



## CHAPTER 7

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# Stories of Cultural Fusion: “Diversity of All Things on Earth Is Natural Law”

### A LITTLE MOLE FROM CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech Republic is one of the first countries to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 67 years ago, the traditional friendship between our countries and peoples has gone from strength to strength. In the 1950s, a well-known Czech painter, Zdenek Sklenar, came to China and became good friends with Wu Zuoren, Qi Baishi and other renowned Chinese painters. After returning to his country, Zdenek Sklenar drew many illustrations of the Monkey King, which is fondly regarded as a unique variation of the image of this popular character. *Krtek* is the first foreign cartoon series introduced to China. The chubby, kind-hearted and courageous little mole became immensely popular among China’s young audience. Bedrich Smetana’s symphonic cycle, *Ma Vlast* and Jaroslav Hasek’s *The Good Soldier Švejk* are also masterpieces that are familiar to the Chinese public.

- Time to Renew and Energize China–Czech Ties, a signed article on Czech media (March 26, 2016).

#### *Commentary*

The well-known Czech painter Zdenek Sklenar was born in 1910. In the 1950s, when Sklenar held an exhibition in China, he was fascinated by

the story of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King of China. From then on, through his painting, he began to introduce the Monkey King and the story *Journey to the West* to the Czech people. Sklenar created his Czech “Monkey King” with perfect integration of Chinese traditional cultural elements and Czech national characteristics, which are brightly colored and diverse in terms of image. He redesigned the more than 500 characters in the *Journey to the West* and created an even more unique “metamorphosis” for the “Monkey King”, who embodies 72 metamorphoses. Because of this, Sklenar is honored as the “Czech Monkey King”.

“Little Mole” is a national cartoon character valued by the Czech people as a national treasure. It stems from *Krtekis*, a classic story by Zdenek Miller, a famous illustrator and film director from Czech Republic. In the production of the cartoon, to help the mole break through boundaries and language barriers, Miller created a rich array of movements, facial expressions and simple sounds to communicate information, avoiding verbal communication. In the 1980s, *Krtekis* was introduced to China and later became a classic memory of a generation. In March 2016, *Krtek a Panda* (Panda and Little Mole), a cartoon series produced jointly by China and Czech Republic, began to be shown. Integrated with the Chinese elements, the little mole continues to sow the seeds of friendship in the hearts of the children of both countries

Born in 1824, Bedrich Smetana was the founder of Czech classical music, a pioneer in the Czech national opera, and father of Czech national music. Unfortunately, he went deaf in 1874, however, he never stopped creating and presented many works thereafter. The symphonic cycle *Ma Vlast* referred to by Xi Jinping is Smetana’s representative work. Jaroslav Hasek, a famous Czech writer born in 1883, was known for works that were characterized by humor and satire. His representative work *The Good Soldier Svejkare* described an ordinary Czech soldier, Svejkare’s, experience in the First World War, exposing the tyrannies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the corruption of its army. Many commentators have compared Svejkare to Cervantes’s Don Quixote. *The Good Soldier Svejkare* has been translated into nearly 30 languages, including Chinese, and it is much loved by people all over the world.

In March 2016, Xi Jinping visited Czech Republic. This was his first visit to Central and Eastern Europe as the Chinese President. Before discussing

China–Czech cultural exchange, he made a point of praising Czech’s “picturesque landscape, rich cultural heritage and talented people”. Recollecting his visit to this country in the 1990s, he said he was deeply impressed by the hard work and ingenuity of the Czech people, their dynamic economic and social progress and Bohemian culture nourished by the Vltava River.

The Czech artist created the paintings of the “Monkey King” according to the image of Sun Wukong, and *Krtek* is immensely popular among the Chinese children. Such anecdotes presented in articles published by the Czech media not only reveal the historical friendship between China and Czech Republic, but they also prove the significance of cultural exchange. With these references, Xi showed that the Chinese and Czech peoples have long admired and appreciated each other’s civilization and culture. Such exchanges have greatly increased in recent years; thus, there is hope that the two countries will further encourage people-to-people and cultural exchanges in the future.

### CHINA AS SEEN BY SINGAPOREAN STUDENTS

Last July, several Singaporean college students in their early 20s joined a “See China 2015” program to learn about China by taking photographs. This was a program that took them to Northwest China. There, they captured images of modern China through the camera lens and experienced and shared Chinese culture with others by watching the local Qinqiang Opera, eating Lanzhou hand-pulled noodles and taking a river trip on sheepskin rafts. Two Chinese students studying at the National University of Singapore spent an entire year filming the personal stories and dreams of 50 Singaporeans. I am sure you know many similar anecdotes of such people-to-people exchanges.

- Forging a Strong Partnership to Enhance Prosperity of Asia—Speech at the National University of Singapore (November 7, 2015).

#### *Commentary*

“See China” is a cultural experience program co-organized by the Academy for International Communication of Chinese Culture (AICCC), Beijing Normal University and the Huilin Foundation. It invites young foreigners to observe China through their own eyes. By taking pictures with their

own cameras and working on their own videos, they can tell Chinese stories, record Chinese scenes and display the Chinese spirit. The 2015 “See China” project attracted the participation of 100 young college students from 20 countries. They produced a total of 100 short documentary films under the theme “People, Home and Nation”. The work *Chopsticks: Yin and Yang in Qingdao* explores the philosophy of the equilibrium between yin and yang in the Chinese culture through chopsticks; *A Bowl of Lanzhou Beef Noodles* reflects on the “home” culture based on beef noodles; *Together* records the daily life of an old couple who have worked in a university as logistical staff for many years. Through close contact, continuous tracking, and in-depth observation, the participants in this program “saw a different China”. One participant said that the 17-day process of shooting in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, changed her impression of China’s western cities and showed her a city in Northwest China that interweaves tradition with modernity.

The anecdote about the two college students from China who observed 50 Singaporean people through their camera lenses also shows us the “great strength of dreams” from the perspective of “the other”. Among the 50 characters in their photos, the youngest was just a few days old, while the oldest had already reached 97. Their stories pieced together a colorful pictorial scroll of the Singapore era. The first exhibition of the photos was held in a shopping center, and the people who visited were mostly local people passing by. After seeing the exhibition, they noted with surprise and emotion that in their Lion City, there is not only a member of the Flying Tigers, who fought against Japanese aggressors, but also a xylographer who created countless works by constantly striving for perfection for decades, and there is even the “watchman of the luxuriant cultural protection forest”—the founder of the Grassroots Book Room. Their emotion was evoked by so many touching stories, and they were surprised because these stories were all around them, but they had never recognized them.

As a Chinese saying goes, “Instead of complaining that one’s talents go unrecognized, one should learn to appreciate the wisdom of others.” In a speech at the National University of Singapore on November 7, 2015, Xi Jinping shared these stories about how the college students of China and Singapore, respectively, explored and discovered anecdotes in each other’s country. This shows that the baton of friendship between the two countries is being taken up by their younger generations, and it further proves that only if young people in both China and Singapore learn more about both countries and learn from each other can they deepen our friendship.

Every exploration of civilization and every journey of in-depth communication is an opportunity to open our hearts. Xi Jinping has often warmly invited people from all over the world to China to experience and learn about it. He has emphasized that “when trying to learn about China, one must guard against drawing conclusions based on partial information,” and “we also hope that the world will view China in an objective, historical and multi-dimensional light and see the true and full picture of a dynamic China.” In his view, “If political, economic and security cooperation is the rigid force to promote the development of national relations, then people to people communication is the soft force to improve the relationship between the peoples and promote spiritual communication between them. Only when the two forces converge can we better promote the sincerity and compatibility among all countries.”

### IN SEARCH OF SHAKESPEARE

“To be, or not to be, that is the question.” This line from *Hamlet* has left a lasting impression on me. When I was barely 16 years old, I left Beijing for a small village in northern Shaanxi province to be a farmer and spent seven years of my youth there. Back in those days, I tried every means to lay my hands on William Shakespeare’s works, reading *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. I was captivated by their dramatic plots, vivid characters and emotional intensity. Standing on the barren loessland of Shaanxi as a young man, I often pondered the question of to be or not to be. Eventually I made up my mind that I shall dedicate myself to serving my country and my people. I am sure that Shakespeare not only appeals to readers with his literary talents, but he also inspires people’s lives in profound ways.

Chinese playwright Tang Xianzu of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) was acclaimed as the “Shakespeare of the East”. He produced a number of world-famous works, such as the *Peony Pavilion*, *Purple Hairpin*, *A Dream under the Southern Bough* and *Handan Dream*. Tang was a contemporary of Shakespeare, both of whom died in 1616. Next year will be the 400th anniversary of their passing. China and the UK could jointly celebrate the legacy of the two literary giants to promote people-to-people exchanges and deepen the mutual understanding between our two countries.

- Work Together to Promote Openness, Inclusiveness and Peaceful Development—Speech at a Dinner Hosted by the Lord Mayor of the City of London at the Guildhall in London (October 21, 2015).

### *Commentary*

William Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu were contemporary dramatists who, respectively, lived in the West and the East. The two masters died in 1616, and they were both listed among the Top 100 Historical Cultural Celebrities by UNESCO in 2000.

As the most important British writer in the European Renaissance, Shakespeare wrote many dramas and sonnets, being honored as “Zeus on the Olympus of human literature”. From his works, we not only feel the exquisite art of language, but we can also discover ideas and themes that are freighted with meaning. From his works, we know the melancholy and irresolute prince Hamlet, the evil and ruthless conspirator Macbeth, the opinionated general Osero, the muddleheaded and tyrannical King Lear, and many other unforgettable characters. In his work, we read of love and forgiveness, revenge and betrayal, death and destruction, and “the emotions of humanity and the brilliance of life”. The themes of the works are broad and profound. The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges once effused: “All rivers of consciousness lead to Shakespeare. They flow circuitously, ceaselessly day and night.” The poet Ben Jonson, Shakespeare’s best friend, even asserted, “He was not of an age, but for all time.” In addition to the four great tragedies *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, he also produced many other classic works, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*.

Tang Xianzu was a Chinese playwright and litterateur in the Ming Dynasty who created many works throughout his life. His *Peony Pavilion*, *Purple Hairpin*, *A Dream under the Southern Bough* and *Handan Dream* are collectively called the “Four Dreams of Linchuan”. Like Shakespeare’s great works, these works show the breadth and depth of life. Many lines and characters from them have long been widely known and shared through the ages. From his works, we came to know Du Liniang, who believes that “The origin of love is elusive, yet in it we fall head over heels”; we know the scholar Lu Sheng, who reached a high position and enjoyed great wealth in an unrealizable dream; and we also know the traveler Chun Yufen, who

also had an illusory dream in which he was appointed Governor of Nanke by the king of the Great Kingdom of Ashendon. Tang Xianzu was a master in using the dream as a metaphor for human life. His romantic literary imagination, gorgeous style of writing and profound humanistic spirit were all unsurpassed in the dramatic writing circles of his time.

Both Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu were “epoch-making giants” in an “epoch of giants”. Eulogizing human dignity, value and power, they, respectively, represented the souls of the Western renaissance and Eastern humanistic enlightenment. Endowed with the gift of art, they were not of a country but for the whole world.

After Xi Jinping’s visit to the UK, Fuzhou, Jiangxi Province, China presented a bronze statue depicting the meeting of Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare to Shakespeare’s Birthplace Trust. The bronze statue is now standing in Shakespeare’s Birthplace, while its twin is in Tang Xianzu Memorial Hall in Fuzhou, China. They bear witness to the cultural exchanges between China and the UK.

In a speech at a dinner hosted by the Lord Mayor of the City of London at the Guildhall in London on October 21, 2015, Xi Jinping described the spiritual communication across time between him and Shakespeare and the resonance across borders between Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare. In doing so, he vividly illustrated his assessment that “In today’s world, openness, inclusiveness and mutual learning is a defining feature of our times.” By using storytelling, he expressed his hope that China and the UK will shorten their “cultural distance” through culture exchanges, allowing “the essence of the culture of both countries” to produce a magic “chemical reaction” in “the way of thinking and way of life of the two peoples”.

### I’D LIKE A GLASS OF HEMINGWAY’S MOJITO

The Chinese people have always held American entrepreneurship and creativity in high regard. In my younger years, I read the *Federalist Papers* and Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*. I was interested in the life stories and thought of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and other American statesmen. I also read the works of Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain and Jack London. I was most captivated by Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* and its descriptions of the howling wind, driving rain, roaring waves, small boat, the old man and the sharks. So, when I visited Cuba for the first time, I paid a special visit to the breakwater in Cojimar where Hemingway wrote the book. In my second

visit to Cuba, I dropped by the bar Hemingway frequented and ordered a mojito, his favorite rum drink with mint leaves and ice. I wanted to sense for myself what was on his mind and what the place was like as he wrote those stories. I believe that it is always important to make an effort to get a deep understanding of the cultures and civilizations that are different from our own.

- Speech at the Welcoming Dinner Hosted by Washington Local Governments and Friendly Organizations in the United States (September 22, 2015).

### *Commentary*

Born in 1899, the famous American writer Hemingway was referred to as a “tough guy in the literary arena” and was praised as the spiritual guide of the American nation. After the outbreak of World War I, he threw himself onto the Italian battlefield as a driver of the Red Cross. It was during that period that he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and awarded three military meritorious medals. It was also during that time that he received 237 scarring shrapnel wounds and nightmarish memories. After recovering, while working as a journalist in Paris, he began to write novels. In 1926, his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, was published, a novel that mirrors the physical and psychological damages of the war to the younger generation. Hemingway and the writers he represented were thus known as the “lost generation”.

The novella *The Old Man and The Sea*, published in 1952, is one of Hemingway's most famous and influential works. It is about an old fisherman named Santiago who fights a giant marlin and a shoal of sharks, and it extolls the indestructible spiritual strength of human beings in the face of hardships. “Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated.” This often-quoted saying comes from *The Old Man and The Sea*. In his 62 years of life, Hemingway also created many other masterpieces such as *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, and *Across the River and into the Trees*. In 1954, Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Hemingway spent more than one-third of his life in Havana, Cuba. He once spoke of the place this way: “I love this country and I feel at home. A place that makes one feel like home, except his birthplace, is where he shapes his destiny.” In Havana, there is a restaurant-bar called La Bodeguita



Del Medio, whose best-known drink is the Mojito, a cocktail prepared by adding mint leaves to a mix of Cuban specialty rum and lemon juice. The Mojito was Hemingway's favorite drink.

Like Hemingway, *The Federalist Papers* also represents the American spirit. In May 1787, at the invitation of the Confederate States Congress of America, the Constitutional Convention was held in Philadelphia under the auspices of George Washington. The convention vetoed the *Articles of Confederation* and instead produced a new constitution. For the new constitution, the states of the US produced two diametrically opposed views: some states supported it, while the others opposed it. Hence a most heated debate took place in American history. The *Federalist Papers* was a direct outcome of the debate. It is a collection of articles and essays written under the pseudonym "Publius" by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay and published in New York newspapers to promote the ratification of the new constitution.

Thomas Paine was one of the founding fathers of the United States, and the country's name "the United States of America" was given by him. During the American War of Independence, he wrote the popular pamphlet *Common Sense*, which encouraged the people of North America to strive for independence and to establish a republic.

As an old Chinese saying goes, "It is the very nature of things to be unequal in quality." Every culture has its own unique value. Xi Jinping enumerated the American classics he had read and his visit to the bar in honor of Hemingway to demonstrate that civilizations come in different colors; civilizations are equal, and civilizations are inclusive. "It is always important to make an effort to obtain a deep understanding of the cultures and civilizations that are different from our own," Xi said.

From the speech excerpt, we can find that Xi is no stranger to majestic Mount Rainier and charming Lake Washington. He also mentioned the impact of the film *Sleepless in Seattle* on the Chinese people in the speech. This classic film about loving and being loved has shaped Chinese audiences' initial impression of Seattle as the Romantic City. Even today, the words on the film posters are still mentioned: "What if someone you never met, someone you never saw, someone you never knew; was the only one for you? This is Seattle, a city that believes in enchanted love." Xi cited this example to illustrate a point, "Greater exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations can further enrich the colors of various civilizations, heighten people's enjoyment of cultural life, and open up a future with more options."

## THE WHITE HORSE CARRIED BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES TO CHINA AND MONK XUANZANG WENT ON A PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEST

In 67 AD, Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaraksa, two eminent monks from India, arrived in Luoyang, China. There, they translated the Sutra of Forty-two Chapters, the first Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures. We have stories of the white horse carrying Buddhist scriptures to China and Monk Xuanzang's pilgrimage to the west. They brought Indian culture as well as Buddhist scriptures to China. During his seven expeditions, the great Chinese navigator Zheng He visited India six times and brought with him neighborly friendship from China. Indian dance, astronomy, a calendar, literature, architecture and sugar-making techniques were introduced to China, while Chinese paper-making, silk, porcelain, tea and music were spread to India. All these bear witness to a long-running history of exchanges and mutual learning between our two peoples.

- In Joint Pursuit of a Dream of National Renewal—Speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs (September 18, 2014).

More than a week ago, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, visited my hometown in Shaanxi Province, China. I joined him in Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi, to trace the history of cultural exchanges between China and India. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, Xi'an was also an important gateway for friendly exchanges between China and Japan, which attracted many envoys, students and monks to study and live. Abe no Nakamaro was a representative of them. He forged a deep friendship with the great poets of the Tang Dynasty Li Bai and Wang Wei, leaving behind a touching tale.

- Speech at China–Japan Friendship Exchange Meeting (May 23, 2015).

### *Commentary*

Buddhism was introduced eastward to China from its cradle in India. In the Eastern Han Dynasty, Emperor Ming of Han sent envoys to the Western Regions to seek the Buddha dharma. The envoys travelled westward to the Greater Yuezhi (now the region that spreads from Afghanistan to

Central Asia), where they came across Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaraksa, two eminent monks who were preaching the Buddha dharma in the region. At the invitation of the envoys, the eminent monks joined the envoys to have a white horse carry Buddhist scriptures to Luoyang, China in 67 AD. Hence the story “the white horse carrying Buddhist scriptures to China”. Emperor Ming even ordered the construction of the White Horse Temple in Luoyang. There, the eminent monks translated the Sutra of Forty-two Chapters. It was said in *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luo-Yang*, a book of Buddhist records produced in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, that, “The White Horse Temple was built by Emperor Ming of Han, from where Buddhism was introduced to China.”

Compared to “the white horse carrying Buddhist scriptures to China”, Monk Xuanzang’s pilgrimage to the west may be more widely known. *The Journey to the West*, one of the well-known Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature, was actually created on the basis of the story of Monk Xuanzang. According to historical records, in the Tang Dynasty, the eminent monk Xuanzang began his pilgrimage to the west from Chang’an. By way of the Western Regions, he finally reached India after all types of hardship and danger. After his study in India, he returned to Chang’an with Buddhist scriptures, and he translated the scriptures in Dacien Temple, Hongfu Temple, Ximing Temple and other places in succession. Xuanzang “concentrated on translation and was unwilling to trifle away any second” to the extent that he refused the request of Emperor Tai of Tang that he resume secular life and assist the emperor in the affairs of state as a minister. Given that the original Buddhist scriptures written in Sanskrit on which he based his translations were scattered and lost, his translations were regarded as “the secondary Sanskrit scriptures” or “quasi-Sanskrit scriptures”. In addition to translating the Buddhist Scriptures, Xuanzang also composed the *Buddhist Records of the Western World* according to his experience in India. This book vividly describes the local customs and practices of India, and it serves as an important resource for studying the travels between China and the Western Regions and Buddhist history. More than that, Xuanzang even translated Lao-Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching* into Sanskrit and introduced it to India according to the *Old Book of Tang*.

Abe no Nakamaro was a Japanese student sent to Tang China in the Japanese Nara period. In the Kaiyuan era, he passed the civil-service examination. He was a gifted poet who was not only knowledgeable and brilliant but also emotional and forthright. He even formed a close friendship with

the Chinese poets Li Bai and Wang Wei. Before returning to his homeland, he composed a poem entitled *Written Before Returning to the Home Country Under Orders* as a farewell present to his Chinese friends. This poem was also included in *Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature* (Wen Yuan Ying Hua), a fine poem collection compiled in the Song Dynasty, as the only work produced by a foreigner in the collection. Wang Wei also composed a poem for seeing off him: *To See off the Directorate of the Palace Library, Zhao Heng, upon his Return to Japan*. From the line in this poem "After this departure, we will be far away from each other, and how can we receive each others' message", we can feel the deep friendship between them.

All these stories of exchanges and mutual learning in history formed the bridges connecting China and neighboring countries. Xi Jinping told the anecdotes of the white horse carrying Buddhist scriptures to China, Monk Xuanzang's pilgrimage to the west and the close friendship between Abe no Nakamaro and the great poets of Tang to illustrate the unbreakable cultural kinship and historical connections between China and neighboring countries.

Xi has a penetrating viewpoint on neighboring countries: We cannot move a neighbor who is at enmity with us; however, we can strive for new neighbors with whom we get along well. However, we cannot move our country; therefore, we can do nothing but live amicably with neighboring countries. China and its neighboring countries conducted exchanges and mutual learning in ancient times and has gone through hardships together in modern history. We live side-by-side, we have similar cultures, and our friendship was formed in ancient times. Hence, the best choice for us is to establish a good-neighborly relationship. As Xi stressed, the very purpose of China "is to express our genuine desire to live in harmony with our neighbors and concentrate on common development. We want to work together with our neighbors to make the pie of cooperation even bigger so that we can all share the fruits of development".

### TAGORE'S CHINESE HOMETOWN

Ninety years ago, Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet admired by the Chinese people, visited China and was warmly received there. Upon setting foot on China's soil, Tagore said, "I don't know why, but coming to China is like coming home." Upon leaving China, he said quite sadly, "My heart stays."

- In Joint Pursuit of a Dream of National Renewal—Speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs (September 18, 2014).

I have had a keen interest in Indian civilization since childhood. The fascinating history of India held me deeply captivated when I read books about the Ganges civilization, Veda culture, Maurya Dynasty, Kushan Dynasty, Gupta Dynasty and Mughal Empire. In particular, I have read a lot about the colonial history of India when the Indian people fought arduously for national independence and when Mahatma Gandhi lived and conceived his ideas. By so doing, I was hoping to gain insights into the evolution and character-making of this great nation. I have read Tagore's poetry, such as *Gitanjali*, *Stray Bird*, *Gardener and Crescent Moon*, many lines of which remain fresh in my mind. He wrote, "If you shed tears when you miss the sun, you also miss the stars", "We come nearest to the great when we are great in humility", "Wrong cannot afford defeat but Right can", "We read the world wrong and say that it deceives us", "Let life be beautiful like summer flowers and death like autumn leaves." Such beautiful and philosophical lines have inspired me deeply in my outlook on life.

- In Joint Pursuit of a Dream of National Renewal—Speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs (September 18, 2014).

### *Commentary*

Rabindranath Tagore was the first Asian winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, and he was also regarded as the "international spokesman" of the Indian civilization. Throughout his 60-year literary career, he produced more than 50 collections of poems, including the masterpieces *Gitanjali*, *Crescent Moon*, *Gardener* and *Stray Bird*, as well as 12 novels and novellas, nearly 100 short stories, and more than 20 dramas. With a huge influence in India, Tagore and Gandhi, two great men of India who were contemporaries, were collectively referred to as the two great sages of Indian literature and politics. Tagore gave Gandhi the title of "Mahatma", while Gandhi hailed Tagore as a "Great Mind".

For China, Tagore was an old friend. During the Chinese New Culture Movement, Many of Tagore's works were introduced to China, and they have influenced Chinese readers generation after generation. In March

1924, at the invitation of Liang Qichao and Cai Yuanpei, a six-person delegation headed by Tagore came to visit China. During his visit to Hangzhou, China, Tagore delivered a speech titled “Look for the Way to Light through Friendship” at the Department of Education of Zhejiang Province before an audience of over 3,000. He even composed a poem at the scene as a tribute to the beauty of Hangzhou: “The hills are shrouded in mist and embraced by the lake at the foot, the water is waving gently with the breeze as if asking the hills to move, but the proud hills stand still.”

During Tagore’s visit to China, Liang Qichao presented him with a Chinese name—竺震旦—on the occasion of Tagore’s 64th birthday. “竺” was derived from “天竺”, the name of India in ancient China, and “震旦” was the name of China in ancient India. Tagore accepted the Chinese name with pleasure. The name, which was generated from a perfect combination, also conveyed the Chinese people’s expectation of Tagore’s great role in a cultural exchange between China and India.

In return, Tagore made unremitting effort to advance Chinese studies. In 1937, he established a Chinese institute at Visva-Bharati University, pioneering the study of China in India. The institute has hosted the Chinese writer Xu Dishan, the painter Xu Beihong and the education scholar Tao Xingzhi, all of whom have given lectures there. The portrait of Tagore that we often see today was painted by Xu Beihong when he lectured in India. In 1941, on his last birthday, Tagore dictated the poem, *I Have Ever Set Foot on the Land of China*, in which he recalled the good times he had spent in China.

Literary classics are the cultural treasures of a nation and an effective carrier of state-to-state exchange. The classical texts and wise thoughts often strike a chord with people of different cultural backgrounds. In the speech delivered at the Indian Council of World Affairs on September 18, 2014, Xi Jinping narrated his story of reading Tagore, and he quoted Tagore’s famous lines, narrowing the distance between him and his audience. He told the audience that he “had a keen interest in Indian civilization since childhood”; he recounted the history of India as if sharing family treasures; and he read Tagore’s famous lines in a clear voice. His storytelling was just like a chat with an old friend, reflecting deep friendship and profound significance.

In 1990, Xi was transferred to Fuzhou from Ningde to serve as prefectural Party secretary. On departing from Ningde, where he had worked for nearly two years, he gave the local leaders some parting words, which were derived from Tagore’s story after visiting China and returning to his

country. A friend asked Tagore, “What have you lost in China?” “Nothing, but my heart,” he answered. Xi took this as a metaphor when he said, “Although I am about to leave East Fujian, I leave behind my heart, which sincerely loves this place.” “It is human nature that those who understand each other cherish the friendship between them; and such understanding can warm their hearts. As long as you warm the heart of another and touch that friend with a sincere heart, the friendship between you will be ever deeper.

### THE COLORED GLAZE UNDER FAMEN TEMPLE

In 1987, 20 exquisite pieces of glazed ceramic were excavated at the underground chamber of Famen Temple in China’s Shaanxi Province. These East Roman and Islamic relics were brought into China during the Tang Dynasty. Marveling at these exotic relics, I thought hard and concluded that as we approach the world’s different civilizations, we should not limit ourselves to simply admiring the exquisiteness of the objects involved. Rather, we should try to learn and appreciate the cultural significance behind them. Instead of satisfying ourselves with their artistic presentation of people’s life in the past, we should do our best to recognize the objects’ inherent spirit.

– Speech at UNESCO Headquarters (March 27, 2014).

#### *Commentary*

Located in Famen town, Fufeng County, 120 km west of Xi’an, Shaanxi province, China, and established in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, Famen Temple was widely regarded as the “ancestor of pagoda temples in Guanzhong”. Famen Temple Pagoda, the pagoda standing in Famen Temple, was named “Grand True Relic Pagoda” due to the discovery of a finger bone of the Sakyamuni Buddha in its underground palace. In 1569, the third year of the reign of Emperor Longqing of the Ming Dynasty, the four-storied wooden Famen Temple Pagoda, which had been reconstructed during the Zhenguan period in the Tang Dynasty, collapsed because of an earthquake. Thus it was rebuilt again and became a spectacular 47-m-high 13-storied pagoda with eight sides.

In the 54th year after the reconstruction, the pagoda began to tilt towards the southwest after another earthquake. The pagoda body was

overweight due to its top-heavy structure, and there was an underground palace under the footing of the pagoda. In 1981, the west half side of Famen Temple Pagoda collapsed in heavy rain, followed by the fall of the pagoda spire. In 1987, the underground palace of Famen Temple Pagoda was opened when the footing was being cleared up in preparation for the rebuilding of the pagoda. A large quantity of precious historical relics were unearthed, including more than 20 pieces of colored glaze as well as four pieces of Buddhist relics, 121 pieces of gold and silverware and 14 pieces of secret color ware.

Since it was introduced into China in the third century, the colored glaze ware has long been regarded as a category of treasure more precious than gold and silverware. The more than 20 pieces of unearthed colored glaze ware included not only bottles and dishes but also teacups and saucers, which were made in East Rome, West Asia and China, respectively. Most of them were fashioned in the Islamic style, and the colored glaze relics bear witness to the transportation and cultural exchanges between China and the Western Regions and possess extreme value as cultural relics.

Although imported from abroad, the colored glaze had long been utilized in people's daily life in the Tang Dynasty, playing an important role in the material culture of Tang. Wei Yingwu, a poet of Tang, once composed a poem entitled "The Colored Glaze" to praise it: "The glaze is colored, but as transparent as ice; the glaze seems devoid of content but can obstruct tiny dust. If the tableware made of colored glaze is absent from a luxurious banquet, it is a thorough betrayal of the beauty-like glaze." Li He, another poet of Tang, who was dubbed the "Ghost of Poetry", once described the colored glaze in this way: "The colored glaze wine glass is glittering, the good wine is amber, and the wine drops lying on the rim of the cup are just like some red pearls."

The exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations have helped the spread of Chinese culture to the rest of the world and the introduction into China of cultures and products from other countries. Recounting the anecdote about when he marveled at the exotic colored glaze, Xi asserted the truth: "Civilizations have become richer and more colorful through exchanges and mutual learning."

For the first time, the leader of China gave a comprehensive exposition of his deep understanding of the development of world civilization, as well as its expansion and principles, on the podium of the UN. Also for the first time, the Chinese leader presented in a systematic way the viewpoint that it is exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations that form a bridge



of friendship among peoples, a driving force behind human society, and a strong bond for world peace. During the speech, Xi Jinping categorized the philosophy of “exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations” into three dimensions: first, civilizations come in different colors, and such diversity has made exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations relevant and valuable; second, civilizations are equal, and such equality has made exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations possible; third, civilizations are inclusive, and such inclusiveness has given exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations the needed drive to move forward. He provided an ingenious metaphor: “The Chinese people are fond of tea, and the Belgians love beer. To me, the moderate tea drinker and the passionate beer lover represent two ways of understanding life and knowing the world, and I find them equally rewarding. When good friends get together, they may want to drink to their heart’s content to show their friendship. They may also choose to sit down quietly and drink tea while chatting about their lives.” If all civilizations can uphold inclusiveness, the so-called “clash of civilizations” will no longer be relevant. This is what he highlighted in this speech.

## THE HISTORY OF CHINA-WEST EXCHANGES ON THE SILK ROAD

In the second-century BC, China began working on the Silk Road leading to the Western Regions. In 138 BC and 119 BC, Envoy Zhang Qian of the Han Dynasty made two trips to those regions, spreading Chinese culture there and bringing into China grape, alfalfa, pomegranate, flax, sesame and other products. In the Western Han Dynasty, China’s merchant fleets sailed as far as India and Sri Lanka where they traded China’s silk for colored glaze, pearls and other products. The Tang Dynasty saw dynamic interactions between China and other countries. According to historical documents, the dynasty exchanged envoys with over 70 countries, and Chang’an, the capital of Tang, bustled with envoys, merchants and students from other countries. Exchanges of such a magnitude helped the spread of the Chinese culture to the rest of the world and introduced into China cultures and products from other countries. In the early fifteenth century, Zheng He, the famous navigator of China’s Ming Dynasty, made seven expeditions to the Western Seas, reaching many Southeast Asian countries and even Kenya on the east coast of Africa. These trips left behind many good stories of friendly exchanges between the people of China and countries along

the route. In the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, the Chinese people began to learn modern science and technology with great zeal, as European knowledge of astronomy, medicine, mathematics, geometry and geography were being introduced into China, which helped broaden the horizon of the Chinese people. Thereafter, exchanges and mutual learning between Chinese civilization and other civilizations became more frequent. There were indeed conflicts, frictions, bewilderment and denial in this process. But the more dominant features of the period were learning, digestion, integration and innovation.

– Speech at UNESCO Headquarters (March 27, 2014).

### *Commentary*

“Walking along the ancient Silk Road, I seem to hear the camel bells of the caravan; hearing the neigh of horses, I seem to enjoy the prosperity of the Han and Tang dynasties.” Since the Western Han Dynasty, there has been a great trade route linking China, Central Asia, Western Asia and Europe and traversing Eurasia, on which silk and porcelain were carried westwards, while fine horses and gems streamed eastwards. This route led a magnificent chapter of the history of Chinese–Western communication. In the late nineteenth century, the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen coined the name “Silk Road” for this route in his book *China*, following with wide recognition of the name.

“The ships of our fleet all hoisted high sails, like the clouds blot out the sky. Day and night, we galloped ahead like shooting stars. We crossed over the raging billows as if we were rambling on the road.” This is a narrative about a scene on a maritime channel of trade and cultural communication, which stretched from the southeast coastal region in China to East Africa and Europe via the Indo-China Peninsula, and states in the South Sea, Indian Ocean and Red Sea. This channel was the “Maritime Silk Road”, named by Édouard Chavannes, a French Sinologist. After the Song Dynasty, porcelain took over the position of silk as the staple export commodity of China. Therefore, the Maritime Silk Road was also called “the porcelain road”.

There were two Chinese who made outstanding contributions along the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road. One was Zhang Qian of Western Han. In 138 BC and 119 BC, Emperor Wu of Han twice sent Envoy Zhang

Qian for trips to the Western Regions. Because of the trips, the main line of the Maritime Silk Road took shape, starting from Chang'an (now Xi'an) to the countries in those regions via the Hexi Corridor. Zhang Qian spread Chinese culture in the regions while bringing grape, alfalfa, pomegranate, flax, sesame and other products into China. The places he passed were all without Chinese footprints; thus, it was said that it was Zhang Qian who opened the road.

Another great contributor was Zheng He of the Ming Dynasty. He was ordered to lead a fleet of up to 200 ships carrying over 27,000 people to sail the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean. They visited more than 30 countries and regions during the voyage, travelling as far as East Africa and the Red Sea. Zheng He's voyages to the West were the largest scale, most ship-borne and longest lasting sea voyages with most seafarers in ancient China, which were more than half a century earlier than the voyages by the European countries, directly reflecting the strength and prosperity of Ming.

As pioneering works in the history of human civilization, the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road formed the longest international transport route linking the East and the West in ancient times. They were the achievements co-accomplished by various ethnic groups along the route, which were truly the roads of communication and friendship. The Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road were not only the ties of economy but also the "blood vessels" where civilizations blended. The great contributions from them could be seen in scientific and technological progress, cultural communication, species introduction, spiritual, emotional and political exchanges among various nations as well as the creation of new human civilizations.

Looking back to the days a millennium ago, the Silk Road showed mankind a means of mutual exchange of needed goods, a means of building understanding between peoples, and even a means of mutual learning between civilians. Sharing the stories of ancient China's promotion of exchange with the western countries along the Silk road, Xi Jinping made clear, "The Chinese civilization, although born on the soil of China, has come to its present form through constant exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations", and he stressed, "Only through exchanges and mutual learning can a civilization be filled with vitality." To look back on history is to embrace a brighter future. In his speech, Xi also cited two western quotes. One was from Victor Hugo: "There is a prospect greater than the sea, and it is the sky; there is a prospect greater than the sky, and it

is the human soul.” The other was given by Napoleon Bonaparte: “There are only two forces in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit.” Through these quotes, he told the world that, on the one hand, we need a mind that is broader than the sky as we approach different civilizations; on the other hand, we should seek wisdom and nourishment from various civilizations to provide support and consolation for people’s minds, and we should work together to tackle the challenges facing mankind.

### PRESIDENT YUDHOYONO COMPOSED A SONG

In this connection, I recall the song *Hening (Silence)* composed by President Yudhoyono. In October 2006, he came to Guangxi, China, for the commemorative summit marking the 15th anniversary of China-ASEAN dialogue relations. On the Lijiang River, Yudhoyono was overwhelmed by inspiration and wrote these beautiful lyrics. “The beautiful days I spend with my friends have kept recurring in my life.” The mountains and rivers in China deeply touched President Yudhoyono and reminded him of his childhood and hometown. This shows just how strong the bond and affinity are between our two peoples.

- Make Joint Efforts to Build China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny—Speech at Indonesian Parliament (October 3, 2013).

#### *Commentary*

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was the sixth President of Indonesia. He was born in a poor military family in Pacitan, East Java, Indonesia, in 1949 and won the Indonesian presidential election in 2004. During his presidency, he established a campaign against the corruption sweeping through Indonesia with “stand by the people” and “preserve political integrity” as slogans, punishing a large number of corrupt officials and thus being praised by his people as “Mr. Clean”.

Not only did he make a difference in politics, but he also made a contribution to music by authoring three music albums between 2007 and 2010. He put his patriotic emotion into his songs and called on the people of the whole country to hang together, love their country and create a better future for the country.

On October 29, 2006, Yudhoyono visited Guilin when he came to Guangxi, China, for the commemorative summit marking the 15th anniversary of China–ASEAN dialogue relations. He did some sightseeing on the Lijiang River and in the Reed Flute Cave. In October, the scent of osmanthus wafts across Guilin, and the Lijiang River, like a green silk ribbon, wraps around the mountains. If you travel by boat on the river, you will seem to be in a gallery. Fascinated by the beauty of the Lijiang River, Yudhoyono praised it in poetic words, “God endowed the Lijiang River with such unique beauty, and I am very privileged to enjoy her beauty. I will bring my whole family here at a certain proper time to share the beautiful scenery with them.” The landscape scenery on the Lijiang River stirred President Yudhoyono’s memories of childhood and hometown and inspired him to compose the song *Hening (Silence)*: “In the silent night, standing outdoors in the beautiful village, I thought to myself, over and over. The beautiful days I spend with my friends have kept recurring in my life. The village is quiet and silent, where the flowers of love are in full blossom. And I am farming and weaving, on and on. I pray silently in my heart: God bless my nation. Please vouchsafe its eternal peace and eternal harmony.”

In his speech at the Indonesian parliament, Xi Jinping told the story of Yudhoyono composing his song to show that, “It is through the efforts of these envoys of friendship that we have built bridges of friendship and opened windows to sincere understanding that the friendship between our two peoples has been everlasting and has grown stronger and more robust as time goes by.”

In this speech, Xi quoted a proverb from Indonesia: “It is easy to make money but difficult to make friends.” A history of world civilization is largely a history of people-to-people exchanges and intertwining. Those heart-stirring cultural exchanges are the most simple and solid emotional ties to sustain and develop state-to-state relations. The friendship between countries requires mutual understanding, mutual support and cooperation. It is also necessary for the people of insight in both nations to further develop it in a down-to-earth way.

### XIAN XINGHAI BOULEVARD

The ancient city of Almaty is also on the ancient Silk Road. In Almaty, there is Xian Xinghai Boulevard, which got its name from a true story. At the outset of the Great Patriotic War in 1941, Xian, a renowned Chinese composer, arrived in Almaty after much travail. By then, he was worn down

by poverty and illness, and had no one to turn to. Fortunately, the Kazakh composer Bakhitzhan Baykadamov took care of Xian and provided him with the comfort of a home.

It was in Almaty that Xian composed his famous works, *Liberation of the Nation*, *Sacred War* and *Red All over the River*. He also wrote the symphony *Amangeldy* based on the exploits of the Kazakh national hero. These pieces served as a rallying call to fight fascism and proved immensely popular with the local people.

- Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future—Speech at Nazarbayev University (September 7, 2013).

### *Commentary*

Throughout millennia, people of various countries along the ancient Silk Road have jointly written a chapter of friendship that has been passed on to this very day. The story of the Chinese composer Xian Xinghai contributed a page to this chapter.

In 1940, Xian was ordered to go to the Soviet Union to compose the score of the documentary film *Yan'an and the Eighth Route Army* and participate in post-production. However, the outbreak of the German-Soviet war in 1941 not only brought film production to a standstill but also blocked his way back to China. Therefore, after much travail, he travelled to Almaty. By then, Xian was worn down by poverty and illness and had no one to turn to, nor a fixed abode. Fortunately, the Kazakh composer Bakhitzhan Baykadamov took care of him and provided him with the comfort of a home. Remaining true to the ideals of their music, both composers in the hard days composed music under each other's encouragement and forged a deep friendship.

As an admirer of Xian's talent in music, Baykadamov recommended Xian to a newly started concert hall in Kostanay, a city in northern Kazakhstan, as a music instructor. There, Xian made tireless efforts to inspire the local people with music. Upon his efforts, the concert hall opened successfully and held the first concert after the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War. In addition to acting as a commander, he played instruments in some performances. The local people therefore presented him with a Kazakh name,

which means happy. He often went on performance tours to mountain villages with peers and studied the folk music of Kazakhstan, upon which he acquired the skills of playing a tambura and collected, adapted and composed many works in the local style. His famous works *Liberation of the Nation*, *Sacred War* and the orchestral suites *Red All over the River* were produced there. His symphony *Amangeldy*, which was composed based on the exploits of the Kazakh national hero, even served as a rallying call to fight fascism and proved immensely popular with the local people. After the death of Xian, Almaty named a street near the house of the Baykadamovs “Xian Xinghai Boulevard” and erected a monument for him.

With the surge of various cultures on the Silk Road, people felt connected by spiritual ties, which, like water, served to refresh them and thus deepened the mutual understanding among the peoples along the road. Looking back on the history of the Silk Road, it can be seen that the exchanges and mutual learning contributed to the progress of human civilization. This is the meaning of Xi’s speech at Nazarbayev University.

Although Xian’s story is merely a single page in the chapter of mutual learning and friendly exchanges written jointly by the people of various countries, it irrefutably proves that, “On the basis of solidarity, mutual trust, equality, inclusiveness, mutual learning and win-win cooperation, countries of different races, beliefs and cultural backgrounds are fully capable of sharing peace and development.” Xi Jinping’s statement effectively translated the valuable inspiration intended by the story of “Xian Xinghai Boulevard.”

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