

A

academies of classical learning 书院 (shūyuàn)

Private establishments of learning usually built far away from cities or towns where scholars could focus on learning without distractions. The first such academies appeared during the Tang Dynasty, with the most popular appearing during the Song Dynasty. They continued to be established throughout China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Some of the most famous were the Bailudong, Yuelu, and Yingtianfu academies, which are located in Jiangxi, Hunan, Henan provinces respectively. Many of them were renamed *xuetang* (学堂, school) in the late Qing Dynasty when the **imperial civil examination** was abolished.

See “imperial civil examination” (Page 217)



▲ Front hall of Bailudong Academy



▲ An Achang young lady

★ Note

① Also called acupoints, they are mostly located where nerve endings concentrate or where nerve fibres are the thickest.

Achang ethnic group

阿昌族 (Āchāngzú)

One of China's ethnic groups who mainly live in Yunnan Province. Although they have their own language, they often speak and write in Chinese and also speak Dai, the language of the Dai ethnic group. They have a rich tradition of oral literature and are known for their love of folk songs. Singing in an antiphonal style is especially popular among the youth. They are also skilled at carving, embroidery, dyeing, weaving, and other arts and crafts.

acupuncture anaesthesia

针刺麻醉 (zhēncì mázùi)

A method of anaesthesia adopted by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine. Acupuncture is applied to certain acupuncture points^① on the human body to produce an analgesic effect that makes it possible for a patient to undergo certain types of surgery in a conscious state.

all-around pleated skirt

百褶裙 (bǎizhěqún)

A kind of skirt with a wide hem and many vertical folds from the top to the bottom. It is often worn by women of the Yi, Miao, and Dong ethnic groups, and is popular in Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou provinces.

allegorical saying 歇后语 (xiēhòuyǔ)

A type of Chinese idiom consisting of two parts. The first part is abstract like a metaphor while the second part provides the meaning. By hearing the first part, people can sometimes figure out the final meaning without hearing the second part, thus making the second part unnecessary, hence the literal meaning in Chinese as “the expression that can take a break (in the middle)”. For instance, “The flying moth darts into the fire—to bring destruction on oneself”.

Along the River During the Qingming Festival

清明上河图 (Qīngmíng Shànghé Tú)



▲ Part of the painting Along the River during the Qingming Festival

★ Note

① A place located in present-day Kaifeng in Henan Province.

A famous Chinese scroll painting created by **Zhang Zeduan** of the Northern Song Dynasty that is 24.8cm tall and 528.7cm long. It captures the architecture and vibrancy of the **Qingming Festival** in the capital city of Bianjing^① along the Bianhe River during the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Northern Song Dynasty. The painting is divided into three parts—the natural landscape of the suburbs, the vibrancy of the dock, and the crowded and flourishing urban streets. It is of great value both historically and artistically.

See “Zhang Zeduan” (Page 549), “Qingming Festival” (Page 386)

Analects of Confucius, The 论语 (Lúnyǔ)

A collection of sayings and ideas regarded as a record of the words, acts, and discussions by **Confucius**, an important Chinese thinker and philosopher, and his disciples. Mainly covering politics, economics, education, morality, and philosophy, this Confucian classic is believed to

contain the core ideas of Confucian thought.

See “Confucius” (Page 72)

ancient magic 古戏法 (gǔxifǎ)

An umbrella term used for ancient performances of magic tricks or displays of unusual physical feats that incorporated elements of music, dance, and acrobatics. Also known as “ancient colour magic”, these performances included all types of magic tricks, tripod lifting, knife swallowing, fire spitting, pole climbing, etc. The performances were usually an effort to show auspiciousness and garner blessings.

ancient-modern Chinese characters 古今字 (gǔjīn zì)

A name used to refer to modern Chinese characters that share the same meanings as ancient characters but are written differently. For example, “debt” was written as 责 in ancient Chinese, but it is written as 债 in today’s language. The latter word 债 was created from 责 to differentiate the word 责任 (zérèn, meaning



▲ A fire-spitting show

responsibility) from 债务 (zhàiwù, meaning debt). Therefore, 责 and 债 are a pair of ancient-modern Chinese characters.

ancient-style poetry

古体诗 (gǔtǐshī)

Chinese poetry that existed before **modern-style poetry** appeared in the Tang Dynasty. This style of poetry is also called *gufeng*, “ancient style”, or *gushi*, “ancient poetry”, and consists of four, five, or seven characters per line. Some poems were composed in a more free-flowing form without standard length and were written free of literary rules, formats, or precise tone. An example of this type of poetry is *The Nineteen Ancient Poems*^①.

See “modern-style poetry” (Page 314)

animal signs of birth; Chinese zodiac animals

生肖 (shēngxiào)

A Chinese astrological system that originated in Chinese folklore. According to the Chinese Zodiac, people are born with certain characteristics of specific animals based on the year of their birth. These animals serve as the symbolic animal of

★ Note

①An anthology of poetry featuring poems that have five characters per line. The anthology contains 19 widely popular poems selected and edited by Xiao Tong of the Southern Dynasty. These poems were typically written by lower-middle class intellectuals when they were learning traditional folk songs in the late Eastern Han Dynasty.



▲ Paper-cuts of the 12 zodiac animals

one's birth year. The ancient Chinese recorded people's birth years by matching each of the 12 **earthly branches** to each of the 12 zodiac animals, forming a 12-year circle as follows: *Zishu* (the Rat), *Chouniu* (the Ox), *Yinhu* (the Tiger), *Maotu* (the Rabbit), *Chenlong* (the Dragon), *Sishe* (the Snake), *Wuma* (the Horse), *Weiyang* (the Goat), *Shenhou* (the Monkey), *Youji* (the Rooster), *Xugou* (the Dog), and *Haizhu* (the Pig).

See “earthly branches” (Page 111)

Annotation of Materia Medica

本草经集注 (Běncǎojīng Jízhù)

A famous Chinese medical monograph written by Tao Hongjing during the Southern and Northern Dynasties. This book was based on the famous *Shennong's Classic of Materia Medica* with new content added by famous doctors of the Wei and Jin dynasties, and contained 730 prescriptions altogether. The author created a new classification method based on the natural and healing properties of different medicine, which had a very important effect on later generations.

See “Shennong's Classic of Materia Medica” (Page 416)



▲ A copy of Annotation of Materia Medica

antithetical couplet 对联 (duìlián)



▲ Children holding a couplet

A type of poetic couplet that can be written on a pair of scrolls and affixed to walls or carved on either wood boards or bamboo slips. They date back to the Later Shu of the Five Dynasties and Ten States Period. During the Song Dynasty, they were affixed on the columns in front of the main gate. Since that time, they have been widely used for decorations, celebrations, or condolences.

Anyang 安阳 (Ānyáng)



▲ National Museum of Chinese Writing (in Anyang)

A city located in northern Henan Province. In the 14th century BCE, the Shang Dynasty made Yin its capital, located in what is now the suburbs of present-day Anyang. Anyang is a famous historical city in China, and is rich in cultural relics, the most famous of which is the **Yin ruins**. The first oracle bone inscriptions and some rare **bronze wares** were unearthed at the Yin ruins site.

See “Yin ruins” (Page 536), “bronze ware” (Page 34)

armillary sphere

水运浑天仪 (Shuǐyùn Húntiānyí)

An astronomical instrument invented by the astronomer **Zhang Heng** during the Eastern Han Dynasty used in ancient China to study astronomy. Celestial bodies, such as the sun, moon, stars, and also the ecliptic and the celestial equator were inscribed or inlaid on this large rotating sphere which indicated changes in celestial phenomena.

See “Zhang Heng” (Page 547)

Ashima 阿诗玛 (Āshīmǎ)

A ballad recited by the Yi ethnic group. It is mainly popular in Yunnan Province. It tells the story of a girl named Ashima and a rich, evil landlord who tries to force her to marry his son. She resists and is held captive as punishment. She has no fear of the landlord and, together with her lover Ah'hei, she bravely struggles for her freedom. The tale's vivid imagery and beautiful language are characteristic of the Yi ethnic group. The ballad has been translated into such languages as Russian, English, and French, and has also been adapted into a film.



▲ The “armillary sphere” sculpture on the square of the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum

★ Note

① It refers to the six ways in which Chinese characters can be formed or used. They include pictograph, self-explanatory character, associative compound, pictophonetic character, mutually explanatory character, and characters of phonetic loaning, which are fully explained in this book.

associative compound 会意 (huìyì)

One of the six categories of Chinese characters^①. It entails compounding two or more pictographs or self-explanatory characters into a new one. For instance, two 火 (fire) pictographs are combined to form the character 炎, meaning burning hot; the pictograph 人 (people) and the self-explanatory character 本 (root) were compounded to form 体, meaning body, etc.

Aunt Gongsun

公孙大娘 (Gōngsūn Dàniáng)

A famous dancer during the Tang Dynasty famous for her skills in dancing and swordsmanship. Her dancing was said to be graceful and marvelous. **Du Fu**, a famous poet during the Tang Dynasty once wrote a poem praising her performances.

See “Du Fu” (Page 105)