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Preface 序

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看了王晓钧博士新作《中国行——从传统走向现代》的简介和样章，简单地谈一下我的意见。

1. 本书的重要性。我在美国大学教授中国语言文化近三十年，对学生的需求和教材的情况比较熟悉。现在语言教材大量出版，老师们有很多选择，实际上已出现了部分重复、供过于求的局面。但是用英文编写的关于中国文化的教材却基本阙如，尤其缺少简明扼要而又立论公允的教材。现有一两本美国学者编写的书，特点是学术性很强，部头很大，基本上属于学术著作，而非给大中学生用的教材。而且这些书讲的都是中国古代文化，不涉及现代文化。对很多事物用的基本上是西方的传统观念，不能与时俱进。王晓钧教授编写的这本书贯穿古今，以独特的风格与崭新的面貌向美国大中学生介绍中国文化，必将受到师生的欢迎。

2. 内容的客观性。本书从地理、历史等方面切入，对中国文化做了概要而客观的介绍。所谓概要，即提供了各方面必备的知识，其中的信息都经过仔细的筛选和严格的考订，使学生一卷在手，对中国各方面的基本知识都能了然于胸。同时，此书也向学生指出了进一步做学问的门径。所谓客观，即书中提供的知识都是符合历史事实的。有些西方学者囿于成见，对中国的地理、民族和历史问题的看法有所偏颇，本书能起到纠偏匡谬的作用，在美国和其他英语国家传播客观、正确的知识。

3. 结构的合理性。文化是一个庞大而复杂的概念，要介绍中国文化常会为“介绍什么”和“怎么介绍”等问题所困惑。本书作者准确地把握了文化的脉搏，并条分缕析地进行了梳理。全书共25章，除一章“中国概况”外，分为8单元24章。这24章涵盖了语言、文字、儒学、老庄、佛教、诗词、京剧、中医、武术等内容。这些章节可分可合，能长能短，为教师和学生提供了一本内容丰富又灵活机动的教材。

4. 写作的趣味性。与纯学术性的文化书籍不同，这本教材知识与故事穿插，图片与文字相映，使原本枯燥的内容显得生动有趣。王晓钧教授是对外汉语教学的专家，积数十年的教学经验，厚积薄发，文笔朴实而生动。书中的练习也富有趣味性，有的选择题要脑筋急转弯，有的又使人读来忍俊不禁。学生们在做练习时，会觉得又有趣又新奇，从而激发他们对中国文化的求知欲。

综上所述，我觉得这本《中国行——从传统走向现代》将填补用英文介绍中国文化教材的空白，是一本应大力扶植的好书。

编写说明

中国文化源远流长，博大精深。随着中国在世界影响力的日益提升，越来越多的海外大学、中学的师生和广大读者希望揭开中国文化的神秘面纱，增进对中国的了解。本书正是为满足教学和读者的强烈需求而编写的。但是，如何从习以为常的生活习俗中抓住独具特色的中国文化的精髓？如何把介绍一脉相承的文化传统与日新月异的社会变化相结合？如何深入浅出地对中西方文化从不同的视角进行比较？如何根据丰富浩瀚的资料来编写提纲挈领而又生动适用的教材和读本？……这些都是我们在编写中遇到的挑战。本书试图根据教学的需要和学习者的知识背景量体裁衣，力求深入浅出，既涉猎广泛又突出重点，既具有知识性又富有趣味性，既探讨传统文化又涉猎现代社会，既突出中国文化特色又注重中西文化的对比，以求既能满足教学和阅读的需要，也可为中国古今文化各方面的研究提供参考。

本书在编写中重点考虑了以下五个方面：

1. 从西方国家大中专院校的课程设置看编写中国文化教材的必要性

根据编者在美国从教多年的经验，美国和世界其他各国的大学和中学一般都设有介绍世界文化的课程，作为必修或选修的共识课。中国文化课是世界文化课程的重要组成部分，想选修相关课程的学生也越来越多。然而，由于师资和教学资源的短缺，不少学校感到力不从心，往往因此而延误甚至放弃开设中国文化课。

2. 从中国文化教材的现状看编写海外中国文化课教材的紧迫性

在国外图书市场上，迄今为止尚难以找到一部既适用于国外课堂教学又便于西方读者自学的中国文化教材，尤其缺少对中国传统文化与现代社会进行系统性、综合性介绍的读本。虽然中国出版了大量有关中国文化学术研究的著作，然而绝大部分都是用中文撰写的，并且往往侧重于某一专题的研讨。这固然符合中国读者的口味，但却难以满足缺少中国语言文化知识的西方学习者的需求。由于中国社会与文化内容多、历史长、变化快，为了教学，教师和学生往往要参考十几本甚至数十本相关书籍。对任课老师而言，这不但加大了工作量，而且增加了授课难度；对学生而言，这不仅费时费力，增加了书本费，而且也难以抓住要领。因此亟须解决这种一书难求的现状。

3. 从教学的课时和需求出发来安排教材编写的体例

本书的编写体例力求与教学的课时和需求环环相扣。全书包括上、下两册，上册介绍“传统文化”，下册探讨“现代社会”。每册有4个教学单元，每个单元又包括3个章节，连同开篇的

“中国概况”，两册共计25章，与海外学校每学年大约28至32个教学周的实际相匹配，可以每周讲授一个专题或根据教学需要确定取舍。上、下册既可综合使用，也可在不同学期分别教授。每个专题的内容不仅与课堂的教学时间基本吻合，而且力求提纲挈领。每章后面还根据讲授内容提供了参考书目与阅读建议，并设计了各类练习，包括填空、选择、判断对错、讨论、趣味练习和思考题，同时在书后附有参考答案，希望为教师备课和学生复习提供便利和帮助。

4. 从学习者的文化背景来确定中国文化教材的编写内容

本书力求突出重点，针对西方学习者最需要了解同时也是最感兴趣的话题确定取舍。西方人对中国文化抱有浓厚兴趣，然而对中国文化的基本特点和精髓却知之甚少。因此，我们在编写时特别注重从西方学习者的角度来看中国文化，凸显中国文化中强调的人与自然的和谐、人与人的和谐等特点，与西方文化中宣扬的个性化、创造力和竞争性形成互补。全书力求既涵盖中国文化的重要组成部分，又揭示中国文化的基本要素与特质。每个章节力争简明扼要，以便于教学，并为学习者今后的深入研讨留出空间。

5. 从学习者的习得特点来设计编写的思路

根据教学的实践，西方学生思想开放活跃，好奇心强。他们一方面希望了解异国的文化现象和基本观念，一方面也喜欢跟自己所熟悉的母语国文化进行比较，通过讨论加深理解。为了便于教学并考虑到学习者的特点，本书每一章的开篇都提供了名人名言，并有中英双语的本章概要和关键词，力求一目了然，突出重点；每章的内容也尽量做到眉目清晰，从文化对比的角度提供生动有趣的例子，帮助读者阅读和理解。每章后面不仅有结合教学内容的练习题，而且设计了趣味题、讨论题和思考题，以期调动学习者的学习兴趣。本书在编写和试用的过程中，一直有美国、中国学者以及学生的积极参与，他们对不同的文化非常敏感，也十分了解学生的需求所在，所以这本书是不同文化相融合的结晶。此外，在出版社和责任编辑的大力支持和帮助下，本书还结合内容选配了大量插图，力求做到图文并茂，给学习者更为直观的认识。希望在条件成熟的情况下配置DVD或网络教学资源，紧跟现代教学的发展趋势，更好地满足使用者多方面的需求。

Compiler's Note

Chinese culture has a long, broad, and profound history. With China's growing influence in the world, more and more overseas readers, including college and high school teachers and students, want to uncover the mysteries of Chinese culture and enhance their understanding of China. This book is written to meet their strong needs. There are many challenges encountered in writing this book, such as: how to grasp the unique essence of Chinese culture over five thousand years, how to introduce cultural tradition with an ever-changing society, and how to compare Chinese and Western cultures and their different cultural perspectives in a productive way. This book attempts to tailor thousands of years of history and culture based on readers' cultural background; to analyze both the accessible information and its deeper substance; and to explore both traditional culture and contemporary society with the contrast between Chinese and Western civilizations.

The features of this book can be summarized as follows:

1) Comprehension

According to the authors' many years of teaching experiences at the universities and secondary schools in the United States and around the world, courses on Chinese life and culture have become an important part of any world cultural curriculum. A growing number of students want to take those courses. However, due to a shortage of comprehensive teaching materials, many schools have to delay or even give up offering such a course. This book will cover essential components of both traditional and modern Chinese culture, providing necessary materials and focal points for educators and students.

2) Concision

In the international textbook market, it is difficult to find one suitable, all-inclusive book that introduces both the traditional culture and modern society of China. Although a large number of academic books have been published in China, the vast majority are written in Chinese, tend to focus on a single and specialized topic, and lines up with the tastes of Chinese readers. However, such specific materials are not written for those beginning their studies in Chinese culture. Since the content of Chinese society and culture has a long history and changes quickly, teachers and students often have to read more than a dozen or even dozens of related books just to create one clear, cohesive timeline. For teachers, this not only increases their workload, but also increases the difficulty of teaching. For students, this is not only time-consuming, but also increases book fees and difficulty seizing essential concepts. This presents an urgent need to write a single, concise book.

3) Connection

This book seeks to connect its content with teaching hours and curricular needs. It includes two volumes: the first focuses on traditional culture and the second explores contemporary society. Each volume contains four units, each of which addresses three related chapters. Together with the introductory Chinese profile, the book contains a total of 25 chapters, providing material for approximately one full school year of 28 to 32 weeks. Instructors can teach a topic on a weekly basis while accommodating for their students' needs. The two volumes can be integrated or taught in different semesters. The content of each chapter is not only suitable with a variety of teaching hours, but also strives to make each topic easily accessible. Each chapter also provides a reference bibliography; reading suggestions based on the content; and various exercises including multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks, exercise for fun, questions for discussion, and diagram for analyses. The very end of the book provides appendices of additional tables of Chinese history, Chinese thoughts, and answers to each chapter's exercises.

4) Comparison

The content of this book is framed toward non-Chinese learners with a variety of cultural backgrounds. They have a strong interest in Chinese cultural phenomena, but know little about the basic characteristics and essence of Chinese culture. In general, Chinese culture emphasizes the harmony between man and nature, and the harmony between people; while Western culture promotes individuality, creativity, competitiveness. Therefore it is interesting to see that the Eastern culture and Western culture are very complementary by comparing such differences and similarities. This book strives to cover Chinese characteristics and to promote comparative studies. Each chapter aims to facilitate critical thinking and leave room for learners to study in the future.

5) Contemporary

According to contemporary teaching practices, students in Western countries are globally engaged. On the one hand, they want to understand other cultures' phenomena. On the other hand, they also enjoy their home country's culture. To appeal to both, the book engages non-Chinese learners through comparison and discussion to deepen understanding. In order to facilitate the teaching and learning styles of students worldwide, the beginning of each chapter of the book provides a celebrity quotation, English and Chinese bilingual chapter summaries, and key words to prioritize content. Cultural contrast provides lively and interesting examples to help readers and learners grasp new ideas. The process of writing this book utilized a team of international scholars and students. Therefore, the book is simultaneously sensitive to different cultures while understanding the needs of students. It has become a crystallization of different cultures. With the help of the publisher and editorial staff, the book also incorporates a large number of illustrations to associate with the content. With continued support, the team hopes to create and configure DVD or online teaching resources to meet the needs of users and modern classroom practices.

A Brief Introduction to China 中国概况

- No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive.

—— [India] Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)

如果试图排除其他文化，那么任何文化都是不能生存的。

—— 【印度】甘地 (1869—1948)



Outline 概要

China is a country with vast land, abundant resources, a multitude of ethnic groups, and brilliant cultural diversity. Although China has an ancient heritage, it keeps up with changes and flourishes that come with each passing day. When looking back into China's history, anyone can see the remarkable innovations and wonders China has provided for the world. In the realm of science and technology, the four great inventions (compass, gunpowder, papermaking, and printing) have greatly promoted material progress worldwide. The Chinese humanities, which include language, literature, calligraphy, painting, Confucianism, and Taoism, have also contributed to today's global culture. China's three unique products of silk, ceramics, tea, and the "silk road" have commercially connected China with the world. In these aspects, China has had a far-reaching effect on neighboring countries and beyond. China has changed dramatically since 1979 through the reform and opening-up policy. This policy has drawn attention from all over the world, and has been playing an increasingly important role in China—and the rest of the world—ever since.

中国历史悠久，地大物博，民族众多，文化丰富，源远流长。它既是一个文明古国，又在发生着日新月异的变化。追溯往昔，在科技方面，中国的四大发明（指南针、火药、造纸术、印刷术）极大地推进了人类物质文明的发展；在人文方面，无论是语言文字、文学艺术、书法绘画，还是儒家学说和老庄哲学等，都对亚洲邻国以至世界各国产生了深远影响；在商贸方面，中国独具特色的丝绸、陶瓷、茶叶等商品以及“丝绸之路”构建了中国与世界的经贸往来。放眼未来，中国改革开放后发生的巨变正引来世人注目，并将在世界上扮演越来越重要的角色。

Key Words 关键词

China
中国
history
历史

introduction
概况
population
人口

geography
地理
descendants of the dragon
龙的传人

How much does the average global citizen know about China? Bear in mind what Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) pointed out: “A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.” As global citizens, it is indisputable that we need to know better about China. However, Chinese culture is still somewhat veiled to Westerners. The cultural difference, according to Frederick W. Mote (1922–2005), is like a “cosmological gulf” between China and the West. Only thorough study can one be able to fully understand Chinese culture. In order to be a Chinese expert and an engaged global citizen, one needs to be prepared with knowledge of both China’s past and present.

As Mahatma Gandhi pointed out: “A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people.” As the whole world moves toward globalization, China is playing a more and more important role. Surely, the more our knowledge of China grows, the better global citizens we become.

MAP OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA



GS (2008) 1413 号

Jun. 2008

Produced by State Bureau of Surveying and Mapping

Administrative divisions of China

Chinese people live in China’s mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao, as well as abroad. In fact, Chinese people live almost everywhere in the world today. They have many different customs and practices in their daily lives. Chinese culture consists of all the ways Chinese people live their lives, no matter where they live.

Chinese culture can be traced back to ancient times, some 3,500 years ago. Chinese civilization began

developing sometime before 1,500 B.C.E., giving this nation more than four millennia of recorded history. In relative isolation, Chinese developed a civilization that has endured as one of the longest in the history of the world. Not only has China left its indelible mark upon her neighbors Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, but has also had a far-reaching impact upon the development of the West. Visitors, from Marco Polo (1254–1324) in the 13th century to Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) in the 16th century, reported favorably upon a society, which in many respects, outperformed their European home countries. Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) even carried a copy of Polo’s account of China with him on voyages to use as a reference.

1 | Geography

1.1 Land and Rivers

Occupying a total land area of approximately 9.6 million square kilometers¹ or 3.7 million square miles, China is the third largest country in the world, only smaller than Russia and Canada. It is almost as large as the whole of Europe, and has a slightly larger land area than the United States. It is the largest of all Asian countries, occupying approximately one-fifteenth of the land area of the Earth.

China stretches for about 5,500 km. (3,418 mi.) from north to south and 5,200 km. (3,231 mi.) from east to west. Altitudes extend from 154 m. (505 ft.) below sea level at the Turfan Depression to the peak of Earth’s highest mountain, Mt. Qomolangma, at 8,844.43 m. (29,017.16 ft.) above sea level. Mt. Qomolangma’s Chinese location, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, is considered to be “the roof of the world”.



Mt. Qomolangma

China has three long rivers, which run eastward to the ocean. These rivers roughly divide China into three regions: northern, central, and southern China. The Yellow River, or Huang He, flows through eight provinces and one autonomous region in northern China. It is the second longest river in China and the sixth longest river in the world. The Yellow River is known as “the cradle of Chinese civilization”, because its basin is the most fertile and rich region in early Chinese history. The longest river in China—and all of Asia—is the Yangtze River, or Chang Jiang. It is the third longest river in the world. It flows from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau across southwest, central, and eastern China. The Yangtze River basin is home to one-third of China’s population. In

¹ The area of China’s territorial sea is about 4.7 million square kilometers.

addition, the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River is the largest hydro-electric power station in the world. The Pearl River, or Zhu Jiang, is the third longest river in China.

1.2 Climate and Resources

China encompasses a climate of great diversity for its vast land. There are 49 degrees of latitude from north to south ranging from subarctic to tropical. During the winter, the temperatures in one season can range from -30°C (-22°F) in the northeast to 15°C (59°F) in the far south. China features extremely dry conditions in the northwest and tropical monsoon conditions in the southeast. In fact, the contrast in temperature between China's northern and southern borders is the greatest of any country in the world.



The Three Gorges Dam



The pandas

The diversity of both China's landscapes and its climates has resulted in one of the most diverse ecological environments in the world. The vast land abounds in an immense number of plants and animal species. China is home to pandas, despite the continuous intrusion of pandas' habitats over the millennia. China carries an abundance of natural resources, including substantial mineral reserves. It is the world's largest producer of antimony, natural graphite, tungsten, and zinc. Other major minerals produced are aluminum, coal, crude petroleum, diamonds, gold, iron ore, and lead. With its vast mountain ranges and mighty rivers, China's hydropower potential is the largest in the world.

1.3 Neighboring Countries

China's land border of 22,800 km. (14,167 mi.) is shared with fourteen countries including North Korea to the east; Mongolia to the north; the Russian Federation to the northeast; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the northwest; Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bhutan to the west and southwest; Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam to the south. In addition to the fourteen neighboring countries whose landmasses border China directly, across to the seas to the east and southeast are the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia. Along the seacoast, the major bodies of water are the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea.

In the past, although China shared its border with many countries, any close contact with outside countries was extremely limited. This may be partially attributed to the geography of China's borders. With the wide Pacific Ocean to the east, the Himalayas and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to the west, the steppes and deserts to the northwest, and the

rain forests to the south, China had been prevented from having easy contact with other major cultures. The relatively enclosed geographical environment helped to foster China's unique civilization and economy. When China finally opened its door to the world, dramatic changes began.

2 | History

China is one of the world's oldest civilizations with thousands of years of continuous history. The history of China can generally be divided into five periods: the Prehistory, the Ancient Era (the pre-Qin period), the Feudal Era, the Modern Period, and today's Contemporary Period.

2.1 The Prehistory of China



The "Beijing Man"

The Prehistory of China can be traced back one million years ago, to the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. We do not know much about the events during that time because of a lack of written documents, leaving archeologists and speculation to piece together ancient Chinese life. Archaeological studies show that pre-humans in China in the Paleolithic age began to use stone tools and fire, skills that have been dated as more than a million years old. The most famous evidence of pre-human presence was discovered in Beijing between 1923 and 1927, known as the "Beijing Man" or "Peking Man". Agriculture was gradually developed in Neolithic times. With an increase in population, the Yellow River valley began to emerge as a cultural center, where China's first villages were founded. Recent studies like these have uncovered more and more pre-historical sites.

2.2 The Ancient Era or the Pre-Qin Period (c. 2070–221 B.C.E.)

China's Ancient Era, in addition to the first presence of written records, identifies itself via artifacts that can be traced back to the Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 B.C.E.). However, according to ancient historical documents, it was the Xia Dynasty (c. 2070–1600 B.C.E.), before the Shang, that constituted the first Chinese state. Although many give the Xia Dynasty credit as China's first dynasty, archeological evidence is still lacking.

The Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 B.C.E.) was established after the Shang. Under this dynasty, much of Chinese culture, philosophy, and literature were developed further. The Zhou Dynasty can be split into two periods: the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 B.C.E.) and the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770–256 B.C.E.). The Western Zhou was a prosperous agricultural society. In 770 B.C.E., the Western Zhou moved their capital from Xi'an to Luoyang. Thus began the new regime, known as the Eastern Zhou. The kings in the Zhou Dynasty were, in some ways, remarkably

similar to those in Europe during the Middle Ages. With the Zhou Dynasty's Spring and Autumn Period came the gradual splitting of the kingdom of Zhou into smaller states. This continued until the Warring States Period of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. Between 475 and 221 B.C.E., during the Warring States Period, the State of Qin gradually emerged and unified China. Despite the changes between dynasties, the Chinese people were relatively static, as China was a slave society during this period.

2.3 The Feudal Era (221 B.C.E.–1840 C.E.)

The Feudal Era of China started in 221 B.C.E., the year the first emperor emerged; the so-called Qin Shihuang, Ying Zheng (259–210 B.C.E.). Using force, Ying Zheng organized China into a hierarchy of prefectures and counties under a centralized control by conquering the last opposing principality. This established a truly centralized Chinese empire for the first time. The Chinese writing system, monetary system, and weight and measuring system were also unified and standardized. Ying Zheng forced thousands and thousands of people to build the Great Wall to protect China against the Xiongnu (Hun). These acts also laid the foundation for feudalism in China. With his new power, Ying Zheng named himself Qin Shihuang, namely the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.E.). Qin Shihuang expected his descendants to become emperors of China after him, generation after generation. Despite these expectations, a peasant uprising merely four years after Qin Shihuang's death overthrew his successor. Learning from the Qin Dynasty short reign, successive dynasties developed bureaucratic systems based on feudalism that enabled the emperor of China to directly control vast territories.



A portrait of Qin Shihuang

With the founding of the new centralized Chinese empire came new ideas and beliefs. In particular, Chinese believed that an emperor's authority and power were given by Heaven, and called the emperor "the Son of Heaven". This belief characterized and enabled the dynastic cycle until the abolition of the monarchy in 1911.

The Feudal Era sees a sequence of dynasties, from the first empire Qin in 221 B.C.E. to the last empire Qing in 1911. The dynasties lasted anywhere from a few years to several hundred years. From the start, each dynasty flourished and expanded, but eventually declined and disintegrated. When one dynasty reached its low point, it would be replaced by another dynasty. This switch in power was not achieved peacefully; on the contrary, it often involved periods of political disorder and violent warlords tangled in battle with each other. The aforementioned cycle has created a traditional Chinese sentiment that "a country would be definitely unified after a long time of division, or vice versa". However, history would not simply repeat itself. Despite the cyclical nature of its politics, China began to change.

2.4 Modern Period (1840–1949)

The beginning of China's Modern Period is marked by the Opium War of 1840, during which traditional feudal society started to disintegrate into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal status.

Outside of China, the British Industrial Revolution began, sprouting from a growing textile industry to growing in many diverse directions. This allowed Britain to become the world's most powerful country, and accelerated development toward today's modern world.



The scene of signing the *Boxer Protocol* on September 7, 1901

China lagged far behind Britain, as it was still closed off to the outside world. Britain soon changed the traditional, historical patterns of China by force. This forced change began with the Opium War of 1840. In order to have a more extensive market and plunder China's rich resources, Britain and other Western powers

compelled the corrupt Chinese government to sign a series of treaties, which deprived China its sovereignty and parts of its territory. These treaties also forced China to open its gates to Western powers.

Disappointed by the corrupt government, Chinese people tried their best to fight against invaders. Their efforts lasted for years, initiating a series of movements including the Taiping Revolution (1851–1864), the May Fourth Movement (1919), among others. The most significant movement was the Revolution of 1911 led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, which ended the monarchy system and marked the establishment of the Republic of China. After this reform, China suffered long years of political unrest at the hands of warlord regimes, and the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression for fourteen years (1931–1945). Eventually, Mao Zedong led the Communist Party of China defeated Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, and established the People's Republic of China. This effectively put an end to the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society of the Modern Period.



A picture of Dr. Sun Yat-sen

2.5 The Contemporary Era (Founded on 1st October, 1949)

The beginning of contemporary Chinese history is commonly recognized as October 1, 1949, the date when the People's Republic of China was founded. The founding of this people's republic opened a new chapter and has led China to experience many important events and social changes. This includes, but is not limited to, the Korean

War (1950–1953), socialist movements, and the “Cultural Revolution” (1966–1976), all under the first-generation leadership of Mao Zedong. In 1978, China entered a new period of reform under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping. Since then, China has continued to experience dramatic changes in today’s period of turbulent political and social reform.



Hong Kong SAR

Today’s China has thirty-four administrative units: the first-level administrative subdivision of the central government of People’s Republic of China, consisting of twenty-three provinces, five autonomous regions (Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, and Ningxia), four municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing), and two special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macao). The municipality Beijing, sometimes known as Peking, is the political capital of the People’s Republic of China. It also acts as the cultural, economic, and media center of the country. Conversely, Shanghai serves as the main industrial and financial center, and

houses the largest population of any city in China. Hong Kong is the leading commercial center and port in China. These well-known cities provide prosperity for China, giving its citizens and nation a beautiful place to call “home”.

3 | Population

3.1 A Most Populous Nation

The People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.) is the world’s most populous nation. The current population of China is 1,387,266,951 as of May, 2017, based on the latest United Nations estimates, making China the home to one of every five people in the world. Since 1964, the population has been expanding at an annual rate of 2.1%, or by an average of 17.4 million people per year. Among them, 52.57% of the population is urban, and the median age in China is 32.26 years.

3.2 Ethnic Groups

China is a multinational country in which 91.95% of the population is Han, or ethnic Chinese. The remaining more than 110 million people (8.05% of the population) are distributed among fifty-five “minority ethnic groups” (*shaoshu minzu*). These range in size from the 16.9 million Zhuang to some groups which



The dance of the Uyghurs



The Mongols

number fewer than ten thousand. Most of these minorities differ from the Han in language and customs. Some differ little from the Han. For example, the Moslem Hui are distinguished by religion alone, and the Manchu are almost completely assimilated with the Han. National policy encourages cultural continuity and limited political autonomy. Representatives from each minority group are trained for local leadership at national institutes that promote research in ethnic languages and history. Most of the minority ethnic groups are scattered in the sparsely settled border areas of China, five of which—Inner Mongolia,

Ningxia, Xinjiang, Xizang (Tibet), and Guangxi—have been designated “autonomous regions”. If significant concentrations of a particular minority exist, autonomous prefectures and counties are created, both within the aforementioned regions and in western provinces such as Yunnan and Guizhou. Minorities have been exempted from China’s stringent birth control program (Family Planning Policy), so their numbers have been increasing at a greater rate than the Han.

4 | Dragons and “Descendants of the Dragon”

4.1 The Power of Dragon

In the eyes of Chinese people, the dragon is a mythical animal from ancient China that can walk, fly, and summon wind and rain. As a deity with the characteristics of several kinds of animals, the ancient Chinese dragon is a mixture of a camel’s head, deer’s horns, prawn’s eyes, snake’s body, fish’s scales, eagle’s paws, fox’s ears and hyena’s tail.

Chinese people have always respected the dragon. This can be seen in both the people’s myths and archeological discoveries. In ancient mythology, there is a story that the Yellow Emperor went to Heaven on the back of a dragon. Folklore also states that Liu Bang, the first emperor of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), was associated with the dragon. According to *Shi Ji* (*Records of the Grand Historian*), Liu Bang’s mother once “met a god in her dream”. At that moment, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and Liu Bang’s father saw a dragon in the sky. Soon after, the mother discovered she was pregnant and gave birth to Liu Bang. From that time on, Liu Bang and every emperor after him was called the “heavenly



A portrait of Liu Bang

son of the real dragon”. The emperor’s palace, clothes, daily utensils, and even tombs were decorated with the image of yellow dragons.

Evidence of the dragon in imperial decoration has appeared in 1987, when an old tomb was unearthed in Henan Province. A dragon figure stood beside the buried corpse. Subsequent research showed that these ruins belonged to the Yangshao Culture. Constructed some six thousand years ago, this contained the oldest dragon figure discovered in China. This discovery indicates that even as early as in the Neolithic Age, the Chinese people paid respect to the dragon. It became the symbol of emperors and represented absolute power and supreme authority in Chinese feudal society.



The paper-cutting of dragon

folk festivals, dragons also served as a symbol of joy and happiness. Dragons are still seen this way today, especially during the lantern festival in the Chinese New Year and the dragon boat race in the Dragon Boat Festival.

For thousands of years, not only have the Chinese people revered dragons, but also liked dragons, regarding them as a symbol of the character and spirit of every Chinese. Therefore, the term “descendants of the dragon” is used to refer to all Chinese people, and Chinese people are very proud to bear this name.

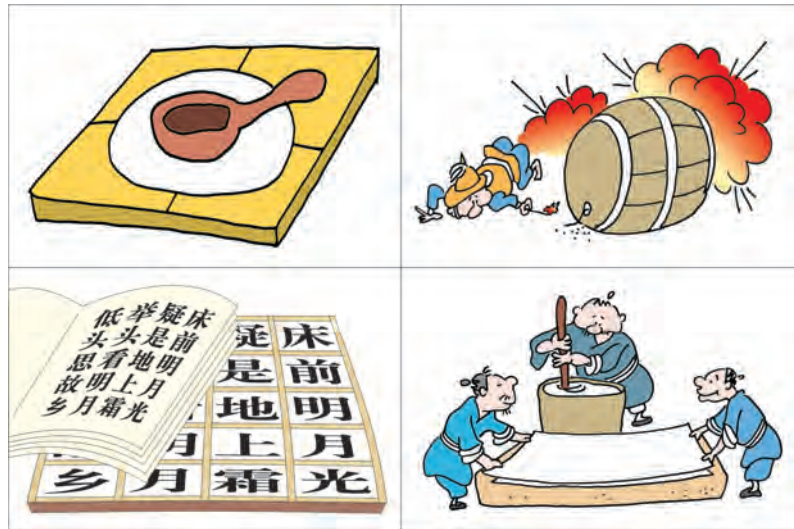


The Nine-Dragon Wall

4.2 The Four Great Inventions

As the descendants of the dragon, Chinese people work diligently from generation to generation, making great contributions to the whole world. The most well-known of these contributions are the four great inventions: the magnetic compass, papermaking, printing, and gunpowder. As early as the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.E.), ancient Chinese people discovered that a magnet could be used to indicate direction. The invention of the compass made it possible for Christopher Columbus to discover the New World in the 15th century, and continued to have a great impact on the development of international navigation as a whole. Papermaking technology, invented between 206 B.C.E. and 25 C.E. during the Western Han Dynasty, improved with the help of Cai Lun (?–121) in the

Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220). It provided one of the best ways to communicate and keep records, and has made a significant contribution to global civilization. Printing was invented after papermaking, during the period of the Sui and Tang dynasties. It was improved by Bi Sheng in the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127). Printing has sped up the exchange of information and technology, and made it possible to disseminate knowledge and popularize education. The formula for gunpowder was recorded in ancient China's Tang Dynasty. Not only has it been used in the weapon industry, but in many other industries as well.



The Four Great Inventions

4.3 Ideologies

For thousands of years, the ideology of China has been influenced by many great thinkers and philosophers. Among them is Confucius, who initiated Confucianism with his followers, such as Mencius and Xunzi. Other ideologies include Taoism by Laozi and Zhuangzi; and Buddhism, which came to China from India. These systems of thought have played important and fundamental roles in shaping the Chinese religions, virtues, and ways of thinking. Traditional Chinese ideology inspired Western Enlightenment thinkers who embraced the ideas of a harmonious relationship between human beings and nature. These ideologies also had a far-reaching effect on neighboring countries, such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

4.4 “Central Kingdom”

China is named *Zhongguo* (中国) in Chinese language. The term *Zhongguo* appeared for the first time in some historic records of the Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 B.C.E.). In *jiaguwen* (oracle bone inscriptions) found in the ruins from the Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 B.C.E.), the form of the character *zhong* (中) looks like a flag. This derived from an ancient practice: kings or leaders called meetings under a flag, while attendees stood around the flag and listened to orders. For this reason, the character *zhong* refers to the center, and *Zhongguo* referred to the central part of China. Since the middle of the 19th century, the term *Zhongguo* has become a special term referring to the whole territory of China. Therefore, it is not correct to think that China has always regarded itself as the “central kingdom” of the world.

4.5 Chinese Zodiac

The Twelve Animals of Chinese Zodiac are a kind of Chinese folk custom. The twelve animals—the rat (shǔ), the ox (niú), the tiger (hǔ), the rabbit (tù), the dragon (lóng), the snake (shé), the horse (mǎ), the goat (yáng), the monkey (hóu), the rooster (jī), the dog (gǒu), and the pig (zhū)—represent the twelve Earthly Branches. Each animal symbolizes one year, and also symbolizes people born in this year. On many occasions, when someone in China is asked about the age, he/she will reply by the animal of the year in which he/she was born (e.g. the year of the horse, or the year of the dragon, etc.). In this way, age may be determined.



The Twelve Animals of Chinese Zodiac

It is generally agreed that the association of the twelve Earthly Branches and the twelve animals started in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220) and gained popularity in the first century C.E.. After that time, the patterns of the twelve animals became popular on handicraft articles.

List of the 12 Earthly Branches (dìzhī, 地支)											
子	丑	寅	卯	辰	巳	午	未	申	酉	戌	亥
zǐ	chǒu	yín	mǎo	chén	sì	wǔ	wèi	shēn	yǒu	xū	hài
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l
Rat	Ox	Tiger	Rabbit	Dragon	Snake	Horse	Goat	Monkey	Rooster	Dog	Pig

In addition to the Earthly Branches, there are also ten Heavenly Stems.

List of the 10 Heavenly Stems (tiāngān, 天干)									
甲	乙	丙	丁	戊	己	庚	辛	壬	癸
jiǎ	yǐ	bǐng	dīng	wù	jǐ	gēng	xīn	rén	guǐ
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J

The twelve Earthly Branches are traditionally used as serial numbers, in combination with the ten Heavenly Stems, to designate the order of lunar years. The combination of each of the twelve Earthly Branches with one of the Heavenly Stems in sequence creates sixty chronological symbols, i.e. the number 1 is expressed as the first Heavenly Stem plus the first Earthly Branch (Aa), and number 2 is composed of the second Heavenly Stem plus the second Earthly Branch (Bb). And so on, up to 10 (Jj).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff	Gg	Hh	Ii	Jj
甲子	乙丑	丙寅	丁卯	戊辰	己巳	庚午	辛未	壬申	癸酉

When we reach 10, Heavenly Stems (upper case letters) are used up, but two Earthly Branches (lower case letters k and l or characters 戌 xū and 亥 hài) still need to go. So the series continues with the Earthly Branches shifted over by two compared with the Heavenly Stems. It takes the count of 60 to come out even. Sixty-one is once again Aa.

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Ak	Bl	Ca	Db	Ec	Fd	Ge	Hf	Ig	Jh
甲戌	乙亥	丙子	丁丑	戊寅	己卯	庚辰	辛巳	壬午	癸未

Since the lunar calendar—a calendar based on cycles of the moon—was formally adopted in China a long time ago, and is popular and still used in farming, Chinese people continue using the symbolic animals to infer a person's age and year of birth. No matter which symbolic animal is associated with the year you were born, from dragon to rat, you are always lucky to be associated with that animal, since each of them has its own characteristics.

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Review and Exercise

1. Multiple Choice

- (1) The Great Wall was built under the _____ Dynasty.
A. Qing B. Zhou C. Yuan D. Qin
- (2) The monolithic imperial policy disintegrated in the _____ century.
A. 20th B. 19th C. 18th D. 17th
- (3) In Chinese people's eyes, the _____ is an auspicious deity full of magical power.
A. tiger B. leopard C. dragon D. phoenix
- (4) Which animal is **not** one of the Twelve Animals of Chinese Zodiac?
A. The cat. B. The ox. C. The rabbit. D. The monkey.
- (5) China is a multinational country in which _____ of the population is Han, or ethnic Chinese.
A. 8.05% B. 28% C. 61% D. 91.95%
- (6) China, with _____ degrees of latitude from north to south, encompasses a climate of great diversity, ranging from subarctic to tropical.
A. 39 B. 49 C. 29 D. 59
- (7) Mt. Qomolangma, the earth's highest mountain is on the border of _____.
A. Brazil B. India C. China and Nepal D. France
- (8) Which one is **not** the major body of water along the seacoast of China?
A. The Bohai Sea. B. The Yellow River.
C. The East China Sea. D. The South China Sea.
- (9) According to ancient historical documents, which of the dynasties constituted the first Chinese state?
A. The Xia Dynasty. B. The Shang Dynasty.
C. The Zhou Dynasty. D. The Qin Dynasty.
- (10) The first emperor of the _____ Dynasty forcibly organized China into a hierarchy of prefectures and counties under centralized control.
A. Tang B. Qing C. Yuan D. Qin

2. True or False

- (1) Chinese culture and Western culture are very similar. ()
- (2) There are fifty-six “minority ethnic groups” in China. ()
- (3) Yunnan has been designated an autonomous region. ()
- (4) China is bigger than Canada in area, and is the second largest country in the world. ()
- (5) The basin of the middle Yellow River was the cradle of Chinese civilization. ()
- (6) Confucianism and Taoism arose in the Qin Dynasty. ()
- (7) There are three autonomous regions in China. ()
- (8) Minorities are included in China’s stringent birth control program. ()
- (9) China’s land area of about 9.6 million sq. km. (3.7 million sq. mi.) is greater than that of Europe or the continental United States. ()
- (10) China is insulated from easy contact with other major cultures by formidable physical barriers. ()

3. Fill in the Blanks

- (1) The four Chinese inventions which have had a far-reaching impact upon the development of the West are _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- (2) There are _____ ethnic nationalities in China.
- (3) China is larger than all other countries except _____ and _____.
- (4) The _____ Dynasty gradually emerged and unified China between 475 and 221 B.C.E.
- (5) The unique products of China that have long been coveted trade commodities are _____, _____, and _____.
- (6) Dragon became the symbol of emperors and represented _____ and _____ in Chinese feudal society.
- (7) Chinese people live in _____, _____, _____, _____, and almost everywhere in the world today.
- (8) In relative isolation, Chinese developed a civilization that has endured _____ than any other in the history of the world.
- (9) China is the home of nearly one out of every _____ people in the world.
- (10) In China, most of the minorities differ from the Han in _____ and _____.

4. Exercise for Fun

What is your Chinese Zodiac?

Chinese Zodiacs circulate every twelve years. Now calculate your own Zodiac based on the information below.



1984/1996 鼠 (rat)



1985/1997 牛 (ox)



1986/1998 虎 (tiger)



1987/1999 兔 (rabbit)



1988/2000 龙 (dragon)



1989/2001 蛇 (snake)



1990/2002 马 (horse)



1991/2003 羊 (goat)



1992/2004 猴 (monkey)



1993/2005 鸡 (rooster)



1994/2006 狗 (dog)



1995/2007 猪 (pig)

5. Questions for Discussion

- (1) China has fourteen neighboring countries while the United States only has two. Which one of the above situations do you think is more advantageous as far as cultural and civilizational development? Why?
- (2) Why didn't China open up until 1978? Do some research and discuss this with regard to economy, geography, and population.

6. Diagram for Analyses

Fill in the table below to have a brief comparison between China, the United States of America and another country you are familiar with.

Country	Population	Total Area	Capital	Administrative Divisions	Languages	Religions	Ethnic Groups
China							
USA							