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Selected Books from China

II. Literature

The Promising Homeland

《望江南》

Wang Xufeng, Zhejiang Literature & Art Publishing House

Set in the twenty years before and after 1949 and the founding of the People's Republic of China, this historical epic recounts the shifting fortunes of the Hang clan, one of the giants of the tea-production world. Amid the smoke and fire of civil war, China's tea trade had fallen to an historic low. The Hang family - producers of the prince of teas, China's world-famous longjing or "Dragon Well" - overcome untold dangers and difficulties to revive tea production and trade, even distributing their products abroad. The author is a professor at Zhejiang A&F University, a leading scholar of tea culture, and winner of the Maodun Literature Prize. Through this rich exploration of national and family history, readers will gain a new appreciation of the poignant, moving aspects of the tea trade.

Pipa Wei

《琵琶围》

Wen Yanxia, Jiangxi People's Publishing House

This book is based on Pipa Wei, a poverty-stricken village in southern Jiangxi Province, which once was the Communist-led Central Soviet Area during the revolutionary times in 1930s. The book narrates stories of the local people struggling to lift themselves from poverty and pursue a better life under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Through interviews conducted in the locally-characteristic enclosed cottage, the author vividly portrays a group of amiable and respectable figures with delicate brushwork and skills unique of female writers.

Food is Heaven

《燕食记》

Ge liang, People's Literature Publishing House

A hundred-year-old Linnan restaurant, Tong Chin House, is rumored to close down at the end of the year. In this time of crisis, a group of old staff try to save the day and take over the restaurant. The retired chef Rong Yisheng tells the story of the development of the culinary culture, the legendary life of the master chef and his disciples, and the historical evolution that Guangdong and Hong Kong have witnessed since the Xinhai Revolution. By portraying the legendary figures amongst merchants, politicians, revolutionary aspirants, common people, the aristocrats, and the leaders of the guilds, the book depicts a majestic picture of China's social changes and its worldly conditions in the past century.

The Hustle and Bustle of Life

《烟火漫卷》

Chi Zijian, People's Literature Publishing House

This long novel focuses on the people's lives in modern city. Zijian Chi's well-paced, delicate, and vivid language ignites the fire and smoke in humanity, which is tender and multi-faceted at once. Chi depicts a snowy city in which nature and modernity, East and West encounter each other. In the foreground of this city, a group of ordinary urbanites thrive in their variety and determination.

Extraordinary People In Our Ordinary World

《俗世奇人：手绘珍藏本》

Feng Jicai, People's Literature Publishing House

From the 1990s to the present, Jicai Feng has written fifty-four short stories for the series *The Commonplace Legends*. With a unified style, rich legends, and lively characters, the book presents the regional landscape, local customs and life styles of Tianjin in the late Qing Dynasty and early Civil Wars, and also shows the exquisite skills and wisdom hidden in our folk culture. This book has sold over 5 million copies.



Safety Letter to Families

《平安批》

Chen Jiming, Beijing October Literature & Art Publishing House

The story occurs in the period from the early years of the Republic of China to the 1930s, and revolves around the character Mengmei who represents the Zheng family. Mengmei and her companions voyaged across the sea, and experienced the history of foreign invasion and national turmoil. These people left their homeland to make money overseas, but they never forgot to eventually return to their root. In this spirit, a unique business emerges: "Overseas Chinese" which serves the overseas Chinese with both postal and banking functions. It records contract and credit in the foreign format but with the traditional Chinese brush. This business, as such, beats with the "Chinese heart" of keeping the way of benevolence, righteousness, profit, and fidelity to one's roots.

Northward

《北上》

Xu Zechen, Beijing October Literature & Art Publishing House

1901 marks a time of turmoil in China. Italian travel adventurer Paolo Dimarco came to China in the name of cultural expedition. Secretly, he was in search of his brother Ma Fude, who had disappeared during the Eight-Power Allied Forces' invasion of China. Xie Pingyao, one of the protagonists of this book, accompanied young Paolo as an interpreter, and successively gathered various underclass people of Chinese society to assist him along the way. This endeavour was not only a journey of academic investigation, but also a journey of reflection on the identity and fate of intellectuals, and a journey of searching for roots.

The Age of Awakening

《觉醒年代》

Long Pingping, Anhui People's Publishing House

As a historical novel, this book displays a magnificent historical picture depicting the heroic deeds of Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yannian and other revolutionary youths in their pursuit of truth during the period from the New Culture Movement to the establishment of the Communist Party of China. These stories offer a profound insight into the historical inevitability of the combination of Marxism, with the Chinese workers' movement, and of the establishment of the Communist Party of China.

Distant Sunflower Land

《遥远的向日葵地》

Li Juan, Flower City Publishing House

Bright and delicate, this book presents the scene of life in the vast land of Aletai in northern China. Particularly, it tells people's survival experience of being thoroughly exposed to nature in a way that is fragile and funny at once. In this book, the popular new-generation author Li Juan tells a beautiful story about her family who farms sunflowers on the banks of Ulungur River. Her narrative unveils the reality of sunflowers which are often overlooked by the practical eye, as she shows how these heavy and elegant things are spiritually co-dependent with human lives in the great order of the cosmos.

Notes about Xihaigu

《西海固笔记》

Ji Dongliang, Beijing October Literature & Art Publishing House

In April 1997, Comrade Xi Jinping, when working at CPC Fujian Provincial Committee, led a team to Ningxia for an investigation, thus ushered a paired-up assistance project between Fujian and Ningxia for the alleviation of poverty and built an internal migration demonstration area in Xihaigu. Through an arduous effort spanning over 2,000km of land and over a period of 20 years, Minning Town has become a role model for impoverished areas in China to eradicate poverty and become moderately well-off. The author selects the most representative characters and events that convincingly reflect the enormous changes in Xihaigu.

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