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# High-level openness benefits China and the world

In the keynote speech delivered at the opening ceremony of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that “China’s move to open wider to the outside world is an independent choice made based on the actual needs of the country’s reform and development. It will help promote high-quality economic development, meet people’s aspirations for a better life and contribute to world peace, stability and development.” Once again the country has made a solemn commitment to the international community to continuing and expanding opening up.

Since “building a new system of open economy” was proposed at the 18th National Congress of the CPC and “comprehensive opening up” was put forward at the 19th National Congress of the CPC, high-level opening up has become an important approach through which China comprehensively deepens reform and realizes high-quality economic development.

High-level opening up mainly includes four aspects: the shift of



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the goal of openness from pursuing GDP, exports and investment to encouraging innovation and improving the business environment; the expansion of the sector of openness from commodity trade to service trade and investment; the extension of the channel of openness from one-way openness to two-way openness and multi-balance; and the extension of the area of openness from coastal regions to inland border areas.

Conceptually, high-level opening up preserves the coordination between internal and external demands, stresses the balance between imports and exports and gives equal importance to “bringing in” and “go-



The construction of the free trade port in Hainan Province is one of the major measures that China is taking to expand opening up. Photo: FILE

ing out.” Through various forms of international communication and cooperation, it aims to establish a fair, open, competitive and orderly modern market system and a management model that is in line with international high-standard investment and trade rules.

In practice, high-level opening up has seen many breakthroughs.

For the past more than five years, over 150 countries and international organizations have signed cooperative treaties on the Belt and Road initiative with China and a large number of cooperative projects have been imple-

mented. The initiative demonstrates China’s resolve to foster high-level regional economic cooperation.

Twelve free trade pilot zones (FTZ) have been set up in China since 2013, and the country has decided to explore policies and systems for the construction of a free trade port in Hainan Province. The institutional innovation and other exemplary models that have come from the FTZs have been copied and extended to other regions in China.

In November 2018, the first China International Import Expo was held in Shanghai. It is the world’s first

national-level import expo. In the context of today’s rising anti-globalization, this expo was a declaration made by China in support of opening up and maintaining an open world economy.

China’s economic development over the last 40 years or more was achieved under the conditions of opening up. For the Chinese economy to achieve high-quality development in the future, more openness is required, and the country will adopt more major institutional and structural measures for reform and opening up.

In the past, opening up has been one of the magic keys behind the Chinese miracle, and it has allowed the world to see and appreciate what China has done. Today, high-level opening up will continue to facilitate China’s development, driving economic globalization in a more open, inclusive, balanced and universally beneficial direction.

*This article was edited and translated from Guangming Daily. Sheng Bin is dean of the School of Economics at Nankai University.*

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## Chinese agricultural civilization at root of cherished values

What has made Chinese civilization the only uninterrupted and continuously evolving ancient civilization? Why is Chinese civilization so unique? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the significance and value of Chinese agricultural civilization to the long-term development of the civilization as a whole.

The development of Chinese civilization is strongly related to its agriculture. The Axial Age from 800 to 200 BCE was a breakthrough period for intellectual civilization. Great thinkers emerged in many civilizations and their thoughts shaped various cultural traditions that, from then on, have affected the social and cultural development of different peoples.

Ancient Chinese thinkers paid high attention to agricultural issues. Thinkers in the pre-Qin period (before 221 BCE) stressed, in various degree, the importance of agriculture. This contributed to the formation of a relatively rational and practical system of guiding ideas and basic principles in the initial development phase of Chinese agriculture.

The idea that “food is the principal concern of political life” can be found in the *Book of History*, which was written in about the fifth century BCE. The same book also contains the idea of “paying different kinds and quantities of tributes in accordance with the specific conditions of the land.” *Master Lü’s*



Illustrations of the wine brewing procedures of ancient Chinese farmers as described in the book *Essentials for the People’s Welfare* Photo: FILE

*Spring and Autumn Annals* edited by Lü Buwei (292–235 BCE) contains four chapters about agriculture. In his *Essentials for the People’s Welfare* (completed between 533–544), Jia Sixie summarized the agricultural ideas expressed in Lü’s book. Jia suggested that the core agricultural idea of Lü’s book was that “If one complies with the seasonal changes of the weather and climate, and makes full use of the advantages of the land, he will succeed in gaining a lot with little labor.” In

Lü’s book, it is stated that “as for the crops, human beings grow them, the earth generates them and heaven nurtures them.” This saying gives a scientific and accurate account of the relationship among humanity, the earth and heaven in agricultural production. Chinese civilization made no disruptive mistakes during agricultural development because Chinese people did not view the relationship between humanity and nature as one between the conqueror and the conquered.

Agricultural society in China was based on basic production units that were formed based on blood ties. This contributed to the great structural similarities between the nation and the family. That is how Chinese rite and music civilization differentiated itself from its Western counterparts. The well-field system (one large square of land divided into nine smaller ones, the eight outer ones being allocated to serfs who had to cultivate the central one for the landowner), the enfiefment system and the patriarchal clan system in the pre-Qin period formed a normative system imposing order and morality in an agricultural society. Various thinkers during the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BCE) and Warring States Period (475–221 BCE) laid the theoretical foundations for Chinese agricultural civilization. The centralization system and the prefecture-county administrative system formed in the Qin (221–207 BCE) and Han (202 BCE–220 CE) dynasties provided institutional and organizational support to the development of Chinese agricultural civilization. And the imperial examination system formed in the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–907) provided China with human resources for agricultural and academic studies.

During its long process of agricultural development, China established an industrial structure that stressed agriculture as its foundation



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and formed a view of agriculture that regarded it as the top priority of political affairs. China also highlighted the collectivist idea of sharing gains and losses, as well as the idea of the harmony between humanity and nature. In addition, the tradition of organic agriculture, the technological system in agricultural production supporting intensive and meticulous cultivation, and the unique silk and tea agriculture enriched Chinese agricultural civilization.

In this sense, such fundamental principles as the following were highly valued in Chinese agricultural civilization: complying with seasonal changes, cultivating in accordance with the conditions of the land, following the code of proper agricultural production, and pursuing the harmony between humanity and nature. These principles formed not only a unique theoretical and technological system, but also cultural ideas and values cherished by the Chinese people.

*This article was edited and translated from People’s Daily. Fan Zhimin is a professor from Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University.*