

Foreword

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It is an honour and privilege to write the preface to this wonderful book. Although the title might indicate it is a book only for the “China specialist” or for those wishing to study and learn much about how to understand Chinese people, culture and history, and whilst it will certainly serve the interests of such readers much more comprehensively than any other book I have seen, Hai Hua Zhang’s passion for people, cultural understanding and her mission to engage us in considering the deeper issues of life’s purpose and possibilities for mankind make it very much more a book for all who wish to explore these important topics. And the elegant literary prose and the articulation will make it a joy to read for anyone.

The first edition of this book had a very great impact on my work in China. I have been visiting, teaching, working in and starting companies there for more than 20 years now. I have grown to love China and the Chinese people enormously and to realise that the knowledge I have acquired remains a tiny part of the story of a nation huge in stature and long in history. Since the first edition, the author has spent more than four years studying, travelling, meeting people – refreshing her own knowledge of China. She has experienced living outside China and returning – and all this at a time of continuous change and development. Hai Hua invites us in her introduction to join her on a journey which delves deep into the history and culture of her home country and brings herself and us up-to-date with modern China and how a nation of 56 ethnic groups and 1.4 billion people has not only entered the modern world after centuries of inventiveness, strife, change and development but which in the current and previous century has become a leader of the modern world. China stands today the world’s largest trading nation and the second largest economy. In the past three decades, 600 million people have been lifted from poverty – extraordinary and unprecedented in the history of mankind. To have achieved so much, especially following the very great conflicts and traumas of the 20th century – civil war, invasion, world wars, revolution – is awesome – a word much misused these days – but appropriate here.

As well as relating to us numbers of new case histories and interview notes made for edition two, Hai Hua offers insightful thoughts for us all, and as a business person I was particularly taken by the way she writes about

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the great emerging Chinese multinational companies, for example Haier, and how the way leaders of such companies think about the world, planning and the future – and people – is very different from the much publicised Western model which often takes pride of place in Western Business School teaching. In so many ways now, China is becoming “Innovation Nation” – reminding us of the great eras of early inventions and inventiveness during which China gave the world so many of the great discoveries and inventions which eventually shaped the Renaissance in Europe.

The author leads us through numbers of challenging and enlightening chapters exploring the way Chinese people over the years have thought, the core of their beliefs, the way the ancient culture and the philosophy of such as Lao Tzu have been sustained and endure in modern Chinese thinking alongside “We Chat” and social media communication now well in advance of what we do in the West. It is an incredible realisation that more than 5000 years ago, civilisation was dawning and developing in the Yellow River draining basin, and that through the centuries and the dynastic eras, the foundations of social and political life developed in ways we can see extended today in traditional crafts and modern industry was evolving continuously.

Reflecting on modern times, it is a source of ongoing frustration to me that there is so much misunderstanding in the West of China. Understanding other cultures – respecting differences, refusing to take the view that one is “better or worse” – crossing the boundaries of thought and philosophy within the worldwide family is something some of us are at great pains to encourage our students, our business partners and our families to do. “Better together”, we say. Reading this book will give incredible insights into how we can perhaps achieve – some way ahead – “a world without borders”. It may be a dream. Hai Hua’s book may help us all understand why the present generation and the young people of China are enthusiastic about “The Chinese Dream” espoused by President Xi Jinping. And why, at a time when in the West drawbridges between nations are being drawn up and protectionism is popular in many quarters, the great globalisation program of China’s One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR) has such potential for enriching many parts of the world. History *does* repeat itself. Centuries ago – beginning in the ancient Chinese capital of Xi’an – the first recorded journey of globalisation began which we came to know as “The Silk Road”. The OBOR – driven by modern technology might make us consider how China has led the charge and leads still – as we journey from Silk Road to Silicon Highway!

Some of us are, today, significantly involved in building bridges for education and trade between China and the West. The prospects are so exciting. Yet there remain reservations both here in the United Kingdom and other parts of the West and still in China about how we might combine to turn dreams into

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reality. *Think More Like Chinese* – and the journey you will undertake as a reader – challenging you to respond and think deeply about every chapter – will be tremendously enjoyable as well as intensely informative and mind-opening. It can help us all with our bridge-building. And it is beautifully written. In so many ways, it is a book *about people for people*.

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