

My Hopes for China

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The book *The Light in the Forest*, by Conrad Richter, told me a lot that I hadn't known about the life of the indigenous people of North America. It also reminded me of my native China, the way it used to be, and the way I perceive it now.

I used to live in a little village (that was) surrounded by mountains. Life was simple. The people there were mostly farmers and their relationships with each other were good. There was no crime and no theft. People's doors were always open. At night, people liked to gather together in the square to smoke, talk and drink.

On summer nights, the other children and I used to like to catch lightening bugs. Also known as a firefly, the lightening bug is beautiful because its tail produces a soft glow. It flies freely around the mountains. The villagers say that lightening bugs are the souls of people who have died, and I remember that they would tell us not to catch them because we might be catching our relatives!

The villagers have many other local and long-held beliefs. They believe that when a person becomes ill, he shouldn't see a doctor but should take some incense and a red candle to the temple, where he will pray to God. When I was living there, this is what they would do. They would bring some of the powder from the burned incense back home from the temple, dissolve it in some water, and drink it. The villagers said their illnesses disappeared after they would do this.

When I was living in this village, I never heard people say that the government was no good. Although my village did not have electricity, much graffiti was written on the walls saying that our leader was a great and gentle man.

Now I know differently. I know that my country has many problems. Now I know that when I lived there, the government controlled people and their lives so much that

they were afraid of the government and afraid to speak out. China is poor. Many long-held beliefs are beautiful, but many keep people's lives from improving.

The light of The Light in the Forest symbolizes the light of awareness. Now I have many hopes for China. I hope my native country will maintain its beauty. At the same time, I hope my country becomes free and open to the modern world.

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