

## Preservation of Cultural Heritage in China

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As we move deeper into the new century, cultural movements are emerging one after another in China, spurred by the wave of globalization and the Chinese government's all-out efforts to bolster national power. The Chinese people are rediscovering their culture, which is adding a new dimension to the world's cultural diversity.

Currently, there are two massive and outstanding cultural initiatives: one is the Project to Save Chinese Folk Cultural Heritages spearheaded by the Chinese Folk Literature and Art Society, and the other is the Project of Protecting Folk and Ethnic Culture in China carried out by the Ministry of Culture. The Project to Save Chinese Folk Cultural Heritages is a ten-year scheme spanning 2003-2012. Under this program, nationwide studies of traditional folk cultures are being conducted more intensively and comprehensively than ever, and the study results will be compiled into the following books: a collection of Chinese folk tales (consisting of 3,000 volumes, one for each county); a series on Chinese ethnography (3,000 volumes, one for each county); a collection of family letters (10 volumes); a collection of Chinese family history records (10 volumes); a collection of Chinese folk art works (31 volumes, one for each province); a collection of woodblock *nianhua* (New Year's prints) (20 volumes); a collection of *jianzhi* paper-cut arts (50 volumes); a collection of scrolls of Tibetan Buddhist paintings (20 volumes); a series on Chinese clothing culture (70 volumes); a series on Chinese folk artists (100 volumes); a series on folk houses and villages in China (100 volumes); a collection of colored paintings of China (10 volumes); a series on Chinese folk cultural heritages (50 volumes); a collection of Chinese epics (100 volumes); and a collection of Chinese historical poems (100 volumes).

The project also seeks to establish various facilities and brands as follows:

- 100 museums specializing in folk culture
- 100 folk cultural committees
- 100 folk cultural villages
- International centers for five major cultures: shamanistic culture in northeastern China, the culture of worshipping the sea goddess Mazu in southeastern China, *nuo* (exorcism) culture in south-central China, Thangka Buddhist paintings and their surrounding culture in western China, and the Zhongyuan Legend and its surrounding culture of the North China Plain.
- Seven international folk art platforms, that is, an international folk art exposition in Tianjin, an exposition of masterpieces of Chinese folk arts and crafts in Beijing, an exposition of Asian, African and Latin American handicrafts in Xiamen, a center for Southeast Asian folk art and literature in Kunming, a center for Central and West Asian folk art and literature in Urumqi, a center for Northeast Asian folk art and literature in Shenyang, and a center for South Asian folk art and literature in Lhasa.
- Five folk cultural brands: Changchun's folk arts and crafts exposition, Shenyang's lantern festival,

Zhangjiagang's Changjiang River art and culture festival, Guilin's acrobatic art festival, and Changsha's liquor cultural festival.

While the Project to Save Chinese Folk Cultural Heritages puts high priority on academic achievements, it also has business aspects. Recognizing the vital roles of the government and society in preserving cultural heritages, the project seeks to build up a system in which a wide range of individuals and entities work together, including central and local governments, researchers and non-researchers, expert and non-expert groups, companies and their industrial departments, and people engaged in general, nationwide surveys and specific searches. We are already seeing the fruits of the endeavor, while most part of the project is being underway, and some will be kicked off in the near future.

The supreme goal of the Project to Save Chinese Folk Cultural Heritages is to actively and promptly salvage folk culture. In particular, we must immediately rescue the culture of ethnic minorities in rural areas, which has been pushed to the verge of extinction by the Open Door Policy. To this end, we strive to set up a system that integrates protection at national and international levels, protection of life and livelihood, protection from academic, educational and legal viewpoints, and protection from the standpoint of industry and production. We further endeavor to establish a cultural preservation group which is led by researchers and embraces government officials, educators, legal pundits, entrepreneurs and ordinary citizens, so as to effectively and harmoniously carry out the protection and inheritance of culture, systematic change, and innovative and development activities.

The author believes that this project will produce immense benefits and, moreover, contribute to world peace, reviving the humanistic spirit of the Chinese people and protecting the cultural heritages of the whole humanity.