite for multilateral arrangements, the U.S. is expected to rely more on bilateral arrangements. Strategically and like his predecessor, Trump will not seek active measures to contain China, and will probably not vigorously promote security cooperation with allies. Instead, he has called for allies, such as Japan and South Korea, to shoulder more security responsibilities on their own.

Economic and trade benefits are Trump's priority in regards to China policy. Since Trump has highlighted the importance of reviving U.S. manufacturing and creating jobs, he will place greater emphasis on traditional trade and show more inclination toward protectionism, which will likely lead to increased trade frictions between China and the U.S. However, Trump welcomes China to expand its investments in the U.S., which will boost U.S. manufacturing, increase employment, and upgrade outdated infrastructure. Trump will soften his ideology on foreign policy towards China and avoid fierce geopolitical competition with China in the Western Pacific. Still, the Trump administration will remain highly alert towards China's development of military power. There will be more practical cooperation between China and the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific region. Traditionally, Republicans have been more supportive of Taiwan, and the development of U.S.-Taiwan relations, especially military relations, demands special attention. 

The author is executive vice-president of the Institute of International Studies and director of Center for American Studies at Fudan University.

Buzzwords

文物医院 Relic Hospital

Edited by Li Zhuoxi

The Palace Museum (Forbidden City) recently established the Imperial Palace Heritage Conservation Center, informally called the "Relic Hospital." With a floor space of 13,000 square meters, it has the most advanced relic restoration workshops in China.

Construction of the "hospital" broke ground on April 12, 2014, and it began operation on December 29, 2016. It features two floors including an underground basement and six districts, namely Scientific and Technological Conservation, Analysis and Detection, Restoration of Calligraphy and Paintings, General Technical Restoration, General Restoration of Arts and Crafts, and Restoration of Metal Relics and Timepieces. Functionally, it operates through


three divisions: Relic Tech Lab, Relic Restoration Studio, and Relic Protection Management and Exhibition.

"The process of relic restoration is not unlike a patient going to see a doctor in hospital," illustrates an expert from the conservation center. "First, relic custody departments register the relics that need to be restored or maintained. Then, they must be diagnosed with sophisticated devices such as special computed tomography (CT) scanners, micro-examination equipment, material analysis instruments, and nondestructive inspection equipment. 'Doctors' write 'prescriptions', and the 'patients' are transferred to relevant divisions for restoration and treatment. The 'hospital' maintains detailed records like a person's medical



On December 29, 2016, the Palace Museum's Relic Hospital opened in Beijing. It is China's largest relic restoration institution, employing top-of-the-line scientists to use cutting-edge equipment.

history. The relics are released to return home after restoration." In the near future, the relic

hospital will open to the public, enabling interested people to observe the entire restoration process. 

二氧化碳监测卫星 CO₂ Monitoring Satellite

Edited by Li Zhuoxi

At dawn on December 22, 2016, Chinese scientists witnessed the launch of the country's first carbon dioxide monitoring satellite, TanSat for short, from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China.

Over the last 150 years, increasing concentration of carbon dioxide, from 280ppm to 400ppm, has plagued the planet. The greenhouse effect caused by gases such as carbon dioxide has been identified as the chief culprit of global warming. Monitoring carbon dioxide with satellites has become a global competition in the most technologically advanced countries. In 2009, Japan launched GOSAT, the world's first greenhouse gas observer, and in 2014 the

United States sent its OCO-2 into space. China is the third country to develop such an observer.


According to specialists, the 620-kilogram TanSat maintains a sun-synchronous orbit 700 kilometers above the earth as it monitors the density, distribution and flow of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Its precision is greater than 4ppm. TanSat will begin formal operation after six months of in-orbit testing. It will test global carbon dioxide levels every 16 days and start comprehensively monitoring the globe after two to three months of data accumulation.

"TanSat will play a huge role in China's efforts to address global climate change and it will improve the monitoring of carbon dioxide



December 22, 2016: China successfully launches its first satellite to monitor the density of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere.

around the planet," explains Li Jiahong, chief engineer of the National Remote Sensing Center of China under the Ministry of Science and Technology. TanSat

will fill a technical gap in monitoring greenhouse gases in China with first-hand data acquired by observing carbon dioxide above the earth. 



Zhangjiajie: Out-of-this-World Mountains

Text and photographs by Nick Lanigan

The region around the city of Zhangjiajie in southern China's Hunan Province is famous for its mountains. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1992, the rugged, otherworldly landscape became even more famous after *Avatar* designer Steven Messing revealed that he visited China and used photographs of Zhangjiajie as inspiration for Pandora's floating mountains in the film. Since *Avatar*'s release, Zhangjiajie's tourism has boomed. I visited in 2014, and was profoundly impressed by the dramatic peaks, steep cliffs and lush vegetation. Memories of my trip now spring to mind every time I hear about new tourist attractions popping up in Zhangjiajie and its mountains.

Zhangjiajie Sandstone Peak Forest Geopark, the name referring to the area's scenic spots collectively, is a geologist's dream. Quartz-sandstone pillars left after millennia of erosion rise majestically from the ground far below. The densely concentrated pillars resemble clusters of trees, which inspired the "Peak Forest" name. A network of paths leads visitors around the myriad sights. Many choose to remain on relatively flat ground, where trails weave through the peaks, providing breathtaking views of cliffs and waterfalls. Others take a more adventurous route upwards into the clouds. Helpful signage throughout the park reveals a plethora of information about the various rock formations, nearby tree species and local wildlife.

One local attraction that needs no introduction is the resident rhesus monkeys. Due to increased contact with people, the

monkeys have become relatively tame and learned that areas frequented by humans are most likely to have food—in exchange for posing for a few pictures. The higher I climbed from the busy areas, the fewer monkeys could be found. The park's gentle streams and abundant trees are worlds away from the concrete jungles of Beijing and Shanghai, but since packed busloads of camera-wielding tourists began arriving

daily, the classic hallmarks of a major tourist attraction have started to appear.

During my visit, a huge glass elevator was already ferrying tourists up and down a cliff, enabling them to comfortably enjoy spectacular views from the top. Some people waited in line for hours just to experience a ride that lasts only a few minutes. Food and souvenir vendors lined the busiest paths, many of them using megaphones

to advertise their products. There was even a bustling McDonald's. Since my visit, a 430-meter-long glass bridge connecting two peaks has opened, allowing see-through passage above a 300-meter-deep gorge. To call the new addition popular may be an understatement: just 13 days after opening, the six-meter-wide bridge had to be closed temporarily for reinforcements because so many people wanted to use it. A second, even more extreme bridge is currently being developed: this one will use reflective materials to create the illusion that the entire bridge is invisible, even while you walk across it.

If the goal is to attract more tourists, these developments make perfect sense. The elevator and the bridges are creative ways to fully harness the beauty of the local area in a way that inspires conversation and facilitates a wealth of stunning pictures circulating around the world on social media. The food and drink vendors are simply seizing an opportunity to make some money, and the locals of Zhangjiajie are all benefitting greatly from the funds injected by tourists. But considering that the resource attracting those tourists is uniquely beautiful scenery, development must be carefully balanced with preservation—es-

pecially as China's tourism industry continues to expand at an unprecedented rate.

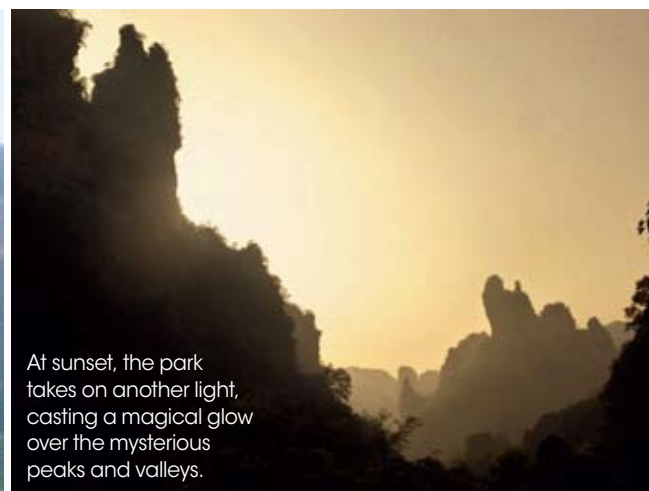
The Chinese authorities are well aware of the need to closely monitor popular tourist destinations. At the end of 2016, the China National Tourism Administration released a comprehensive plan to upgrade the industry. Administrators of Zhangjiajie had already marked trails where visitors are allowed to walk, hoping to prevent damage to comparatively vulnerable areas. Trash collection facilities have been installed everywhere that people tend to eat and drink. The "invisible" glass bridge would be a breathtaking attraction on its own, but placing such a structure in this particular location is also meant to stress the importance of blending into the surroundings.

China is not the only nation struggling to keep its tourism resources sustainable. Countries around the world have experienced similar problems, so much so that the World Tourism Organization has designated 2017 the "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development." The concept of sustainable tourism has grown in both relevance and popularity in recent years, as people realize the importance of protecting and preserving indigenous cultures and the natural environment alike. In Zhangjiajie, as in many other areas of natural beauty, the preservation of the pristine scenery is of paramount significance. The unique landscape is worth protecting for its own sake, but its health is also a crucial indicator of the future of the tourism industry in the region and the country.

As China's domestic and international tourism sectors grow, so does the need to protect the country's natural beauty. Just as engineers met the challenge of linking two mountains, now Zhangjiajie's administrators must achieve an even more delicate balance between development and preservation. 



The otherworldly mountain scenery of Zhangjiajie is said to have inspired the blockbuster film *Avatar*.



At sunset, the park takes on another light, casting a magical glow over the mysterious peaks and valleys.



Seen from above, the dizzying height of these mountains becomes all too clear.



Each stone peak has been created in a unique formation by the forces of time and the elements.

Making the Case for Globalization

Edited by Zoe Zhao

Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Zurich on January 15 to pay a state visit to Switzerland and attend the 2017 annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. It was the first state visit to the Alpine country by a Chinese president in the 21st Century. Meanwhile, Xi also became the first Chinese head of state to attend the WEF annual meeting in Davos. During his first overseas trip in 2017, which lasted until January 18, Xi also traveled to Geneva and Lausanne to visit the United Nations Office at Geneva and the headquarters of the World Health Organization and the International Olympic Committee.

“I hope that, through my visit, we can deepen the traditional friendship between our two peoples, expand our practical coopera-

tion in various areas, enrich the meaning of our innovative strategic partnership, push bilateral ties to a new high, and jointly make positive contributions to promoting world economic recovery,” Xi said in a speech delivered at the airport in Zurich.

China and Switzerland have enjoyed long-term exchanges and cooperation. In 1950, Switzerland became one of the first Western countries to establish diplomatic relations with the newly-founded People’s Republic of China. At the start of this century, Switzerland was among the first European countries to recognize China as a full market economy. In recent years, Switzerland became the first country in continental Europe to conclude and implement a free trade agreement with China.



January 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan receive flowers from Swiss children after their arrival in Zurich, Switzerland. by Lan Hongguang/Xinhua



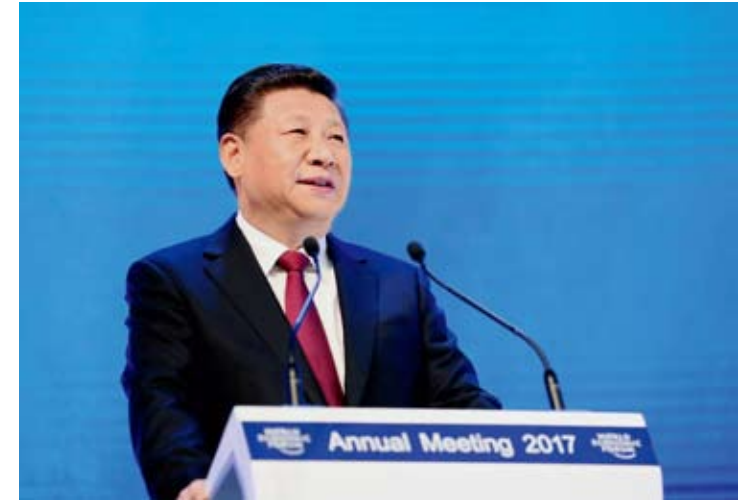
January 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan enjoy tea and conversation with Swiss President Doris Leuthard and her husband Roland Hausin in a special train on their way to Bern, capital of Switzerland. by Lan Hongguang/Xinhua



January 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a speech during a welcome ceremony held by the members of the Swiss Federal Council in Bern, Switzerland. by Xie Huanqi/Xinhua




January 17: Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Swiss counterpart Doris Leuthard pose for photos during the launch ceremony of the China-Switzerland Year of Tourism in Davos. by Rao Aimin/Xinhua



January 17: Xi delivers a keynote speech at the opening plenary of the 2017 annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. by Lan Hongguang/Xinhua



January 17: Xi shakes hands with Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, Davos. by Rao Aimin/Xinhua

Xi also attended the WEF annual meeting, which came as economic globalization faces headwinds of rising populism and trade protectionism. During a keynote speech at its opening ceremony on January 17, Xi shared the views of the world's second largest economy on charting the course for globalization, to make it more inclusive and beneficial to all, and on revitalizing global economic growth. 

Peizhai:

A Village Springs Forward

Text by Hu Zhoumeng
Photographs by Qin Bin

Peizhai Village nestles deep in the southern Taihang Mountains in central China. Administered by Zhangcun Township of Huixian City, Peizhai is located in an area with the scarcest water resources in northern Henan Province. It also lacks convenient transportation infrastructure and useful natural resources. The small village lived on cultivation of the hardest crops, such as wheat and sweet potatoes, due to water shortages for generations. In 2006, its annual per capita income averaged less than US\$145.

Peizhai's residential area. In 2006, Pei Chunliang invested US\$4.4 million to level the barren mountains south of the village and build new homes for more than 500 households. Two years later, locals bid farewell to mud dwellings that barely sheltered them from heavy rain and wind, and moved into new houses.

In 2005, villagers invited local-born entrepreneur Pei Chunliang, who was working elsewhere, to return to head the village committee. Since then, Pei has led his fellow villagers to dig deep wells, erect greenhouses and build commercial streets and reservoirs. By the end of 2016, annual per capita income in Peizhai reached US\$1,450. In 2010, thanks to planning and promotion by the township government, 23 neighboring villages gradually united around Peizhai to form today's Peizhai Community, home to over 15,000 people.

Fighting Drought

In the past, drought consumed Peizhai almost every year and was especially cruel during springtime. When water in local cellars ran dry, residents were left to borrow from neighbors. The whole village depended on a manual winding-rope well over 30 meters deep. The well water was hard. A new aluminum pot used to boil the water was usually covered in mineral deposits in less than a month.

When Pei Chunliang returned, he first built a 530-meter-deep well for daily use and a 5,000-cubic-meter pool at a cost of more than US\$1.3 million, which came out of his own pocket. However, the new well didn't provide as much water as they hoped. Pei proposed channeling water 100 kilometers from the Shimen Reservoir and storing it in their new reservoir. Since the development of efficient agriculture requires abundant water, Peizhai's Party committee, villagers' committee, and villagers' representatives made a bold joint decision to dig a deep natural well in the old area of Peizhai and build a reservoir to channel water from another large reservoir 100 kilometers away.

Before construction on the reservoir broke ground, around US\$140,000 was raised from locals and donations, including a US\$11 donation from kids of Zhangcun Central Elementary School.

The new reservoir, full of hope more than water, faced great challenges in its first summer. Heavy rain pushed the poorly-protected dam foundation dozens of meters away. Watching their painstaking efforts across months washed down the drain, the villagers were heartbroken, and some even suggested they give up the efforts. Pei mobilized every Party member and official in the village to go door-to-door to encourage residents to persist. "As a village leader, I had to be firm on issues on which I knew we were right and help others keep the faith," says Pei.

In late 2013, construction of the Peizhai Reservoir, with storage capacity of 800,000 cubic meters, was finally completed. Vil-

lagers set off firecrackers to celebrate, and the new structure began supplying water to more than 30,000 people in Peizhai and neighboring villages and 1,333 hectares of farmland and orchards.

Door to Wealth

In 2006, Pei invested US\$4.4 million to level barren mountains south of the village and build new homes for more than 500 households. Two years later, locals bid farewell to clay dwellings that barely sheltered them from heavy rain and wind, and moved into new houses. Since then, Pei has shifted his focus to guaranteeing and improving local standards of living.

Peizhai people have survived by farming for generations, and agriculture remains tightly intertwined with their spiritual lives as much as it is materially. Pei Chunliang understood this factor as well as anyone. In 2010, 40 hectares of land in old Peizhai Village was reclaimed and fitted with solar and geothermal greenhouses to cultivate vegetables and flowers, which could enable growers to earn a hundred times as much as growing grain. However, the new, exotic equipment intimidated the villagers.

To calm villagers' worries, Pei twice escorted about 30 villagers to their neighboring province, Shandong, to witness its advanced greenhouse-based agriculture system in action. Upon seeing the operations of their prosperous neighbor, some minds were changed, but others remained reluctant. Back in Peizhai, Party members took the lead in greenhouse cultivation. To help villagers, Pei Longxiang, deputy secretary of the Peizhai Party Committee, established a professional cooperative for vegetable and flower plantation to facilitate mutual aid between farmers. The cooperative provided farmers with seeds and planting technologies as well as sales services. Agricultural specialists were invited to guide local farmers. Now, efficient agriculture in the Peizhai Community covers about 100 hectares, up from 17 hectares in 2010. It features 750 greenhouses of various kinds and participation of over 1,200 villagers.

Even after the village's agricultural development began booming, its central commercial street remained dilapidated. The bumpy, cracked, seven-meter-wide road was always crowded. Peizhai's Party committee, villagers' committee and villagers' representatives agreed to bulldoze the beat-up street and expand its width to 25 meters. Shops were to be moved into new accommodations about the same size as the old structures. Some shopkeepers who had built new structures only a few years earlier were not willing to go and voiced strong opposition.

Pei Qingli, a member from the villagers' committee who



The entrance to Peizhai Community.



Local seniors relax in the sunshine in front of their homes.



Pei Chunliang (right) tastes persimmon in a local's home.



A local kids' store on Peizhai's commercial street. The two-story business sells products for mothers and children on the first floor, and provides a baby bath service on the second floor. According to the owner, his annual income from the shop is about US\$22,000.

oversaw commercial street management, had a lot to say: "Families of many Party members owned shops and even I ran a small business selling daily-use commodities. My family opposed the demolition project, but I persuaded them to give it a chance. We can't attract investors without improving the business environment. We have to make sacrifices to get business opportunities." When Party members in the village took the lead and started

tearing down their own shops, the other villagers began to follow voluntarily.

The old street was swept up into the dusts of bulldozers. Soon, over 900 modern shops lined a broad new avenue. Supermarkets, restaurants, beauty salons, and dance clubs opened one after another. In a flash, Peizhai's commercial street became the most bustling area in Zhangcun Township.



At the local Sweet Potato Noodles Festival, two noodle makers are producing the food. Sweet potatoes are one of the major food crops in Peizhai, and sweet potato noodles are a popular local specialty.



Two kids hold a picture of the Peizhai Reservoir under construction in front of the site. In late 2013, construction of the Peizhai Reservoir, with a storage capacity of 800,000 cubic meters, was finally completed, and local villagers soon began to channel water from Sanjiaokou Reservoir some 100 kilometers away. More than 30,000 people in Peizhai and neighboring villages, as well as 1,333 hectares of farmland and orchards, have benefited from the reservoir.



In a greenhouse for rearing goldfish in Peizhai Community, a local holds a picture of the greenhouse under construction.



After the Sweet Potato Noodles Festival concludes, a local holds a picture of the same area, which used to be barren land.



In front of a vegetable greenhouse in Peizhai Community, a local holds a picture of the same site, where the old residential area used to stand.



In front of a shop on Peizhai Community's commercial street, a local holds a picture of the street under construction.

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PEIZHAI: A VILLAGE SPRINGS FORWARD □

TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION: ■
ONE VILLAGE'S MARCH TO MODERNIZATION

THE WATER WATCHERS OF PEIZHAI VILLAGE ■

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Health over Wealth

A decade ago, the whole village was struggling so much to meet basic food and clothing needs that many Peizhai villagers couldn't even afford vaccinating their kids at a price of one U.S. dollar per injection. Lack of modern medical and health knowledge has resulted in numerous tragedies in rural China. In Peizhai, high blood pressure related premature deaths were all too common. "For rural Chinese people, the death of a working-age adult can cause the collapse of a whole family," laments Pei Chunliang. To avoid such tragedies, Peizhai Village painted health information on walls and built sports facilities like basketball courts and ping pong tables. Every year, doctors from big cities are invited to donate their time and skill to provide free health examinations for villagers. Recent years have brought a jump in longevity in the village, with seniors breezing past age 80 in a place where 70 was once a feat.

To maintain a sanitary living environment, Peizhai hires five people to handle sanitation work, waste classification and recycling. Party members and village officials spray herbal liquids around the village to ward off mosquitoes and other insects. Currently, the village is building a sewage treatment plant designed to recycle domestic wastewater and store it in the reservoir to be used for irrigation.

Pei Chunliang considers spiritual health just as imperative as physical health. When villagers' material lives improve, so should their cultural lives. Peizhai's "cultural corridor" features wide-ranging performances from Tuesday to Saturday. Elderly fans of Henan Opera from throughout the region can frequently be seen

gathering there. Even outside municipal art troupes often visit Peizhai to perform. And local children receive "bonus" classes in singing, dancing and painting from two dozen university students who visit the village every summer and winter to teach.

Future Direction

Pei Chunliang has served as a deputy of the National People's Congress, the supreme organ of state power in China, for nine consecutive years since his election in 2008. Every year, he takes motions on rural construction to the Great Hall of the People and brings back the latest government report to his fellow villagers.

Coordinating with China's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), Peizhai has developed its own village development plan for the next few years after open discussions. Along with plantation of fruit orchards, agenda items include introducing e-commerce, developing local tourism and red tourism—tours of China's revolutionary sites and landmarks. Thanks to a special governmental grant, the Peizhai Community hired agricultural specialists to explore cultivation of experimental varieties of 14 different fruit trees. If this project yields results, the economic gains could exceed those of the greenhouses and further improve local lives.

At every annual villagers' meeting before the Lunar New Year, Peizhai people reflect on their accomplishments in the past year and set the goals for the next. "We want everyone to have a clear idea of our future," asserts Pei Chunliang. "With united minds and actions, anything is possible." 47

Tradition and Transformation

One Village's March to Modernization

Text by Nick Lanigan

Photographs by Qin Bin

China's efforts to eradicate poverty have been heroic and well-documented. The country has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty since the 1970s, which contributed to the global achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. On a recent visit to the village of Peizhai, in central China's Henan Province, I witnessed the achievements made on one particular community's road to modernization—as well as how they are maintaining traditions despite the quick development.

As the high-speed train sliced through the Henan countryside and dropped us safely in Xinxiang City, I was struck by a jarring reminder of how high the stakes are for regional development in China. With a population of around six million, this Henan city, previously unbeknownst to me, has more

people than many European capitals. If it were a country, Henan Province alone would be the twelfth most populous nation in the world. While I contemplated these figures, we transferred to a bus to continue our journey to Peizhai, where I was to be introduced in earnest to rural Chinese life.

The defunct remains of a well mark the center of Peizhai Village, persisting as a reminder of harder times. Today, the villagers have much more convenient access to water, but just 10 years ago, locals' daily struggles there were unimaginable. A victim of its geography, nestled in a valley deep within the Taihang Mountains, Peizhai faced regular and acute water shortages that crippled its development. Aerial photography has shown just how big a difference the village's modern reservoirs and irrigation systems have made to the landscape: previously barren land is now blanketed by lush green crops. "Water is extremely important to the village," explains Pei Chunliang, secretary of the Party committee of Peizhai Community and a local, self-made philanthropist who has reinvested heavily in the area. "A reliable water source has enabled us to progress."

His and others' efforts have proven effective. The water storage systems have given local people the upper hand in their battle with drought for the first time in history, and the resulting changes have rendered Peizhai almost unrecognizable. The village's origi-

nal buildings have largely been demolished to make way for newer structures, so to understand what life there used to be like, we visited another nearby community that has not seen the same pace of development: Dawangzhuang. There, a dirt road winds through ramshackle houses, some of which stand empty and dilapidated. A few dogs rummage through roadside trash. The people still subsist almost entirely on farming. With this as a reference point, Peizhai's achievements are even more impressive.

A spacious village square now welcomes visitors to Peizhai with art designed by local schoolchildren. Basketball courts, ping-pong tables and well-maintained exercise equipment wait for users, and neat rows of modern, terraced houses shelter families that previously inhabited deteriorating huts. As the country develops, such scenes can be found across China. So how does Peizhai retain its unique "village" aura? Its people. The village's traditions were not abandoned as easily as its buildings. Seniors still gather each morning for their daily exercise before returning home to look after grandchildren while their parents head off to work. Later, they enjoy the afternoon sunshine in their front yards, which are lined with rows of vegetables or drying laundry. Their homes are clean and welcoming, but scattered with the paraphernalia of rural life. Despite the stress of moving into modern facilities, their mentalities and daily lives have remained remarkably consistent. The preservation may be fleeting—the children will never know the hardship their parents and grandparents endured—but for the moment, a curious tug-of-war between past and present, tradition and development, is crystal clear.

Old habits die hard, even more so in cuisine. It's no secret that food plays a central role in Chinese culture, and Peizhai is no exception. We were invited to lunch with other visitors to the village and seated in a clean, brightly-lit hall at one end of the village square. Despite the starkly modern surroundings, the cooking was all done in a large vat outside, with a roaring fire underneath. The food, vegetable stew served on a bed of rice, was delicious, but their traditional methods were even more remarkable, with some-one running dishes in and out of the building. "The most cutting-edge cooking equipment in the world can hardly rival traditional methods" was a refrain repeated throughout the village. On multiple occasions, we met residents cooking steamed buns over an old-fashioned outdoor stove, right outside a perfectly functional kitchen. "Food is important because it leaves an impression on you," stresses Pei Chunliang. "If you leave a place full, you'll have good memories of that place."



Traditional music and dance accompanies festivals in the village of Peizhai.



Local people may have moved to more modern homes, but they still like to sit outside and eat their lunch in the sunshine.



A chef hangs sweet potato noodles out to dry before they are used in various dishes.

Children from neighboring villages have a chance to taste the sweet potato noodles.



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A prime example of the value still placed on traditional cooking is the celebration of *fentiao*, or “sweet potato noodles.” Throughout Peizhai’s historical struggles with drought and poor soil conditions, the sweet potato endured and became known as the most reliable crop. The village’s newfound prosperity has allowed them to begin holding a celebration devoted to the faithful vegetable, and it is a jubilant event. They open the cooking area to spectators, and I witnessed the transformation of sweet potatoes into *fentiao* before my eyes, backed by live traditional music. First, the sweet potatoes are cut into small pieces and mashed with flour to form a doughy mixture. When the dough reaches the right consistency, it is squeezed through a kind of sieve into long, thin strips, which land in a tub of hot water with a fire underneath it. The chefs cook quickly and expertly; their bright white outfits are fit for an upmarket restaurant and clash with the smoke and flames. After a few seconds, the thin strips are scooped out of the water and hung over a rack to dry in the sun. Nothing is wasted: even the roots of the sweet potatoes are exported to Japan, where they are a delicacy, according to 62-year-old Wang Zhongmei, who runs a sweet potato business with his son. A Peizhai native, Wang was one of Pei Chunliang’s middle-school teachers. He’s confident that despite the huge changes he has seen in the village in his lifetime, appreciation of the sweet potato and *fentiao* will endure. The people hired to set up the event seemed to share that sentiment. “This festival gives us a new opportunity to show our local specialty to outside visitors,” one told me. “It gives local people a new platform to display their produce and thereby a path to prosperity.”

Of course, the people of Peizhai have worked hard to get to this point, and far fewer now grow sweet potatoes. The village has come up with a number of innovative industries that employ local people and generate significant income. Peizhai is spinning the proverb about teaching a man to fish to feed him for a lifetime into “Teach a man how to raise goldfish, create a highly successful business.” At one end of the village, a long, low building houses row after row of large tanks, in which goldfish of varying sizes are raised until they can be sold to pet stores as far away as Beijing. For a village that only recently overcame a devastating drought, the decision to raise fish seems as symbolic as it is lucrative.

Still, agriculture remains the largest labor sector. The establishment of Peizhai’s modern industries rests on a foundation cemented by generations of local farmers. Across a vast area, 28 large greenhouses house fruits and vegetables far more exotic than the humble sweet potato. Each greenhouse is angled to capture as

much sunlight as possible. A tall wall of compacted clay on one side helps capture the warmth, and translucent, plastic sheeting serves as a roof. The overall effect is impressive, with the temperature noticeably warmer than outside. The greenhouses represent progress, but the tradition of families operating businesses together hasn’t changed. Mr. Liang, a farmer in his 50s, and one of his daughters maintain two tomato greenhouses. Business is booming, and the pair makes fifty or sixty thousand yuan a year. Nearby, Ms. Ru’s young daughter plays outside while her mother tends an exotic crop of dragon fruits, sprouting bizarrely from thin, spindly stems that look like they belong to a cactus.

We headed into the village center and reached Commerce Street, the pride of Peizhai and its commercial hub. The businesses there embody the hopes and dreams of many local people. Snapshots of traditional Chinese village life are infused with the trappings of modernity. An electronics store displays gleaming televisions, washing machines and air conditioners, while outside, an elderly man sells fruit from a wooden cart. A group of children enthusiastically learns the steps of a Latin dance, energetically waving a Chinese flag in each hand. Even places like this are within the reach of China’s e-commerce giants, and a JD.com store distributes purchases made online. The proprietor, Mr. Yang, is just 21 years old. A convenience store operated by the Postal Savings Bank of China offers well-stocked shelves of non-perishable food items and household goods as well as a preferential voucher system to encourage savings of bank account holders. The shopkeeper, who is six months pregnant, wears a thick coat behind the counter because the store lacks heating. This village is still a work in progress, but its people are proud of it, as they should be.

Peizhai’s realization of the Chinese Dream was possible thanks to the generosity of Secretary Pei Chunliang and the support of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and the village’s gratitude is overwhelmingly apparent. An exhibition celebrating the local achievements of the CPC has been placed proudly in the village square. But the narrative of Peizhai’s development is also a complex tapestry of individual stories. Successes and failures, triumphs and defeats on the smallest and most personal scale have all contributed to what the village has become, and will continue to do so as Peizhai’s people forge their path into the future.

In the exhibition hall, I was drawn to a large group photo taken at a celebration in 2015. “We are one family,” reads the caption. And despite all the changes that come with modernization, this enduring village spirit gives Peizhai its own special identity. 47



Zhang Guixian (front) and Jia Dan beside the 5,000-cubic-meter pool in Peizhai Village. by Zhang Ruisi

The Water Watchers of Peizhai Village

Text by Hu Zhoumeng

At the entrance of Peizhai Village, next to a Chinese national flag, is a wide road extending to the other end of the village. The left side of the road is lined with two-story townhouses, and on the right is a square bigger than a soccer field, featuring an exhibition center, a cultural performance area and basketball courts. A decade ago, over 100 families living in the village still inhabited ramshackle mud-brick houses and drank water from a hand-cranked well.

When strolling around the village during the day, you will only see seniors sunbathing and children playing in small groups because working-age people are busy tending greenhouse vegetables and flowers, running shops on the village's commercial street, or working at Chunjiang Group, in which every villager holds a stake.

The Good Life

At 8:00 a.m., Zhang Guixian, a member of the village committee, picks up her mop in gloved hands as usual to begin cleaning the five public washrooms in the village. She visits each of them twice a day to ensure they stay tidy. Even more importantly, Zhang monitors the water supply. After cleaning, Zhang drives an electric motorcycle to a 530-meter-deep well where she pumps water into two storage tanks on the back of a hill. From there, the water flows to the townhouses and the commercial street through underground pipes. When the automatic water pump malfunctions, as it has done periodically, Zhang spends hours at the well pumping the water manually.

The water monitor also handles pipe maintenance. When a leak sprouted behind a sweet potato noodle shop, Zhang received an ur-

gent call from her colleague Jia Dan. That day, the village was holding a sweet potato noodle festival, which had attracted merchants from near and far. A leaky pipe and limited access to water would surely put a damper on the village's sweet potato noodle business. Zhang immediately phoned a plumber and rushed to the site.

It was already dark when the pipe was finally repaired. After seeing off the plumber, Zhang began to prepare dinner for her two granddaughters. On her way home, Zhang bought some hot porridge, steamed stuffed buns and milk tea, favorites of her granddaughters. As she set the food down in the kitchen, she reminisced about cooking over a fire in the old days. "I used to burn coal and choke on the smoke," she recalled. "But now natural gas has replaced it. Cooking has become more convenient and affordable." A couple of minutes after Zhang started cooking, the inviting smell of fried carrots and green peppers filled the air throughout the house.

Zhang's two granddaughters sat at a tea table in the living room, the elder watching a cartoon on TV while playing with

stickers and the younger swiping at a smartphone game and sipping milk tea.

Zhang enjoys the girls' company, even more so because her husband passed away over a decade ago and her two daughters married into nearby villages. Her son and daughter-in-law seem to be perpetually working.

In the evening, Zhang sometimes listens to the news on a radio on a shelf above her bed. Further down on the shelf are several green papayas that emit a mild fragrance. Because she always leads a frugal life, some brand-new cotton-padded jackets and a pair of silver earrings that Zhang wears at times are particularly eye-catching. "My daughter bought them for me when we went shopping downtown," Zhang explains with a wrinkled grin.

Nowadays, her salary from the village committee and rent from a shop on the commercial street add up to more than 10,000 yuan a year, and the dividends from Chunjiang Group further enhance her earnings. "A good life is a job and ample income, isn't it?" she asks rhetorically.



Zhang Guixian cleans a public washroom in Peizhai Village. by Zhang Ruisi

Building a Happy Family

Alongside 60-year-old Zhang Guixian, 30-year-old Jia Dan also monitors Peizhai's water supply. During the summer months, Jia rises at six o'clock in the morning to go jogging and pump the water. Jia's job in the village committee also includes cleaning an office building and the exhibition center and processing formalities such as medical insurance reimbursement for villagers. "Most villagers are not familiar with the government offices in the town, so the village committee helps them with things," notes Jia.

In recent days, Jia and Zhang have been busy shopping for tableware for Peizhai Xishihui, a village-run dining hall that caters

to villagers' wedding and funeral banquet needs—hugely important events in rural Chinese tradition. "In the past, the villagers usually rented tents to host banquets, which were cold in winter and hot in summer," Jia reveals. Since the dining hall opened in 2010, the villagers have been able to rent the spacious and well-equipped hall for only a few hundred yuan.

Jia decided to work in the village so she could better take care of her kids. She has a 3-year-old son and a 5-year-old daughter with her husband Pei Zhuanshan, who works as a salesman at Chunjiang Cement Plant. Every morning, Jia sends the kids to kindergarten before heading to work. "Sometimes I feel sorry for my kids," Jia admits. "I don't have very much time with them,



A photo of Jia Dan and her family, taken in front of her house. by Hu Zhoumeng



Jia Dan beside the 530-meter-deep well, ready to operate the water pump machine. by Zhang Ruisi

especially my son. The villagers' urgent problems didn't stop just because I gave birth, so I have never had much time with him."

Jia once dreamed of becoming a police officer or soldier when she was young, but serving as a capable village committee member or a family supporter is just as noble a position. In their spare time, Jia and her husband take their kids to the village playground or watch animation with them at home. Occasionally, the whole family drives to downtown Xinxian for a fancy meal in a restaurant. On their parents' birthdays, the couple will prepare a grand meal as well as a birthday cake.

Mother-Daughter Dynamic

In winter, the village's water pipes tend to freeze and the pump breaks down too often. Zhang Guixian and Jia Dan always tackle emerging problems together. "A pump malfunction once kept us there until 11 o'clock at night," Jia says of her worst experience on the job. "It would have been terrifying if I was alone. Fortunately, Auntie Zhang was right there with me."

Jia and Zhang are the only two female members of the village committee. Jia is from Xuchang, a city in central Henan Province, and Zhang hails from Shandong, a province bordering Henan. Chinese tradition holds that a married woman should visit the family on her side on the second day of the lunar year. However, Jia and

Zhang take turns visiting their respective families so one can stay in the village to look after the water supply.

"Auntie Zhang never slacks in work and always does the toughest jobs," says Jia of Zhang's dedication. Years of backbreaking work have taken a toll on her body. Every day, she takes a total of eight painkillers to fight a bone spur and other aches. The pain is worthwhile to Zhang: "It is hard work, but everyone in my village now has stable access to drinking water."

Jia first joined the village committee to oversee birth control, and immediately regretted her lack of work experience, considering the wide range of tasks that demanded her attention. Zhang comforted her with good advice such as, "Don't rush. Haste makes waste."

Many in the village liken the relationship between the two women to that between mother and daughter. "Jia is really a great friend," Zhang remarks. "She was the first person to buy me a hamburger." Although the pair has become close, they still disagree on some issues related to work. But, as Jia says, they "never quarrel." Rather, each one "just speaks out her respective idea and they discuss which is more feasible."

"Walking on the right path is even more important for young people," Jia adds. "A good life is earned with hard work and a calm mind." 47

CPC Officials on the Farmland

Text by Zhang Yangsheng

From mud-brick homes to apartment buildings, from drinking water from wells or cisterns to tap water, Peizhai Village of Huixian City in central China's Henan Province has transformed in just a few years from an impoverished village to one which other villages often look up to. The success can be attributed to a number of factors, and one is that the village is led by a competent official, Pei Chunliang.

Pei, born and raised in the village, was a self-made successful rural entrepreneur, when in 2005, he was voted by his fellow villagers to be the village chief. In the following years, he led the village to build a new village site (which was funded out of his own pocket) and set up a business group that runs multiple industries such as cement, tourism, electricity and chemicals. The village has built reservoirs, vegetable bases and flower bases and prospered under his leadership.

Pei is one of the 35 million rural members of the Communist Party of China (CPC). They have led their fellow CPC members to help lift tens of millions of rural Chinese out of poverty in the past few decades, a miracle that the world marvels at.

These CPC members have strong faith. They are convinced

that no matter how times change, they must commit themselves to the cause of helping the public live better lives.

They are ready to give rather than take. After funding the new village site project with 30 million yuan, Pei gave each household 10 tons of cement in 2010 to help them build new homes.

They are competent at what they do. Rural CPC officials are capable of energizing farmers to engage in land trade and to improve their traditional way of making ends meet.

These CPC officials also have great integrity and virtue. They have high moral standards in their work and life, which sets a great example for the ordinary people.

Outstanding CPC officials like Pei are not isolated cases: it has to do with the Party's way of selecting and training its members.

The CPC selects capable officials, regardless of their age and background. In rural areas, the village chief can play a vital role in the development of the entire village. In recent years, China's rural areas have selected local officials from all walks of life, including rural entrepreneurs like Pei, veterans, retired officials and college graduates. As long as they abide by Party discipline and are capable, they can be promoted.



Some schoolchildren in Peizhai Community. by Qin Bin



Peizhai Xishihui, a village-run dining hall that caters to villagers' wedding and funeral banquet needs. Since it opened in 2010, the villagers have been able to rent the spacious and well-equipped hall for only a few hundred yuan. by Qin Bin




The cultural performance area in Peizhai Community, where older villagers gather every Tuesday and Saturday to perform Henan Opera. The art troupes from Huixian City and Xinxiang City also give performances here at times. by Qin Bin



The playground of an elementary school in Peizhai Community. by Hu Zhoumeng

Rural Party officials are well trained. At least once every year, rural officials will attend training provided by the county, city or province. They learn about Party discipline and the ways of helping villagers get rich, as well as rule-based management. Apart from attending training sessions, they can also learn via the internet in some regions.

The CPC also invests in monitoring the activities of officials and energizes them in various ways, so that the officials will not abuse their power or remain inactive.

With more than 88 million CPC members and 4.4 million Party units across the country, the CPC will continue to lead its people to live better lives and hence contribute to the world. 

The author is editor-in-chief of the Party Building Books Publishing House under the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee.

Baima Dorji is the founder and chairman of the Songtsam hotel chain. Since 2008, the world-renowned travel site TripAdvisor has ranked Songtsam as one of “China’s 25 best hotels.” British magazine *Tatler* listed it among the “101 best hotels in the world,” and it was cited by CNN as one of the nine Chinese hotels with the most beautiful scenery.

Baima Dorji: My Own Private Shangri-La

Text by Wang Shuo

Not a cloud could be seen in the azure sky as the morning sun enveloped Shangri-La, a mysterious, scenic destination in the Deqen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in southwestern China’s Yunnan Province.

A singular fragrance lingered in the air around Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge, a boutique hotel nestling between Ganden

Sumtseling Monastery and Kena Village. The breeze bouncing off the nearby mountains generated a sound like whispering bamboo flutes. Withered leaves fell from several white birches and smoke trees in the corner of the hotel’s courtyard, glowing like rusted gold in the sun, while a four-story Tibetan-style building completed the tranquil picture.

That dwelling was Baima Dorji’s childhood home, and it is now one of China’s most prestigious boutique hotels.

Having returned from a business trip at midnight the previous night, Baima looked worn out. But the Tibetan’s voice remained as calm and gentle as a glassy pond without any ripples. I pondered whether such calmness derives from internal peace or his innate temperament.

His hotel’s management team is diverse: some are local villagers, some foreign executives, and others seasoned hospitality professionals. Regardless of their backgrounds, they all see Baima as a teacher and kind uncle as much as a boss.

“Baima taught us that giving is the simplest way to find happiness,” explained the manager of Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge. “We treat our guests with kind, generous hearts. Baima is always considerate to others and cares about every guest and employee, and even his employees’ families.”

Innate Love for Tibetan Culture

Baima found his place in the hospitality industry relatively late in life.

After graduating from high school, Baima studied animal husbandry in Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province. After graduation, he returned to his hometown and practiced as a veterinarian for two years. He eventually learned about TV

production and began working for a local TV station. Thanks to his internship with Yunnan TV, he found an opportunity to study at Beijing Film Academy. After staying a while in Beijing, he realized that few people from outside Tibetan communities knew much about Tibetan culture, and some even misunderstood it. “Many people assumed that Tibetans were rugged and unrefined,” he explains. “However, I think most are reserved and even introverted.”

In 1992, China Central Television (CCTV) recruited Baima. He developed the hope that television could serve as a bridge connecting Tibetan culture to others from beyond Tibetan-inhabited regions. “I wanted to help more people understand Tibetan culture because we are one big family,” he grins.

After joining CCTV, Baima produced some documentaries on Tibetan culture, which earned great acclaim from critics. In 1998, his TV documentary, *Portraits of Mountains*, walked away with the Excellent Prize from MIPTV, an annual TV event in Cannes, France.

Baima learned a lot and deepened his understanding of culture and life during his tenure at CCTV. “Every culture has wonderful things to offer,” he explains. “Learning about them makes your heart and soul stronger. When you establish good control of your mind, you can develop your own ideas about many things. And through the process, you’ll obtain wisdom.”

Gradually, Baima conceived plans for his own platform to spread Tibetan culture. “I wanted to share Tibetan culture with as many people as possible and inspire

people from every ethnic group to better understand each other,” he says. “We’re all essentially a family living under the same roof, so we should work to live more harmoniously together.”

During that era, Baima heard frequent complaints from his colleagues about the less-than-ideal accommodation in Deqen after they returned from business trips there, despite the region’s picturesque scenery. Baima remembered seeing many boutique hotels in Paris and once stayed in one near the Arc de Triomphe while on his way to attend MIPTV. That lodge in France inspired the idea of converting his home in Kena Village into a boutique hotel. His home featured two courtyards and buildings inhabited by his parents and sister’s family that covered more than 1,000 square meters.



Songtsam Tacheng Lodge nestles amidst villages, terraced fields, mountains and rivers. by Yu Xiangjun/China Today



Baima Dorji, founder and chairman of the Songtsam hotel chain. by Chen Jian

In 2001, Baima razed the old buildings in the two courtyards and built the 22-guestroom Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge in their place with 60,000 yuan (US\$8,693) he had raised. The same year, his home county of Zhongdian was renamed Shangri-La County.

Tibetan Culture in Songtsam

Baima recruited the first manager of Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge from Kunming, where he was running a four-star hotel. Their different operational ideas meant the manager often conflicted with Baima, who wanted a tranquil hotel rich in cultural atmosphere rather than a bustling business. The hotel suffered heavy losses in its early days. Baima consecutively hired a German, an Austrian and a Xi'an native to manage the hotel, but none of them could turn things around. In those days, the hotel charged 80 yuan per night and 11 yuan per person for a lunch.

In 2003, Baima began to manage the hotel himself. He even lived there to train employees as much as possible and urge them to slow down to match the development pace of the hotel. Eventually, Baima hired the hotel's current manager, Zhang Min. Thanks to their joint efforts, the hotel finally found a path to sound development. They hired locals to introduce Tibetan religion, culture and history to guests. "I wanted every guest to feel the intimacy of Tibetan culture and enjoy a natural stay," adds Baima.

As time went on, Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge welcomed an increasingly heavy flow of guests, even as its rates went up. After spending one night in the hotel, many backpackers canceled other reservations to stay there for a full week.

Gradually, the hotel became famous. Many investors tried to buy into it, but Baima refused. "I didn't feel like the business was strong enough to absorb extra capital," he explains. In his eyes, every



With its stone facades, Songtsam Benzilan Lodge is located in a tranquil village, hidden deep in a valley. by Chen Jian

move should be made in a prudent, reasonable manner, especially in terms of non-renewable resources. Deqen boasts unparalleled tourism resources. If properly utilized, they benefit everyone. In Baima's opinion, it's better to prevent outside capital from squandering those resources in a non-renewable manner until later generations can pinpoint the best way to capitalize on them sustainably.

Since the day Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge was established, Baima has been clear about his goal of operating the hotel sustainably. To this end, he invested a decade of research and planning. He never rushed the hotel to market or expanded it.

In 2006, Baima eventually found an ideal partner. "Geographically, Deqen is located in an area where the Jinsha, Lancang and Nujiang rivers flow side by side," he points out. "I want my hotels to look like ancient inns along a travel route, each with

unique views."

In 2009, Songtsam Linka Retreat, a towering hotel built from scratch, opened for business atop a hill facing the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery.

In 2011, four more Songtsam hotels opened in Deqen, one after another.

An hour's drive from Shangri-La is Benzilan, a must-see stop along the ancient Tea-Horse Road on the banks of the Jinsha River. Songtsam Benzilan Lodge, situated in a small village of only a dozen households hidden in a valley, is only linked to the outside world by a cobblestone path. The windows of the hotel face the entrance of the valley, beneath which lies the farmland of local villagers.

From Benzilan, one can reach Deqen County on the banks of the Lancang River on the other side of the Baima Mountains. Every year, numerous tourists visit Meili Snow Mountain. Baima is proud of the



Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge, first opened in 2001, has attracted tourists from both home and abroad. by Chen Jian



Many of the Tibetan-style artifacts, furniture items, ornaments and thangka paintings in the hotel come from Baima Dorji's personal collection. by Chen Jian

location of his Songtsam Meili Lodge. The mysterious, snowy mountain is visible from guestroom windows.

Heading south along the Lancang River, one can reach Cizhong, where a French missionary built a Catholic church in the early 20th Century. Songtsam Cizhong Lodge lies just 200 meters from the church. Almost every local household owns a vineyard. Utilizing winemaking techniques inherited from the French missionary and high-quality grapes growing at altitudes of more than 3,000 meters, the local wine is famous for its unique taste.

It takes four hours to drive from Cizhong to Tacheng, a place noted for the famous Bodhidharma Cave and Yunnan Golden Monkey National Park. There, Songtsam Tacheng Lodge nestles amidst villages, terraced fields, mountains and rivers.

Today, Songtsam hotels form a loop, with Shangri-La at the center.

Home Away from Home

Many tourists are awed by the strong Tibetan flavor of Songtsam hotels. In the four-story Songtsam Shangri-La Lodge, the strong aura of Tibetan culture is everywhere. Every thangka painting, carving or furniture item radiates Tibetan flavor. These thoughtful touches inject life and vigor into the hotel, and even make it less like a hotel.

Many of the Tibetan furniture items and ornaments in the hotel came from Baima's personal collection. Some have expressed concern about using such precious items to decorate the hotel's lobby, restaurant and even guestrooms, where they could be damaged. Baima, however, considers his collection valuable only if it is displayed. "If such items are hidden from visitors too long, they get depressed," he jokes.

Baima adhered to traditional construction methods in his hotels, to preserve the original look of the villages and natural environment as much as possible. He hired seasoned local artisans to carry out carpentry, bricklaying and copper carving. "When building Songtsam Linka Retreat, I was lucky to find an experienced coppersmith," he recalls. "He had been forced to take up stone carving because of a lack of demand for a coppersmith. I told him he could do copper work for my hotels as long as he wanted. Now, Songtsam has five coppersmiths on staff who produce wares such as door knobs, knockers, pots and basins."

Songtsam hotels also cooperate with nearby craft workshops by referring their guests to visit those shops, to promote the development of local crafts.

Baima is profoundly aware of the importance of education. Since 2005, he has been providing financial support to students in his home village. Wherever his hotels open, he introduces grants for local students to the tune of 500 yuan for


each middle-school student, 1,000 yuan for each high-school student and 2,000 yuan for each college student. "Life is long, and doing good things makes the whole process more meaningful," he asserts.

Currently, local Tibetans account for 98 percent of all employees at Songtsam hotels, which enriches the hotels' Tibetan flavor. "My staff members are mostly local villagers," Baima declares proudly. "Rather than following protocols of star-rated hotels, they serve guests according to their own beliefs and affinity for others. I believe such relationships can touch the soul."

Gradually, Baima realized that Songtsam had evolved into exactly what guests wanted. "Modern people face tremendous pressures from fierce competition and the material desires of society," he explains. "Over 15 years have passed since my first hotel opened in 2001. In addition to spreading Tibetan culture, I hope Songtsam can create a second home for guests—a home away from home."

Shangri-La is widely known as a pure, sacred land. The name was popularized globally in the 1930s when British writer James Hilton published the novel *Lost Horizon*. For Baima, a native of the sacred land, Shangri-La is much more than postcard scenery or a mythical land. He wants the place to inspire a sense of happiness in everyone, like it does for him. "A piece of Shangri-La is in everyone's heart," he says. "It is selfless and soul-stirring."

According to Baima, Songtsam is building new hotels in Lijiang and Lhasa, which are scheduled to open in May. By 2019, Songtsam hotels will be open in Shannan and Xigaze in the Tibet Autonomous Region. "I want to continue shooting documentaries to show the amazing Tibetan culture to the world."

Perhaps Baima's mission to spread Tibetan culture has just begun. 

Patrick Druet: A French Heart in Shangri-La

Text by Lu Rucui

Songtsam Retreat at Shangri-La, a member of the MGallery Collection, is a 70-room traditional Tibetan hotel at the foot of the mountains. Its windows open onto Ganden Sumtseling Monastery, the largest of its kind in Yunnan Province.

In 2009, Patrick Druet took just five minutes to decide to live there, taking a job as general manager of the hotel.

Patrick, from France, has not only worked in the cities of his home country, but also in Canada, Ireland, Britain, and China. “For me, joining a newly-established hotel presented a big challenge,” Patrick beams. “But I couldn’t leave the snow-capped mountains and yaks. Many years ago, I worked at a ski resort in France, and since then, it has been my dream to return to the mountains. My dream has finally come true right here.”

Patrick’s career in China began in Xia-

men, Fujian Province in 2001. Since then, he has traveled across the country, working. He became particularly passionate about Shangri-La for all the right reasons: the environment, the mountain views, the climate, and most of all, the smiling faces around him.

Nevertheless, the job was far from a walk in the park. Training the local staff was a monumental task in itself, because most had not received higher education and had grown up comparatively isolated from the rest of the world. Several former foreign general managers in his position gave up and left. Patrick persisted. In his eyes, everyone there is real and deeply religious, and works hard for more than just money. “Really, the smiles from the bottom of their hearts are the most-cherished memories for guests,” Patrick continues.

“Our hotel is not star-rated. We have our own distinct local features, highlighted

by the culture and its activities, architecture and the employees themselves.”

Patrick’s astute understanding of Shangri-La is perhaps best exemplified by his style of dressing—Tibetan, and he often hikes along the mountain paths. “I hike in the mountains a lot in my spare time,” he explains. “Sometimes, I even follow the locals and spin a prayer wheel along with them. It’s a place of tranquility and peace that gives everyone a sense of belonging.”

Patrick will become a manager of a soon-to-open Songtsam hotel in Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region. “I want to maximize the local cultural flavor in these hotels, which is the best way to draw people from around the world.”

Patrick hails from southern France. As for the future for this wandering nomad, it is looking up: “Lhasa is higher than Shangri-La. I may have to leave one day, but my heart will stay here in Shangri-La forever.”



In 2009, it took Patrick Druet just five minutes to decide to work as general manager of the Songtsam Retreat at Shangri-La. Patrick, from France, has not only worked in the cities of his home country, but also in Canada, Ireland, Britain, and China. by Yu Xiangjun



Ani Ga: WeMountain Life

Text by Wei Bo

“I’m a child of the Meili Snow Mountain, and I’ve never stopped worshipping the mountain god,” says Ani Ga, a 54-year-old Tibetan farmer who has lived at the foot of Mt. Meili in Deqen County, Deqen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, all his life. “Every time I feel under the weather, I look at the sacred peak of Kawakarpo and instantly feel peace. The snow-capped mountain has been an indispensable part of my life.”

Guji, a village composed of five households, was once the only community Ani Ga knew. Across generations, the villagers have relied on the mountains’ resources for survival, but things are starting to change. Ani Ga now works full-time for Songtsam Meili Lodge, where he earns a monthly income of 3,000 yuan. The dramatic change in earning power has brought chances to meet people from every corner of the planet along with it.

Now a seasoned user of the social media app WeChat, Ani Ga begins his “We-Life” day as the first ray of the sun creeps over the summit of Kawakarpo. Over the past five years, he has been capturing the beauty of his sacred mountain with his cellphone and sharing photos with friends near and far.

Ani Ga loves hiking the mountain paths, thousands of meters above sea level. “It’s tons of fun!” he insists. He now guides more than 20 tours a year for the hotel, and his virtual circle of hiking friends grows with each WeChat post.

“I am grateful for everything I have: I get to meet different people every day,” he continues. “Every hiking tour is unique because of different weather, different groups



Ani Ga, a 54-year-old Tibetan farmer from Deqen County, Deqen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, has worked in Songtsam Meili Lodge for seven years. by Chen Jian

of hikers, and different physical situations. Still, one thing always remains consistent: the joy of returning to nature. I am always delighted by the opportunity to introduce our lifestyles to tourists.”

He can’t count how many times he has hiked the mountain paths, but every time he is still awed by the snow-capped mountains and his heart melted by the little creatures he meets along the way. He captures everything he sees with his cellphone camera and shares it with his friends via WeChat.

Not only has the lofty mountain fueled his passion, it has also nourished his heart. As part of his job, he often invites his guests to his home and serves them buttered tea. On one excursion up the mountain, a hiker was struck by severe altitude sickness and could hardly move. Ani didn’t hesitate to pick him up and carry the man back to the vehicle.

In recent years, the volume of visitors and pilgrims visiting Mt. Meili has increased dramatically, enabling greater

numbers of people to enjoy the beautiful scenery and brilliant local Tibetan culture. But the influx of people has also placed greater pressure on the environment. “I pick up any trash I see whenever I hike,” he remarks. “The tourism boom has clearly improved locals’ lives, but we worry about upsetting our mountain god too much. So far, most of the tourists have been friendly, which I hope doesn’t change.”

Ani Ga started using WeChat five years ago, and he is now connected to more than 240 friends through the social networking app. After work, he likes to sit by the stove to find out what’s happening with his friends and send his greetings from the foot of the snowy mountain.

“I’m so proud I get to bathe in the glory of the sacred mountain every day,” Ani grins. Hiking it has become an integral part of his life. “My heart feels peaceful each time I turn my prayer wheel while looking up at the holy peak and listening to the whispers of its million-year-old glaciers.”

Losang Gyamchu: A Hotel in My Heart

Text by Zhou Jin

Losang Gyamchu doesn't talk too much. But if asked a question, he has a surprising amount to say. The mysterious, time-honored Tibetan culture turns out to be easy to understand with his illustrations.

Losang is a native of Shangri-La. Eleven years ago, he went to study at the Communication University of China, majoring in media management. His college days brought great changes to his life. "I learned how to conduct myself in society and about attitudes towards life," he explains. "The atmosphere at the university was comparatively free, and I studied with open-ended teaching. I could take any subject I was interested in and got many chances for practice. As a freshman, I went to a TV station as an audience member. Later, I worked for the student union, organizing parties and performances, thus earning useful experiences."

After graduation, Losang began his career with an automobile exhibition. He soon quit his job and chose to work as a freelancer. He took tailor-made travel in his hometown as a business opportunity: "Shangri-La is bestowed with advantageous tourism resources," he asserts, "but the market operation is yet to be regulated."

"I established my own company five years ago, naming it Riyue (Sun & Moon) Linka. It has gone smoothly, with a good number of customers. However, we have come across a bottleneck." Initially, he wanted to offer experiential travel with a combination of "the best vehicle+most experienced driver+best hotel," which he later found far from enough.

The plan sounded perfect, yet it didn't

work well when put into practice. There was still room for improvement in his driver's appearance, room service, and the way his employees talked.

How did he work things out as expected? He talked to Baima, with whom he had got acquainted during his business development phase. "We often chatted because we had both had the experience of 'drift-



Losang Gyamchu, a native of Shangri-La, joined Songtsam's branding team in 2013.

ing' in Beijing," Losang recalls. "At that time, Songtsam Hotel was going smoothly, with its franchised outlets opening one after another. The only things they needed were personnel training and marketing."

Discovering Songtsam's weakness, which was his own strength, Losang joined the hotel, along with his two partners, to make a perfect match at the end of 2013.

"I'm coming back to Songtsam" was how Losang described his collaboration. He was committed to making the hotel's travel products more innovative, transforming the original, traditional boutique hotel into "a way of travel." In early 2014, he started to operate a membership system and brand Songtsam's media image. "This is the change I've brought to Songtsam, branding." He is in charge of combing the product's framework, planning various campaigns, transport, and housekeeping.

The splendor of a boutique hotel lies in its uniqueness. Every Songtsam hotel enjoys tranquility: the only sound one can hear is one's breath. Every hotel has employees from local villages, who are always happy to share their lifestyle if you are interested. All the paths around the hotel afford views of the stunning local scenery. "I've been cooperating with Baima for over 10 years in Songtsam," he explains. "All the employees are committed to serving their guests from the bottom of their hearts. They are so proud of and happy about their service."

According to Losang, all the employees in the hotel are fully aware that they can do their jobs well as long as they work hard enough, regardless of how much they know about how to operate a hotel in a professional way.

Zhang Min: Soul in Songtsam

Text by Wei Bo

For many years, Shangri-La has attracted streams of visitors from around the world with its idyllic, ancient and peaceful beauty. But few stay as long as Zhang Min, who has lived there for 12 years.

"This place is like another world, with the unique air and beauty that I can't describe with earthly words," thought Zhang when she first set foot in the county. Her soul finally felt at home the moment she entered Songtsam Hotel, which seemed like the building of her dreams.

In 2005, Zhang, a native of Kunming, Yunnan Province, quit her job at a high-end modern hotel and relocated to Shangri-La to work with the locals employed by Songtsam Hotel, a Tibetan-style lodge. Since then, she has been committed to making the hotel a warm, comfortable home-away-from-home for her guests.

Today, Songtsam has grown bigger and warmer, with new lodges under its brand name erected in other areas of Shangri-La. A witness of the hotel's progress, Zhang Min has grown alongside it and become more graceful, charming, self-confident, and calm.

She feels lucky to be able to hear sutra chanting from the monastery nearby, bathe in the light of Buddha and build trust with her colleagues and guests. She is deeply impressed by the unique culture and Lamaism in the area, which tend to make living and working easier, as per Zhang.

"Everything around me is different," Zhang explains. "I have learned about how Lamaism affects people here—they are open and easy to get along with, and they care for each other." She takes her work seriously and endeavors to make every co-worker and guest from a noisy metropolis

feel like at home.

Zhang Min oversees human resources. It shouldn't be easy to find so many local people who share her ideals. "It's fate," she grins. "I want to be kind to everyone around me." Every employee considers her a friend. When they have problems, they go to her. In guests' eyes, she is a charming young lady with a profound understanding of life.

Zhang Min is pursuing her dream and feels she made the right choice. If its founder Baima Dorji gave Songtsam its quality, it was Zhang who created sweet memories in the hotel. "This place renewed my understanding of Tibetan culture," she admits. "Baima is the heart of Songtsam. Each employee is like a little spark, coming together in a joint effort to serve as messengers of Tibetan culture. Together, they light the path to Shangri-La."



In 2005, Zhang Min, a native of Kunming, Yunnan Province, quit her job at a high-end modern hotel and relocated to Shangri-La to work with the locals employed by Songtsam Hotel, a Tibetan-style lodge. by Chen Jian

Sang Lei: Specially-recruited Teacher in Deep Mountains

Text and photographs by Guo Shasha



Since Pengdang Wanquan Elementary School is a boarding school, Sang always accompanies his students back home before holidays and festivals. The journey sometimes takes several hours.

“When you look up, you see mountains, but when you look down, you also see mountains,” declares Sang Lei. “Behind the mountain ranges are more soaring mountain ranges.” This is the environment around Pengdang Wanquan Elementary School in Yunnan Province, where Sang has been working as a specially-recruited teacher for nine years.

Born in Fugong County, Yunnan Province, in 1985, Sang Lei from the Nu ethnic group graduated from Pu'er University at the age of 22 with a bachelor's degree in computer education. After graduation, he began to teach at the rural elementary school in Pengdang Township in Gongshan Dulong and Nu Autonomous County.

Specially-recruited teachers are nothing new in China, but have received increasing attention in recent years. In 2006, China launched a governmental program to spread compulsory education in rural areas of the country's central and western parts and improve the quality of rural education. By recruiting university graduates to work as rural teachers, the program coined the term “specially-recruited teachers.” Over the past decade, over 500,000 graduates like Sang Lei have ventured to 30,000 rural schools in more than 1,000 counties in central and western China.

Although Pengdang Wanquan Elementary School is small, the institution is a big deal for the area's school-aged children. Some students live nearby, but others walk for seven to eight hours from their homes to reach the school. Dimaluo Village, deep in the mountains, is the most remote and inaccessible village in the elementary school's district. Because of the difficult journey, Sang and other teachers escort those students home for holidays and festivals.

“Highways take kids out of the mountains, but only education will lead them away from the mountains in any real sense,” declares Sang. “As teachers, we shoulder tremendous responsibility.”

Change Starts with Kids

In 2007, when Sang arrived in Pengdang, he became the first elementary school teacher with a bachelor's degree in the township. Due to staffing shortages, Sang taught subjects ranging from Chinese, ethics, music and art to English, as well as being a leading class teacher and the head of a research group. Serving as a rural teacher is never easy, but Sang has made every day at the school as bright as possible. During his nine years, Sang has visited many students' homes by riding a small motorcycle through the mountains. Because his students come from many different ethnic groups, Sang has learned the Tibetan and Lisu languages himself to better communicate with students and their parents. He has used the internet to reach out to philanthropists and collected more than 10,000 donated books. He has learned

to play the drum and tambourine in order to teach them to his students, because "music and art are crucial for developing aesthetics."

"At first, I just wanted to try teaching in Pengdang," reveals Sang. "I knew I could still take the civil service exam after three years at the school, in accordance with the specially-recruited teacher program." Upon arrival, he immediately regretted his decision: "I searched the whole town for an electric rice cooker, but came up empty. The best I could find was some noodles and a bottle of meat sauce." Eventually, he learned from the locals that shopping happens on Mondays, when various vendors travel to the town, and that he would have to wait a week. "My first week here, I ate noodles with meat sauce for three days and instant noodles the next four."

"For quite a while, I only looked

forward to getting out of here," adds Sang. "However, my mind was changed by the trust I built with my students and a renewed sense of responsibility."

Like Teacher, Like Family

By Sang's third year in Pengdang, his mind was fundamentally changed.

One evening, some fourth-graders came to see him. A little girl had fallen and hurt her hand. She was an orphan who lived with her uncle's family, but her uncle had gone to Tibet to work. Sang assumed the role of the girl's temporary guardian and took her to a hospital in the county seat. There, a doctor confirmed that she had fractured a bone in her left hand that would require surgery. During the surgery, the girl held Sang's hand tight, and never said a word despite becoming soaked in sweat due to the pain.



In class. During his nine-year stay in the school, Sang has taught subjects ranging from Chinese, ethics, music and art to English, as well as being a leading class teacher and the head of a research group.



Sang corrects students' homework. Usually, Sang does this at night, after he has concluded the whole day by checking the student dorms.



For Sang and his students, haircut day has become a holiday. With simple tools, teacher Sang is transformed into a stylist for his kids.

Afterwards, the girl wrote a note to Sang that read:

"Teacher Sang, do you know why I didn't cry during the surgery? My father and mother are gone. When you came with me to surgery yesterday, I felt like my father had returned. How could I cry in front of my father?"

"I suddenly realized how much I meant to these kids," says Sang. "I'm their only spiritual support." After that experience, he made up his mind to stay and teach there.

Pengdang Wanquan Elementary School is a boarding school, so Sang has become like family for many students. Some students lacked personal hygiene because their parents were working in far-off cities or simply too poor; they were in dire need of a haircut. Sang acts as a stylist and offers this service to kids in need each month. His tools are simple: a pair of old shears and a plastic sheet. For the kids, the haircut day is

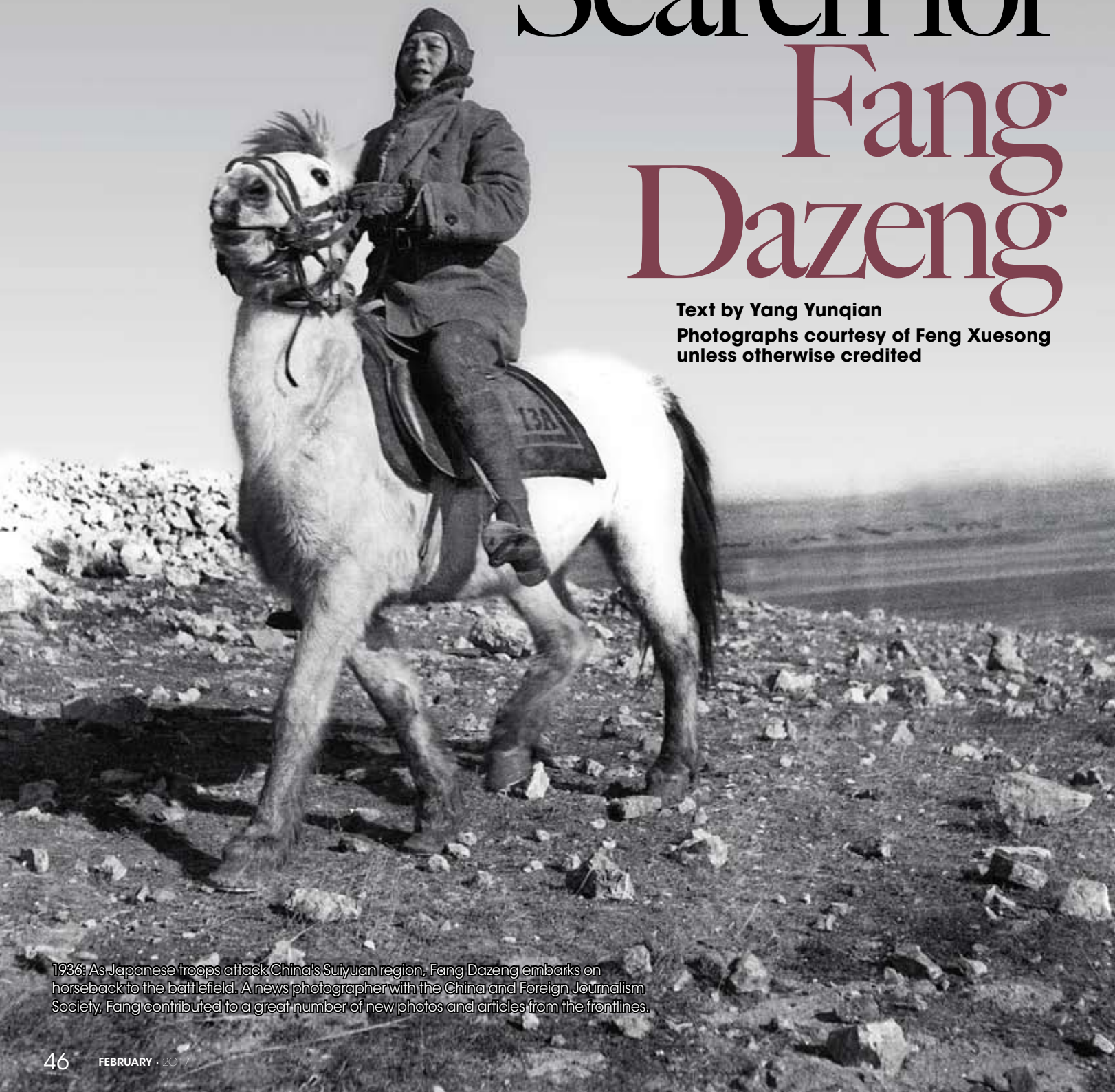
like a holiday. They laugh, play, and smile brightly while waiting their turn.

Nightly patrols for Pengdang Wanquan Elementary School require a teacher to touch each student's forehead to check their temperature and ask if anyone feels ill. In many parts of China, especially remote areas, teachers become healthcare providers. Sang soon conformed to the common local practice of leaving his door unlocked at night: the local people are simple and honest, and the children may need to wake him in case of an emergency.

"As far as I am concerned, teaching deep in the mountains requires far more than planning lessons and correcting homework," Sang grins. During his nine-year tenure at the school, he has become emotionally tied to his students. "We spend almost every day together. Sometimes I'm the nanny, sometimes security and sometimes the doctor. But at the end of the day, we are always family."

The Endless Search for Fang Dazeng

Text by Yang Yunqian
Photographs courtesy of Feng Xuesong unless otherwise credited



1936: As Japanese troops attack China's Suiyuan region, Fang Dazeng embarks on horseback to the battlefield. A news photographer with the China and Foreign Journalism Society, Fang contributed to a great number of new photos and articles from the frontlines.

At 8 o'clock on the morning of December 12, 2016, having traversed the whole of Beijing City, Feng Xuesong, a TV producer and documentary director, finally arrived at the Liangxiang Campus of Beijing Technology and Business University. It was the 14th leg of the campaign "Fang Dazeng on Campus," and also the final leg of 2016.

Initiated by Feng Xuesong, "Fang Dazeng on Campus" is a charity event, which aims to visit 20 Chinese universities to display Fang Dazeng's life and China's history in his times. The tour began in September 2015 and will run until July 2017, the end date marking both the 80th anniversary of the Lugou Bridge Incident (also known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident), launched by Japan in July 1937, and also the 105th anniversary of the birth of Fang Dazeng.

Since the end of 1999, Feng has been "looking for Fang Dazeng" in all kinds of ways. He has looked up histori-

cal documents, visited Fang's old friends and returned to the last places mentioned in reports by Fang. Feng has not missed anything about Fang and has done almost biographical research on him. "Looking for Fang has been the most time-consuming task of my career," claims Feng. "I won't stop until I find him."

Why Look for Fang?

On July 7, 1937, Japan began its full-scale invasion of China by launching the Lugou Bridge Incident, on the outskirts of Beijing. Three days later, Fang, then 25 years old, rushed to the battlefield with his camera. On August 1, as fighting against the Japanese aggressors continued on Lugou Bridge, a 7,000-word article under his pen name "Xiao Fang" was published in *World Affairs*, a magazine founded by the Communist Party of China in 1934. This was the first article to cover the battle with both text and pictures, making Fang

the first correspondent ever to report on the Lugou Bridge Incident.

In 1936, when Japanese troops attacked China's Suiyuan region, Fang, then a photo correspondent with the China and Foreign Journalism Society, contributed a number of news photos and articles from the frontlines. The articles, with their many photos, showed skillful writing and close observations, creating precious records of the Suiyuan battlefield. However, Fang went missing after his last battlefield report on *Ta Kung Pao* on September 30, 1937.

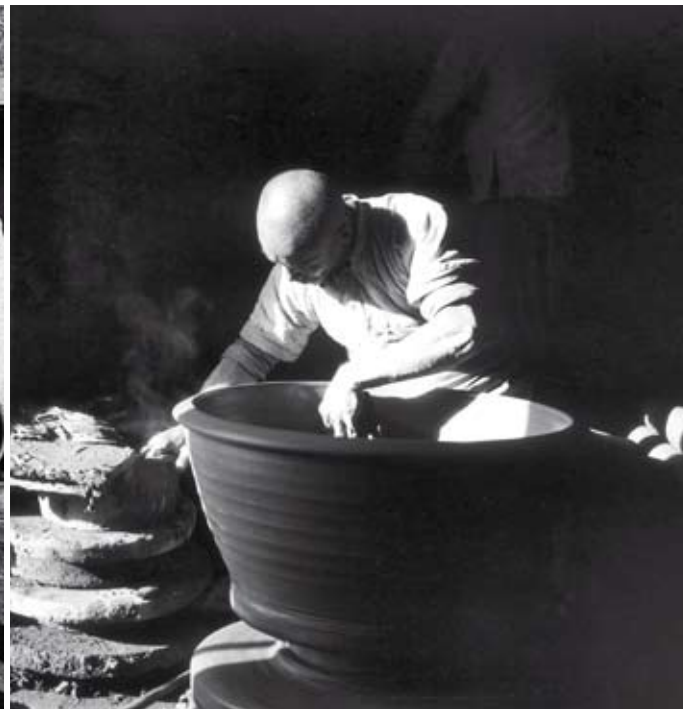
In 1999, in his office, Feng Xuesong stumbled across a fax note from the China Photographers Association, asking if they could co-compile Fang's works into a book. Words such as "China's Robert Capa" and "mysterious disappearance" on the note caught Feng's attention. It was at that moment that Feng embarked on his journey of "looking for Fang Dazeng."



Feng Xuesong (right) with his crew members, finishing the last shot of the documentary *Looking for Fang Dazeng*. While shooting the film, Feng discovered more traits of Fang including his vision of news, professionalism and patriotism.



December 10, 2016: The "Fang Dazeng on Campus" tour arrives at the Liangxiang Campus of Beijing Technology and Business University. Feng Xuesong initiated "Fang Dazeng on Campus," a charitable campaign lasting from September 2015 to July 2017, which plans to tour 20 Chinese universities to display Fang's life and China's history in his times. by Wang Yuncong



Some photos by Fang Dazeng. An excellent war correspondent and photographer, Fang Dazeng took a great number of photos of soldiers and commanders on the frontlines. He also documented the lives of ordinary people in the 1920s and 1930s with his camera.

Feng went to Fang Chengmin, the younger sister of Fang Dazeng, who provided him with 837 photos taken by her brother. Intrigued by the precious historical moments recorded by Fang, Feng began to look into the periodicals and newspapers from between 1934 and 1937 stored in the National Library of China. It took Feng

four months to find Fang's articles and pictures in these publications, including *Fighting against the Japanese Aggressors on Lugou Bridge*, *The 29th Army: Fighting for Our Country*, *Air Raid Drill in Jinjing*, and *Wanping County Under the Gunfire of Japanese Invaders*. From then on, more and more traces of Fang's work as a war corre-

spondent gradually emerged.

Later, Feng visited various places Fang had once frequented, including cities like Baoding, Shijiazhuang, Taiyuan, and Datong. Within eight months, Feng interviewed around 100 civilians who had experienced the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, as

well as scholars and specialists, and filmed more than 40 hours of footage. On November 8, 2000, the first Journalists' Day since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Feng's documentary *Looking for Fang Dazeng* was broadcast on China Central Television.

While filming the documentary,

Feng uncovered more evidence of Fang's valuable qualities: his vision of news, his professionalism and his patriotism. In the decade that followed, Feng searched for information and friends of Fang, and retraced the final steps mentioned in Fang's news reports to seek every possible clue connected to him.

In 2014, Feng Xuesong compiled the historical materials he had found, along with his experiences from the search, into the book *Fang Dazeng: Disappearance and Reappearance*. "Feng's book reveals the stories of Fang Dazeng, a distinguished journalist and photographer who had been buried in oblivion for over 80 years," says Fang Hanqi, a leading Chinese scholar of news history. "Making his name known to the public is a great contribution to the research on China's history of journalism and war photography."

The Memory Won't Fade Away

Fang was famous before he vanished, but his disappearance, combined with the turbulence of the time, drowned out both him and his works. A major publication on the history of China's photography includes just a 100-word description of him. Thanks to Feng's search over recent years, public knowledge of Fang's life has been enriched.

Fang was an excellent war correspondent and photographer. But before turning to battlefields, he once recorded people's lives in Tianjin City and Shanxi Province with his camera. His attention to ordinary laborers and underprivileged people is also of significance.

The figures seen through his lens include rickshaw pullers at the entrance of a *hutong*, local people in ragged clothes, boat trackers at a wharf, and laughing kids. Those pictures show not only the wartime

lives of people in the 1920s and 1930s, but also a trust and equality between the subjects and the photographer.

In 2006, Fang's relatives donated his 837 surviving original photographic plates to the National Museum of China. In 2015, Fang's photographs of the battlefields were exhibited in the museum to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.

In the history of Chinese photography, many of the most precious images were taken by foreign photographers, such as famous French photographers Henri Cartier-Bresson and Marc Riboud. The absence of Chinese photographers has always been a pity. But Fang's return to prominence fills this blank. Despite the poor conditions of his times, Fang intuitively injected a rich sense of empathy and a great deal of fun into his works, and whether intentionally or accidentally, created a record of his times.

In the years since the publication of the book *Fang Dazeng: Disappearance and Reappearance* in 2014, a "Fang Dazeng" craze has spread through China's academic and media circles, with various events organized to remember and study him. A symposium on Feng Xuesong's tracing and collection of Fang's stories was held by the All-China Journalists Association; the Fang Dazeng Memorial was established in Baoding, Hebei Province; and the "Fang Dazeng on Campus" publicity campaign has been started, influencing an increasing number of college students. Still, Feng has more plans, such as adding Fang Dazeng into the *Encyclopedia of China*, setting up a Fang Dazeng Fund, establishing the Fang Dazeng Award to encourage young journalists, and adapting Fang Dazeng's stories into a drama. 

It's Only Natural

Text by Yin Xing

Photographs courtesy of Fongaia School

In 2005, American writer Richard Louv first introduced the concept of “nature-deficit disorder” in his book *Last Child in the Woods*. Sufferers of the disorder are not physiologically ill, but are so far removed from nature that they develop behavioral and psychological problems. As Louv proposed, natural education has emerged to fix the problem.

In recent years, China’s natural education has prospered. In its early days, it drew heavily on Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s concept of “natural man,” which focuses largely on freedom from restraint. But nowadays, as environmental problems worsen, natural education has shifted focus to coexisting as part of nature and aims to improve the ecology. Contemporary natural education promotes not only education “in” nature and “about” nature but also “for” nature.

“Firefly lanterns light my way to the moon,” wrote Li Muhe, a 10-year-old girl at Fongaia School. “Muhe used to just like to stay home and read,” reveals her mother. “Now, she likes to experience nature and finds beauty in everything she sees.” Gaia, the personification of earth in Greek myth, inspired the name of the school, Fongaia. Founded in 2014, the school of natural education is a subsidiary of Friends of Nature,

an environmental NGO. Vice principal of Fongaia School, Zhang Meng, or “Winter Wheat” as she’s known at the school (everyone at the school adopts the name of a plant or animal), granted an exclusive interview to *China Pictorial* to talk about China’s natural education.

China Pictorial (CP): As a founder of Fongaia School, what made you decide to launch a school for natural education?

Zhang: I was volunteering for Friends of Nature to work on projects related to natural education. But without consistent funding, we couldn’t keep things going for long. In 2013, I had a chance to visit some of Japan’s schools of natural education. Japan has more than 30 years of experience in natural education and about 4,000 nature schools. Compared to us, they have a more mature and sustainable system.

I used to teach at a college. I have always believed education can make people change and grow. I have been volunteering for four years, in which time I participated in many activities and got more connected to nature, which changed me a lot and elevated my life. I knew I could do this well. In 2014, I decided to establish Fongaia School.

Natural education teaches that as part of nature, people should get more connected with nature, which will help them better understand the world and themselves.





The children from Fongaia School have dinner in a snowfield.

CP: Do you think many Chinese children suffer from “nature-deficit disorder”?

Zhang: I think it’s painfully obvious and not confined to urban children. Several days ago, a teacher from a village came to our school. She told us that when her son saw flourishing winter wheat, he said “Chinese chives grow so well.” But “nature deficit” is about more than a lack of knowledge about nature; it’s more about the ability to feel nature. When we were children, we spent a lot of time in nature and established a magical connection to it. We knew that when we felt sad and angry, we could always get comfort from it. But now, many people fail to get any consolation from nature, children and adults alike. In-

stead, they feel anxious when they’re out in nature. They consider it dirty, and they’re afraid of insects. They don’t know how to interact with nature to get happiness and strength. Humans are part of nature. Natural education involves not only relations between man and nature, but also interpersonal relationships and self-improvement.

CP: What are the reasons for the disconnection?

Zhang: Firstly, we only experience fragmented nature. When we see a table, we know it is made of wood, but we do not necessarily know where the wood comes from; we turn on the tap and see water flowing out, but we do not care where it

comes from; we throw out garbage and it’s gone, but we don’t know where it goes; we don’t know where food comes from. Our attitudes toward nature become fragmented. Secondly, children lack freedom. Their schedules are arranged by their parents and crammed with all kinds of classes. When the kids are exposed to nature, parents are most concerned with sanitation and safety. We urge everyone to “return life to nature, give childhood back to children and learn from daily life.” Thirdly, social values are too materialistic. Almost all parents want their children to go to a famous university, find a decent job and live a well-off life. This has become the standard goal in life. But few people think about profound things




The children from Fongaia School greet birds at the foot of the Great Wall.

or the value of life. For example, when they ask about our classes, many parents ask things like “What will my son learn?” and “What kind of skills will he build?” And they expect their children learn fast. Real natural education doesn’t teach the names of plants and animals. Some kids can memorize an entire atlas of insects, but they don’t really understand the importance of those creatures to the planet. If a person lacks empathy, feelings and passion for nature, all the knowledge in the world is useless. Intimacy with nature completes the cognitive relationship with the world and strengthens the explorative spirit while igniting an interest in learning. This is where its value lies.

CP: What is the status of natural education in China? What does it need to overcome?

Zhang: In recent years, China’s natural education has developed rapidly. Many organizations involved in natural education have emerged in first- and second-tier cities. A lot of people have become interested in this field, evidenced by the growth in enrollment in our training classes to become a nature guide. At first, it was hard to find students, but now it is so popular that people are fighting to get a spot. Working as a nature guide is not even a high-salary profession. But the practitioners understand the value of natural education, a sign that social values are becoming more diverse.

Some textbooks cover natural education and some schools launched their own gardens to plant vegetables and flowers.

When natural education is mentioned, most people think of it for children. But adults need it more. We emphasize “parent-child-together education” because children are more perceptive and sensitive to nature than adults. However, when the kids get home, influenced by their parents, they quickly go back to their old ways. Targeting parents makes the process slower. In fact, in natural education, nature itself is the ultimate teacher, with endless wisdom. All of us should try to understand the world around us and each other, and nature facilitates better communication. 



Xiong Chaoyang, deputy head of the Asian Elephant Breeding and Rescue Center, with an elephant friend. Having been involved in Asian elephant protection for more than 16 years, Xiong believes that Asian elephants are very intelligent mammals.

Elephant S.O.S.

Text and photographs by Jia Daitengfei

In the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture is the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve in southern Yunnan Province. Despite its relatively limited area of less than 250,000 hectares, the reserve is home to one quarter of China's wild animal species and a fifth of its wild plant species. The nature reserve is warm, humid and rainy all year round, gifting the area tremendous biodiversity and China's best-preserved tropical rainforest at a comparatively high latitude and altitude.

An abundance of rare animals inhabits the tropical rainforest, of which the wild Asian elephant is the most famous species. The flagship animal even won Xishuangbanna the reputation of being the "elephant prefecture" in ancient China. Today, the world's two major species of elephants are distinguished by their native continents: Asia and Africa. With an estimated wild population of between 30,000 and 50,000, the Asian elephant is distributed across 13 Asian countries, including China. Statistics show that about 300 wild Asian elephants lived in China in 2015, of which 250 were located in Xishuangbanna. Wild Elephant Valley, one specific scenic spot in Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve, is home to about 70.

Observation and Protection

On an ordinary day in July 2016, it was stiflingly hot despite the towering trees shielding people from the sun's direct rays. The light still filtered through the dense branches and leaves.

"Keep silent," whispered Yan Hanlu, head of the Asian Observation and Protec-

tion Center. "Don't make a sound."

Yan then pointed towards a group of wild Asian elephants relaxing and drinking from a river just 20 meters away.

He quickly scribbled a note reading, "At 11:30 a.m., 26 wild Asian elephants were spotted: one adult male, five adolescent males, four calves, ten adult females and six adolescent females." He was so thrilled to see such a large group that his writing was especially illegible.

Wild Elephant Valley, located in the Mengyangzi section of the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve, first launched efforts to protect the wild Asian elephant in the late 1980s. Then, governmental agencies began placing salt at river banks the elephants frequented. Wild elephants need salt and other minerals that are often hard to come by in their natural environment.

In 1991, the Xishuangbanna Nature Conservation Bureau created observation posts in Wild Elephant Valley to conduct scientific observations. Later, when the valley became a forest park for wild elephant viewing, breeding and research, many agencies involved in elephant protection moved into the valley. The Asian Elephant Observation and Protection Center, established in June 2005, is one of them. Yan Hanlu and his coworkers' regular routine includes tracking and monitoring wild elephant herds as well as issuing alerts and warning tourists. "Many tourists want to get as close as possible to the elephants," Yan remarks. "We are not only responsible for their safety, but also for preserving the elephants' domain. No viewing should disturb the elephants' everyday lives."



An employee at the Asian Elephant Breeding and Rescue Center showers off a calf who has just returned from searching for food in the wild. The lovely creature, named Ming Ming, is usually the quiet type. However, if it gets excited, it can turn very naughty.

Reproduction and Rescue

Alongside the Asian Elephant Observation and Protection Center, the Asian Elephant Breeding and Rescue Center is also based in the valley.

Bao Mingwei, a veterinarian at the breeding and rescue center, is known for his skill at delivering anesthetics by blowing them through a pipe. Using his long blow-pipe, he can sedate a wild Asian elephant from ten meters away so specialists can treat and help it. In 2007, Bao and his coworkers found a sick adult female Asian elephant in the wild, which they named Ping Ping. She had contracted a severe infection around her hip and was nearing death. Wary of attack by members of her herd, Bao and his colleagues sedated Ping Ping with the pipe-

blown anesthetic and immediately treated her on-site. Within two weeks, Bao and other experts had formulated a treatment plan and successfully performed surgery.

Along with rescuing wounded wild elephants, the breeding and rescue center also rehabilitated four elephants that had been used to smuggle drugs. They were seized by China's border control. "Foreign drug dealers fed these poor things drugs in the hope of concealing and trafficking them," explained a representative of the breeding and rescue center. "The four elephants were sent to Hainan Province for rehabilitation before being returned to Xishuangbanna." During their stay at the center, workers walked the four elephants through the forests to search for food every day, along with other

elephants. "We couldn't just lock them up," adds Bao. "They need more supervised time in their natural environment before they are ready to survive in the wild."

Long Road Ahead

Asian elephants face the same persistent threats they have faced for years worldwide: human development and the ivory trade.


Human development steadily encroaches on elephant habitat, pushing them out. Compounding the problem, the gradual shrinking of tropical rainforests has further exacerbated habitat loss, forcing elephants to venture out of forests in search of food, into areas inhabited by humans.

Despite international efforts to end it, the ivory trade remains rampant globally,

and as well as causing a serious gender imbalance, it has even influenced the animal's genetics. In a reversal of Darwin's "survival of the fittest," adult male elephants with the most beautiful tusks have the hardest time surviving. Since adult males with small or even absent tusks survive more easily, the dominant tusk gene is gradually disappearing. At present, this external pressure has resulted in an absence of the iconic incisors in at least half of the global male Asian elephant population. And the male-female ratio of Asian elephants worldwide sits at a staggering 1:12.

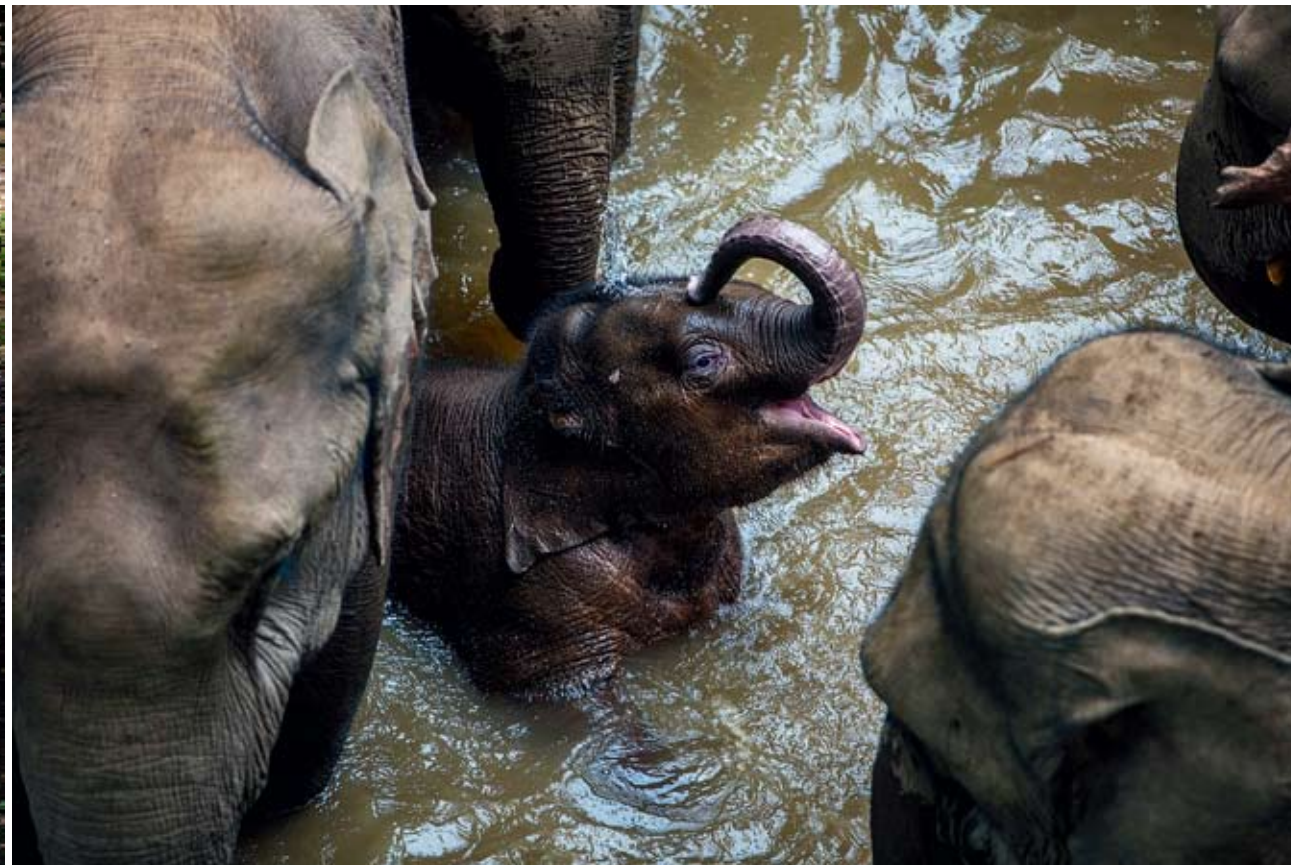
Asian elephants have approximately the same life expectancy as humans and stop growing at about age 30. Also like humans, females usually give birth to only a single offspring per pregnancy and reach sexual maturity in their teen years. This long life cycle makes threats to the species' population even more challenging to face.

For years, the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve has been making tremendous efforts to preserve wild Asian elephants. To reduce human-elephant conflict, the nature reserve has reduced traditional rubber plantations through developing commercial agarwood forests, and launched projects such as biological isolation belts and elephant food bases. Moreover, a comprehensive observation network for wild Asian elephants has been established. More than 40 observation spots have been set up across the nature reserve, where professionals identify and track individual elephants and collect data.

Complementing strict international bans on the ivory trade, the nature reserve has carried out extensive international cooperation in recent years. Large areas for elephant protection have been designated along border areas. By 2015, China and Laos had jointly designated five zones for joint elephant protection with a total area of 200,000 hectares. 



A group of wild Asian elephants relaxing and playing at the river bank. Generally speaking, wild Asian elephants seldom attack humans unless their territory is invaded or they feel that their calves are threatened.



A calf in water. Asian elephants have a similar life expectancy to humans and stop growing around the age of 30.

Universal Two-Child Policy: Smiles and New Worries

Text by Wang Shuya

On January 1, 2016, China officially abandoned the one-child policy, which had been in place in the country for more than three decades, in favor of a universal “two-child” era, allowing all married couples to have two children. Unexpectedly, a year after the implementation of the new policy, a survey by the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF) showed that over half of families with one child don’t want a second one.

With responses from 10,000 families with children under 15 years old in 10 provincial-level regions, the survey found that 53.3 percent of families have no desire for a second child. In developed regions and highly-educated groups, the number reaches even higher, to 62 percent. Education, medical resources, healthcare and the living environment are the key factors for most parents when considering a second child.

To Have, or Not to Have?

Ms. Zhang, in her 30s, has lived in Beijing for over 5 years. She and her husband both work for state-owned companies, and they own a 60-square-meter apartment in a good school district near the north fourth ring road. Their only daughter has just entered kindergarten.

The moment the new policy was introduced, Zhang was deeply moved. “There shouldn’t be any debate,” she asserts seriously. “For my daughter’s sake, I should give her a sister or brother. One child is too lonely.” However, after several rounds of family discussions, her firm resolve and

fiery passion were dispersed.

The major obstacles are related to finance and education. The couple had planned to relocate to a bigger apartment so that Ms. Zhang’s parents could move in with them to help take care of the newborn. However, as soon as the new policy was implemented, the price of their dream house skyrocketed out of their price range. The average price of houses in the community has risen to 80,000 yuan per square meter because of the good schools nearby. Then, the struggle became even more intense. If they found a bigger house in the same area to stay in the desirable school district, it would cause intense financial pressure. To secure an acceptable home elsewhere, they would have to move farther from downtown, sacrifice top-shelf education and make a more exhausting commute every day. The couple has little confidence in the educational resources of the suburbs. Thus, the second child plan was shelved.

A resident of Baoding, Hebei Province, Ms. Li, in her 40s, doesn’t have the same financial concerns. Partly because they live in a second-tier city, she and her husband have paid off their mortgage and worry little about covering daily expenses. The couple has long dreamed of having a second child, but when the policy finally arrived, Ms. Li began to be hesitant.

First of all, she could be too old for a second child at this point. Li took that concern to doctors, and their responses were consistent: the risk of complications rises sharply in older mothers.

Still, her paramount concern is balancing career development with child care. Ms. Li and her husband came to the city at a very young age. After years of struggle and hard work, both have become the backbone of their respective companies. Because of frequent business trips and busy schedules, they already regularly leave their son with his grandma. As the grandma gets older, no other potential help has emerged, and newborns require the most care. For Li, the choice is between a dream career and a second child. “I have been seriously wanting a second child for a long time, but now that I can, I don’t have the resolve,” she admits. “If I did have another child, I would probably have to quit my job. And even if I managed to save the job, I couldn’t keep my current position. Considering all the hard work and struggles I have endured over so many years, I want to realize my own dreams and be all that I can be. Quitting my job would mean a big cut in income. It’s not a realistic option considering our cost of living coupled with saving for retirement.”

Beijing native Ms. Liu seems luckier than Zhang and Li on paper. Without significant obstacles, she is about to give birth to her second baby. However, the process was still not as smooth as Liu expected. “Beijing’s medical resources fall short of demand, especially those related to the obstetric and pediatric departments,” she reports. “We had to fight to register to give birth at the nearest hospital. Every prenatal visit was an exhausting trek through a huge crowd. Then my son got sick, and my



A kindergarten in Shanghai. During each year’s recruiting season, primary and middle schools and kindergartens hire teachers in large numbers, with kindergarten teachers in particularly high demand. IC

life suddenly fell apart. Beijing Children’s Hospital is constantly overcrowded. Seeing a doctor after only three hours of waiting was considered quite lucky.” Ms. Liu admits that beneath her joy and happiness brought by the expectation of new life, she has begun to worry about whether she can take care of two children.

Ready Public Support

By the end of 2013, China had already launched a selective two-child policy benefiting couples in which either parent was an only child. Two years later, the policy was expanded to all married couples. The important move aimed to optimize the demographic structure, increase labor supply and ease pressure on the aging population in a new situation.

However, one year after it was implemented, the long-awaited universal two-child policy seems to have fallen well short of its projected goals. On November 26, 2016, the National Health and Family Planning Commission announced at a Beijing forum on population that the


country would welcome more than 17.5 million newborns in 2016. That figure is only 950,000 greater than the 16.55 million in 2015 and 630,000 more than the 16.87 million in 2014. So in terms of boosting the birthrate, the universal two-child policy has not improved much on the previous selective two-child policy.

As for the reasons, Mu Guangzong, a professor at the Institute of Population Research at Peking University, posits that although the universal two-child policy came into effect on January 1, 2016, the fertility potential of the productive population still needs time to respond. Currently, people in many regions of China have been facing a range of factors like late marriage, late motherhood, low fertility desire and increasing cost of living. Especially in recent years, considering income levels, housing cost, commuting time and other factors, it has become even harder for people to transform a desire for children into reality. Many young parents have become fearful of having a second child.

“The fundamental reason is that the

current public services and resources allocation system hasn’t adjusted to serve the new demographic and fertility situation,” Mu says. The universal two-child policy still doesn’t allow every family to have as many babies as they want, but more supportive public policies are clearly on the horizon.

“The current social resources supply and operating systems have long been designed for the demographic structure of one family, one child,” explains Du Jie, vice president of the Chinese Women’s Research Society. She adds that only when key problems related to public services are solved will young parents feel like they have a choice.

On methods to improve public services, the ACWF presented three suggestions to the government: First, adjust basic public service systems and increase allocations to medicine, healthcare and educational resources. Second, clarify the supervision and development of nursery institutions for newborns to toddlers. Third, improve the current parental and family education by using guidance stations to innovate and enrich methods of family education. 

Cheers to Tourism

Text by Chu Jiwang

In the late 1980s, I visited a Western country for the first time, and still recall being struck by the cafés and bars along the streets and admiring the people spending their daytime leisure hours drinking beer and sipping coffee.

At first, I assumed such lifestyles could only exist in capitalist countries because their wealth made things so easy and comfortable.

After traveling to a wider range of Western countries, I eventually realized that the phenomenon should also be attributed to different eating and drinking cultures as well as varied attitudes depending on geography.

It seemed to me that Westerners drink coffee and beer, while Chinese prefer tea and liquor: the former pair promotes a casual life, while the latter two are used to relax after hard work.

Since ancient times, Chinese people have advocated a lifestyle of diligence and thrift. They habitually save their earnings in a bank and think about the next generation. Westerners, however, aren't as concerned about the future and tend to spend as much as they make.

Most Chinese citizens still lead diligent, thrifty lives. At my age of 75, I have many literary friends, battle companions, schoolmates, and business partners who still work and can't imagine retirement. In China, we would consider young men idly drinking beer and sipping tea during the

day to be lazy.

In the 1960s, I served in the army in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, where I saved my monthly six yuan subsidy in the bank. Years later, when I bought a house, I sighed with emotion upon seeing the endless list of tiny deposits.

Last year, after the Hannover fair in Germany, I did some traveling in Shkoder, Albania. It's a relatively small city with a population of 80,000, and neat and beautiful structures with white walls and red tiles scattered across a green blanket of plains and lush trees.

The streets are lined with shops and stores, in front of which are tables, where people enjoy coffee and beer in the sunlight.

Our guide was a young lady from Serbia, who studied Mandarin Chinese in Shanghai. "Don't they work during the day?" I asked. She replied, "People might spend a couple of hours here for just one cup of coffee. It's part of our work culture."

As we were hanging around, she pointed at lines in English on the back of a passerby's T-shirt: "See? 'Live! Live! Live! There is no life after marriage.'" I still didn't get how this behavior could be accept-



A street café in Prague, capital of the Czech Republic. Xinhua

able. "Who pays these people?" I snapped. "You!" she rebutted, and I was silenced.

"Every year, we welcome over 3 million tourists from every corner of the world," she illustrated. "Tourism has brought an injection of funds that has tremendously boosted the local economy. Why should we still toil away for long hours every day instead of enjoying some leisure time?"

On the trip, I visited a total of six eastern European countries that were once part of Yugoslavia, but are now independent following many years of war late last century. It has been the new-found inbound foreign tourism that has brought freedom and happiness to the residents.

Chu Jiwang is president and founder of the Ningbo Ruyi Joint Stock Co., Ltd., a major Chinese logistics equipment manufacturer. More than just an entrepreneur, Chu is a recipient of the China Charity Award, the top philanthropic honor in the country. In each issue, he shares his business insights and inspirations gained from his life experience.

Location	Year	Number of finless porpoise
Yangtze River	2006	1200
	2012	500
	2012	500
Dongting Lake	2006	200
	2012	100
	2012	100

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Hidden Tibetan Buddhism in the Palace Museum

Text by Zhang Xue Photographs by Feng Jin

The Palace Museum (Forbidden City), an imperial palace of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, is considered the pinnacle of Chinese palace architecture. One of the world's largest and best-preserved wood architecture complexes, it attracts tens of thousands of visitors from China and around the world every day. Still, some corners of the complex remain unopened to the public and a relative mystery.

After many phone calls and negotiations, our reporter was finally granted access to one of the “forbidden zones” where a hidden Tibetan Buddhist world lay in wait.

Mysterious Yuhua Pavilion

In the northwestern quadrant of the museum is an area known as Zhongzheng-dian, entirely composed of Buddhist halls. Around Zhongzheng Hall are 10 Tibetan Buddhist halls including Baohua Hall, Yuhua Pavilion and Fanzong Tower, lined up from north to south. None of these buildings are open to the public.

In 1749 during the Qing Dynasty, Emperor Qianlong took the advice of the third Jangjya Khutuktu, then national preceptor, to mimic the designs of the Mandala Tower of the Toling Monastery in Tibet during a renovation of the Yuhua Pavilion, an esoteric Tibetan Buddhist hall.

Although it appears to have only three stories, Yuhua Pavilion actually has four floors and is the only structure in the imperial palace to combine Han and Tibetan flavors. The Buddha statues on the fourth

floor represent four different levels of religious practice.

“The layout of the relics in the pavilion remains the same as it was from 1711 to 1820,” notes Luo Wenhua, director of the Institute of Tibetan Buddhist Heritage of the Palace Museum. The specific duration and the position of each article have been recorded in the museum's files.”

Through the opened vermeil gate, warm winter sunshine radiates onto the rosewood Buddhist pagoda on the first floor of Yuhua Pavilion. Above the gate is a board with an inscription by Emperor Qianlong. According to Luo, inside the rosewood pagoda are Buddha statues gifted by former Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas to emperors as tributes. The pavilion also houses enamel mandalas for three main Buddhas of esoteric Buddhism, as well as many gold and copper Buddha statues, ritual articles, porcelain pagodas and thangka paintings. Some of the treasures came from Tibet and Mongolia as tributes or hailed from India and Nepal. Some were made by the imperial household department.

Most of the thangkas were painted more than two hundred years ago, in and around the year 1750, when the pavilion was first built. Heavy curtains prevent the sun from damaging the thangkas or their colors. Under torch light, bright hues of the mineral pigments of the paintings are still vibrant. “Those thangka paintings have been hanging there since the day they were finished and never put away,” says Luo. “But they remain as fresh as ever.” Most of

the 1,970 thangka paintings in the museum were composed by Tibetan painters during the reign of Emperor Qianlong.

Some large-scale wooden structures and porcelain pagodas have been fitted with earthquake-proofing equipment, but most relics remain exactly the same as they have always been. The pavilion is so crowded with relics that visitors would frequently bump into them—a major reason the pavilion isn't open to the public. However, it has been included in the “Digital Museum” plan, and will be even more vividly displayed to the public with the help of virtual reality technology.

Visitors looking for Tibetan Buddhist art treasures can visit Xianruo Hall in the Garden of the Palace of Benevolent Peace, which was just renovated and reopened to the public last year, according to Luo. Xianruo Hall served as the place where empresses and imperial concubines worshipped Buddha.

Statues of Tibetan Buddhism

The Palace Museum witnessed the prime of Tibetan Buddhism in China.

In 1653, the tenth year of the reign of Emperor Shunzhi, the emperor welcomed the fifth Dalai, then leader of Tibetan Lamaism, whom Shunzhi dubbed the “Dalai Lama.” In 1713, Emperor Kangxi gave the fifth Panchen the title “Panchen Erdeni,” formally acknowledging the political and religious status of Dalai and Panchen in Tibet. Subsequently, Tibetan Buddhism prospered and the volume of Tibetan Buddhist halls in the Forbidden City swelled.



Part of a 15th Century gilded Buddha statue from Nepal.



Chunhua Gate, entrance to the Zhongzhengdian area.



Dragon ornaments under the eaves of Yuhua Pavilion.

In 1780, the sixth Panchen arrived at the Forbidden City to celebrate Emperor Qianlong's 70th birthday, marking the final high point of Tibetan Buddhist activity in the royal court. After that, as the empire began to erode, the influence of Tibetan Buddhism in the royal court faded.

"After waking up, emperors would light incense from one hall to another before having breakfast in the Palace of Heavenly Purity," explains Luo. "The area of Buddhist halls was very important to them."

Through Zhaofu Gate to the north of Yuhua Pavilion is a square where large-scale Buddhist activities were once held. The prayer flags they used still remain. At the end of each year, emperors would

take part in an "exorcism" ceremony, the highest-level Buddhist event in the royal court. On that day, emperors would sit side-by-side with the Dalai or Panchen along with other senior monks, manifesting the dominant status of Tibetan Buddhism in the Qing Dynasty.

Today, visitors can still feel the profound influence left by the plentiful Tibetan Buddhist articles. The Palace Museum houses 42,000 religious relics, of which 80 percent are related to Tibetan Buddhism.

Relic Protection and Cultural Exchange

After graduating from Peking University in 1989 with a degree in archeology, Luo Wenhua went straight to work at the Palace Museum. Today, not only is his English fluent, but he is also well-versed in Tibetan, Sanskrit and German.

"Many relics are scattered throughout the monasteries in Tibetan-inhabited regions," laments Luo, speaking on the protection of Tibetan Buddhist relics. "We don't even know how many remain because there has never been a systematic survey, let alone how to take protective measures." In his eyes, China's hub of Tibetology study is Beijing rather than Tibet. Tibetan-inhabited regions are home to myriad precious relics, but locals are not all conscious about the importance of protecting them. Due to a lack of funds and professionals, many relics have not been catalogued and some are sold away to overseas buyers. In recent years, China has strengthened supervision of relics and instructed Customs to check more closely. Compared to the 1980s, fewer relics are being lost.


To better protect relics in Tibet, the Palace Museum and the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region signed an agreement on relic protection. The two parties will cooperate to build digital museums,

study and restore relics, hold exhibitions and publish research. Archaeological research in the autonomous region will be carried out step by step. Experts from the Palace Museum have begun contributing to the protection of relics in Jokhang Monastery in Tibet.

It so happened that the exhibition "Across the Silk Road: Gupta Sculptures and Their Chinese Counterparts during 400-700 CE" took place in the Palace Museum when the reporter visited it. The curator of the exhibition, Luo Wenhua, has visited India many times. "India has a wealth of antiques and cultural sites," says Luo. "Historically, China and India conducted frequent exchanges, but in modern times, people of the two countries know little about each other." Luo thinks China and India should strengthen cultural communication. Every time he visited India, he brought back a lot of books about Buddhism, which he still treasures.

The West has shown tremendous interest in Tibetology research for more than a century. Buddhist culture originated in India. However, the United States, Britain, France and Germany have accomplished fruitful achievements in studying Tibetan Buddhism, especially of the Himalaya area. China should work with these countries.

Shan Jixiang, director of the Palace Museum, hopes the organization can take advantage of its rich relic resources and serve as China's capital of Tibetology study, promoting exchange with domestic and international experts alike.

The Palace Museum is China's largest museum of ancient culture and arts and a globally celebrated landmark. At the end of 2016, the documentary *Masters in the Forbidden City* hit cinemas in China, giving the public a glimpse of professionals in the ancient imperial palace, which is continuously becoming more open to the world. 



A 15th Century gilded Buddha statue from Nepal.



A gold Tibetan wheel.



A red-copper Buddha statue made by the imperial household department in the mid-Qing Dynasty.



A copper and gilded Buddha statue from the reign of Emperor Xuande (1426-1435) of the Ming Dynasty.

Mariinsky's China Month

Text by Wang Danyang

Shanghai embraced one of Russia's greatest operas on October 18, 2016, when Valery Gergiev, considered an "Arts Tsar," staged the classic *Queen of Spades*, a masterpiece of the Mariinsky Theater, at the Shanghai Grand Theater.

The tour group was composed of over 600 elite artists from the opera troupes, corps de ballet, symphony orchestras, and choruses of Mariinsky, composing the grandest-ever Russian group to tour China. During their stay from October 18 to November 9, the Russian artists gave 19 performances in cities including Shanghai, Harbin, Tianjin, and Guangzhou, presenting masterpieces *Swan Lake*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *War and Peace*, as well as symphonies

by Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Stravinsky.

Shanghai was lucky enough to receive seven performances including the opera *The Queen of Spades* and the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* as well as free or affordable public activities such as back-stage exploration, a fairy-tale symphony and meeting ballet dancers. "We started preparing for the campaign two years ago," explains Zhang Xiaoding, general manager of the Shanghai Grand Theater. "The dynamic, rich performances that we saw were only finalized after extensive communication between us and Mariinsky."

The Queen of Spades is based on a short story by Alexander Pushkin, a great Russian poet and writer. It was adapted


into an opera by Tchaikovsky, a romantic composer during the late 19th Century, and hailed as a surreal piece of work reflecting his deepest depression, most extreme psychological tension, and diversified style.

The story follows a Russian army officer's obsession with learning a trick involving three secret cards to win at gambling. He falls in love with a young woman, but his desire for money proves stronger, and the story ends in an asylum.

"The artists of Mariinsky have a perfect understanding of the roles," comments General Manager Zhang. "The male lead, for example, is played almost exactly the same as it was in the Mariinsky's premier: sharp but not rich, because the character is sick."

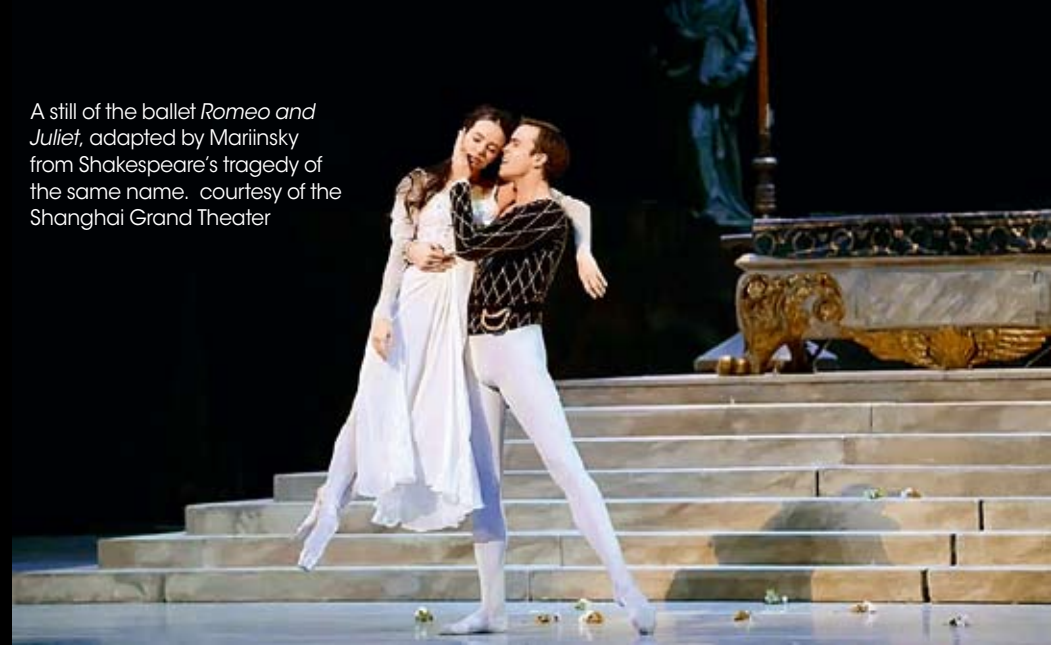
On October 26 and 27, spectators in Harbin, capital of northeastern China's Heilongjiang Province, had the chance to enjoy two performances of the opera *War and Peace* which Prokofiev, an eminent composer of the former Soviet Union, composed in 1941. The rarely-seen full-scale drama involves 600 performers in 13 scenes and lasts four hours. The production is the culmination of nine different versions at Mariinsky. It has seldom been staged globally—only a handful of performances in places like Covent Garden in London and the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Diana Vishyeva, senior ballet dancer of Mariinsky at age 40, choreographed this version. Vishyeva has become an icon of Russian culture and held an honorary seat with the American National Dance Troupe for 15 years.

Founded in 1849, Mariinsky remains Russia's largest artistic workshop with a membership of more than 4,000 artists. It has staged more than 1,200 productions. Every year, it presents about 2,000 performances, of which 300 to 400 are overseas tours led by Gergiev.

What other art theaters in the world can rival Mariinsky's storied history? 

The author is a journalist with *Sanlian Lifeweek*.

A still of the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, adapted by Mariinsky from Shakespeare's tragedy of the same name. courtesy of the Shanghai Grand Theater



October 18, 2016: *The Queen of Spades* staged in the Shanghai Grand Theater kicks off Mariinsky's month-long tour of China. courtesy of the Shanghai Grand Theater



A still of *Swan Lake*, presented by Mariinsky in Tianjin on October 28, 2016. CFP





Yesterday's Youth: Middle-school Students in the 1980s

by Ren Shulin, published
by Beijing United Publishing Co., Ltd.,
November 2016

For China, the 1980s was an era of many new introductions and concepts. During the decade, well-known photographer Ren Shulin visited many middle schools in Beijing to observe classes, witness student life during a transformative generation, and capture it all with his gentle, lyrical photographic language.


A total of 170 photos were printed in the book. As one of the key members of April, the oldest organization specializing in documentary photographic exhibitions in China, Ren used his own unique style to document the rich, colorful lives of the middle-school students of that era without any trace of staged photography.

"The strength of his photography is the inertia of the lingering charm, which is the nature of photography," commented Gu Zheng, a renowned Chinese artist and curator.

The book also includes several articles by Ren Shulin recounting his early years, including his reasoning in choosing to focus on middle-school students, behind-the-scenes anecdotes, his experience learning from senior photographer Di Yuancang and his friendship with amateur photographers.

The people in his photos aren't merely reminders of the 1980s. Rather, they represent different memories of yesteryear for every viewer from any era. Ren opens a door back to poetic and idealistic eras.

"I want students who are now consumed by various tests and exams to see the lives of the older generation through these photos," declared Chen Danqing, an eminent Chinese artist and writer. "Photographic work like this is the only way to show them what we endured."

Ren Shulin is a distinguished photographer in modern China. He is a member of the China Photographers Association and the Royal Photographic Society. In 2010, he won the Excellent Photographer Award at Pingyao International Photography Festival. His most famous works include *Excellent Worker*, *College Entrance Examination in Beijing*, 1980, *The Middle-school Students in the 1980s*, and *The Scenery of Yunnan Province*. 



1980: A college entrance examination room at Beijing No. 75 Middle School.



July 1986: A class in Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



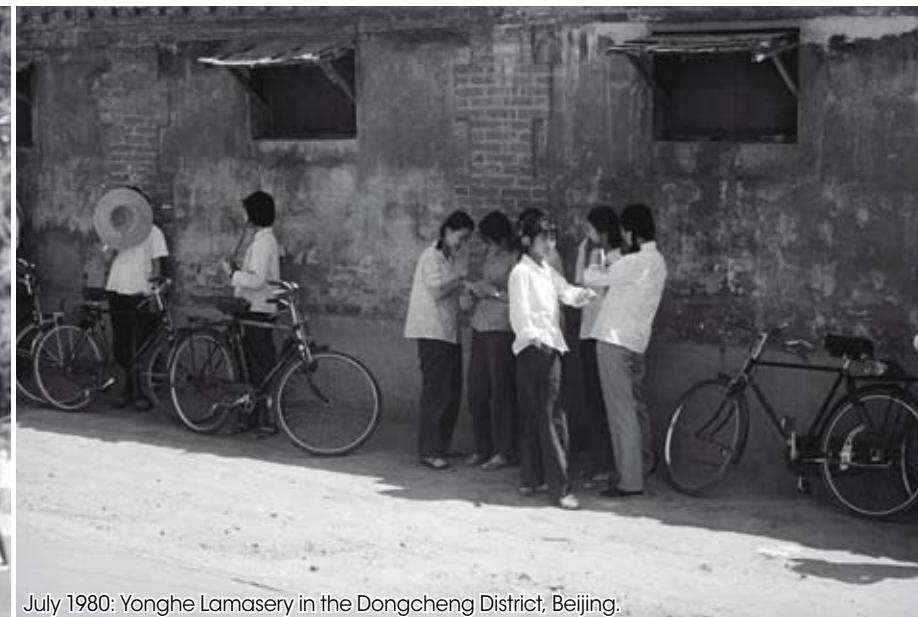
August 1985: Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



August 1985: The playground of Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



April 1986: A small auditorium of Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



July 1980: Yonghe Lamasery in the Dongcheng District, Beijing.



December 1988: A class at Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



September 1983: Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



May 1983: The art room of Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



December 1983: The city moat of Andingmen, Beijing.



April 1986: A classroom at Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



July 1985: A classroom at Beijing No. 171 Middle School.



October 1981: The playground of Beijing No. 171 Middle School.

Today's Documents More Choices

Text by Yi Mei

After six years of preparation, the 3rd "Today's Documents" finally opened at Today Art Museum on December 10, 2016 and will last until March 5, 2017. The title of the exhibition is "BRIC-à-brac" in French, "The Jumble of Growth" in English and "另一种选择" (Another Choice) in Chinese. According to its curators, the French term BRIC-à-brac refers to a jumbled situation, whereas Jumble of Growth symbolizes a dynamic process, and Another Choice

hearkens to an attitude, standpoint and analysis. The relations between these three titles in three languages are not parallel, but progressive.

The exhibition invited 50 artists from different countries including China, Mexico, Spain, Brazil, India, Russia, South Africa and South Korea. Their works discuss the role art plays in the chain reaction of emerging economies and how art deals with social transformations and their influence on society and individuals.



After the I Ching XXIV Fû by Francesco Clemente, watercolor and miniature on paper, 35.6x50.8cm, 2016

Stuck in the Middle

Although the exhibition focuses on BRICS countries, the participating artists hail from a wider range of nations. Curators hoped that inviting representatives from several developing countries would result in light radiating from a “middle zone.” “We have artists from Spain, Cuba, Mexico, Chile, Panama and even Iraq,” notes co-curator Huang Du.

These nations from the “middle zone” are neither Western countries nor undeveloped ones, and represent a rising force. “In contrast with Western economics of transnational capitalism and modes of knowledge production, new emerging economies focus

on national modernization and cultural discovery,” explains Huang. “Influenced by global capitalism, they benefit from it and grow. Their complicated and diverse political and economic situations present a different brand of modernization, which demands attention and analysis that can be satisfied in part through study of their artistic practice.”

The exhibition hopes to shake off the normal worldwide context of West-centered globalization and focus on nations in the “middle” to show the commonalities and differences of the globalization process.

“For example, for Chinese people, demolition is one of the most conflicted issues of urbanization,” Huang continues. “China

must face this problem alongside other developing countries. Panamanian artist Donna Conlon took photos of her country’s old cities and titled the series ‘Domino Effect’ to highlight demolition and reflect on the impacts of urbanization. St. Petersburg is tearing down old buildings even more frantically. Emerging economies are all facing similar problems like penetration of capital, lawlessness and destruction of tradition.”

Curators believe that art from the “middle zone” is neither “the other” nor “itself,” which contributes to artistic vitality. They feature characteristics of non-Western modernization, which fits perfectly with the “Another Choice” theme.



After the Gift—Blossfedt's Fan
by Sascha Pohle, HD color
silent video, 24'38", 2016



Studies on Maps, radio, 6'52", 80x80x57cm, photograph and
221 neon light tubes, 2016



Wretched of the Earth 82 by Kendell Geers, iron dust on
paper, 102x66cm, 2016



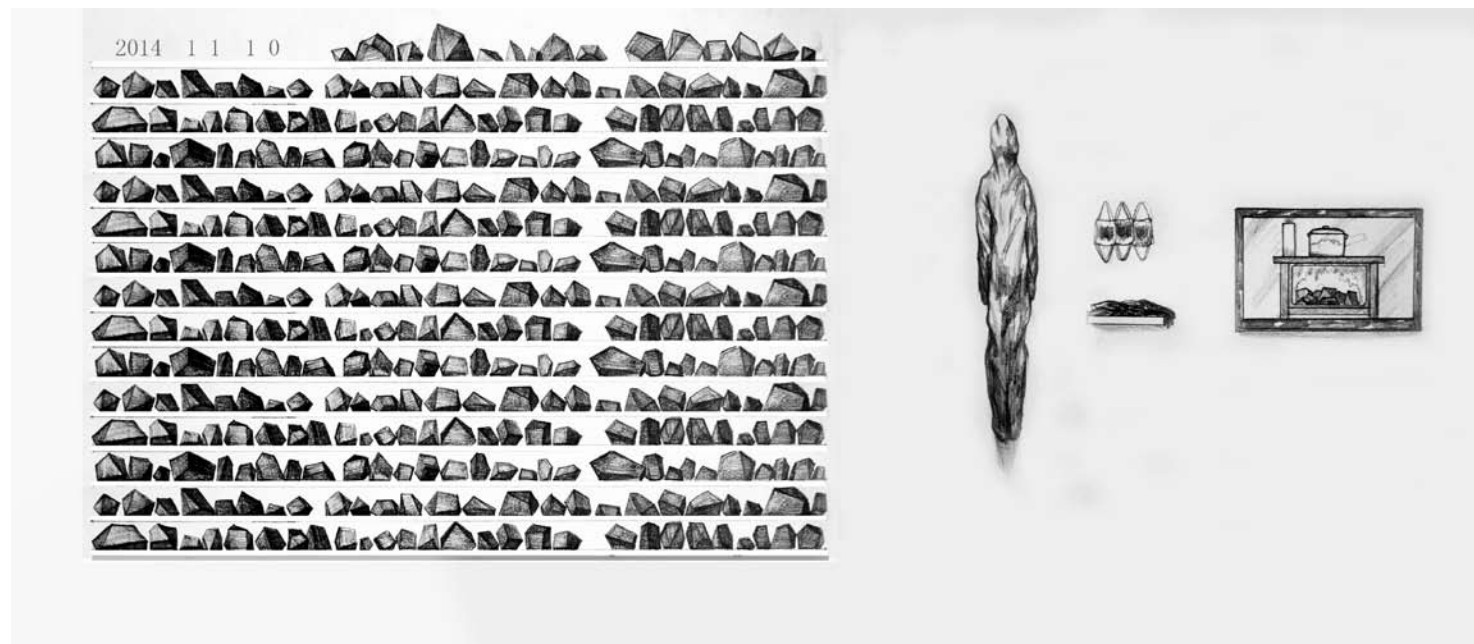
Domino Effect by Donna Conlon, videos, 5'13", 2013



Domino Effect by Donna Conlon, videos, 5'13", 2013



Untitled by Subodh Gupta, mixed media, 441x111x101cm, 200-250kg approx., 2012



The Winter of 2014—Refined Burning by Wang Lijun, variable size, coal, 2014

Artistic Dialogue

In 2001, economist Jim O'Neill coined the acronym BRIC. In 2010, South Africa was added to the group, making it "BRICS." For a long time, the study of emerging economies has focused on their economic roles. Such large-scale art shows from emerging economies are still rare.


"Art has the power to penetrate the depths of social and cultural matters by virtue of its tropological, subjective approach, which allows artworks to address the intricacies of society," remarks Cuba-based co-curator Gerardo Mosquera. "In a lively and enlightening manner, art documents the human aspects of progress and highlights subjective matters and cultural predicaments that macroeconomic numbers miss."

The exhibition did not arrange exhibits by nation. "We placed works on related topics together to promote dialogue among works and highlight the mixed and overlapped vigor of art in the 'middle zone,'" explains Yan Yan, deputy director of Today's Art Museum.

For instance, Weng Fen, Marcos Ramirez Erre and Eason Tseng Ka-wai all reflect on complicated issues in multi-dimensional space. *Staring at Ordos* by Weng documents Ordos, a Chinese city rich in coal, which declined after the country began to shift its mode of development. A snapshot of the absurd growth of a city, the work not only expresses human anxiety about space, but also mirrors the relation between modern capital and consumer society. Contrasting Weng, Marcos Ramirez Erre's *City Portraits* employs cartography, technology, sociology and ethnic groups. It uses abstract form to illuminate the complicated nature of globalization. Hong Kong artist Eason Tseng Ka-wai's *New Landmark* features photos of the surfaces

of architecture from a low angle.

"Most contemporary artists don't describe, analyze, express or build context," adds Gerardo Mosquera. "The context comes from their personal, historical, cultural and social contexts in international

terms. Context thus ceases to be a 'closed' circuit related to a reductive concept and projects itself as a space from which international culture is built naturally. The works in this exhibition inject this dynamic into contemporary art." 



The Thinker by Su Xinping, 80x60cm, oil on canvas, 2010



Spring View, 62x108.5cm, Emperor Guangxu's reign in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), acquired by National Art Museum of China.



Willows in the Spring Breeze —Exhibition of Selected Yangliuqing New Year Pictures Acquired by National Art Museum of China

New Year pictures have always been part of traditional Chinese folk art for China's most important holiday, Spring Festival, which is celebrated on the New Year on the lunar calendar. People from Yangliuqing produce such paintings particularly well. Yangliuqing, a township under the direct jurisdiction of Tianjin, became famous across the country during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) for printed New Year pictures featuring unique techniques combining printing and painting, exquisite engraving craftsmanship, and delicate colored drawing.

On display are over 100 boutique pieces that best present the old way of thinking and aesthetic concepts of outstanding traditional Chinese art in terms of topics, function, and craftsmanship.

January 10 – March 26, 2017
National Art Museum of China, Beijing

Attracting Phoenix with the Melody of Xiao (a vertical bamboo flute), *Riding a Dragon*, 103.5x57.5cm, Emperor Qianlong's reign in the Qing Dynasty, acquired by National Art Museum of China.



Screen Landscape & Post Digital Body —Liu Yefu's Individual Event

Born in 1986, Liu Yefu resides in Beijing. Over the last few years, Liu has contributed to scores of group exhibitions at home and abroad and participated in the Artist-in-Residence Program of the Kala Art Gallery in Berkeley, California, in 2014.

This event features the third edition of "Screen Landscape & Post Digital Body," a special series focusing on the research of digitalized art, featuring five of Liu's images and installations created during his stays in New York, Beijing, and other places.

As British art critic Karen Smith noted, in short and sweet strokes, young Liu Yefu opens channels of communication that have already been expanded by mass media in whatever way with his direct response to the impact on the visual environment wrought by the internet.

January 15 – February 26, 2017
Goethe-Institut China, Beijing



Floating Points, single-panel high-definition video installation, 9'28", 2015.



Rock Series, 2014.

Elephant: Poem vs. Image —Exhibition of Works by Yu Jian

Yu Jian, born in 1954, is a famous Chinese poet, writer, documentarian and photographer known for a completely original style. He began writing while practicing photography. During his travels around the world, Yu's camera captured glimpses of daily life in many countries against the backdrop of globalization, and he felt compelled to write his insights as captions.

On display are many pieces related to his performing works, such as poetry reading, theater documents, and selected photos. At the opening ceremony, Yu Jian recited his poem *Zero File*. The exhibition showcases his photo series "Elephant," "Rocks" and "At the Moment" as well as documentaries including *Hometown* and *Jade-Green Station*, which was a competitor for IDFA (the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam) Award for Best Mid-Length Documentary, formerly known as the Silver Wolf Award.

December 10, 2016 – February 13, 2017
Ming Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai

An Image, A Vision — Solo Exhibition of Zhu Xiangmin

Born in 1989, Zhu Xiangmin graduated with a master's degree from the Oil Painting Department of the China Academy of Art in 2015, by which time his oil paintings had already won numerous prizes and awards from domestic exhibitions.

Zhu is an expert in breaking archetypes of his characters with seemingly chaotic images composed of overlapping, broken structures. His ambition for image creation resembles "stato di eccezione (state of exception)" described by Giorgio Agamben, an Italian aesthetic academic: approaching a state that cannot be harnessed by any measure via the suspension of laws and regulations.

Showcased are his oil paintings from 2014.

November 25, 2016 – February 17, 2017
Hive Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing



Festive Red No.1, oil on canvas, 180x190cm, 2014.



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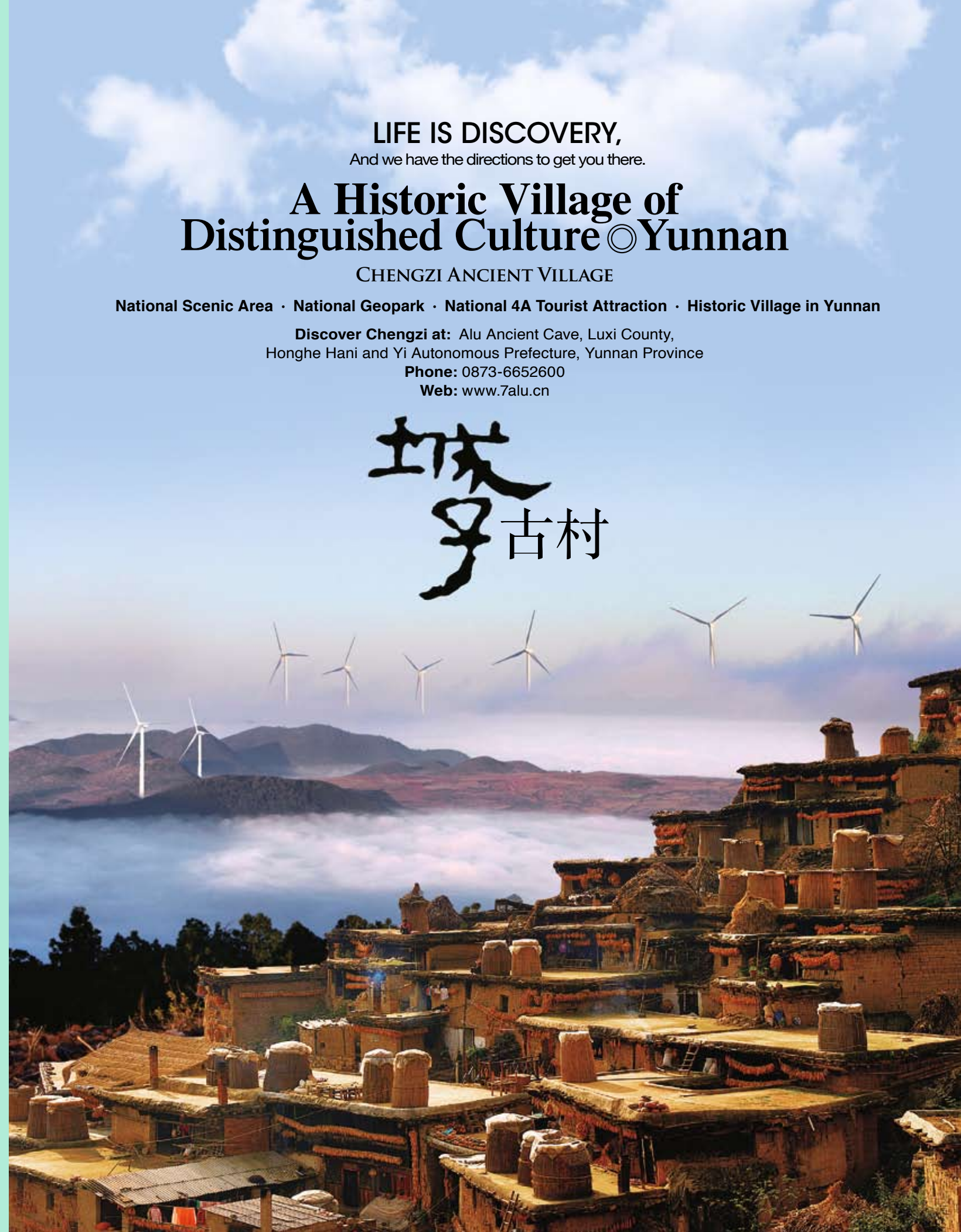
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