



CULTURAL ORIENTATION

CHINESE-MANDARIN



River boats on the River Li, against the Xingping oldtown footbridge, with the Karst Mountains in the distance, Guangxi Province Flickr/Bernd Thaller

Ti
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DLIFLC
DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER



About Rapport

Predeployment language familiarization is target language training in a cultural context, with the goal of improving mission effectiveness. It introduces service members to the basic phrases and vocabulary needed for everyday military tasks such as meet & greet (establishing rapport), commands, and questioning. Content is tailored to support deploying units of military police, civil affairs, and engineers.

In 6-8 hours of self-paced training, Rapport familiarizes learners with conversational phrases and cultural traditions, as well as the geography and ethnic groups of the region. Learners hear the target language as it is spoken by a native speaker through 75-85 commonly encountered exchanges. Learners test their knowledge using assessment questions; Army personnel record their progress using ALMS and ATTRS.

- Rapport is available online at the DLIFLC Rapport website
<http://rapport.dliflc.edu>
- Rapport is also available at AKO, DKO, NKO, and Joint Language University
- Standalone hard copies of Rapport training, in CD format, are available for order through the DLIFLC Language Materials Distribution System (LMDS)
<http://www.dliflc.edu/resources/lmds/>

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Traditional wooden-stilted houses, or diaojiaolou, along the waterways of the ancient town of Fenghuang, Hunan Province Wikimedia/chensiyuan

Chapter 1 | Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Profile

Introduction

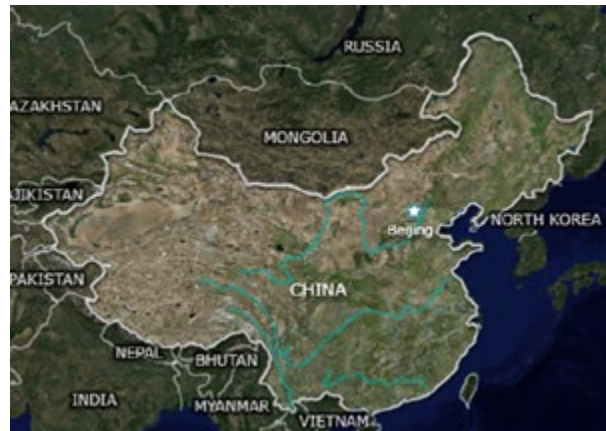
*By three methods we may learn wisdom:
First by reflection, which is noblest;
Second by imitation, which is easiest;
And third by experience, which is the bitterest.
— Confucius*

Chinese society of the 21st century has evolved from 3,300 years of recorded history. For thousands of years, the Middle Kingdom (*Zhongguo*—the Chinese name for China) has been marked by a continuous and unifying social organization and culture. At its

foundation is Confucianism, which provides an ethical system of rules for socially acceptable behavior. Historically, the name *Zhongguo* signified balance, righteousness, and the authority of its ruling dynasties over lands and people outside the kingdom.

China's long history has enormous diversity and variety. Its civilization is rich in the arts and sciences, and it is credited with inventing the compass, paper, the printing press, gunpowder, seismography, and the crossbow, among others. Its people constructed the Great Wall and built the world's first high-speed train.^{1, 2, 3}

Today, China is the largest of all Asian countries, and its 1.4 billion people represent one-fifth of the world's population.⁴ It is a land of immense scale, with a culture that fuses Old World traditions and a westernized lifestyle. Like the traditional yin-yang formula of balance, towering skyscrapers coexist with historical buildings, business suits and blue jeans juxtapose traditional Manchu dresses (*qipao*), and dim sum is as popular as xi can (Western food).⁵



China and its neighbors, Eastern Asia
Graphic/DLIFLC

Over the last 30 years, China has undergone one of the most stunning human transformations in history, rising out of the era of Maoist dogma to take up free market ideas.^{6, 7, 8, 9, 10} It has built up its economy at a rate never seen in the developing world, dramatically expanded its cities and infrastructure, while still retaining its strong traditions.¹¹ China's middle class has surged, and a generation of Chinese now live in a style that would not be out of place in many Western cities.¹² Rapid urbanization and a rush to make profits, however, have severely polluted China's water and air. The increase of wealth has also left millions behind, with income inequality on the rise.¹³ Corruption, fraud, and counterfeiting are ongoing concerns.¹⁴

Though state-led capitalism has benefitted many Chinese—living standards have dramatically improved and the room for personal choice has expanded—there are no signs that China will ever adopt a Western form of democracy^{15, 16, 17} Its population is tightly controlled through widespread censorship and surveillance, and a heavy-handed legal system that is not built to defend its citizens.¹⁸ Freedom of expression is tolerated only so far as it does not threaten the absolute authority of the central government.^{19, 20}

Geographic Regions

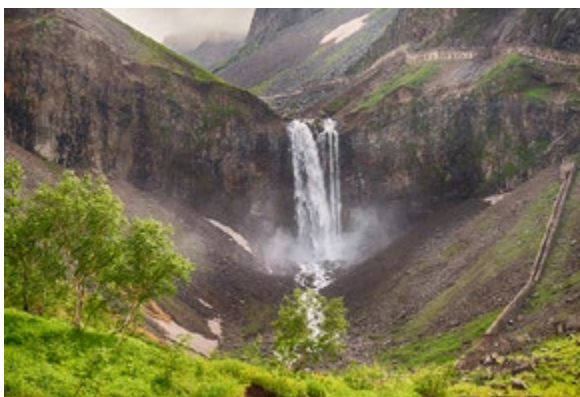


Jagged sandstone pillars of Five Fingers Peak, Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, Hunan Province Wikimedia/chensiyuan

China is second only to Russia in terms of land area, and it shares borders with 14 countries, including North Korea, Russia, and Pakistan. At 9.3 million sq km (3.6 million sq mi), China has great physical diversity. Broadly speaking, China's relief is high in the west and low in the east. Consequently, major rivers flow generally eastward. The west and north are marked by sunken basins, such as the Takla Makan desert, plateaus, and mountains. This region contains the highest tableland on earth, the Tibetan Plateau. China's east and south regions, the location of most of China's population, consist of foothills and fertile lowlands with moderate temperatures that are well suited to agriculture.²¹

There are three major climate zones. The eastern region is monsoonal, with seasonal rain-bearing winds. In this area, typhoons occur several times a year, and massive flooding is common in the rainy season. The northwest is arid and eroded by wind. The southwest is cold and mountainous.²² In much of the country, earthquakes are common, and collectively they have killed millions of people throughout China's history. In the 20th century alone, two earthquakes—one in Gansu Province (1920) and the other in Hebei Province (1976)—caused some 250,000 deaths each.

The Eastern Highlands



Waterfall in the Changbai Mountains, near the border between China and North Korea, Jilin Province Flickr/Joe Jiang

The Eastern Highlands are a series of low hills and mountain ranges that extend northward from Shandong Province and continue across the Bohai Strait into Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces in Manchuria (Northeast China). The region ends at the Amur River (*Heilong Jiang* or Black Dragon River), which forms much of China's border with the Russian Far East.²³ The mountain ranges that surround the broad river valleys of the Manchurian

Plain to the west contain some of China's largest, densest forest reserves.^{24, 25} These mixed forests of pine and broadleaf trees are home to a small population of the highly endangered Amur tiger.²⁶ South of this region, in Shandong Province, is Mount Tai (*Taishan*), the highest mountain in East China and a UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage site.²⁷ Foremost among China's Five Great Mountains, the Chinese refer to it as the "First Mountain under Heaven"; as such, it has much historical and cultural significance. Its tallest peak is the sacred Jade Emperor Peak (*Yuhuang Ding*), at 1,545 m (5,069 ft).²⁸

The Mongolian Border Uplands

The mostly mountainous Mongolian Border Uplands extend from northeastern China's border with the Russian Far East, southward through Inner Mongolia into north-central China. The Uplands consist of two mountain ranges: centrally, the extensive Greater Khingan Range (*Da Xing'an Ling*), and to the west, the arid Yin Mountains (*Yinshan*), which form the southern border of the Gobi Desert.²⁹ The northern section of the Uplands is the coldest part of eastern China; here, the mountains are heavily forested and rich in wildlife. The central and southern sections are warmer and drier, with broad-leaved woodlands and grasslands.³⁰ At its southwestern end, the Uplands region arcs around the Loess Plateau (*Huangtu Gaoyuan*), a once-fertile farming region that has suffered from desertification.³¹



Badain Jaran Desert, in the Alxa Plateau, an extension of the Gobi Desert, Xinjiang-Mongolian Uplands Flickr/Zhang Yu

The Eastern Lowlands

The Eastern Lowlands (from north to south) consist of the North China or Manchurian Plain (*Dongbei Pingyuan*), and the Yangtze River (*Chang Jiang*) Valley. This area is the agricultural heartland of China.³² It is also China's most extensively urbanized region, containing 6 of China's 10-largest urban metropolises, including the two largest, Shanghai and Beijing. Rural areas in this region are also densely populated. The North China Plain is known as an agricultural and industrial region that also hosts extensive coal and iron-ore mining operations. The southern end of the Eastern Lowlands, including the Lower and Middle Yangtze regions, is China's most prolific tea-growing region.^{33, 34, 35}

The Central Uplands

Sandwiched between the Tibetan Plateau to the west and the Eastern Lowlands to the east are mountains collectively known as the Central Uplands. The most well-known of these ranges are the Tsinling Mountains (*Qin Ling Shan*), which run east-west and form part of the traditional divide between North and South China.³⁶ With a highest point of 3,767 m (12,359 ft), these mountains create a sharp divide between the wet subtropical area and forested hills of the south, and the dry and temperate areas of the north. They are also important for channeling rainwater into the Yangtze and Yellow rivers.³⁷ The Tsinling and rugged Min (*Min Shan*) mountains to the west, which have isolated patches of bamboo forest, are home to populations of the endangered giant panda.^{38, 39, 40, 41} To the north of the Tsinling lies the historically significant city of Xi'an—the capital of several ruling dynasties, including the Qin, Tang, and Ming, and the eastern end of the Silk Road.

The Sichuan Basin



Wucai Chi, one of hundreds of travertine pools in Huanglong National Park, northern Sichuan Province; Min Mountains in the background Flickr/ Jean-Marie Hulot

The Sichuan Basin (*Sichuan Pendi*) region is an area of low hills, valleys, and floodplains surrounded by the Wu and Daba mountains, the Tibetan Highlands, and the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. These formations protect the interior from temperature extremes; the resulting high humidity and low air circulation make parts of the Sichuan Basin some of the foggiest places in China.⁴² But the basin's location on a south-facing slope allows it to receive direct sunshine most of the year.^{43, 44} Called *Tianfu Zhi Guo* (Heaven on Earth) by the Chinese, the densely populated Sichuan Basin area contains abundant natural resources, making it one of the most prosperous and self-sufficient regions in China. The Yangtze River and three of its tributaries run through the basin's rich agricultural lands, which produce rice, citrus fruits, and medicinal herbs.⁴⁵ To the southwest, the rare bamboo forest of Shunan covers an area 120 sq km (46 sq mi).^{46, 47}

The Xinjiang-Mongolian Uplands

This immense northern region encompasses several large deserts and arid basins divided by towering mountain ranges. The eastern and central areas, part of the Nei Mongol Autonomous Region (Inner Mongolia), comprise the southern reaches of the Gobi Desert.^{48, 49, 50} Much of the Great Wall lies in this desert region, built with packed yellow earth, reeds, or sand instead of stone.⁵¹



Karakul Lake, Muztagh Ata Peak in the background, Pamir Plateau, far west Xinjiang Flickr/Gabrielle Battaglia

In the far west, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, an area the size of Iran, is China's largest administrative region.⁵² The massive, snow-peaked Tian Shan Mountain Range cuts through the region's landscape from east to west, eventually forming China's border with Kyrgyzstan. To the south and north of the range lie the two great basins of China—the Tarim Basin (*Tarim Pendi*) and the Dzungarian Basin (*Zhunga'er Pendi*). Within the parched Tarim Basin rests the vast Takla Makan Desert (*Taklimakan Shamo*), a sandy, barren wasteland stretching 320,000 sq km (124,000 sq mi).⁵³ Its few inhabitants live in oasis towns and villages on its northern and southern fringes.^{54, 55} The strategically important Junggar Basin holds some of China's largest oil and coal deposits.⁵⁶

The Tibetan Highlands

The entire southwestern region of China is made up of the sparsely populated Tibetan Highlands. Known as *Xizang* in Mandarin, this region is larger than Western Europe, and consists mostly of high-altitude plateau. The Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, as it is known in China, is surrounded by some of the world's highest mountains. This includes Mount Everest (*Qomolangma Feng*), which rises 8,850 m (29,029 ft) above sea level and is part of the



Mount Everest, Himalayas, Tibet Flickr/Göran Höglund (Kartläsarn)

Himalayan Mountains separating China from Nepal.⁵⁷ To the northwest, Mount Kailas is sacred to Tibetan Buddhists, who make a pilgrimage around the mountain's 57-kilometer (35 mi) base, sometimes making the arduous trek in a series of full-body prostrations.^{58, 59, 60}

Geographically, the plateau can be divided into the west and northwest nomadic lake region, and the east, west, and south agricultural river region. The former, which occupies half of the land area, is covered by open alpine grassland and dotted with lakes, many of which are saline. The river region consists of forested mountains, fertile valleys, and rivers; all major cities and towns lie in this area.^{61, 62}

The permanently frozen ground that covers more than half the plateau region, as well as the 37,000 glaciers on the Chinese side alone, feed some of Asia's principal rivers, including China's Yangtze and Yellow rivers.⁶³ Glacial thawing over the past few decades has contributed to the disappearance of thousands of small rivers in China.^{64, 65, 66}

The Southern Uplands



Terraces of houses and rice paddies, Qjandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou Province, southwestern China Flickr/Ken Marshall

The Southern Uplands consist of southeastern China and the eastern Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. Most of this region is hilly or moderately mountainous, apart from the Pearl River Delta, a 7,500 sq km (2,900 sq mi) plain formed by an extensive river system that empties into the South China Sea. Its wetlands, estuaries, lowlands, and plains made it a historically important rice-growing region.⁶⁷ Over the last 20 years, it has seen rapid economic growth and urbanization, fueled by foreign investment and the

region's proximity to Hong Kong.^{68, 69, 70} To the west, the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau is an area of rolling hills, gorges, and limestone plateaus that have weathered to produce world-famous karst topography, such as the Stone Forest in Yunnan Province.^{71, 72} At 2,158 m (7,080 ft), Huanggang Peak, in the Wuyi Mountains, is the highest point in southeastern China.⁷³ It is one of 36 steep granite peaks that make up Huanggang Mountain, famous throughout Chinese artistic history for its mist-covered jagged peaks.^{74, 75, 76}

Bodies of Water

Poyang Lake (Poyang Hu)

Located in the southeast, Poyang was once China's largest freshwater lake. The lake—actually a system of lakes and marshes—fluctuates radically in size by season; at its peak, it was 2,734 sq km (1,055 sq mi), roughly the size of Rhode Island. Historically, the lake area would become extensive marshland in winter. During the summer floods, the Yangtze spilled over into the lake area, and the surrounding farmlands flooded.⁷⁷ But in recent years, Poyang has diminished to a quarter of its size during the rainy season; in the winter, it has all but dried up. Experts indicate this is caused by the Three Gorges Dam, the dredging of the lakebed for sand (concrete), and extreme drought.^{78, 79} Over 1 million people now face extreme water shortages, fishing villages are disappearing, and millions of migratory birds and several endangered species are threatened.^{80, 81}



Fishing with trained cormorants, a 1,300-year-old technique, Poyang Lake, Jiangxi Province Wikimedia/Ytrbzy

Dongting Lake (Dongting Hu)

Located in northeastern Hunan Province, Dongting Lake is where dragon boat racing and rice farming originated; more rice is produced in the region today than any other in China.⁸² At 2,820 sq km (1,089 sq mi), Dongting is China's second-largest freshwater lake. Dongting faces many of the same challenges as Poyang. It relies on the Yangtze and its tributaries for water, and fluctuates dramatically from season to season.⁸³ In the 1980s, hundreds of dikes were installed throughout the region to protect farmland and homes from the devastating floods.^{84, 85} The Three Gorges Dam also regulates the flow of the Yangtze and limits flooding. But the dam's tight grip on water flow, combined with severe drought since 2010, has caused Dongting's water



Upstream from Dongting Lake, the Three Gorges Dam, Yichang, Hubei Province Wikimedia/Christoph Filnköfl

levels to drop dramatically.⁸⁶ Today, the lake is half the size it was 50 years ago, and widespread water shortages are a reality for the area's inhabitants.^{87, 88}

Lake Tai (Tai Hu)

Lake Tai (Grand Lake) lies in the East China coastal area, surrounded by several cities, including affluent and picturesque Suzhou. Lake Tai, the third-largest freshwater lake in China, with an area of 2,425 sq km (935 sq mi), is the main drinking water source for roughly 10 million Chinese. Lake Tai is famous for its natural beauty and the intricate pattern of canals and irrigation channels that run from it. Within in the lake lie roughly 90 islands, the largest of which is Xishan, the summer retreat of Wu emperors.



Looking across Lake Tai at the skyline of Wuxi, Jiangsu Province goodfreephotos.com

The area around Lake Tai is one of the fastest-growing regions in China, and industrialization has severely polluted the lake. In the 1990s, farmers tending their rice paddies wore gloves and rubber boots; without them, irrigated water would cause their skin to peel off.^{89, 90} In 2007, the Chinese government undertook a large-scale cleanup effort to address the toxic waste from the hundreds of factories on Lake Tai's shores, closing factories and tightening water treatment regulations. To date, the waters of Lake Tai are still polluted because local governments often ignore or block environmental efforts.

South China Sea (Nan Hai)

The South China Sea (*Nan Hai*) is a division of the western Pacific Ocean. It borders southern China and the Southeast Asian mainland. Summer typhoons are frequent, and surface waters are relatively warm. The extensive runoff of nutrient-rich waters from the mainland support a wealth of marine life. As such, the South China Sea is heavily fished for its abundance of tuna, mackerel, anchovy, shrimp, and shellfish. But overfishing in coastal waters has forced Chinese fishing vessels farther from home.^{91, 92} The sea also provides some of the world's most important shipping lanes for commerce and oil, as well as huge oil and natural gas deposits. China relies on these routes for 80% of its crude oil imports, and billions of dollars in trade annually.^{93, 94}

Because of the South China Sea’s economic importance, it is a point of conflict between China and its maritime neighbors. China claims almost the entire sea as its own, using a broad-sweeping “nine-dash line” that encircles most of the area, including the Spratly and Paracel Island groups.⁹⁵ The claim is disputed by China’s neighbors, and is so far not supported by international law.^{96, 97, 98, 99} The only maritime boundary agreement in the South China Sea, which establishes fishing rights in the Gulf of Tonkin, is between China and Vietnam.^{100, 101, 102} Since 2012, international territorial disputes, especially over the Spratly Islands, are increasingly frequent.^{103, 104}



*Statue of Guanyin, bodhisattva of compassion, facing the South China Sea, Nanshan Temple, Hainan Province
Flickr/Bas Leenders*

East China Sea (Dong Hai)

The East China Sea is an arm of the western Pacific Ocean that borders eastern China, extends southwest to the Taiwan Strait, and connects to the South China Sea. To the north, it extends to the Yellow Sea, which lies between China and the Korean peninsula. The sea is rich in marine life, and China, Japan, and North and South Korea actively fish its waters. The fishing, mostly by small local boats, is for tuna, mackerel, shrimp, sardines, and shellfish. Petroleum and natural gas deposits lie under the sea’s continental shelf, and a small percentage of China’s oil and natural gas comes from its offshore wells in the East China Sea. These discoveries have led to disputes between the bordering countries over control.¹⁰⁵ In addition to the local shipping traffic, the East China Sea serves as the main shipping route from the South China Sea to North Pacific ports. China’s main port to the East China Sea is Shanghai.¹⁰⁶



*Port of Yangshan, a deep-water port for container ships in Hangzhou Bay, south of Shanghai, East China Sea
Wikimedia/Marqueed*

Rivers

Yangtze River (Chang Jiang)



Suspension bridge across the Yangtze River, Xinling, west Hubei Province Flickr/Bernd Thaller

The Yangtze, or Long River, follows a course of 6,300 km (3,915 mi), making it the world's third-longest river (after the Nile and the Amazon).¹⁰⁷ Originating in the Tibetan Plateau, it traverses nine provinces and irrigates some of China's most fertile fields in the Yangtze Delta before emptying into the East China Sea at Shanghai.¹⁰⁸ Along the way, several major rivers, including the Han (*Han Jiang*), and thousands of lakes feed into it. Navigable all year, it is a major

transportation artery. Cargo transport on the river reached 2.3 billion tons in 2015.¹⁰⁹ Heavy shipping and industrial pollution have taken a toll on the river's rare native aquatic life, such as the Yangtze River Dolphin, and the health of the Chinese who depend on its waters.^{110, 111, 112, 113} The river's Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydroelectric dam project in human history, was built to address flooding along the river and create a source of electricity.^{114, 115} The project, which took 17 years to complete, required resettlement of the 1.3 million people who lived in the area that was flooded. Because of rapid changes in the reservoir water level, safety and environmental concerns remain.^{116, 117, 118}

Yellow River (Huang He)



Visitors walking along the pier at Qingdao, Yellow River, Shandong Province Flickr/Andrew Smith

The second-longest river in China, the Yellow River begins in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, crosses the North China Plain, and empties into the Bohai Sea some 5,500 km (3,400 mi) away. The word *huang* (yellow) refers to the high concentration of yellowish silt that clouds the river's water. Historically, flooding has discharged as much as a billion tons of this sediment into the delta each year, creating rich farming soil. China's earliest inhabitants settled along the river's

banks, where they farmed and fished. For centuries, the Yellow River Basin formed China’s economic, social, and political backbone. As such, it is considered the cradle of Chinese civilization. But destructive floods caused the deaths of millions living near it, and the river earned the name “China’s Sorrow.” The impact of climate change and the river’s numerous dams is the focus of public concern. These have reduced the river’s flow, which supports 147 million Chinese, to a trickle at times.^{119, 120} Moreover, industry waste and sewage have heavily polluted the river; over one-third is unusable for agriculture or industry.¹²¹ In the lower reaches, millions of acres of farmland have been abandoned.^{122, 123, 124}

Pearl River (Zhu Jiang)

The name Pearl River is commonly used for the Xi River system, made up of the Bei (North), Xi (West), and Dong (East) rivers. These tributaries make up the Pearl River Delta, and merge into the Pearl River itself—the widest point of the system—and then into the South China Sea. Measured from the headstream of the Xi River, the Pearl River is 2,214 km (1,376 mi) long. The Pearl River Delta has rapidly transformed from a rural region with an agriculture-based economy to one of the most densely populated and industrialized areas in China.^{125, 126} The river system has long supported industrial growth in the delta, called the “world’s factory floor,” while serving as a source of drinking water for the region’s 65 million inhabitants. But factory runoff has made the river system highly polluted and unfit as a drinking water source.^{127, 128} Despite this, the entire region is still intensively cultivated and fished, leading to concerns about food contamination.^{129, 130} In response, local governments began enforcing environmental regulations, pushing out polluting factories and attracting nonpolluting industries, such as higher-end manufacturing and finance.¹³¹



Commercial and industrial buildings along the banks of the Zhu Jiang (Pearl River), Guangzhou, southern China Wikimedia

Amur River (Heilong Jiang)

The *Heilong Jiang*, or Black Dragon River, is China’s northernmost major river. It forms most of China’s northeastern boundary with Russia, where it is known as the Amur. At 3,101 km (1,927 mi), it is China’s third-longest river, after the Yangtze and the

Yellow rivers.¹³² Historically, the Amur was the East's main passage for trade before the Trans-Siberian Railway. It was also a sometimes contentious focal point for foreign relations, immigration, and trade between Russia and China.¹³³ The Amur's importance as a waterway increased in the 1990s, when a trade agreement between the two countries gave China better access to Siberia's natural resources, including much-needed oil and gas.¹³⁴ The Chinese-Russian joint construction of a 20-km (12-mi) cross-border rail bridge will dramatically reduce transport distance for cargo and travelers after its completion in 2019.^{135, 136}

Other Rivers

Alongside the Yangtze, the Mekong (Lancang Jiang) and Salween (Nu Jiang) rivers originate in the mountains of the Tibetan Plateau. At their upper reaches, these three great rivers of Asia are known as the *Jinsha*, *Lancang*, and *Ninjiang*. They flow south into mountainous northwest Yunnan Province, where they cut through steep gorges bordered by glacial mountains in what is the Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage Site. This area is one of the most biologically rich regions of the world, and concerns focus on the environmental impact of the numerous dams being constructed along these rivers.^{137, 138} Additionally, the Mekong and Salween are important water sources for China's neighbors to the south—Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar.¹³⁹



Tiger Leaping Gorge, Yangtze River, Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage Site, Yunnan Province Wikimedia/ Peter Morgan

Cities

New wealth rests in China's cities. Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing, the four municipalities directly under the control of the central government (*zhixiashi*), have all served as pacesetters for China's sociopolitical development and economic growth. In recent decades, these four megacities have undergone dynamic transformations.¹⁴⁰ Cities within the Yangtze and Pearl river deltas and the capital region are merging into powerful complex systems of interdependent cities.¹⁴¹ These changes have had a strong impact on the politics and economy of the country. It is estimated that by 2030, 7 of the top 10 cities in the world in terms of the highest contributions to the value of all final goods and services produced

worldwide will be in China: Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing, Guagzhou, Shenzhen, Chongqing, and Suzhou.¹⁴²

Shanghai



Green spaces and clean waterways, part of modern Shanghai Flickr/Asian Development Bank

residents. It is a dynamic, international city known for business, shopping, nightlife, and sophistication.^{145, 146, 147}

The shimmering city of Shanghai (City on the Sea) is China's largest metropolis and a leading industrial and commercial center.¹⁴³ Shanghai lies in the flourishing Yangtze River Delta, on the coast of the East China Sea. Just a small fishing village until the treaty following the First Opium War opened it up to Western trade, today Shanghai is the world's busiest port city.¹⁴⁴ Shanghai is China's most modern city, and it is often likened to New York, both in density of population and the attitude among



Market alley with skyscraper in background, Da Pu Qiao district, Shanghai Flickr/Xiquinho Silva

would be not out of place in the West are a symbol of the nouveau riche.^{148, 149, 150, 151}

Shanghai has also become a city of extremes, and its dramatic transformation has come at a high price for its poorer residents. Unregistered migrant workers account for roughly 40% of the city's total population of 24 million. The gap between rich and poor is evident. Run-down apartment buildings and narrow streets housing old-world markets contrast with a backdrop of cranes, neon-lit elevated freeways, and towering skyscrapers. Just outside the city, gated communities that

Beijing

Situated in the northernmost portion of the North China Plain, Beijing (formerly Peking) is China's political, economic, and cultural heart. The city has been the Chinese capital for most of the last 750 years. With a population of over 21 million, Beijing is China's

second-largest city and home to many of the central government’s key leaders and operations, both past and present. It is a city known for its historic sites, the “Bird’s Nest” Olympic Stadium, the Peking Opera, notoriously congested traffic, and unforgiving pollution. Beijing is one of the global economy’s most important hubs, and one of the most prosperous and developed cities in China.^{152, 153}



Urban skyline at sunset, Beijing Flickr/Chris McMillon

The Forbidden City, located in the center of Beijing, was the Chinese imperial palace and the political and ceremonial center of Chinese government for nearly 500 years. The immense complex of 980 buildings and 8,000 chambers housed the emperors, their families, and 8,000-10,000 concubines and servants. Access to the city was barred to most people; even government officials had limited access.¹⁵⁴ In the 20th century, the Communists incorporated the structure into their vision of a new China, rather than razing it as a relic of the country’s feudal past.¹⁵⁵ Tiananmen square, the gateway to the Forbidden City, was expanded, making it suitable for rallies. Massive buildings, which currently house government offices and museums, flank the square.¹⁵⁶ Radial concentric ring roads (beltways) circle the city.



The Forbidden City, once closed to all but the imperial family and their servants Flickr/David Stanley

Guangzhou

China’s third-largest city is the capital of Guangdong Province and a thriving commercial and trading center. Guangzhou has a population of 13 million, and, like many of China’s urban centers, is constantly growing due to an influx of rural Chinese. With strong rail and road links to both the interior and coastal Hong Kong, as well as excellent port facilities, Guangzhou, and the entire Pearl River Delta region to the south, has become a shipping hub for many industrial and consumer goods produced in southern China.

Once known as Canton, Guangzhou was the main port for trade with Westerners, especially the British, from the 17th to the 19th century. At that time, all foreign trade coming into China was confined to Guangzhou, and it was the main outlet for China’s tea, rhubarb, silk, spices, and porcelain. It was also the entry point for silver and opium.¹⁵⁷ Guangzhou was one of the cradles of the 1911-1912 Chinese Revolution, and its political base during this period.¹⁵⁸



Highrises on the banks of the Pearl River, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province Flickr/Xiquinho Silva

Guangzhou is considered the home of traditional (Cantonese) Chinese food. Throughout China, Guangzhou’s wholesale food market is famous for its immense volume and choices. As one of the largest manufacturing hubs in China, however, Guangzhou’s waters and farmland are now intensely polluted. Produce harvested in the region contains staggering amounts of pesticides, fertilizers, and heavy metals, and the local fish is becoming inedible.^{159, 160, 161}

Shenzhen



City of Shenzhen, Shenzhen river and rice fields in the background, Guangdong Province Wikimedia/SSDPenguin

On the coast of the South China Sea and just a 30-minute subway ride from Hong Kong, Shenzhen is Southern China’s most important financial center and port.^{162, 163} Most significantly, this Pearl River Delta city is China’s electronics hub; factories here assemble most of the world’s electronic devices. Thirty years ago, Shenzhen was a small border city of 30,000 people.¹⁶⁴ In 1979, the city was afforded tax breaks and other economic incentives that propelled

its extraordinary growth. Today, Shenzhen is home to more than 12 million people, the headquarters of numerous high-tech companies, and one of the hottest destinations for foreign investment.¹⁶⁵

Shenzhen has been called a tech nirvana for hardware startups. High-tech manufacturers have flocked to Shenzhen for its entrepreneurial spirit, its open-source culture, and easy access to every imaginable electronic component, packager,

and shipper. Shenzhen's manufacturing environment is rooted in the Chinese culture of *shanzhai*, which can refer to counterfeit electronic goods, but also means open-source manufacturing.¹⁶⁶ In the same way programmers share code for others to improve on, Shenzhen manufacturers view product design as something they can borrow freely and alter. In their eyes, business success is a matter of speed and execution, not necessarily originality.¹⁶⁷ Notably, Apple set up a research and development center in Shenzhen to combat Chinese rival companies that have taken market share from the iPhone.¹⁶⁸



Cable factory workstation, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province
Flickr/Chris

Chongqing

Located in southwestern China, Chongqing is the leading river port, transportation hub, and traditional center of commerce and heavy industry for the upper Yangtze River region.¹⁶⁹ Following Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin, Chongqing was made a municipality directly under Beijing's control in 1997. This designation gave it the same rank as a province, bestowed such benefits as tax breaks and special private property rights, and targeted it as an engine of growth for the rest of the nation.¹⁷⁰ Since then, the municipality has been one of the fastest-growing areas in China. In 2016, the country's largest shale gas project began production in Chongqing.^{171, 172} As of early 2017, central Chongqing had a population of roughly 8 million; the entire municipality exceeded 30 million.^{173, 174, 175, 176}



Looking northwest towards Chengdu (Sichuan Province),
Chongqing's inland ports at the confluence of the Yangtze and
Jialing rivers Wikimedia/Oliver Ren

During the Japanese occupation, Chongqing was the wartime capital of China, and later became the center of China's weapons industry.¹⁷⁷ Today, it is a powerhouse for motorcycle manufacturing, and an industrial center for iron, steel, and aluminum production.¹⁷⁸

Outside the city center, however, over half the municipality's residents live in the fertile Sichuan Basin, and remain dependent on farming for their livelihood.^{179, 180, 181}

Tianjin

With over 15.5 million residents, Tianjin is the third-largest urban area in China, after Shanghai and Beijing. An avenue to the Yellow Sea and former treaty port, Tianjin lies in northeastern China on the Bohai Gulf. Tianjin's cityscape is a hybrid of modern Chinese high-rises and foreign-style buildings.¹⁸² Just 120 km (75 mi) southeast of Beijing, Tianjin is the commercial gateway to the capital and a major destination for foreign investment and research and development. It is also



Hai He riverfront in Tianjin Flickr/Caitriana Nocholson

North China's most important manufacturing center and leading port, through which most of the region's products are shipped overseas. Biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and information technology are also major industries. Nicknamed the Censorship Capital, China's leading internet information providers have their censorship departments in Tianjin. These factors make Tianjin a rising economic powerhouse that rivals the Yangtze and Pearl River deltas.¹⁸³

In 2017, the Chinese government took the first steps toward merging the nearby cities of Beijing and Shijiazhuang with Tianjin by high-speed rail. With the goal of eventually creating one contiguous megacity called Jing-Jin-Ji, the government plans to combine Beijing's intellectual talent and financial resources with Tianjin's port access and Shijiazhuang's steel, iron, and concrete factories. The resulting high-end manufacturing and technology hub would be more populated than Japan by roughly 3 million people.^{184, 185}

Chengdu

Chengdu is the capital of China's lush Sichuan Province and, with 14 million inhabitants, its fifth-most populous city. Established in 311 B.C.E., Chengdu is an ancient city that, for centuries, was linked closely with the arts and crafts trades. During the Han Dynasty, it developed a reputation for silk brocade, and later as a printing center, producing the world's first paper money during the Song Dynasty.^{186, 187} Today, Chengdu is a critical



Jin River (Jin Jiang) and Anshun Bridge in Chengdu, Sichuan Province Flickr/DvYang

logistics and transportation hub, along with the central city of Wuhan. It is also western China's center for finance and high-tech manufacturing.¹⁸⁸ According to official statements, half the world's iPads and Intel laptop computer chips are made in Chengdu.¹⁸⁹ It is also the gateway to Tibet, where travelers stop for visas and board planes or trains to Lhasa. The Chinese government is constructing a high-speed railway spanning the 1,600 km (1,000 mi) from Chengdu to Lhasa, but the difficult terrain has pushed the completion date to 2030.¹⁹⁰ Despite being one of China's top 10 emerging cities, it maintains a reputation as one of the country's most livable cities, famed for its relaxed atmosphere, thousands of teahouses, and hot pot restaurants.^{191, 192} Chengdu is also considered one of the best places to see giant pandas.¹⁹³

Lhasa



View of Lhasa, Potala Palace in the distance Wikimedia/Qeqertaq

Lhasa (Ground of the Gods) is the capital of the Xizang Zizhiqu Autonomous Region (Tibet) in southwestern China, a vast area of plateaus and mountains, including Mount Everest. Lhasa is over 1,300 years old, and has been the capital of Tibet since 1642. It is also the center of Tibetan Buddhism, and Tibetans considered the city holy. The 14th Dalai Lama (Tibet's exiled spiritual leader), and all previous Dalai Lamas for over 500 years called Lhasa home. Chinese troops moved into Lhasa in 1951, but it remained under Tibetan authority until the Tibetan uprising in 1959, when direct Chinese administration was imposed. The 14th Dalai Lama and many Tibetans fled to India.

The Potala Palace is Lhasa's most recognizable landmark. Set high above the city and the Lhasa River, the immense religious and administrative complex was the historical residence of the Dalai Lamas.¹⁹⁴ Tsuglagkhang (Jokhang) Temple, built in the mid-seventh century in the center of Lhasa, is considered the holiest place in Tibet. Before 1951, the city's economy was based on the historic trade routes that converged on Lhasa



Potala Palace, set high above Lhasa, the historical residence of the Dalai Lamas Flickr/Laika ac

from China, India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Today, tourism is an increasingly important component of the local economy, and Lhasa has been designated one of China's historic and cultural cities.¹⁹⁵ Foreigners traveling to Tibet must apply for a permit and receive approval from the tourism or foreign affairs departments.

In 2016, encouraged by the Chinese government, ethnic Han migrants coming from densely populated coastal provinces have begun moving to Lhasa in greater numbers.¹⁹⁶ Despite Tibet's official designation as a culturally protected area, the forced integration of Han Chinese into Tibet is seen as part of a concerted effort to homogenize China.¹⁹⁷

History—Imperial Dynasties

Qin Dynasty



Terracotta warrior from the necropolis of Shihuangdi, first emperor of China, near Xi'an Flickr/Mary Haarsch

Chinese history records a series of dynasties that rose to power, consolidated or expanded their domain, and eventually declined and were replaced by a new dynasty. Several had a profound influence on the shape of China to come, including China's first dynasty, the Qin, and its first emperor, Shihuangdi (259-210 B.C.E.). Also known as Qin Shi Huangdi (First Emperor of Qin), he is among China's most renowned emperors and credited with unifying China and building the first iteration of the wall to keep out the Mongols from the north.¹⁹⁸

For 500 years, 7 kingdoms fought for dominance in what is known as the Warring States Period; the most powerful of these were the Han, Chu, and Qin. The Qin kingdom was distinguished by having the largest army at the time, with a military discipline comparable to the Spartans, and advanced weapons and fighting methods. These included the cross-bow and sword coatings of chrome, a metal alloy that would not be “invented” and patented for another 2,000 years.¹⁹⁹

Once Shihuangdi brought the other six kingdoms into submission, he proceeded to make sweeping changes aimed at unifying all aspects of the empire. He standardized weights and measures, and established a common currency (the *Ban Liang* coin). Shihuangdi also abandoned regional scripts to form one language and one communication system for all of China. He abolished feudalism, divided the empire into 36 governor-commanded military districts, and compelled the royal families from each of the kingdoms to move to the capital—Xianyang, in Central China—where they could be closely supervised.^{200, 201} Shihuangdi set in motion a level of imperial authority that all future dynasties would claim, one legitimized by his own “Mandate of Heaven.”²⁰² He went so far as to seek immortality by commissioning a vast necropolis populated with a Terracotta army, discovered near Xi’an in 1974.²⁰³



Funerary army of Qin Dynasty emperor Shihuangdi, near Xi’an, Shaanxi Province Flickr/Almir de Fritas

Han Dynasty

The 400 years of Han Dynasty rule (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) was a time of peace and prosperity. The dynasty created irrigation and water conservation projects and improved farming tools. Contact with the West through the Silk Road was first established in the Han period. During Emperor Wu’s time, China incorporated the whole of modern China, to include northern Vietnam, Inner Mongolia, southern Manchuria, and most of Korea.²⁰⁴ Among the Han Dynasty’s greatest achievements was the invention of paper. It also established the social and moral basis of Chinese society for years to come by making Confucianism the official state ideology. Modern Chinese Han derive their name from the Han Dynasty.²⁰⁵

Tang Dynasty

From 618-907 C.E., the Tang Dynasty ruled China. It is regarded as the greatest imperial dynasty in ancient Chinese history. It was a period of reform and cultural advancement; changes made to government and social structures, the military, education, and religious practices lay the groundwork for current Chinese policies. Many of China’s most impressive inventions and advancements (clocks, gunpowder, air conditioning, gas stoves, woodblock printing, and advancements in medicine,

science, technology, architecture, and literature) were made during the Tang Dynasty. Public libraries were built to house all the books in print, and calendars were printed for wide distribution. The emperors Taizong, Wu Zetian (China's only female ruler), and Xuanzong were the drivers behind these reforms.²⁰⁶

Ming Dynasty



Scroll depicting Jiajing (1507-1567), 11th emperor of the Ming Dynasty, on his state barge *Wikimedia/PericlesofAthens*

The Ming Dynasty, the last of the great Chinese dynasties, came to power by overthrowing the short but harsh rule of the Mongols. At its height, the Ming dynasty made China a global force, influencing trade, culture, and politics for East Asia and the Turks to the west, as well as Vietnam and Myanmar. This period in China's history is described as a "golden age," when it produced some of the most beautiful paintings and objects ever made. From 1368 to 1644, the Ming Dynasty completed the Great

Wall in the form it is known today, and built the Forbidden City. At that time, China was a world leader in shipbuilding and navigation; the dynasty's most famous admiral and navigator, Zheng He, sailed a huge armada as far as Africa. But Confucianism did not encourage trade, and this, combined with a belief in the superiority of the Chinese culture, led later Ming emperors to close the country's doors, limiting outside access to a few port cities in the south.²⁰⁷

Qing Dynasty and the Opium Wars

The Manchus invaded China in 1644 C.E. and established the Qing Dynasty, which ruled China until 1911. Under the Qing, the empire expanded its territory to include Outer Mongolia, Tibet, Dzungaria, Turkistan, and Nepal. Its population also grew from 150 million to 450 million. Floods, famine, corruption, and the emperors' resistance to modernization and inability to meet the problems caused by the expanding population caused unrest.²⁰⁸

Until the 19th century, China exported many goods to Europe, including tea, silk, and porcelain, but it imported only silver, as the Chinese believed outsiders had little to offer. That changed when the British began importing opium into Canton (now Guangzhou).

A series of events led to the Opium Wars (1839-1858) between the British Empire, the French, and China. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Boxer Rebellion (1900) followed. All resulted in a series of unequal treaties imposed on the ailing Qing Dynasty, enabling Europeans to enjoy territorial rights, meaning they were not subject to Chinese law.²⁰⁹ Among these was the Treaty of Nanking, which ceded Hong Kong to the British. These events further weakened the monarchy and the existing social order, and led to increased sentiments of nationalism.²¹⁰



Canton (Guangzhou) harbor with floating barges that served as opium warehouses Flickr/Okinawa Soba (Rob)

History—Republican China



Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), colorized black and white portrait Wikimedia/Militaryace

In 1911, revolutionaries in southern China overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established in its place the Republic of China, ending the imperial system. In the years that followed, Sun Yat-sen, who formed the Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*), rose to power.²¹¹ The republic, however, struggled to assert authority over the country, parts of which were controlled by warlords. In the wake of World War I, Germany's territorial holding in China was not returned to Chinese sovereignty but instead awarded to the Japanese in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Patriotic youth protested in what became known as the May Fourth Movement, China's first large-scale student movement.^{212, 213} Questioning how their country had become so weak, the students promoted scientific and democratic ideas. This became part of the New Culture Movement, aimed at enabling China to overcome its backwardness and defend its interests on the international stage. Concerns related to modernization set off an intellectual debate that gave rise to different groups, including the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).²¹⁴

The government finally subdued warlords in southern China and brought that part of China under Nationalist Party control in 1925, shortly before the death of Sun Yat-sen.

Several years later, Jiang Jieshi (also written as Chiang Kai-shek) emerged as the new leader, viewing the Communists as the primary threat to his government.

In 1931, the Japanese Imperial Army invaded Manchuria. Jiang Jieshi ordered his forces not to resist, in line with his policy of “first internal pacification then external resistance.”²¹⁵ As his troops retreated, the CCP organized an anti-Japanese resistance in the countryside. Resistance grew after what became known as the Rape of Nanking, when, in 1937, Japanese Imperial Army forces massacred hundreds of thousands of people—including soldiers and civilians. The event also laid the foundation for long-term anti-Japanese sentiment.^{216, 217, 218, 219} Although the Communists had been largely unsuccessful in organizing worker strikes in Shanghai, the peasants saw them as patriots defending the homeland.²²⁰ By some accounts, the Japanese invasion changed the fortunes of the Communist movement.²²¹ After the Japanese defeat in 1945, the Nationalists attempted to reassert control over the entire country. But corruption and high inflation hobbled the government. The CCP and its People’s Liberation Army ultimately forced Jiang Jieshi and his followers into exile in Taiwan. They set up a government there, politically severing the island from the Communist-ruled mainland.



Portrait of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) in military uniform Wikimedia/Spellcast

Mass Mobilization Campaigns



Mao Zedong, chairman of the CCP, before a crowd, circa 1950 Wikimedia/Charvex

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong founded the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The new government was initially welcomed by many who had suffered through war and financial insecurity wrought by rampant inflation. Landlords in the countryside, however, were immediately vilified for “exploiting the people.” In the Marxist view, the only way someone could get rich is by taking advantage of those who are weaker and profiting from their labor. Therefore, people from wealthy, urban families or with relatives abroad in capitalist countries were politically suspect from the start. Successive mass mobilization campaigns, which were a hallmark of Chinese Communist

rule, swept the country and the movement's numbers grew. During the Hundred Flowers movement (1957), intellectuals were encouraged by Mao to offer constructive feedback on the party's performance. Within the CCP's hierarchy, the rank and file were apprehensive about where this would lead. Their concerns were not misplaced; after all, they had seized the authority of the traditional intelligentsia, who were now being asked to evaluate the CCP's performance.²²²

One of those who offered criticism was a Harvard-educated physician, drawn home to Shanghai by the prospect of helping to build a "New China." He suggested doctors, not party secretaries, who were often uneducated peasants from the countryside, should run hospitals. "I took Mao at his word," he explained years later.²²³ Shocked by the outpouring of criticism from the population, the government launched a campaign to ferret out rightists, or those who questioned party leadership. The doctor was branded a rightist and sent away to break rocks in a quarry. His wife, also a medical doctor, lost her position as well. Their son, a promising premed student, was sent to the countryside.

The Great Leap Forward

After agricultural collectivization, farmers were organized into teams responsible for delivering a certain amount of grain to the state each year. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), Mao intended for China to become the world's leading economic power. He set high targets for the agriculture and the steel industries—annual production was to reach levels that far exceeded what China had ever produced. To that end, collective farms were grouped into massive communes of 20,000 people. These communes evolved into centers of industrial and agricultural production, becoming the basic unit of rural society. Workers were encouraged to devote all their time to increasing iron smelting and expanding the harvest. Metal implements of all types, including farming tools, were melted in furnaces.



Nursery school children eating a meal in a CCP People's Commune school, circa 1959 Wikimedia/Abasaa

Bad weather, discouraged workers, and the diversion of resources from farming to steel production led to a widespread drop in grain production in 1959 and 1960.²²⁴ Many cadres reported large harvests whether they had achieved them or not.²²⁵



Early commune-model steel furnaces built in backyards Wikimedia/Arlang1234

As the food supply in the communal dining halls dwindled, what remained was confiscated to feed city dwellers.²²⁶ Any farmer who refused to turn over grain risked being accused of hoarding, a serious charge.²²⁷ Experts estimate that between 15 and 40 million people in the countryside starved to death because of the Great Leap Forward.^{228, 229} While the number of deaths was not publicized in China, Mao's power within the government was greatly diminished. Though not directly repudiated, Mao was forced to retire from active leadership and allow others to make policy.

Mao, likely realizing his window of opportunity to shape China's future was closing, needed to reassert his authority in a dramatic way. In July 1966, the 72-year-old chairman swam across the Yangtze River. His feat was well publicized and "widely interpreted as a demonstration that Mao was still physically fit and able to continue to lead China on its revolutionary course."²³⁰ His brief wave to a small crowd after he emerged from the water would become immortalized in propaganda posters for years to follow.²³¹ Two days later, he appeared in Beijing. Declaring the need for "permanent revolution" to achieve a Communist utopia in the face of internal opposition, Mao launched his biggest mass movement to date, the Cultural Revolution. The campaign against bourgeois thinking was intended to prevent bureaucratic, Soviet-style Communism. The movement removed the more cautious bureaucrats, who Mao had earlier mocked as "women with bound feet."²³²

Cultural Revolution



Mao called on the nation to purge the "impure" elements of Chinese society.²³³ Armed with the *Little Red Book* of Mao's sayings, passionate followers denounced and persecuted teachers and intellectuals and enforced Mao's cult of personality. Among these followers was Mao's power base, the Red Guard, a political militia of students sworn to uphold the revolutionary line. Widespread book burnings were common. Criticism of

CCP Cultural Revolution messages expressed in two-color clip art books
Flickr/Kurt Groetsch

party officials, intellectuals, and “bourgeois values” turned violent. An estimated one million died in the purges that followed.^{234, 235, 236} Most law enforcement personnel retreated to avoid being accused of impeding the revolution, enabling Red Guards to take over functions normally handled by the police.²³⁷

In December 1968, Mao abruptly ordered the Red Guards to go to the countryside and learn from the peasants.²³⁸ This restored a degree of normalcy to urban life. Yet industrial production was limited because workplaces emphasized the ideological purity of their staff rather than meeting output targets. By the time the Cultural Revolution was declared over in 1976, Mao had died. His widow, Jiang Qing, and three others, were blamed for the excesses of the period in which millions of lives were ruined. Known as the Gang of Four, they were sentenced to long prison terms. CCP Secretary General Deng Xiaoping, who Mao had called a “capitalist roader” before banishing him to the countryside, returned after Mao’s death and took up leadership of the PRC. Under his influence, China embarked on a path of market-oriented reform.

Reforms Introduced

Chinese refer to the reforms that ensued as “Socialism with Chinese characteristics.” The godfather of these reforms, Deng Xiaoping, believed that socialism and a market economy were “not incompatible.” He famously said, “It doesn’t matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice.” In 1979, he ended discrimination against those with “bad class backgrounds” (landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and rightists), which had stigmatized family members during the Mao era. Many who were sent away for reeducation, began to receive permission to return to their former homes. They became eligible for job reinstatement or first-time placement, which put pressure on the government to create job opportunities. In moving away from class struggle and toward economic development, Deng reassured a populace weary of mass mobilization campaigns that it was all right for some people to get rich first. The Chinese people reacted cautiously, having lived through several decades in which capitalists were vilified and targeted for abuse.



Social reformer Deng Xiaoping, 1979
Wikimedia/Hohum

Many of the first wave of entrepreneurs were ex-cons and others who could not secure prized public-sector jobs; these citizens had little to lose if the reforms were reversed. While they were initially limited to a maximum of five employees, individual business proprietors (*getihu*) could pool household labor to expand their businesses. Small independent businesses quickly appeared all over the country. Suburban peasants took advantage of their ability to market cash crops to city residents. Local governments scrambled to establish regulations covering hygiene, quality, and taxation.²³⁹ Although consumers were happy to have greater choice, the introduction of free markets also unleashed inflation, which was unknown during the first three decades of Communist rule. Those who had saved most of their salaries over the years found their money could buy very little.

1989 Democracy Movement

The 1980s was also a period of self-reflection. Older intellectuals pondered why no one had acted to stop the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese history, after all, is replete with tales of courageous scholar-officials who criticized imperial policy, knowing it would lead to their imprisonment and even execution.²⁴⁰ Information flowing in revealed that surrounding countries, traditionally tributary states, were wealthier and more modern than China.

The immediate catalyst for the demonstrations that led to the occupation of Tiananmen Square in Beijing in the spring of 1989 was the death of Hu Yaobang. Hu was a popular reformer who had been dismissed from his position of CCP general secretary during an earlier round of student demonstrations in 1987. Paying their respects on Tiananmen Square gave ordinary people the chance to congregate and pass judgment on the party's handling of the economic reforms.



Chinese military reaction to pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square, June 1989 Flickr/Michael Mandiberg

College students, after prevailing in an intensely competitive process to secure acceptance at a university, were particularly dissatisfied. A familiar complaint was that *getihu*, who set up stalls outside school gates, earned more money than a professor did. In addition to an income divide, living conditions on campuses were significantly worse

than in other urban districts.²⁴¹ The protests culminated with a government crackdown on the demonstrators, leaving an unknown number dead, with some estimates in the thousands. The event was a watershed moment for Chinese politics, despite the lack of immediate change. For the government, the moment of democratic expression and its aftermath represented losing control. For all but educated Chinese or those who have lived abroad, the event has been all but censored.²⁴²

Though it did not deviate from the path of market reform, the Chinese government was severely criticized by the outside world for its response to the Tiananmen peaceful protesters. Despite the crackdown, foreign investors continued to see China's large market as attractive. Over time, deepening economic reforms raised the standard of living for most Chinese. A more vibrant private sector rewarded education and hard work with higher salaries. Recognizing the role universities play in technological innovation and research, the government gave higher education a greater funding priority. This has reduced the impetus for intellectuals to take to the streets in protest.

Government



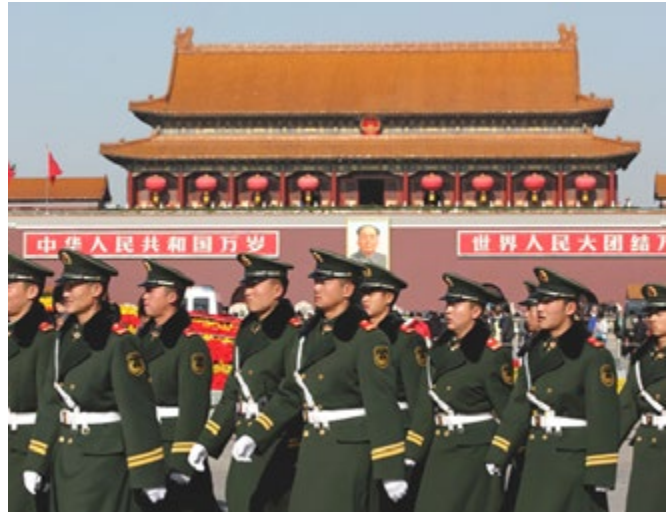
President Xi Jinping, People's Republic of China, October 2013 Wikimedia/Antilong

President and Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping assumed office in 2012. Since then, he has emphasized stronger leadership, introduced the notion of the “Chinese dream” to “rejuvenate” China, launched a campaign against corruption that has removed some of China's highest officials, and introduced heavier state controls. He has made clear his disinterest in adopting Western-style democracy and universal rights, and exerts an authoritarian control to suppress perceived threats and achieve “social stability” and a “harmonious society.” His administration faces many challenges, including income inequality, a slowing economy, ethnic tensions, severe pollution, and food safety problems. Chinese do not have a meaningful right to vote or enjoy the basic freedoms of expression or religion that are provided in the Chinese constitution.

Still, many Chinese citizens enjoy a higher standard of living and a degree of personal choice unimaginable 30 years ago.^{243, 244}

Division of Authority

Most PRC political power rests with the seven members of its most senior decision-making body, the Standing Committee of the Politburo, of which President Xi Jinping is head. Politburo members are not elected—they gain and retain power through influential relationships. The Politburo controls the People’s Liberation Army through its Military Affairs Commission, the National People’s Congress, or parliament, and the administrative arm of the government, the State Council.²⁴⁵ The CCP and the state are



Formation of People’s Liberation Army soldiers, Tiananmen Gate, Beijing Flickr/Times Asi

deeply interconnected, and many state officials are also party members.²⁴⁶ Power is spread horizontally throughout the government and party apparatus. As a result, lower-level party secretaries and municipal officials have always enjoyed discretionary authority, enabling them to create local fiefdoms.

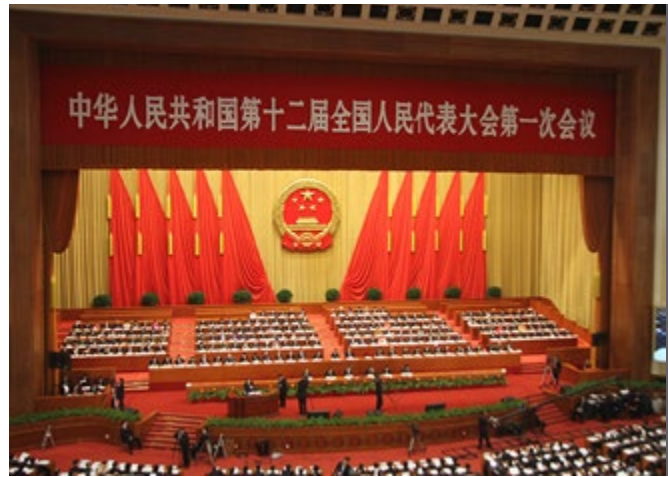
Despite their liberalization of the economy, China’s leaders have been careful to keep a tight grip on its politicians and party members, the army, and its propaganda machine. They control the media through China’s Propaganda Department, which quietly issues daily directives through email, text messages, and phone calls to the media, all the while staying out of public view.²⁴⁷

Petitioners

There is little legal framework allowing Chinese citizens to fight discrimination, abuse of power, or corruption in the system; there is no protection for whistleblowers.^{248, 249} Their only recourse is to petition (*shang fang*) higher levels of government, a practice that has survived since imperial times.²⁵⁰ China’s Bureau of Letters and Visits is tasked with providing people and organizations a hotline to local, provincial, and national governments. Still, the bureau sends most petitions to the place where the dispute originated rather than becoming directly involved.²⁵¹ As a result, petitioners risk retribution.^{252, 253}

Communist Party and Private Sector Relations

All government officials above the village level are party members. The CCP is a powerful and exclusive body, and the application process to become a formal member takes two years or more. Once in, party members have certain advantages that can solidify a person's *guanxi*, or influence within social networks. As of 2015, there were 89 million CCP members across China.²⁵⁴ Senior members quietly dictate all personnel appointments including those in universities, companies, and the media. High-ranking officials are also members of *lingdao xiaozu*, where policy is hashed out but deliberations are never discussed in the domestic press.²⁵⁵



Great Hall of the People, filled with delegates to the 12th National People's Congress, Beijing, 2013 Wikimedia/Dong Fang

As of 2016, the PRC could claim over one million millionaires and nearly 400 billionaires, three-quarters of whom owe their fortunes to either private business ownership or real estate speculation.^{256, 257, 258, 259} Observers have long predicted the emerging entrepreneurial class would challenge the one-party state's monopoly on power.²⁶⁰ Instead, the CCP has co-opted it; today, there is a far higher level of party membership among private entrepreneurs than the general populace.²⁶¹ The continued viability of their businesses requires them to maintain good relations with government officials who, desiring high rates of growth, are unlikely to allow the residential construction sector to falter. Those who lack such connections complain they are disadvantaged and unable to benefit from speculative investments.²⁶²



Happy Valley shopping mall in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province Wikimedia/Retailguychina

Media

In 2016, there were some 2,000 newspapers, 8,000 magazines, and 374 television stations in China.²⁶³ Media outlets must produce content people will pay for while not provoking the censors.²⁶⁴ Many publications, particularly new ones, and some TV shows are



Newspaper stand, Beijing Flickr/Ernie

devoted to sensationalist stories and celebrity gossip. Fashion magazines have also surged. For periodicals focused on national affairs, it is permissible to discuss societal problems. This includes sensitive subjects such as the urban-rural income disparity. What cannot be addressed in detail are tragedies and accidents that are the result of state violence, corruption, or negligence.²⁶⁵

Cognizant it cannot block critical news coming from the outside, the Chinese government has developed more sophisticated strategies to discredit unflattering stories. Spinning has replaced outright denial.²⁶⁶ The Propaganda Department manages public sentiment by ensuring nationalist rhetoric is the dominant voice on the internet; it pays internet users to post progovernment content, and plays on fears of the West.^{267, 268, 269, 270}

Economy

After the United States, China has the largest economy in the world. It is the largest manufacturer in the world, producing nearly half of the world's industrial goods, and more air-conditioners, high-speed trains, highways, shoes, machine tools, computers, and cellphones than any other country.²⁷¹ As such, this economic superpower is increasingly influential in the global economy.

China's extraordinary transformation and economic rise began in the 1980s with a series of market-based economic reforms put forward by Deng Xiaoping. Tax breaks were offered to foreign companies willing to invest in four designated coastal cities, including Shenzhen.²⁷² Now there are cities across the country that have become Special Economic Zones, and these cities, as well as overall foreign investment and trade, have boomed.²⁷³

Manufactured goods, which made up less than half of China's exports in 1978, now account for nearly 95% of exports. Over the years, these reforms fueled the fastest sustained growth by any major economy



Container ship loading at Port Shekou, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province Flickr/Chris

in history, lifting 800 million people out of poverty. Rapid economic expansion has also brought on many challenges, including income inequality, rapid urbanization, problems with environmental sustainability, and severe pollution.²⁷⁴ In addition, China faces challenges related to an aging population and internal labor migration.²⁷⁵

Challenges and Solutions

China has a long and rich history of farming, producing traditional crops of soybean, rice, barley, and tea. Today, China is the largest producer and consumer of many of the world's crops, and almost 40% of the country's labor force is employed in agriculture. As an industry, agriculture moved away from the collective farming of the Mao era, now placing land in the hands of farmers. While incomes have increased 20 times since then, rural farmers earn far less than urban workers.²⁷⁶ The agriculture industry has also employed new approaches to combating pollution and other problems by introducing corporate and organic farming approaches and diversifying crops.^{277, 278, 279, 280, 281}

China remains a developing country; the average income is a fraction of that earned in advanced countries, and its market reforms are still evolving. In 2014, there were over 70 million poor in rural areas, and state-owned companies (*yangqi*) still account for an important proportion of the national economy.^{282, 283}



Man working late at an internet cafe, Qingdao, Shandong Province Flickr/Gauthier Delecroix

The government's five-year plan, released in March 2016, stresses the need to increase consumer spending at home and boost industry and services innovation. The aim is to decrease dependence on exports and heavy industry fueled by low-skilled assembly, thereby bolstering economic growth, raising incomes, and reducing pollution.²⁸⁴ Along these lines, China began a campaign to support entrepreneurship, and has opened 1,600 high-tech incubators for startups.^{285, 286}

Ethnic Groups

Although the Han Chinese make up over 90% of the country's population, China is a multiethnic society. Officially, China has 56 ethnic groups, including the Han. Members of non-Han groups, referred to as the "minority nationalities," constitute only about 7% of the Chinese population but number more than 70 million people. These groups

include Zhuang, Hui, Manchu, Uyghur (Uighur), Miao, Yi, Tujia, Tibetan, Mongol, Dong, Buyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh, and Dai.²⁸⁷ They are concentrated in areas spanning nearly 60% of the country.



The five autonomous regions of China Graphic/DLIFLC

Because many of these frontier areas are politically sensitive, their populations have acquired an importance greater than their numbers. Since 1949, the Chinese government designated five regions as Autonomous Regions: Guangxi Zhuang (Guangxi), Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang Uyghur (Xinjiang), Ningxia Hui (Ningxia). This designation grants them official recognition, limited autonomy, and some cultural independence.^{288, 289} But that guarantee has not been faithfully carried out, particularly in areas like

Tibet and Xinjiang, where the government exerts unofficial efforts at control.²⁹⁰ These areas have minority government leaders, but the Han-dominated CCP remains the real source of power. In fact, the Chinese government is working to mold ethnic identities through a modernization process to establish “social homogenization.”²⁹¹

Han



Classroom, Baibi mountain village, Xijiang, Guizhou Province Flickr/Thomas Galvez

Han, who make up 92% of the population of China, are the majority ethnic group in every province, municipality, and autonomous region except for the autonomous regions of Xinjiang and Tibet, where Uyghurs and Tibetans are the majority, respectively. The name Han was derived from the Han dynasty; the dragon, the Great Wall, Confucianism, and the Yellow River symbolize the Han culture. Han Chinese value devotion to family, hard work, carefully controlled emotions, humility, and education. Although presented as a unified culture, Han peoples differ in many ways and speak mutually unintelligible languages including Mandarin, Wu, Yue, Hakka, Xiang, Gan, and Min.

Tibetan



Tibetan men en route to the Tibetan New Year's celebration, Qinghai Province, western China Flickr/Ding Zhou

Tibetans are probably China's best-known ethnic minority. There are 5.5 million Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region, and Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Historically, Tibetans were divided into two hereditary categories: lords and serfs. Serfs were bound to an estate, many of which were owned by monasteries, so land reform had religious implications.

Today, Tibetans make up 90% of the Chinese-controlled Tibet Autonomous Region. Their population consists of two distinct groups: nomads (*drokpa*), literally “high pasture people” who live in clans led by chiefs, and those who are sedentary and live in towns and cities.²⁹² In recent years, the PRC has forcibly moved nomads off rangelands and into towns.²⁹³



Tibetan woman and daughter, Tongren City, Huangnan County, Qinghai Flickr/Ding Zhou

When Buddhism was introduced to the region in the seventh century, Tibetans were warlike. They ruled the ancient Chinese capital of Chang'an, and occupied much of Gansu, Szechuan, and Yunnan provinces. The Tibetan conversion to Buddhism was gradual, and when the empire fell in the 10th century, the Tibetans withdrew.²⁹⁴ Though they share many basic beliefs, Tibetan Buddhism is distinct from traditional Chinese Buddhism; prayer flags, prayer-wheels, and Vajrayana practices

such as full-body prostration (*gyangchag*) are iconic to Tibet. The institution of the Dalai Lama is also a unique Tibetan tradition.^{295, 296}

The Chinese government, which took control of Tibet in 1959, defends its harsh treatment of monks as necessary to abolish a theocracy that enslaved people.²⁹⁷ In recent years, Tibetans, including monks, are regularly detained and beaten.^{298, 299}

Uyghur

The Uyghur ethnic minority makes up roughly 45% of the population of Xinjiang, which was ruled by many empires, including the Chinese, Turkic, and Mongol. In contrast to many Central Asian tribes, which forged a nomadic existence on the steppe, the Uyghurs were historically one of the few settled groups to establish extensive trading networks. Situated along a section of the legendary Silk Road, Uyghurs played an important role in cultural exchanges between the East and West, developing a unique culture and civilization. Among their traditions is the Uyghur Muqam, a unique form of improvisational music that was designated an Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.



Uyghur shepherds, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Flickr/ U.S. Army

Since China overthrew the short-lived state of East Turkestan in 1949, there has been large-scale immigration of Han Chinese into the region. Uyghurs fear that their traditional culture will be eroded. Most Uyghurs, who have maintained a strong connection to folk religious beliefs and customs, are Turkic Sunni Muslims. As such, they have always had a troubled relationship with the Chinese central government, which currently views Uyghurs as part of the global radical Islamist threat.³⁰⁰ In recent years, the PRC has banned fasting during Ramadan, prohibited beards, and banned veils in public places.^{301, 302, 303, 304, 305}



Elderly Uyghur men in front of the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar, Xinjiang, western China Flickr/Dan Lundberg

Language

China is a multilingual country. There are roughly eight different linguistic groups and hundreds of language varieties and dialects. Most often they are not mutually understandable, and differ from each other about as much as English and German.³⁰⁶ All forms of Chinese belong to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. They are typically

tonal, meaning that different intonations distinguish words that are otherwise pronounced identically.

Since 1955, the official language of the PRC has been Mandarin Chinese, also known as Modern Standard Chinese or *putonghua* (common language). It is spoken by over 1 billion people in China, and is the basis for the modern writing system.^{307, 308} Mandarin is the language of government and school instruction. It is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations. There are Mandarin speakers among all 56 official ethnic groups in China, but most native speakers are ethnic Hans.³⁰⁹ Thus, Mandarin is also called *hanyu* (Han language). The sound system of spoken standard Mandarin is based on the Beijing dialect, but there are other dialects of Mandarin, including *Xinan Guanhua* (Southwestern Mandarin) and *Jinghuai Guanhua* (Eastern Mandarin).³¹⁰



Street sign in Beijing, with traditional Chinese characters on the top line, and Pinyin on the lower line
Wikimedia/Scott Meltzer

Other significant languages spoken in mainland China, in terms of numbers of native speakers, include Wu (or Shanghainese), Min, Yue (or Cantonese), Hakka, Xiang, Gan, and Hui.^{311, 312} Among these speakers, who are primarily ethnic Hans, Mandarin is used as a second language for formal communication in government, media, and education. Their native language is used for less formal occasions such as conversation at home, and between friends and relatives.

In some autonomous regions of China, the language of the official minority ethnic group is also an official language with Mandarin: Zhuang in Guangxi, Mongolian in Inner Mongolia, Uyghur in Xinjiang, and Lhasa Tibetan in Tibet.³¹³ In these areas, the ethnic official language is also used in official spheres, as well as in print, radio, and television, and may be used as a lingua franca by other ethnic minorities.

Written Language

The Mandarin writing system developed over 4,000 years ago. There is little connection between the written and spoken language. Because it is ideographic, using symbols to describe words without sounds attached, speakers of all Chinese languages, regardless of the diversity of the spoken form, can read and understand Chinese writing. For example, the character 我 is pronounced *wo* in Mandarin, *ngoh* in Yue,



Traditional calligraphy method, with the brush held perpendicular to the writing surface, Wuhan, Hubei Province Flickr/Andres Moreno

Chinese characters, and in all diplomatic documents. For example, the capital of China is now spelled Beijing rather than Peking. The use of Pinyin has led to a literacy rate of 91%.^{316, 317, 318, 319, 320}

and *a* in Gan; in all Chinese languages, it means “I.”³¹⁴ As a result, China’s languages are sometimes incorrectly referred to as dialects. There are two forms of written Chinese, standard (older and more detailed) and simplified. In mainland China, simplified characters are used most often, especially for online materials, modern research, and technical resources. Traditional characters are used for classic literature.³¹⁵

The official Romanization, Pinyin, is based on the pronunciation of the characters in the Beijing dialect. In the 1980s, it replaced the older Wade-Giles system, which was created for pronunciation by native English speakers. Today, Pinyin is used on street and commercial signs in China, as well as in elementary Chinese textbooks as an aid in learning

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Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Chapter 1 | Profile

Assessment

1. The Yellow River is considered the cradle of Chinese civilization.
2. When the Communists came to power in 1949, they radically reconstructed the ancient capital of Beijing.
3. The Gang of Four were held responsible for the Cultural Revolution.
4. The PRC officially recognizes only one ethnic group.
5. CCP Secretary General Deng Xiaoping proclaimed: “It doesn’t matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True



Women lighting yak butter lamps inside a temple, Garze, Sichuan Province, southwest China
Flickr/Frederic Gloor

Chapter 2 | Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Religion and Philosophical Systems

Introduction

Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, the three main schools of Chinese thought, have blended over the centuries. Thus, while many Chinese profess to not be religious, meaning they do not attend worship services or pray, they have developed a set of values that reflect elements of these three schools. The idea of religion as a distinct and separate part of culture is new. *Zong jiao*, a Chinese term for religion, came to exist only in the late 19th century.

Chinese frequently refer to their destiny (*mingyun*) when reflecting on their lives. This word is considered Confucian in origin; each person comes into the world with

a particular genetic makeup that is the *ming*, or fate of heaven. *Yun*, or movement, implies individual choice—what a person does with the *ming* he or she is given.³²¹ Another common word is *yuanfen* (good luck). This may apply to meeting a marital partner or someone who can provide help with career advancement. Yet, what Westerners would chalk up to chance encounter or random occurrence is attributed by Chinese to the invisible hand of fate, a perspective gained from Buddhism.

Traditional Religions and Philosophical Systems

Confucianism

Confucius is arguably the most influential figure in Chinese history. Though there are many temples built in his honor in China, Confucianism is not a religion in the Western sense; it is an ethical and philosophical system. This system continues to exert a deep influence on modern China today.

Born in Qufu, Shandong Province, in 551 B.C.E., Confucius was a statesman and philosopher who lived during a time of war between numerous feudal states. He devised a doctrine that he believed would bring peace and order to society. His writings were a practical moral guide and set of instructions for good government and society—one that valued hierarchy, group orientation, and respect for age and tradition.

Confucius created five categories for human relationships: 1) Ruler-Subject; 2) Parent-Child; 3) Husband-Wife; 4) Older Brother-Younger Brother; 5) Friend-Friend. These relationships create a hierarchy in which it is the duty of the more powerful party to guide the lesser one by moral example.³²² The same rules that governed behavior in a household applied to relations with a state or between states, with the emperor serving as the family head.³²³



Tang Dynasty era portrait of Confucius
Wikimedia/unknown

In line with his belief that people could be educated, Confucius put great stock in the value of *li* rites, or social customs. In his view, it was the observance of *li* that creates harmony in a society, not the codification of laws.³²⁴ One of the most important *li* is ancestor worship, which enables people to

demonstrate respect for one’s parents, elders, and ancestors (*xiao*).³²⁵ Traditionally, the ancestral altar had a prominent place in the Chinese home. The family assembled there to say daily prayers. Children learned that behaving dishonorably would bring shame, not only to living family members but the deceased as well.³²⁶



Emperor Wu of Han Dynasty, from the seventh century Thirteen Emperors Scroll
Wikimedia/Yan Li-pen

Even though Confucius had devoted followers, he never achieved name recognition during his lifetime. It was not until the reign of Emperor Wu, during the Han Dynasty, that Confucianism became the ideology of feudal society, and eventually the standard for Chinese public and private behavior today.

While Mao denounced Confucianism as “old thought” and “old tradition,” President Xi Jinping has worked to elevate Confucius as the father of Chinese culture.^{327, 328} He is, in fact, branding Confucianism and using it as an ideological tool, emphasizing hierarchy, order, and duty to ruler and family. Xi Jinping recognizes that, unlike Marxism, Confucianism is uniquely Chinese; it appeals to a Chinese populace unsettled by China’s furious pace of change and longing for older values. In

this way, Confucian tenets can support the party’s authoritarian rule while fending off Western ideals of democracy and human rights. Beijing’s propaganda machine is deftly spinning the Confucian concept of a “harmonious society” into one where there is no dissent to party rule.^{329, 330, 331}

Buddhism

The history of Buddhism in China covers roughly 2,000 years—from the time it was brought from India to China during the latter half of the Han Dynasty (circa 150 C.E.), to the present.³³² Buddhist concepts profoundly shaped Chinese world view, especially the beliefs of karma (cause and effect) and samsara (death is simply a continuation of life in another form). Whereas a Westerner might view the unfortunate victim of an accident as “being in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Buddhists would view it as the result of the person’s karma. Whatever happens in the present is a result of the individual’s past or past life.³³³

There are 10 schools of Buddhism practiced in China today, most notably Chan (Zen), Tibetan, and Southern or Theravada Buddhism.³³⁴ What makes Chinese Buddhism distinct from the Buddhism practiced in India are the ideas and traditions found in Taoism, which have been incorporated over time. Chan Buddhism, for example, is more sympathetic to the concept of nature and being in tune with natural harmony. Chinese Buddhists believe that Buddha is more than a teacher, that he is a divine being to be prayed to for assistance and salvation.



Yonghe Temple, a temple and monastery of the Geluk School of Tibetan Buddhism, Beijing Flickr/Jeremy Reding

Taoism

The incorporation of Taoist ideas has led to Buddhism's success and enduring resilience in China.^{335, 336} Next to Confucianism, Taoism is one of the two great Chinese philosophical/religious systems. While today only 5% of the Chinese population identify themselves as Taoists, in truth, Taoist philosophy permeates every aspect of Chinese life.^{337, 338} A wealth of customs and festivals in China bear Taoist features, from the practice of Tai Chi exercise to the final New Year celebration, the Lantern Festival, which is held in February.³³⁹

Taoism synthesizes several trends of thought associated with the philosopher Lao-tzu, who lived sometime between the sixth and third centuries B.C.E. He wrote the *Tao Te Ching (The Book of the Way and Its Virtue)*, a metaphysical text about the benefits of living in harmony with nature and the intrinsic value of all forms of life.^{340, 341} It is the central Taoist text, a collection of proverbs, truths, and seeming riddles.³⁴² To followers of the Tao, it is more than a faith, it is a principle that permeates everything and every living creature; it keeps the universe in equilibrium.³⁴³



Taoist monks in ceremonial dress performing a religious rite, White Cloud Temple, Shanghai Flickr/Thomas Berg

One element of Taoism, feng shui, literally “wind and water,” harnesses the power of supernatural forces by ensuring manmade structures and activities are in harmony with the universe. Also known as the art of placement, it held considerable sway with Chinese emperors. The architecture of the Forbidden City, for example, is strictly arranged according to feng shui principles. Even today, company executives may consult feng shui experts on the best location for a new business or building project.^{344, 345, 346, 347}

The breathing technique of qigong, practiced by millions of Chinese every day, has its roots in traditional Taoist philosophy. To remain healthy, a person’s *qi*, or life force, must be able to flow freely through the body. Along with acupuncture, *qi* is the central underlying principle in traditional Chinese medicine.^{348, 349} Yin and yang, perhaps the best-known Taoist symbol, represents two basic and opposite forces in the universe: dark and light, female and male, cold and warm.

Chinese Folk Religion

Though Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are considered the primary schools of Chinese religion, Chinese folk religion provides a fourth element. Chinese folk religion is a combination of the three main pillars of Chinese thought combined with local folk beliefs and practices. These beliefs include astrology, ancestor veneration, natural forces as portents, shamanism, spirit mediumship, and local temples housing various immortals including Buddhist and Taoist figures. To some, Chinese folk religion is simply folk Taoism, the less sophisticated precursor of the “high Taoism” of the Taoist priests. Many Chinese who would claim no religious identity are often devotees of Chinese folk religion. And despite decades of condemnation of superstition by the Communist Party, traditional beliefs are strong in China, especially in the underdeveloped countryside.^{350, 351}



A family showing reverence for an ancient tortoise, a symbol of longevity and good luck, Guangxi Province Wikimedia/Paul Munhoven

Official figures indicate that 20% of the population practices folk religion. Observers, however, have estimated that as much as 80% of the Chinese population believes in some form of traditional folk religion.^{352, 353, 354}

Christianity and Islam



Eid al-Fitr prayers, Id Kah Mosque, Xinjiang Flickr/Preston Rhea

In an era when materialism has replaced ideology, greater numbers of Chinese have sought religion as a source of spiritual knowledge and comfort.³⁵⁵ Between 1997 and 2006, the number of acknowledged Christians in China increased from 14 million to 21 million. A conservative estimate today is around 68 million, and China may become the world's largest Christian country by 2025.^{356, 357}

Islam, like Christianity, was first introduced to China during the Tang Dynasty in the seventh century. Islam is increasingly popular among Chinese youth, and today there are approximately 23 million Muslims throughout China. The highest concentrations are in Ningxia, Xinjiang, and Gansu Province. Sunni Islam is the main branch worshipped in China.^{358, 359}

Religion and the State

Communists are traditionally hostile to religion for ideological reasons. According to Marx, religious faith served to bolster the existing social order by encouraging people to accept their fate. During the Mao era, few Chinese dared to worship publicly, lest they be branded as counterrevolutionaries. During the Great Leap Forward, regulation became more repressive, and temples were destroyed throughout the country to make way for cultivation and irrigation.³⁶⁰

In keeping with the Reform Era principle of “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” that began in 1978, Beijing revived official recognition of five main religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Protestantism, Islam, and Catholicism), but placed them under state regulation.^{361, 362} While China’s constitution allows “freedom of religious belief,” adherents of all religious groups, from state-sanctioned to underground groups, still face persecution and repression. All religious organizations must register with “patriotic governmental associations” that monitor sermons and church activities. Whenever a new temple is built, the state’s spiritual representatives are on hand.

Churches that choose not to register, resenting what they see as government interference, can be shut down at any time. Rules limit the number of congregants who may worship at one time. There is no tolerance for independent leadership, and



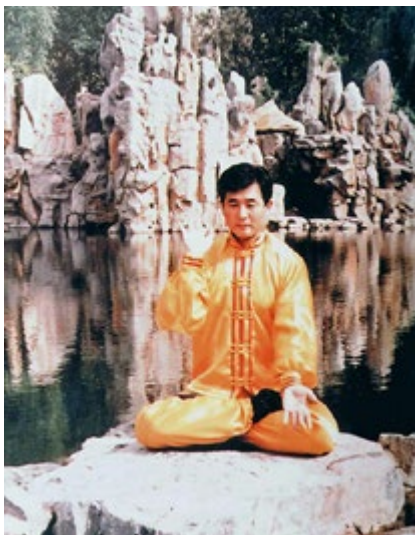
St. Joseph Roman Catholic Cathedral (Xikai Church),
Tianjin Wikimedia/Terry Tianjinese

Chinese citizens are forbidden from elevating allegiance to any foreign figure, including the Pope, over the government.³⁶³

The Chinese government maintains the importance of confronting what it calls the “three evils”: separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism. Christians who run afoul of government authorities are often charged with evangelizing, a natural act for Christians but one that violates the rights of nonbelievers who are protected by the Chinese constitution.³⁶⁴ In Tibet and Xinjiang, religion is viewed as promoting separatism. Thus, Tibetan Buddhist temples and Uyghur mosques are under tight government supervision.^{365, 366} In 2015, there were reports of increased government interference in the education and training of young Tibetan Buddhist

monks. At least 143 Tibetans have committed suicide by setting themselves on fire since February 2009 in protest.^{367, 368} In Xinjiang, Beijing has banned the observance of Ramadan and has taken steps to prevent students, party officials, and public servants from fasting.^{369, 370}

Banned Religious or Spiritual Groups



The Chinese government cracks down hard on what it views as cults. The most prominent, Falun Gong, was banned in 1999, four years after its founder, Li Hongzhi, moved to the United States. The group was considered particularly threatening because it amassed members without the government’s knowledge. Their purpose for congregating was to practice qigong breathing exercises and seek spiritual inspiration from Taoist and Buddhist teachings. But Beijing views charismatic leaders like Hongzhi and religious groups that desire a transformative change to society as potential threats to social harmony.³⁷¹

Left: Falon Gong founder Li Hongzhi sitting in meditation Wikimedia/clearwisdom.net

Places of Worship

The most common temples in China are Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian. These sacred sites act as a place of practice as well as living quarters for monks and nuns.³⁷² The three types of temples may look similar to those unfamiliar with them, but each has features that set them apart.

Confucian temples are much less ornate than their Taoist or Buddhist counterparts. They have simple color schemes and, in line with the Confucian tradition of focusing on the teachings, there are few paintings or statues and they are typically built close to schools.

Buddhist temples are usually multistory pagoda-style buildings with a large bell and two statues of guardian lions (or fu dogs) near the entrance. Inside, there is a large statue of Buddha, as well as other statues and paintings; the walls and ceilings are painted green, gold, orange, and yellow. Some visitors may be startled to see what appears to be a Nazi swastika adorning the walls or carved into statues. In fact, it is an ancient symbol that predates fascism by at least 5,000 years. In the Buddhist tradition, it is positioned clockwise, and represents good fortune, prosperity, and the Buddha’s heart.^{373, 374, 375}



Buddhist temple (Kaifu Temple), Changsha, Hunan Province Flickr/Michael Lusk

Taoist temples are the most elaborate of the three, decorated in a multitude of bright colors and ornate carvings of mythical creatures from top to bottom. Statues of a dragon and a tiger are set in front of the main gate. Within are statues of any number of deities, most often the Eight Immortals or San Qing (Three Pure Gods), who are the origin of all conscious beings.^{376, 377}

May I enter?		
Visitor:	wo keyi jinglai ma?	May I enter?
Local:	keyi	Yes.

Exchange 1

Behavior in Places of Worship



Visitor in prayer, with three joss sticks of burning incense representing Tian Di Ren (the realms of heaven, earth, and the deceased), outside a Buddhist temple, Beijing Flickr/Dennis Jarvis

Visitors are generally welcome in most temples, which are open from dawn to dusk. Visitors should, however, take care to follow temple protocol. Most temples require modest clothing, which can be casual, and visitors should wear tops that cover the shoulders and pants or skirts that reach below the knee.

Buddhist meditation or prayer rituals include ringing a bell and lighting incense. The incense smoke is believed to link the worshipper's soul to the Buddha or ancestors. Incense is also commonly used in Taoist rituals. Outside the temple, Buddhist worshipers burn long sticks of incense in small or large bundles. The incense is typically held above the head while bowing three times in each of the four compass directions, starting with the direction of the temple.

Visitors should enter a temple on the right, stepping over the threshold with the right foot. When greeting a monk, it is traditional to place both hands together as in prayer and perform a small bow. If a monk offers a tour, it is appropriate to reciprocate by donating to the temple. Visitors, especially women, should not shake a monk's hand.^{378, 379}

Religious Holidays

Qingming Jie (Tomb-Sweeping Day)



Tomb Sweeping Day, Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery, Beijing Flickr/Dan

Qingming (Day of Clear Brightness), also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day, is a traditional Chinese festival with roots in Buddhist traditions. Held in the first week of April, it celebrates the beginning of spring and is an occasion to remember past relatives. Different activities take place during the festival, including family outings and flying kites, but paying respect to the deceased is the most important. Weeds around graves are cleared away and fresh dirt is added. The

deceased's favorite food and beverage are placed at the grave or poured onto it, along with joss paper (spirit money). The offerings are burned and travel with the smoke to the family member in the afterlife.³⁸⁰

In recent years, young people started offering replicas of iPhones, Wi-Fi routers, and other gadgets on Qingming; this has become a booming market. Some online stores offer “tomb-sweeping packages” for busy urbanites; these can range from simple tomb-sweeps to bowing, giving gifts, and weeping at the grave.^{381, 382, 383, 384}

Zhongyuan Jie (Ghost Festival)

During Zhongyuan Jie or the Ghost Festival, the ghosts and spirits of deceased are the honored guests of the living. The Ghost Festival is the height of a series of events during Ghost Month celebrations. During the month of August—the start and end dates vary from year to year—the Chinese believe spirits emerge from the lower world to visit earth. Offerings made during the Ghost Festival are like those of Tomb Sweeping Day, and include incense, joss paper, prepared food, wine and tea, as well as gold and other valuables. During the Ghost Festival, these offerings are made in the homes of the living, in the context of elaborate feasts. Traditionally, a feast is prepared to honor the deceased, and empty seats are left for them at the family table. In this way, the living and the dead can sit together and share a meal. Other activities include releasing miniature paper lanterns and boats on water, which help direct lost ghosts.



Burning joss sticks—offerings to the deceased—in the City God of Pingyao Taoist temple, Shanxi Province, Northern China Flickr/Paul Arps

Zhongyuan Jie has roots in the Buddhist festival of Ullambana, a day on which monks pray and make offerings on behalf of families to their dead ancestors or “hungry” ghosts. Family members of the deceased pay for this service; their patronage is essentially a form of charity.^{385, 386}

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Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Chapter 2 | Religion

Assessment

1. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are largely distinct religious and philosophical systems.
2. State-sanctioned religions have constitutional protection, and Chinese citizens are free to practice their faiths without interference.
3. During the Ghost Festival, spirits of the deceased are believed to visit the earth, and families prepare elaborate feasts in their honor.
4. All religious organizations in China must register.
5. Beijing recognizes three religions.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False



Children waving traditional Chinese fans decorated with chrysanthemum blossoms, Yuxi, Yunnan Province
Flickr/MM

Chapter 3 | Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Traditions

Introduction

The traditional culture of China is one of the world's most enduring and powerful. It is the force that guides and motivates 1.4 billion people. *Wenhua*, the Chinese term for culture, can be translated as “patterns of thought and behavior.” As the Chinese see it, their country is a cultural entity rather than a landmass.³⁸⁷ It is a culture steeped in tradition and beliefs in supernatural causality. All of which stems from a long and rich history of religious and philosophical systems.³⁸⁸

Honor and Values

While individual freedom is celebrated in the West, Chinese emphasize collectivism, or the role and responsibilities of the individual to the group. The importance of curbing personal desires by “eating bitterness” (*chi ku*) is stressed from an early age.³⁸⁹ Children are expected to spend long hours in preparation for standardized academic tests.³⁹⁰ Learning by example, children see their parents accept difficult work conditions to improve the household’s financial situation. On a broader level, Confucian-dictated duty to the family has been extended to patriotic acceptance of state power. The CCP supports its power monopoly by casting itself as protector of the country’s honor in a world that wishes to suppress Chinese success and growth.³⁹¹ To this end, the government routinely asks its citizens to make sacrifices, such as limiting family size, on behalf of the nation.



Children playing, Inner Mongolia, China Flickr/Oliver James

Face

The concept of “face” (*mianzi*) is associated with honor, dignity, and a deep sense of pride. In China, respect for someone’s feelings is paramount. Open criticism in front of others causes a loss of face, as does losing your temper, confrontation, failing to show respect, or embarrassing someone. Causing a person to lose face, even unintentionally, could seriously damage a relationship.^{392, 393, 394}

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

Shaking hands has become the standard custom in China. The handshake is performed with a light grip; to demonstrate respect, some Chinese may avoid direct eye contact.³⁹⁵ In modern China, bowing is reserved for certain celebrations and ceremonies. Introductions to elderly Chinese are an exception, especially in the countryside, when a slight bow is more appropriate. Children may simply nod their head to acknowledge an elder. In ancient times, it was customary for someone of lower social status to touch his head to the ground when greeting a superior. This posture is known in English as kowtowing and was literally translated from the Chinese word *koutou* (knocking head).³⁹⁶

Etiquette

In China, the concept of personal space is much less important than in the West. A reasonable bodily separation may be one to three feet less than for Westerners, or virtually nonexistent. The concept of personal privacy is almost completely absent, especially between people of the same gender. As such, public toilets may have only small partitions between stalls.



*Shaking hands, a standard custom in China today
Flickr/UCL Institute of Education*

Foreigners will observe a contradiction in how the Chinese apply etiquette rules. The Chinese will be extremely gracious in some circumstances, and push past people in a crowded street without apology or cut in line in others. There are two worlds when it comes to politeness in China: a person's circle of business and personal relationships, and everyone else. This is partly rooted in the Confucian focus on honoring family and superiors (the inside world), and the historical struggle to survive, which can cause people to be indifferent to anonymous masses (the outside world).³⁹⁷

Good afternoon!		
Visitor:	ni hao!	Good afternoon!
Local:	ni hao	Good afternoon.

Exchange 2

How are you?		
Visitor:	ni hao ma?	How are you?
Local:	Hen hao, ShieShie	Fine, thank you.

Exchange 3

During a formal group introduction, the person being introduced may receive a round of applause. This person should join in the applause to show solidarity with the group and as a sign of appreciation for the welcome. While not clapping reflects humility for Americans, Chinese would interpret this as a sign of conceit.³⁹⁸

During individual introductions, business cards should be extended with both hands. After receiving a business card, the recipient should demonstrate respect by examining

the card. Similarly, pauses in conversation are not considered awkward by Chinese; the silence is viewed as a chance to reflect on what has been said.³⁹⁹ Answering a question immediately is taken as a sign that the answerer does not respect the person who asked the question.

Hospitality and Gift Giving



U.S. and Chinese sailors exchanging gifts, using both hands as is the custom in China Flickr / U.S. Pacific Fleet

Gift giving is an important part of Chinese culture. It is so commonplace that the government forbids public officials from accepting gifts, since this constitutes a form of bribery. Gifts can be offered as a token of appreciation. The value of a gift is often dictated by the price, and Chinese may intentionally leave the price tag on an expensive gift to demonstrate respect; an inexpensive gift may be seen as disrespectful.⁴⁰⁰ In general, gifts should be wrapped in red or gold paper, which

represent good fortune and wealth, respectively. Greeting cards are uncommon.⁴⁰¹ The standard wedding gift is money presented in a red envelope.⁴⁰²

The concepts of humility and face are also tied to Chinese gift-giving etiquette. When offering a gift, the giver may need to press the recipient several times to accept the gift. Politeness requires the first rejection of the gift to demonstrate that the recipient is unworthy of the gift. Persistence on the part of the giver demonstrates the recipient is worthy of the gift. Gifts should be presented and received with both hands. Recipients will not open a gift in front of the person giving it so as not to seem greedy or to lose face if the gift is less valuable than expected.

While gifts are appreciated, a few would cause offense. Never give a clock—they are associated with impending death. A paper or silk fan is also inappropriate; opening a fan is symbolic of a couple on the verge of splitting. Finally, do not give a man a green hat.⁴⁰³ A man whose wife or girlfriend is unfaithful to him is described as “wearing a green hat” (*dai lu maozi*).⁴⁰⁴ Small items like books, music, perfume, wine, and specialty foods are always well received.⁴⁰⁵ In addition, gifts given in pairs or even numbers bestow the recipient with good luck.^{406, 407}

Food

For centuries, the Chinese have had a love affair with food, and as the saying goes “To the people, food is heaven” (*min yi shi wei tian*).⁴⁰⁸ After the Great Famine and into the late 1970s, severe poverty was pervasive in rural China. “Have you eaten yet?” became a common greeting between friends and neighbors. This question was used much like “How are you?” in the United States. While the greeting is still in use among the elderly today, and China’s poorest still work hard to feed themselves, starvation is a thing of the past.^{409, 410}

Chinese create and consume their cuisine with reverence and delight. Dishes and meals are often a complex balance of colors, textures, and tastes. The shapes of prepared food, from dumplings to fried fish, the selection of dishes for special meals, and their visual presentation echo centuries-old traditions and often hold symbolic significance.⁴¹¹ Chinese cuisine, like many aspects of Chinese culture, is greatly influenced by geography and ethnic diversity. China’s broad variety in cooking styles can be explained by an old saying: “The East is sweet, the South is salty, the West is sour, the North is hot.” Today, however, Hunan and Szechuan cuisines are more famous for their spiciness.



Sampling of food for sale, Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, south-eastern China Flickr/Joan Campderros-i-Canas

The Culture of Tea

The story of tea (*cao*) begins in China, where it is mentioned in legends, some dating back nearly 5,000 years. During the Tang Dynasty, tea drinking became an art form and tea was prepared with elaborate ceremony. It was around this time that the first teahouses appeared.⁴¹² Today, tea is more than the beverage of choice in China; there is a sophisticated culture surrounding its preparation, the varietal choice, the utensils used to prepare it, and the occasions for drinking it. There are hundreds of varieties of Chinese tea, but the most common are red teas (also known as black tea in the West), green teas, and jasmine teas.⁴¹³ Tea prices vary widely depending on the quality and variety. The average Chinese drinks the less expensive teas; premium teas are often given as gifts.

Philosophy, ethics, and morality influences any tea activity in China. The traditional Chinese tea ceremony, *gongfu* (making tea with effort), is performed as a sign of

respect for guests. It begins with the preparer entering the right frame of mind, as the Chinese believe this can be passed to others. The ceremony itself involves a detailed and exact brewing phase, using the right variety and amount of tea leaves, perfect water temperature, brewing time, special tea utensils, and a Yixing teapot, which is made with purple, sandy clay. Most local teahouses can prepare tea this way, but it must be requested.^{414, 415} Visitors to major cities should be wary of tea ceremony scams that charge hidden fees.⁴¹⁶



Tea tasting in the Yuyuan Bazaar, Old Town Shanghai (Nanshi) Flickr/Dan Lundberg

China's teahouses (*chaguan*) have long been the focus of social life in China. They are gathering places for locals to catch up with friends, play *ma jiang* (mahjong) and *xiang qi* (Chinese chess), listen to crosstalk (similar to stand-up comedy), gossip, and talk business and politics.^{417, 418, 419} In some areas of China, the older expression "to go to the teahouse" (*shang cheguanr*) is used to mean "to settle a dispute."⁴²⁰ During the Cultural Revolution, teahouses in major cities were shut down for fear that they bred dissent. Today, they thrive throughout China, in market towns, on busy urban streets, and in parks and gardens.^{421, 422, 423}

Meals and Banquets



Table set with a variety of meats, vegetables, tea, soup, and condiments, Beijing Flickr/Jirka Matousek

Most Chinese socialize during meals, and nearly all celebrations center around food. Parties hosted in homes are rare, but restaurants and karaoke establishments are thoroughly equipped for large celebrations. The *yanhui*, or Chinese-style banquet, is a multicourse food extravaganza. The standard *yanhui* table is round and seats 12 people. Food is served on large communal platters or bowls that are placed on a setting that spins, thus giving everyone access to the dishes. Some diners

may use chopsticks to pick up food from a shared dish. At formal social, business, or political banquets, the host will typically make a short welcome speech and toast with both beer and hard liquor; the senior guest, in age or status, should respond with a short speech and toast.⁴²⁴

When dining in homes and in public places, there is a strict seating protocol; guests should wait to be seated. In most situations, the host may direct guests to a specific seat that relates to their status. Guests and senior family members receive the places of honor. In public places, guests are seated according to their company position or other professional ranking.⁴²⁵ In both spaces, an empty plate at the end of a meal indicates that the host has not ordered or cooked enough, and he or she will lose face. Guests, therefore, should always leave a small portion of unfinished food.⁴²⁶



*Working breakfast with Chinese businesspersons and diplomats from the United States, Diayutai Guest House, Beijing
Flickr/U.S. Department of State*

The Chinese enjoy treating guests to meals, even extravagant ones. The host generally pays the bill, but it is common for someone to grab the bill and offer to pay. In some cases, diners will argue over the bill. This is not considered rude, but rather shows appreciation and gratitude. To avoid anyone losing face, a guest may slip away from the meal before it ends and pay in advance. The Chinese have slowly adopted the Western practice of adding gratuity to bills, and there is a growing acceptance of tipping service people, particularly in upscale restaurants.^{427, 428, 429}

I really appreciate your hospitality.		
Visitor:	ShieShie ni de kwandai	I really appreciate your hospitality.
Local:	bukeChi	You are welcome.

Exchange 4

The meal was very good.		
Visitor:	fan dzuode tebie hao chi	The meal was very good.
Local:	ShieShie	Thanks.

Exchange 5

I'd like a coffee.		
Visitor:	wo yao yibei kafei	I'd like a coffee.
Local:	hao	Sure.

Exchange 6

Attire



Shoppers walking in the Dogmen Shopping District, Shenzhen Flickr/Chris

China is a country steeped in ancient traditions that have undergone a stunning transformation over the last 30 years. This can be seen on the streets of its busy cities, where fashion has evolved from the Zhongshan (or Mao) suit that was traditional for more than a generation, to pajamas and nightgowns in the 1970s, to modern clothes influenced by both Eastern and Western culture. Politicians and businessmen wear Western-style suits and ties. Among communist China's young middle class, personal style is more important than designer brands, and styles run the gamut from T-shirts and jeans to colorful and creative clothing combinations. That said, the cities are a patchwork of many trends. The average Chinese wears what they can afford and what is expedient. In the summer, it is not unusual to see men without a shirt or wearing pajamas in the streets. In villages, peasant girls often wear loose shifts or balloon-seated pants. Small children sometimes wear slit-seat pants (*kaidangku*) so they can relieve themselves without removing their pants. Simple lightweight shoes, such as plastic sandals, are common. On cold winter days ("two-coat" and "three-coat" days), the elderly, who are used to harsh winters, wear multiple sweaters, quilted pants, and slippers in their homes. In western China, Muslim women may wear veils, often simply to keep out the dust.^{430, 431}

Formal Dress



Traditional short-sleeved qipao Wikimedia

In more formal situations, Chinese will often wear traditional *qipao* (*cheongsam* in Cantonese), the gender-neutral term for the Manchu garment. For women, this is the trademark mandarin collar dress, which has a short, stiff collar, an embroidered opening from the neck running under the right arm, and a slit up one or both legs if the skirt falls below mid-calf.⁴³² Introduced by Manchurians, the original *qipao* was wide, baggy, and covered the entire body. The dress "got a new lease on life in 1920s Shanghai, when it was given a more alluring, body-skimming cut, with slits on one or both sides of the skirt."⁴³³ Indeed, silk *qipao*, affordable only to

the wealthy, became synonymous with refined taste. When economic reforms were initiated in 1978, conservative *qipao*, which included long sleeves, reappeared. Today, Chinese women may wear short-sleeved *qipaos* at traditional festivals or formal events.⁴³⁴ The male version consists of a long jacket or tunic and may be worn with matching loose trousers.⁴³⁵

Symbolism in Chinese Culture

The belief in Chinese astrology, symbols, and portents has been a fundamental part of Chinese culture for thousands of years. Far beyond the classic symbols of Chinese culture that Westerners may be familiar with, such as dragons and jade, Chinese culture upholds the magical properties of everyday items. From peaches to bats and chrysanthemums to dumplings, as well as the good or bad fortune associated with certain numbers and colors, each has a meaning that is woven into decisions made about festival traditions, art motifs, gifts, banquet foods, family planning, business matters, and daily activities.



Chrysanthemum motif—a symbol of autumn and longevity—seen in 17th century Chinese porcelain Wikimedia/Walters Museum

Many symbols in Chinese culture originate from ancient mythical beliefs, others from the nature of written and spoken Chinese, which has many homophones. Words with different meanings that sound the same are associated with one another. Clouds are considered lucky because the Chinese word for cloud (*yún*) is pronounced like luck (*yùn*). On the other hand, four (*sì*) is unlucky because it sounds nearly identical to the word for death (*sǐ*). In both cases, only the tones are different.⁴³⁶ Many Chinese wake up to a cloudy day and anticipate that things will go well (as opposed to a sunny day in Western culture). Buildings often do not have a 4th floor (or a 14th or 24th floor, which also contain the number 4), while an apartment on the 8th floor (a lucky number) will sometimes sell for a higher price.^{437, 438, 439, 440}



Braids of garlic and other charms hanging outside a house to protect the occupants from evil spirits, Hainan Province Flickr/See-Ming Lee

Chinese Zodiac

The Chinese lunar year system has a 12-year cycle in which each year is associated with an animal: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep (goat), monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. The first mention of the Chinese zodiac (*shengxiao*) dates to the 11th century B.C.E. While its origins are unclear, a popular legend explains the choice and order of the animals in the zodiac. It involves a race among all the animals to meet with the Jade Emperor; the order of the animals in the zodiac corresponds to the order in which the first 12 reached the destination.^{441, 442} Each animal in the Chinese zodiac represents unique traits, and the Chinese believe that a person's personality and destiny are affected by their zodiac animal. While many Chinese will initially deny belief in astrology, it influences people's decisions and opinions. Revealing one's zodiac animal in everyday conversation provides information to the listener: personality, age, who the speaker will or will not get along with, or the speaker's place in the social pecking order. Parents may favor a specific year to have a baby based on its zodiac animal. During a person's birth sign year, which is considered an unlucky time, some Chinese may wear jade bracelets or the color red to ward off bad luck (red and the semiprecious jade stone are believed to bring good fortune).^{443, 444}



Representation of the Chinese Zodiac in bronze, Sui Dynasty (581-618 A.D.) Wikimedia/Hispalois

Non-Religious Celebrations

Chinese (Lunar) New Year

Known in China as the Spring Festival (*Chun Jie*), the Lunar New Year falls between mid-January and late-February and is the largest festival in China. It developed as a means to usher in an abundant agricultural season before the start of spring planting. Celebrated by urban and rural Chinese alike, preparations begin well in advance.⁴⁴⁵ People decorate their homes and focus attention on their personal appearance to start the year off right. The holiday is marked with fireworks and parades featuring dragon dancers.⁴⁴⁶

The government stipulates that everyone is allowed seven days off, but schools close for a month and most other nonessential public sector businesses operate on reduced

staff for several weeks.⁴⁴⁷ Subsequent days are set aside to receive visitors in the home; visitors often bring two mandarin oranges or tangerines, which symbolize good fortune, as a gift. Other days are reserved for family outings. Each day has specific rituals associated with it.

On New Year’s Eve, thousands of people line up outside Buddhist temples in the hopes of being the first to enter the shrine to burn the first stick of incense. This act is thought to bestow the best luck and blessings for the new year. Burning incense has become big business in China; some tickets for the first stick have been sold for as much as 290,000 yuan (\$42,200).



Lights outline traditional Chinese symbols in celebration of the Lunar Year, Chongqing Flickr/Col Ford and Natasha de Vere

Will you celebrate Chinese New Year?		
Visitor:	nimen mingtian ChingJu chunjie ma?	Will you celebrate Chinese New Year?
Local:	dui	Yes.

Exchange 7

Lantern Festival

New Year’s festivities wrap up with the Lantern Festival, which occurs on the first full moon of the new year, 15 days after the start of Chinese New Year. Its origins go back as early as the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.-25 C.E.), when paper lanterns lit by candles were first hung.⁴⁴⁸ Like many celebrations in China, the origins of the Lantern Festival has roots in several legends. One has it set to coincide with the birth of the Taoist God of good fortune, Tianguan, another honors the Buddha, and a third involves a palace maid who cooked delicious dumplings.⁴⁴⁹ In any event, lanterns long ago became associated with the return of spring. Today, households and local governments put up colorful lanterns (red being a favorite). People spend the evening strolling through neighborhoods to admire lanterns hung



Traditional red lanterns during Mid-Autumn Festival, Beijing Flickr/Lydia Liu

from private homes or congregate in a public place lit by larger lanterns. As the last night of the holiday season, the festive celebrations usher in a prosperous new year.

Dragon Boat Festival



Dragon Boat Festival in Guilin, Guangxi Province Flickr/Mel Gr

Dragon boat races commemorate the sacrifice of Qu Yuan, a poet who lived during the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.E.). His efforts to combat corruption in the Chu imperial court, where he served as a minister, won him a place in the hearts of ordinary people. After urging the emperor to avoid conflict with the more powerful Qin state and instead devote himself to improving the welfare of his subjects, Qu Yuan was dismissed from

office. Freed from administrative responsibilities, he traveled the Chu kingdom as a visiting scholar. Upon receiving news that the Qin had defeated the Chu army, Qu Yuan fell into a deep state of despair and drowned himself. As news of his death spread, fishermen took to their boats to look for his body, beating drums to scare away hungry fish and evil spirits. They also threw balls of sticky rice (*zongzi*) wrapped in lotus leaves to lure away the fish and evil spirits. The fishermen's response to Qu Yuan's patriotic self-sacrifice is reenacted during the Dragon Boat Festival, which typically falls during the first half of June.⁴⁵⁰

Mid-Autumn or Moon Festival



Moon cake with golden egg yolk encased in bean paste and pastry Flickr/Kate

This festival marks the autumn equinox and falls on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, sometime in October when the moon is farthest from earth. Chinese celebrations have been traced back as far as the Xia and Shang dynasties (2,000-1,000 B.C.E.). In subsequent dynasties, some emperors honored the moon with a three-day gazing holiday. The moon has special significance in Chinese culture—often a symbol of loneliness, which has been described in

countless poems.⁴⁵¹ For most Chinese, the waxing and waning of the moon mirrors the vicissitudes of life, with the full moon representing peace and prosperity. On this festival day, those living away from home make reasonable efforts to return and enjoy an evening meal with family. Moon cakes filled with bean paste and sometimes an egg yolk bear the baker's insignia, and are available for sale everywhere. Their origins hark back to several folk tales, but one that stands out took place during the Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368 C.E.). To avoid having their plans for a rebellion detected, Chinese organizers used moon cakes to hide logistical messages.^{452, 453}

National Holidays

As the Chinese embrace a market economy, the topic of annual leave has come up. Under socialism, most urban workplaces were overstaffed. It was not difficult for workers to ask for personal leave, even on short notice. There were no vacations other than Lunar New Year, but offices closed and factories ceased production at certain times, during which employees did not report for work. In 1999, during the Asian financial crisis, the Chinese government began “Golden Week” holidays to spur domestic consumption by promoting commerce and tourism.⁴⁵⁴ The May 1st International Labor Day and the October 1st founding of the People's Republic anniversary were expanded into week-long holidays. Yet block vacation time created congestion, making travel unattractive. The government is, therefore, continuously refining holiday schedules; traditional celebrations are becoming public holidays and Golden Weeks for national holidays are phasing out. May 1st has been restored to its original status as a single-day holiday.



*Floral arches celebrate National Day, Beihai Park, Beijing
Wikimedia/pfctdayelise*

Dos and Don'ts

Do greet the oldest person in a room first.

Do offer the host a gift with both hands at least three times.

Do study someone's business card rather than putting it away immediately.

Do show patience with strangers' attempts to practice speaking English.

Do avoid showing irritation that will cause a person or parties to lose face.

Do keep calm when dealing with government officials if the situation becomes tense.

Do be on time. The Chinese consider punctuality a virtue; they may even show up a bit early to show their earnestness.

Don't write anyone's name in red ink; historically, only the names of the dead were written in red.

Don't point at anyone with your fingers; instead, motion them with your palm down.

Don't stick chopsticks straight up in a rice bowl (this resembles incense burned on behalf of the dead) or lick or drum chopsticks.

Don't bring up Chinese politics.

Don't take offense at people who stare at you.

Don't overreact when asked personal questions about your marital status, family, age, job, or income; this is done to seek a common ground.



A light meal, chopsticks resting on the bowl (placing them next to the bowl, or on a chopstick rest is also common)
Flickr/Jan Fidler

Don't display affection in public or put your arm around someone's shoulder, which could make a Chinese person feel uncomfortable.⁴⁵⁵

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Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Chapter 3 | Traditions

Assessment

1. Shaking hands, for Chinese, has been used as a greeting for centuries.
2. Embarrassing someone in China, even unintentionally, could seriously damage a relationship.
3. The Lantern Festival concludes the Chinese New Year holiday season.
4. A gift or business card should be presented with both hands.
5. As a guest in a restaurant or home, it is important to eat everything on your plate.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False



City lights, Guangzhou Flickr/Pablo Fernandez

Chapter 4 | Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Urban Life

Introduction

In the 1980s, when just 20% of China's population lived in cities, the Chinese government shifted its focus to urban development and industrialization in an effort to build an export economy. Since then, more than 280 million people have left the countryside and poured into cities in search of work and better wages.⁴⁵⁶ Today, more than half the population lives in metropolitan areas, marking the most rapid urban transformation in modern history. Estimates indicate that by 2030, up to 70% of the Chinese population will live in cities.^{457, 458, 459} Rapid growth and industrialization, however, have come at the cost of severe pollution and a striking divide between rich and poor.

Still, China’s new wealth rests in its cities, and a generation of Chinese now live in a style that would not be out of place in New York, London, or Berlin. China’s middle class is exploding. It is estimated that 76% of China’s urban population will be considered middle class by 2022. In 2000, just 4% fell into this category. This would make China’s middle class alone large enough to be the third-most populous country in the world.⁴⁶⁰

Urban Living



Urban planning model of Shanghai as anticipated for 2020s
Flickr/Dan Lundberg

China is experiencing rapid urban expansion and renewal, and while the middle class is growing exponentially, many urban Chinese cannot keep up with the breakneck pace of change. Residential skyscrapers cloud the horizon, but many apartments remain unsold because most working-class Chinese cannot afford apartments.⁴⁶¹ In 2016, an average 80 sq m (861 sq ft) apartment in Beijing cost \$300,000; in Shanghai, a comparable apartment was four times that amount.^{462, 463} In many parts of China’s

largest cities, migrant workers live in deteriorating buildings that sit in the middle of giant office buildings. The income divide is pronounced. In contrast to the residences of the urban poor, expensive Western-style gated communities and elaborate villas dot the outskirts of cities.^{464, 465} In response, the government has encouraged development of housing for middle and lower income urban Chinese. In early 2017, it also banned further development of gated communities and “bizarre” architecture.^{466, 467}

May I take pictures?		
Visitor:	wo neng zhaoxiang ma?	May I take pictures?
Local:	buxing zher bu zhun zhaoxiang	No, it is not allowed here.

Exchange 8

Transition from *Danwei*

A product of socialist city planning, the *danwei* were government-controlled work units—entire city districts—that combined residential, work, and social functions. Urban Chinese were assigned to a specific *danwei* to which they would usually belong

for their working life. The work unit provided employment and welfare benefits such as free housing, schooling, and health care; the *danwei* also strictly controlled workers' lives. Managers approved or refused work transfers and marriage licenses, and distributed birth permits during the time when policy dictated that a couple was allowed only one child.^{468, 469, 470} For many, the *danwei* prevented social mobility, and the system became known as the “iron rice bowl.” Still, membership to a *danwei* provided community, and it was an important aspect of individual identity in China into the late 20th century.⁴⁷¹



Housing, Zhenhai District, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province
Flickr/Jim Bowen

Economic and social reforms carried out since the 1990s have weakened the role of the *danwei*, and urban Chinese were freed to relocate to other areas within cities.^{472, 473} The rigid *danwei* system has been replaced by entrepreneurship. Former socialist housing areas are being demolished to make way for new development. Old factory *danwei* serve as low-income housing or are redeveloped into specialized creative clusters or arts districts.^{474, 475, 476} The Chinese have embraced the move away from the *danwei* system as “returning rights to the individual” and “limiting public powers.” People may speak of their transition from “*danwei* persons” to “members of society.”⁴⁷⁷



Data storage factory workers,
Jiangsu Province Flickr/Robert Scoble

Does your family live here?		
Visitor:	nimen jia Judzai Jer ma?	Does your family live here?
Local:	Ju Jer	Yes.

Exchange 9

How many people live in this house?		
Visitor:	Jege angdzili Ju duoshapRen?	How many people live in this house?
Local:	shigRen	Ten.

Exchange 10

Crime

Whether it is the result of China’s Confucian values and the shame associated with street crime, or China’s extensive surveillance system and high criminal conviction rate, China overall is very safe. Public monitoring is organized through a grid management system and takes several forms: high police presence, widespread camera surveillance, and networks of social micro-surveillance groups. These groups, consisting of neighborhood residents and party members wearing red armbands, monitor their designated zone 24 hours a day. Thus, Chinese society is always under vigilant surveillance.^{478, 479}

The rate of violent crime, such as burglary, robbery, and homicide, is relatively low compared to the size of the urban populations.⁴⁸⁰ Most crimes affecting foreigners are financial because foreigners are perceived as wealthy. Pickpocketing is common on public transportation, in shopping areas, and at tourist sites. Financial scams are also widespread and include tourist tea scams that leave tourists with a steep bill, unlicensed or “black” taxis that make off with luggage or charge inflated fees, and counterfeit currency.^{481, 482}



Crowded shopping area, Nanjing Road, Huangpu District, Shanghai Municipality Flickr/Achim Fischer

Pollution

The surge in city populations and industrial growth outpaced the Chinese government’s efforts to build the infrastructure to support it or to manage the waste it produced. Today, poor water quality and dangerous smog levels are recurring themes in China’s metropolitan areas.⁴⁸³ Air pollution levels exceeded World Health Organization guidelines by 100 times in 2016.⁴⁸⁴ Much of the air, water, and soil contamination is blamed on industrial waste and emissions



Pollution in Shanghai Flickr/leniners

from unregulated heavy industry, poor quality gasoline, and coal burning, both for electricity and heating homes.^{485, 486}

Face masks and bottled water have become the norm for many city residents.^{487, 488, 489}

Winters in northeastern cities like Beijing, when coal furnaces are in heavy use, are frequently spent on yellow alert. In 2015, Beijing began issuing red alerts, the top-level smog warning, as pollution levels reached five times what is considered healthy. The city put into effect emergency measures including closing schools and mandating alternate driving days for city residents.⁴⁹⁰ In early 2017, travel agencies began offering “smog escape” travel packages to cleaner countries, such as Iceland and Antarctica.⁴⁹¹



Woman wearing a pollution mask Flickr/Global Panorama

Smog protests are effectively banned, and even mild protests are met with heavy police response.⁴⁹² Weather reports are prohibited from giving pollution warnings that conflict with official statements. Environmental lawyers and activists are routinely jailed.^{493, 494} Despite this, protests in Chinese cities have gained strength.^{495, 496} Worried about unrest, China declared a “war on pollution,” approving measures to reduce air pollution by 2035. Immediate actions included closing polluting factories, directing steel and cement factories to cut production, setting limits on coal burning, and taking vehicles registered before 2005 off the road.^{497, 498, 499, 500, 501} So far, however, follow-through and enforcement at the local level has been inconsistent and only marginally effective.⁵⁰²

Health Care

China’s move toward a market economy had a great impact on the delivery of health care. In 1980, the *danwei* paid for nearly all of a person’s health care.⁵⁰³ By the close of the 20th century, and after two decades of privatization, only 10% of urban Chinese had any type of health care coverage. In the 15 years that followed, the Chinese government invested heavily in its health care infrastructure and launched sweeping health



Medical staff member, Shanghai No. 6 People’s Hospital, Shanghai Flickr/Gary Stevens

care reforms. These achieved near universal health coverage by early 2017.⁵⁰⁴ Reforms included expanding public health coverage, encouraging the development of private insurance, hospital reform, strengthening the primary care system, and improving equal access. These changes significantly reduced maternal and child mortality and rates of infectious disease, and improved the health and life expectancy of the population.^{505, 506}



Top-ranked Peking Union Medical College Hospital, Beijing
Flickr/I a walsh

But China’s public insurance coverage is basic. It has not kept pace with the rising costs of an aging population and the steep increase in the number of people with cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.⁵⁰⁷ For those who have insurance and/or the means to pay out of pocket, the quality of care is vastly improved. Many hospitals have VIP wards that offer new technology and high quality care for government officials and those who can pay for the top-of-the-line services.⁵⁰⁸ For others, such as the elderly,

urban poor, and rural Chinese, the high cost of modern health care has forced them to take out loans. Official reports indicate that of those families who fell below the poverty line in recent years, 44% were impoverished by illness.^{509, 510}

Is there a doctor here?		
Visitor:	Jer you dafu ma?	Is there a doctor here?
Local:	meiyou	No.

Exchange 11

Education



Commencement day, Xueyanu District, Beijing
Flickr/Kan Wu

Most Chinese see a university education as the key to wealth and personal success, not just for the student, but also for the family. Over the last few decades, China’s national obsession with education is reflected in government policies and reforms. As a result, basic education and college admittance increased on a massive scale. In 2014, over 7 million students graduated from China’s universities annually, more than 7 times the number 15 years

earlier. China's education system is fiercely competitive, and admission, especially to elite campuses such as Beijing and Tsinghua universities, is difficult. But as more universities and technical colleges open, the number of graduates is expected to reach 35.5 million by 2020.

These positive developments overshadow the huge gap between those who benefit from the system and those who do not. The system discriminates against poorer and less-connected Chinese. Bureaucratic and financial boundaries also keep students of parents from one region from attending public school in another.^{511, 512}

Recognizing these inequalities, in 2013 the government set in motion the gradual integration of migrant families into its cities, a process that will take years. In the meantime, China introduced a controversial quota system in 2016, reserving a percentage of spots at universities in developed provinces for students from poorer rural areas.⁵¹³ Historically, universities admitted students based solely on their score on the *gaokao*, a two-day college entrance exam. The new quota system sparked protest among parents who saw it as lowering the college admissions bar.⁵¹⁴ Most recently, Beijing announced it would set aside funds to subsidize education for children who move with their migrant parents to urban areas, regardless of whether they have registration there.⁵¹⁵



Parents of students outside two-day gaokao entrance exam, Tsinghua Fuzhong Secondary School, Beijing
Wikimedia/Stomatapoli

Most recently, Beijing announced it would set aside funds to subsidize education for children who move with their migrant parents to urban areas, regardless of whether they have registration there.⁵¹⁵

Transportation

Mass Transit

As urban populations become wealthier and the demand for cars increases, cities are investing vast sums in mass transit. As of 2016, 26 Chinese cities had extensive metro systems, with those in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Nanjing ranking among the 10 longest metro rail systems in the world.⁵¹⁶ The 365-mile Shanghai Metro is the world's longest rapid transit system.⁵¹⁷ Generally reliable and punctual, the Shanghai Metro provides service to 13 districts for 10 million passengers a day.^{518, 519} Ticket prices are subsidized to encourage use of public transportation, and

they are relatively low. This is also true for both city bus systems—the *poo-thong*, or regular city buses, and the more expensive *kwye*, or express buses, which makes fewer stops.⁵²⁰

Will the bus be here soon?		
Visitor:	gonggongChiche kwai lai le ma?	Will the bus be here soon?
Local:	kwai lai le	Yes.

Exchange 12



Maglev train, the fastest commercial train in the world, leaving Pudong International Airport, Shanghai
Wikimedia/Alex Needham

Since 2007, China has amassed the world’s largest bullet train (*gaotie*) network. Nearly 20,000 km (12,400 mi) of high-speed rail stretches across the country, between major urban areas along the eastern seaboard, up to the Tibetan Plateau, and as far west as Kunming.^{521, 522, 523, 524} The Shanghai Maglev Train, the first commercially operated high-speed magnetic levitation train, is the fastest commercial train in the world. Reaching speeds of 430 km/h (267 mph), it makes the 30.5 km (19.0 mi) trip

between Shanghai Pudong International Airport and the city in less than 8 minutes. With plans to double the existing high-speed rail network by 2030, the government invested a further 800 billion yuan (116 billion USD) in railway construction in 2017.^{525, 526}

Is there a train station nearby?		
Visitor:	fujin you huocheJanma?	Is there a train station nearby?
Local:	meiyou	No.

Exchange 13

Road Network

For a variety of reasons, China has a high number of vehicular accidents annually.⁵²⁷ Diverse terrain and weather conditions, and an infrastructure struggling to keep up with the growing number of vehicles, can make the roads hazardous.⁵²⁸ Because of poor workmanship, lesser-quality materials, infrequent maintenance, and bad weather, many city streets and highways become eroded after only a few years.⁵²⁹ Some older

inner-city areas are impossible for anyone but locals to negotiate. Beijing’s *huton* neighborhoods, for example, are networks of narrow, brick-walled alleyways originally laid out in the 13th century.

Driving conditions on China’s elevated expressways and convoluted exchanges are precarious as well. A length of the G6 expressway into Beijing is known as the “Valley of Death” because vehicles speeding downhill toward the city often plummet off the sides of the elevated sections.⁵³⁰ Moreover, freeway systems in and out of city centers in China are notorious for massive traffic jams. The Chinese government is working hard to keep up with the pace of urban population growth and car ownership, building over 6,700 km (4,200 mi) of expressway in 2016 alone.⁵³¹ In fact, the road network is changing at such a fast pace that SinoMaps, the Chinese map publisher, updates their city maps every three months.⁵³²



Nanmatou Road, Pudong Xinqu, Shanghai
Flickr/leniners

Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?		
Visitor:	fujin youmeiyou hao yidianr de Chiche Shiuligong?	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?
Local:	yau	Yes.

Exchange 14

Taxis



Three-wheeled red taxi, Wuhan, Hubei Province, eastern China
Flickr/John Lee

Taxis are an efficient way to get around in metropolitan areas. The customary way to hail a cab is with your palm facing down and your forearm pulling inward.⁵³³ Taxis can be flagged down on the street, but heavy traffic may prevent drivers from stopping. Waiting in line at a taxi stand is often a better bet.⁵³⁴ In some cities, rickshaws and motorbike taxis can be found outside bus and train stations, but they often overcharge.^{535, 536}

Ride-hailing apps have become extremely popular in urban areas, and more than 150 million Chinese use smartphone apps to hail taxis. While Uber has a presence in China, the country's largest provider is Didi Chuxing, which operates in 300 cities. Didi lets users select a taxi, shuttle van, private car, shared car, or bus to pick them up.^{537, 538} It should be noted that for visitors to China, language and culture barriers compound the safety concerns associated with using these services.^{539, 540}

These cut-price ride-hailing firms pose increasing competition for taxi services, who are fighting back. Characteristic of Chinese-style entrepreneurship, some taxi drivers have turned their vehicles into miniature convenience stores. Passengers can buy anything from dried meat and tea, to umbrellas and chewing gum, and pay using a mobile app.⁵⁴¹

Dos and Don'ts

Do make note of the taxi's license plate to avoid fake taxis. All legitimate taxis in Beijing, for example, have a plate that starts with 京B.

Do bring cash. Most taxis do not accept credit cards.

Do research fares beforehand.

Do know the destination. Very few taxi drivers speak English. Bring a business card for your destination or have it written down in Chinese to show the driver.⁵⁴²



Taxis crowding the intersection at Wulumuqi and Anfu Roads, Shanghai Flickr/MS

Do make sure the meter is on. It is illegal to bargain the fare, and visitors may be overcharged when doing so.

Do ask for a receipt (*chefeishouju*); it has the taxi's central number so you can call to report a complaint or if you forget something.^{543, 544}

Do have the driver remove your bags from the trunk before you get out of the taxi.⁵⁴⁵

Don't bring large bills. Taxi drivers often do not carry much change. Be wary of offers to exchange large notes; visitors may receive counterfeit money.

Don't tip. Tipping is uncommon in China, and the driver will not expect it. The driver will round off the fare before you pay.

Can I get a cab around here?		
Visitor:	wo dzai fujin neng jiaodao chudzuChiche ma?	Can I get a cab around here?
Local:	neng	Yes.

Exchange 15

Stop the vehicle!		
Visitor:	Ting che!	Stop the vehicle!
Local:	Zai zhan!	Goodbye!

Exchange 16

Cars

The Chinese have been driving for a relatively a short time.⁵⁴⁶ In 2000, China had fewer than 10 million passenger vehicles for a population of 1.3 billion; most cars—the status symbols of government officials—were chauffeur-driven. Bicycles, not cars, jammed city streets.⁵⁴⁷ Fifteen years later, the number of privately owned cars in China ballooned to about 244 million, and a new term arose: *zidong jiashi* (self-driving or autopilot).^{548, 549, 550} Gasoline, which is state-owned, was once rationed, but now there are plenty of stations all over the country.

Driving inexperience, compounded by a culture of bending the rules, makes China’s roads exceptionally dangerous. In 2013, China ranked second worldwide in vehicle deaths. While the government imposed new safety laws, including regulations making it illegal to run a yellow light or use a mobile phone without a hands-free device, many people ignore them.⁵⁵¹ Road traffic deaths have fallen in recent years, but analysts attribute this to safer vehicles more than better driving.^{552, 553}

In traffic accidents involving foreign nationals, the foreigner is often ruled at fault, regardless of the cause of the accident.



Traffic congestion, Kunming Railway Building, Yunnan Province Wikimedia/Jialing Gao

China’s unruly urban streets are especially dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists.⁵⁵⁴ It has been said that Chinese drive “the way they walk

[through crowds].”⁵⁵⁵ Larger vehicles muscle out smaller ones, car horns send bicyclists and motorcyclists scattering. Running red lights is common, and drivers rarely respect a pedestrian’s right of way, even if there is a crossing signal.⁵⁵⁶ Pedestrians share sidewalks with bicycles, motor bikes, and even cars, and must remain alert at all times.⁵⁵⁷

Do you know this area very well?		
Visitor:	ni dui Jege diChu shu ma?	Do you know this area very well?
Local:	dui	Yes.

Exchange 17

Is there a gas station nearby?		
Visitor:	fujin you jiayouJan ma?	Is there a gas station nearby?
Local:	yau	Yes.

Exchange 18

Is there a car rental agency nearby?		
Visitor:	fujin you zu che gongsi ma?	Is there a car rental agency nearby?
Local:	you zai nar	Yes, over there.

Exchange 19

Telecommunications



Cell phones, a common sight throughout China Flickr/ 俊玮 戴

Heavy spending on infrastructure over the past 20 years has given China world-class telecommunications networks. Only about 20% of Chinese have a landline; instead, most people use cell phones and mobile internet, skipping personal computers altogether.^{558, 559} Internet use, practically nonexistent in 1995, had expanded to over 700 million users by 2016. That, coupled with nearly 1.3 billion cell phone subscribers, has made China the largest digital telecommunications market in the world.⁵⁶⁰

Wi-Fi coverage is extensive, particularly in cities, and the Chinese are avid mobile phone users; most prefer instant messaging over email.^{561, 562} QQ and WeChat (both originally copies of Western apps), are the biggest online chat services in China. Chinese use these apps for almost everything. WeChat, for example, offers business features, email, a news feed, mobile pay service, and games, in addition to messaging and video calls.^{563, 564} Not surprisingly, internet addiction is a growing concern.⁵⁶⁵

The telecommunications industry is dominated by three state-run businesses: China Mobile, the world’s largest carrier by number of subscribers, China Telecom, and China Unicom.⁵⁶⁶ Cyber-surveillance is widespread. Government monitoring of private communications is standard practice and conducted openly. Unlike its perception in the U.S., surveillance is generally accepted by the Chinese. Influenced by Confucian principles, government leaders are viewed as custodians of society, and the Chinese have few problems with authorities knowing where they travel or what calls they receive.^{567, 568} Internationally, China was ranked as the world’s worst abuser of internet freedom in 2016. There is harsh punishment for any antigovernment rhetoric, which has undermined social activism on the internet.⁵⁶⁹



Offices of China Mobile, seen from the street
Wikimedia/ 陈少举

May I use your phone?		
Visitor:	wo keyi yongyong ni de dianhua ma?	May I use your phone?
Local:	keyi	Sure.

Exchange 20

Restaurants

China’s major cities offer everything from high-end international dining to small restaurants that showcase regional cooking styles. The relative abundance of food and the newfound wealth in cities have rekindled the Chinese romance with food and taken it to a new level. A foodie culture has developed, especially among the urban middle class.⁵⁷⁰ As the average income increases and rapid industrialization pollutes China’s farm and fishing areas, quality is more important than quantity.⁵⁷¹ Many seek out international cuisine, imported fruits and vegetables, and organic foods, spending half their income on food and clothing.⁵⁷²

Tipping is not customary in China. Visitors are not expected to tip anyone, including taxi drivers, restaurant servers, or hair stylists. Higher-end restaurants in Shanghai and Beijing might add a 10% service charge to the bill.

Only restaurants serving exclusive clientele will have restroom facilities. Public outhouses abound in cities, however. Separate areas are partitioned off for females (女) and males (男). Squat toilets, considered more hygienic by Chinese, are common in public facilities; toilet paper may not always be available.⁵⁷³



Outdoor dining, MIXC Shopping Mall, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province *Wikimedia/Coreamyilsa Lim*

Are you still serving breakfast / lunch / dinner?		
Visitor:	nimen hi gongying dzaofan / wufan / wanfan ma?	Are you still serving breakfast / lunch / dinner?
Local:	dui	Yes.

Exchange 21

Is this food fresh?		
Visitor:	Je dongShi ShinShian ma?	Is this food fresh?
Local:	ShinShian	Yes.

Exchange 22

Put this on one bill, OK?		
Visitor:	ba suoyou de dou fangdzai yiJang Jangdanshang, Shingma?	Put this on one bill, OK?
Local:	shing	Sure.

Exchange 23

Where is your bathroom?		
Visitor:	nimen de weishengjian dzai nar?	Where is your bathroom?
Local:	dzai nar	Over there.

Exchange 24

Shopping

In stark contrast to three decades ago, when Chinese had little money to spend and not much to spend it on, shopping is now the favorite pastime of the growing middle class. In its rush toward consumerism—a stated goal of Chinese leaders—developers have been building Western-style malls at a furious pace since the early 1990s. Today, city shoppers have an overwhelming number of choices on how and where to spend their newfound money, from shiny new department stores and luxury malls, to chic boutiques and bustling night markets.^{574, 575, 576} By some estimates there were 4,000 shopping malls in China in 2016, and competition is fierce. Many developers find creative ways to lure shoppers in. For example, Printemps department store in Shanghai has added a twisting dragon-shaped slide that can drop customers from the fifth to the first floor in just seconds.⁵⁷⁷

Payment Methods



MIXC Shopping Mall at night, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province Flickr/Samyuen1

Urban Chinese consumers increasingly use mobile payment apps, such as AliPay and WeChat Wallet, to pay for just about anything: goods at department stores, fresh produce on street corners, utility bills, dinner tabs, taxis, dumpling deliveries, movie tickets, and hospital appointments.^{578, 579, 580} Credit cards are widely accepted, particularly in hotels and shopping malls in metropolitan areas. But even in major cities, small shops and restaurants may not accept credit cards, so it is advisable to have

plenty of renminbi, the PRC currency, on hand. Most banks in China have ATMs, but they may charge large fees for any amount withdrawn.⁵⁸¹

Do you take credit cards?		
Visitor:	ni shou xinyongka ma?	Do you take credit cards?
Local:	shou dan you shuaka shouxufei	Yes, but there is a charge.

Exchange 25

Traditional Markets

Traditional markets are characterized by a lively atmosphere as buyers and sellers bargain over prices. Foreigners can expect to be quoted a higher price. Ask to inspect an item and only engage someone in bargaining if you intend to buy the item. Merchants can be quite aggressive in confronting customers. Use caution, and be aware of the quality before purchasing an item.^{582, 583, 584}

Will you be going to the market today?		
Visitor:	jintian ni Chu shichang ma?	Will you be going to the market today?
Local:	Chu	Yes.

Exchange 26

Buy something from me.		
Visitor:	mai yiShie wo de dongShi	Buy something from me.
Local:	bu mai	No.

Exchange 27

May I hold this and inspect it?		
Visitor:	wo neng naje jege jiancha yiShia ma?	May I hold this and inspect it?
Local:	Shing	Sure.

Exchange 28



Chinese yuan, also known as renminbi, used throughout in mainland China Flickr / Karl Baron

In traditional markets, most vendors only accept Chinese currency. They fear foreign banknotes might be counterfeit and are unlikely to accept them. They are often reluctant to change large renminbi notes for the same reason. The basic unit of renminbi is the yuan. Informally known as *kuai*, Chinese currency comes in bills with denominations of 1 (also available in coin form), 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100.

Once an offer has been accepted, it is rude to back out. It may be wise to ask if credit cards are accepted before bartering, and be aware that vendors may add a credit surcharge.

Do you accept U.S. currency?		
Visitor:	ni shou meiyuan ma?	Do you accept U.S. currency?
Local:	bu shou women Ji shou Renmingbi	No, we only accept renminbi.

Exchange 29

Can you give me change for this?		
Visitor:	ni neng ba Je huancheng lingChian ma?	Can you give me change for this?
Local:	buneng	No.

Exchange 30

Beggars are common in cities. They often wait around ATMs and transportation hubs to make contact with tourists. Chinese invariably advise foreigners not to give money.

Give me money.		
Visitor:	gei wo Chian	Give me money.
Local:	bu, wo mei Chian	No, I don't have any.

Exchange 31



Elderly beggar in Shenzhen, his story written in chalk in front of him Flickr/Trey Menefee

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Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Chapter 4 | Urban Life

Assessment

1. Taxis often accept cash and credit cards.
2. In urban China today, hospitalization is paid for by the patient's *danwei*.
3. Bargaining is the norm in Chinese markets.
4. Beijing is the only Chinese city with a subway system.
5. Migrants from the countryside are denied services available to city dwellers.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. True



Village houses, Ganzi Zangzu, western Sichuan Province Flickr/Frederic Gloor

Chapter 5 | Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Rural Life

Introduction

For centuries, the village economy was the backbone of rural Chinese society. Even three decades ago, four out of five Chinese lived and worked on farms and in villages and outlying areas. But rapid industrialization and urbanization since 1980 have had a dramatic effect on many rural communities. Millions of farmers and peasants have migrated to China's burgeoning cities in search of work, or have been relocated to make way for new construction and development. As of 2016, less than half of the Chinese population lived in the countryside. The roughly 440 million Chinese who continue to live in outlying areas face serious challenges.

Millions of migrant workers in China's cities are still tied socially and legally to their farms and villages.⁵⁸⁵ Left without the resources or means to relocate or support their families in the city, this “floating population” (*liudong renkou*) is forced to leave children behind and are seldom able to return home. Villages are often left with only the very young, the disabled, and the elderly. Children are cared for by grandparents, who still small plots of land and farm animals. This aging population of villagers often lacks insurance and pensions.⁵⁸⁶



Young children and an older women, Guoluo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province Flickr/M M

Rapid industrialization has led to toxic chemicals and untreated waste flowing directly into waterways. Millions of rural Chinese lack access to clean drinking water and are subject to water-borne illnesses.^{587, 588, 589, 590} Despite the establishment of national drinking water standards in 2012, problems persist.^{591, 592} Official statistics—previously classified as a state secret—indicate that over 19% of China's farmable land has been contaminated by industrial runoff, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides.⁵⁹³

Since 2004, the Chinese government has changed several laws to improve the lives of rural Chinese, including changes to taxes and quotas.^{594, 595} It has implemented rural projects, sometimes in coordination with GMOs, to reverse deforestation and desertification in the countryside. But even these projects are plagued by corruption at the regional level.⁵⁹⁶ Rural Chinese will often cite a proverb when talking about the central government and its inaction in rural areas: “The mountains are high, and the emperor is far away.”



Rice terraces, Giolin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Wikimedia/chensiyuan

The Urban-Rural Divide

While the Chinese government drove hard to industrialize, it strictly controlled population growth in its megacities through a restrictive population registration

system, or *hukou*.⁵⁹⁷ The system, however, fractured the rural family unit and created glaring inequalities between the health care, education, and wages received by villagers compared to urbanites.^{598, 599} In 2013, the government began reforming the *hukou*. Its aim is to incrementally register China's migrant workers, and the families they were forced to leave behind, in the cities where they work.⁶⁰⁰ According to official reports, more than 16 million workers and their families were registered in cities in 2016.^{601, 602}

Migration



Shaxi, Jianchuan County, Dali Prefecture, Yunnan Province
Flickr/Nick

of their *hukou*, 75% of these migrant workers are forced to leave behind their farms, villages—and their young children. Thus, an estimated 61 million children live with a single parent, grandparents, or sometimes no one. Researchers estimate that 25% of all children in rural communities are left-behind children, estranged from one or both parents for years.⁶⁰³ Typically, parents and young migrant workers only return once a year to visit family, during the Chinese New Year. This annual homecoming is considered the world's largest human migration.⁶⁰⁴



Dashilar, a traditional Beijing hutong alley, not far from the Forbidden City Flickr/Jens Scott Knudsen

China's industrialization and economic development has led to relaxed limits on migration. In recent decades, millions of migrant workers have moved from the countryside to cities in search of better wages, which can be three times higher in cities. By 2016, an estimated 200 million rural Chinese had left their homes to find work in the country's burgeoning cities. Because parents cannot get government housing or public education in cities because

Despite the status associated with being a permanent city resident, some migrants have become more prosperous than urbanites.⁶⁰⁵ This prosperity is due in part to support networks, in the form of kinship and native place associations; migrants have created villages within a city (*chengguancun*).⁶⁰⁶ Among the earliest and largest of such communities was Zhejiang Village in Beijing, where most of

the 70,000-80,000 residents hailed from the Wenzhou area of Zhejiang Province.^{607, 608} In 1995, Zhejiang Village was torn down for redevelopment after the residents were evicted by police, an action defended by then Premier Li Peng. His message was clear: “illegal” outsiders were not welcome.⁶⁰⁹

Do you have a job?		
Visitor:	ni you gongdzuo ma?	Do you have a job?
Local:	you	Yes.

Exchange 32

Hukou: One Country, Two Societies

In the late 1950s, the Chinese government established the *hukou* system of household registration. The document, much like an internal passport, allows a person to reside in a certain district and, hence, to use its hospitals, schools, and services. Rather than control mobility, it has been used as a tool of institutional exclusion for most rural migrants. These migrants work in cities, but lack access to social services because of their *hukou*.⁶¹⁰



Hukou household registration Wikimedia/Atlaslin

Within China, there is now recognition that the *hukou* has created a two-tiered society.⁶¹¹ On 1 March 2010, the editors of 13 Chinese newspapers released an unusual joint statement asking that the *hukou* system be scrapped.^{612, 613, 614} For many years it had been an intractable issue; there was simply no way to disband the system without creating large short-term costs.⁶¹⁵ The reasoning: municipalities would be hard pressed to absorb an influx of workers who would work under the table, not paying taxes, but still draw on public services including schooling, unemployment insurance, and health care subsidies.^{616, 617} Recently, however, the Chinese government acknowledged the negative effects of the system and created a National New Urbanization Plan. The plan will gradually shift to registration by residence. But the changeover has been slow. As of early 2017, it was still in progress.⁶¹⁸

Land Ownership

Urban land belongs to the state, with the actual owner being a specific entity such as a factory or university. Under the economic reforms, land use rights have been separated from ownership, enabling a private real estate market to emerge.⁶¹⁹ Thus, once a property is developed into residential housing, condominium owners can transfer title to their properties through private sales. By contrast, agricultural land is “collectively owned,” a legal designation that prevents individual plots from being bought or sold; a farmer may lease land for up to 30 years.⁶²⁰ Consolidating plots has resulted in more efficient farming and higher crop yields, which is needed to feed the country’s expanding population.⁶²¹ Recently, China began introducing corporate farming, a move that may have wide economic and political implications, and may gradually phase out collective farming.⁶²² The central government also remains leery of allowing households to cut their ties to the village by cashing out. In Beijing’s view, as well as that of some migrants, holding onto that land provides a safety net if they lose their jobs in the city.⁶²³



Farmers working the land, Yangshuo, Guangxi Province Flickr/Ivo Verhaar

The current land laws have allowed exploitation by a Chinese government set on rapid industrialization and profit-making. Local officials evict farmers and villagers, paying them a fraction of what their land is worth and demolishing houses and farms to make way for new development projects that are “in the public interest.” The villagers are moved into consolidated villages on the outskirts of towns.⁶²⁴ Every year, local governments appropriate land from an estimated 4 million rural Chinese. This has sparked protests and disputes between farmers and local governments. So-called nail houses, residences locals refuse to vacate, are popping up throughout the country. In the end, protest and resistance are seldom successful.^{625, 626, 627, 628, 629}



A nail house, whose owners refuse to leave, preventing construction of a shopping mall, Chongqing Wikimedia/zola

Are you and your family planning to move?		
Visitor:	ni he ni jialiRen shibushi yao banjia?	Are you and your family planning to move?
Local:	bushi	No.

Exchange 33

Farming

Agriculture was the backbone of the Chinese rural economy for centuries, and most peasants worked on farms. In the traditional Chinese or Confucian view, it was the only morally and socially acceptable trade for peasants.⁶³⁰ Today, the rural population is declining as an increasing number migrate to cities in search of higher wages. Moreover, the average age of farmers is rising and fewer young people are choosing to farm the land. In 1988, over 60% of the working population was employed in agriculture. By 2014, the United Nations estimated that only 3% of the working population remained in agriculture. Experts predict that the number of



Rapeseed farm, Tiantai, Zhejiang Flickr/Ronald Tagra

farmers in China will continue to decline. At the same time, the amount of arable land is decreasing.^{631, 632, 633} From 2001 to 2013, official estimates are that 33,000 sq km (12,741 sq mi) of farmland was lost to industrial and commercial development, through what the government terms “planned ecological cropland conversion.”⁶³⁴ This is compounded by desertification, drought, and pollution.⁶³⁵

Despite these challenges, China ranks first in worldwide farm output in rice, wheat, pork, chicken, seed cotton, peanuts, rapeseed, tea, and various fruit.⁶³⁶ Most of this is consumed by the Chinese themselves. With a population of 1.4 billion people, China works to feed 20% of the world’s population using only 7% of the world’s available farmland.⁶³⁷ Its food security relies on small-scale, household-run farming operations. The average rural home consists of roughly four people who tend just over an acre, only enough to feed the family.⁶³⁸

Household Responsibility System

After the Great Famine, rural poverty remained endemic into the 1970s. The 1978 economic reforms broke up the collectivized production system. Under the Household Responsibility System, village land was divided among households based on a per capita basis. After contracting with the state to supply a fixed amount of grain, producer families could keep surpluses after contributing their quotas. Grain production went up 20% almost immediately.⁶³⁹ But the benefits were spread unevenly. Villages situated in places where the land was flat and fertile, such as river valleys that enjoyed access to water, were able to take full advantage of the reforms. It was easy to expand the harvest under these conditions. Farmers close to urban areas could increase their income by marketing cash crops. Rural income increased steadily for the next 10 years.

By contrast, the Household Responsibility System delivered negligible benefits for the rural poor and ethnic minorities living in large areas in the western and border provinces.⁶⁴⁰ In fact, residents of most communities off the beaten track had no means to market goods. Thirty years after the revolution, a trip to the commune headquarters, which became the county seat under the reforms, could take half a day. Here, households that had little grain left over after making their contractual sale to the state went hungry.⁶⁴¹



Rice terraces in Yuanyang, Honghe Prefecture, Hunnan Province Flickr/Ronald Tagra

Rural Settlements

There are around 1 million rural settlements in China, each with an average of 900 people. A typical small- to medium-size village is made up of roughly 50 to 100 families.⁶⁴² Villages are fairly evenly distributed and are connected by footpaths and cart tracks. Most villages contain simple individual residences and community houses, such as a meeting house, temple, or clan (ancestor) hall. Most rural settlements, except those in mountainous regions, are compact, with houses built close together in the center of the village. In mountainous and hilly terrain, homes are spread apart. Many large villages and market towns are surrounded by walls. Villages are surrounded by farmland.⁶⁴³

Did you grow up here?		
Visitor:	ni shi dzai Jer Jangda de ma?	Did you grow up here?
Local:	shi	Yes.

Exchange 34



Theft of livestock and burglaries are an increasing problem. The rural police force is understaffed and poorly trained. Most of the state funding for security is allocated to the cities. As a result, it is common for a single police officer to be responsible for several villages and 4,000 to 6,000 people, making adequate policing impossible.⁶⁴⁴

Left: Bringing animals to the livestock market Flickr/Tom Thai

Local Government

The Chinese government continues to reject any national political reform that could challenge the CCP's dominant role. But given the challenges of managing China's immense size and minimizing local protests of national decisions, the PRC established a form of "socialist democracy" in the countryside in the 1980s. Locally elected village committees are self-governing under the "guidance" of the larger-level township. In this way, peasants gained some control over their affairs. Voting stops at the "village gate," however, as the Chinese government continues to denounce Western-style separation of powers.

Depending on the size of the village, committees are made up of three to nine members who serve three-year terms. The core leadership is made of CCP members.⁶⁴⁵ These committees are charged with implementing state and local taxation and military recruitment policies, overseeing land distribution and road construction, and resolving family conflicts.⁶⁴⁶

Villagers select their village head (*cunzhang*) and members of a village committee (*cunmin weiyuanhui*) for three-year terms.^{647, 648} Chinese village elections meet the basic democratic norms of secret ballot, direct election to office, and competition between candidates. Lists of registered voters must be posted 20 days before an election and can be challenged by those who have been excluded. There is no provision for absentee ballots, so residents who work elsewhere must return to their village to vote. The candidates, who are not announced until 5 days before the election, do not

campaign on party performance. Instead, their platforms emphasize how they will improve village life.

Despite the village elections, the local party secretary who is head of the village committee, holds the most power in the community. The party secretary functions more as a representative of the state than that of the villagers. Responsible for all individual applications for government loans and major land transactions, the secretary can break long-term leases for a small fee if a city developer wants land.⁶⁴⁹ The party secretary is selected every three years in a closed-door session by local CCP members. The outcome of the selection process is typically dictated by the candidate’s personal connections and influence (*guangxi*).



Local government offices, Shijia Village, Hukeng Town, Fujian Province Wikimedia/Vmenkov

Does your leader live here?		
Visitor:	ni de lingdao Judzai jer ma?	Does your leader live here?
Local:	dui	Yes.

Exchange 35

Can you take me to your leader?		
Visitor:	ni neng dai wo Chu jian nimen lingdao ma?	Can you take me to your leader?
Local:	Shing	Yes.

Exchange 36

Rural Homes

The traditional Chinese home is built in a three-bay style. Depending on the size and wealth of the family, there may be a fully enclosed courtyard on three sides and walls for privacy. The view through the entrance is often blocked by a wall or screen for additional privacy. Traditionally, this prevented access by bad spirits, which, according to Chinese folk beliefs, can only move in a straight line.⁶⁵⁰



Traditional village home in Tongshan County, Hubei Province Wikimedia/Vmenkov

In general, rural homes tend to be bigger than urban apartments, with several rooms and a courtyard. Depending on the region, they are made of wood, sun-dried brick, or pounded earth. They may be traditional in style or block-like. It is not uncommon to find kitchens outside, with a water pipe in the courtyard. Typically, there are no modern toilets, showers, or central heat. In colder climates, a traditional *kang* bed is common.⁶⁵¹ Made of brick or clay, the *kang* can be heated. Homes

are generally unadorned; framed certificates of appreciation from the government for things like paying taxes and keeping the home clean may hang on the walls. Villagers may have televisions, washing machines, and motorcycles, and a few have cars.

There is great variety in the style of homes in different regions. In the south of China, where there is an abundance of lakes and rivers, many houses are built along canals. In Fujian, Guangdong, and Guangxi provinces, the Hakka ethnic group live in multifamily communal living structures. These round, multistory buildings (*tulou*) are traditionally defensive structures; they have only one entrance and windowless ground floors. Tibetans live in compact, stone-chamber dwellings called *diaofang*. These are two or three stories; livestock is kept on the ground floor, and the family living space is on the second story. If there is a third floor, the family sutra hall, or place of prayer, is located there.^{652, 653, 654}



Tianluokeng cluster of circular and rectangular tulou, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Zhangzhou City, Fujian Province Flickr/notch

In northwestern China, nomadic Mongols live in circular, pelt-covered yurts (*gers*). On the Loess Plateau and in northern Shaanxi, western Shanxi, and southeastern Gansu, homes built into hillsides are a distinctive feature of the rural landscape. Here, wood is scarce and the cover of yellow earth, or loess, is thick.⁶⁵⁵ Approximately 40 million people live in these “cave” dwellings, which are naturally insulated, making it warmer in winter and cooler in summer.⁶⁵⁶ But they can be fatal in an earthquake.

Health Care

Today, China has a universal health care system in place, with benefits that include preventive and primary care. Funded by the insured and by subsidies from the local and central governments, it provides partial coverage for many kinds of medical expenses, excluding some outpatient and drug expenses.⁶⁵⁷ While inpatient hospital services required patients to contribute 50% of costs as of 2016, the Chinese government plans to increase coverage to 70% of hospital costs in the coming years.⁶⁵⁸

The path to universal coverage, and correcting the inequality between coverage for rural and urban residents that had existed for decades, has been evolving since 2003. Before then, national government expenditures on health care per capita were about seven times higher in the cities than in rural areas.⁶⁵⁹ The emergence of the large floating population of migrant workers made the spread of infectious disease more difficult to prevent, and brought the issue of health care reform to a head.⁶⁶⁰ The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003 prompted the Chinese government to focus on health care reform, especially in rural China. It established a new rural cooperative medical insurance scheme that was voluntary. At that time, most rural Chinese struggled to save the money needed for a medical emergency, which they would have to pay for out of pocket.



Cataract patient being examined by a doctor from Wuzhishan Eye Hospital Flickr/Community Eye Health

By 2010, more than 90% of all rural residents were insured. But China’s public insurance coverage is basic, and it has not kept pace with rising costs. China’s population is aging, and roughly 60% of China’s elderly live in rural areas.⁶⁶¹ Moreover, China’s rural areas have the highest tuberculosis rate in the world.⁶⁶² For the elderly and poor, the cost of treating cancer, diabetes, and heart disease has forced them to take out loans to pay the difference. Official reports indicate that of those families who fell below the poverty line in recent years, 44% were impoverished by illness.^{663, 664}

Do you need my help?		
Visitor:	ni yao wo bang ni ma?	Do you need my help?
Local:	Yao	Yes.

Exchange 37

Do you know what is wrong?		
Visitor:	ni Jidao nar chuwentì le ma?	Do you know what is wrong?
Local:	bu Jidao	No.

Exchange 38

Is there a medical clinic nearby?		
Visitor:	fujin you yiwusuo ma?	Is there a medical clinic nearby?
Local:	you, dzai nar	Yes, over there.

Exchange 39

Transportation and Lodging

Transportation in rural China is reasonable, though many areas are off limits to foreigners. Dirt roads become progressively more common as one moves away from the coast into the less developed interior. In some straight stretches, farmers may dry crops on the road. Propaganda signs along rural roads display support for the military, philosophical slogans, and campaigns for combating desertification. Buses and motorcycle taxis serve roadside communities. Long-distance buses can be dangerous, as drivers are paid by the load and rush from destination to destination.⁶⁶⁵



Harvested corn drying in piles in the street, Tiantai, Zhejiang Province Flickr/Francisco Anzola

People in the countryside are not skilled at giving directions because few drive or know the roads around them. It may also be difficult to find someone who can read a map. Though the Chinese have an impressive history of cartography, maps in China were historically used only for government and military purposes.⁶⁶⁶ There was no tradition of maps for private use, and map-reading is not taught in schools.



Hainan Dao Tu Shuo (illustrative map of Hainan Island) 1820-1875 Wikimedia

In the past, cheaper hotels could only accommodate Chinese nationals; now they may provide lodging to anyone. Rural tourism is still an emerging industry in China.⁶⁶⁷

Can you take me there?		
Visitor:	ni neng dai wo Chu nar ma?	Can you take me there?
Local:	neng, geng wo dzou	Yes, I can. Follow me.

Exchange 40

Checkpoints and Security

Rural Chinese are well acquainted with roadway checkpoints, especially near border crossings, in and out of major cities, and areas of protest or potential unrest.

Where is the nearest checkpoint?		
Visitor:	dszijin de jianchaJan dzai nar?	Where is the nearest checkpoint?
Local:	li Jer you liang gongli	It's 2 kilometers.

Exchange 41

Clashes between police and villagers are common. Police are sent to enforce a government judgment to develop rural farmland for other commercial uses. While the central government forbids the use of force in dealing with demonstrators, the specifics of how to arrive at a peaceful resolution are left to the discretion of lower-level authorities.



Checkpoint at the China-Tibet border Flickr/meg and rahul

Identification checkpoints in and out of Tibet, and in the center of Lhasa, have been in place for years. Here, identification is required before using photocopiers or buying gasoline.^{668, 669} In far-west Xinjiang, home to Uyghurs, recent tougher security measures include frequent checkpoints along roads and highways.⁶⁷⁰ In Inner Mongolia, to penalize locals for accepting a visit by the Dali Llama in late 2016, several checkpoints were set up to collect fees for copper and coal shipments.

Is this all the ID you have?		
Visitor:	Je shi ni weiye de shenfenJen ma?	Is this all the ID you have?
Local:	shi	Yes.

Exchange 42

Before 1984, PRC citizens were not required to have identification. Today, Chinese are issued national identity cards (*shenfenzheng*) at age 16, which they must carry in public at all times. The card is required for everything from residency permits and college applications to using internet cafes and purchasing items in stores. The government will also soon require internet users to use their real names and a digital ID card online. ^{671, 672}

Show us the car registration.		
Visitor:	Gei women knkan ni de Chiche JutseJen	Show us the car registration.
Local:	hao	OK.

Exchange 43

All vehicles must be registered. The registration can cost as much as the vehicle, though this is truer in the cities than rural areas. Additionally, ordinary citizens do not have legal access to firearms.

Landmines

The full extent of landmine use in China is not known, though China claims it maintains a small number of minefields for national defense. China, a large producer and stockpiler of landmines, has not signed any international bans on either landmines or cluster munitions. China claims to have “less than” 5 million antipersonnel mines, but experts estimate that the PRC’s stockpile may contain up to 110 million mines. ^{673, 674} Historically, China had minefields on its territory bordering Vietnam, India, and Russia. The border with Vietnam had,



Chinese Type 72 metallic anti-tank mine, Beijing Military Museum Wikimedia/Max Smith

at one point, roughly 2 million landmines. China conducted clearance operations of the Vietnam border areas in the 1990s. Despite initial claims that these areas were clear, there were reports of casualties in Yunnan Province. In 2015, China resumed clearance of more than 50 minefields, covering more than 50 km sq (19 mi sq). Clearance of these 470,000 mines was set to be completed by the end of 2017. China has not reported on mine fields along its borders with India and Russia, or on operations to clear them.^{675, 676}

Is this area mined?		
Visitor:	Jege diChu mai dilei le ma?	Is this area mined?
Local:	mai le	Yes.

Exchange 44

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Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Chapter 5 | Rural Life

Assessment

1. Roughly 25% of all rural children live without one or both parents.
2. The average income of farmers remains far below that of city dwellers.
3. Chinese farmers have titles that show their ownership of the land they work.
4. Rural Chinese cannot vote.
5. Rural migrants can easily change their status (*hukou*) and become city residents.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False



Family reunion, Beijing Flickr/Connie Ma

Chapter 6 | Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Family Life

Introduction

Family ties have traditionally been the cornerstone of Chinese society, where collectivism is valued more than individualism. Familial relationships, family values, and respect for one’s parents, elders, and ancestors (*hsiao*) are considered virtues to be cultivated. From the Chinese perspective, doing so ensures a harmonious society. The philosophical connection between the family and Chinese society is reflected in the word *jia* (family or house); *jia* is used in *guojia* (country, or literally “the family of the country”) and *da jia* (everyone, or literally “big family”). These words convey the group orientation of Chinese culture.^{677, 678, 679, 680}

The traditional Chinese family is male-centric. The male head of household makes all major decisions, while the oldest son is considered a “second father” to the family. He is the one who inherits, with the expectation that he will use the inheritance to provide for the rest of the family. Traditionally, a son and his wife lives with the son’s parents. The household incorporates grandparents, parents, married sons, their wives, and grandchildren under one roof. The home is the ancestral home, the place where their ancestors lived and where their descendants will live. Children grow up with their cousins. They are viewed collectively as part of the same generation, often called “second son” or “fifth daughter,” and so on. In fact, there are more than 50 kinship terms in Mandarin, one for each family member on the mother’s and father’s sides.^{681, 682} Philosophically, family extends outward, and familial terms of respect—grandfather, uncle, and aunt—are often used for neighbors and other members of the community.^{683, 684}



Chinese family Flickr/Matt Barber

The traditional family has undergone tremendous change in the last 30 years. Changes in education, the retirement system, and the economic structure have altered family life in contemporary China.⁶⁸⁵ The tradition of families living close together and under one roof is disappearing.⁶⁸⁶ Chinese parents give children more freedom, and the children are less dependent on the family. More than half of Chinese parents over age 60 now live separately from their adult children.⁶⁸⁷



*Young couple, Shanghai
Flickr / Harvey Jiang*

Ancestor Veneration

In modern China where families increasingly live apart, cultural traditions surrounding ancestor veneration bring families together.^{688, 689} The Chinese have long believed that the spirits of deceased family members influence their fortunes. Families honor their ancestors through rituals, and in return the ancestors provide protection and assistance. To ensure their ancestors’ positive disposition, family members regularly burn incense and make offerings of food at small altars in the home or the village communal house.^{690, 691} They may also pray directly to



Honoring the deceased Flickr/istolethetv

ancestors for intervention or guidance in times of need. Wealthier families may pay to have ancestral altars set up in temples, where priests pray to the deceased every day. Busy urban families may reserve their ancestor worship for special holidays, such as Tomb Sweeping Day and the Ghost Festival.^{692, 693, 694}

Family Makeup



Laundry drying above a residential street in Shanghai Flickr/Connie Ma

With market reforms, privatization, and the decline of the *danwei* social welfare system in cities, many urban families must be self-sufficient and seek out growth opportunities, housing, and health benefits, and care for their elderly.⁶⁹⁵ Apart from those who run family businesses out of the home, urban families separate family and business just like rural families. Typically, a working-class urban family will rent one room and share a kitchen with two other families, leaving the home each day for work. Children of urban families do not bring in extra income or wages as much as in the countryside. Urban families are generally smaller. Rural families, with increasing frequency, are made up of the very old and very young.

In cities, grandparents watch young children or children are enrolled in a work unit nursery or kindergarten. In rural areas, one or more of the elderly may watch over their own grandchildren and any other children without adults to care for them. Depending on the availability of housing in cities, newly married couples will establish their own household or may move in with the husband's parents, or sometimes the wife's parents. In rural areas, new wives will often come into a village from other towns, moving in with the husband's parents.^{696, 697}

Do you have any brothers?		
Visitor:	ni you gege didi ma?	Do you have any brothers?
Local:	you	Yes.

Exchange 45

Are you the only person in your family who has a job?		
Visitor:	nimen jia Jiyou ni yigeRen gongdzuoma?	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?
Local:	bushi	No.

Exchange 46

Is this your entire family?		
Visitor:	Jeshi nimen Chuanjia ma?	Is this your entire family?
Local:	shi	Yes.

Exchange 47

Elderly

Traditionally, the elderly enjoyed the highest status in the family. In a strict Confucian home, they received food first, even if it meant the children went hungry.⁶⁹⁸ As outward migration of the able-bodied has become routine, the family, which traditionally provides the primary social security network for the elderly, is breaking down. In rural China, a growing population of aging farmers lacking adequate health care and pensions, are left behind. Moreover, the burden of childrearing has shifted to the elderly at a time when they expected to be cared for by their own children.^{699, 700, 701, 702}



Elderly Uyghur man at the pigeon market, Kashgar, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Flickr/Dan Lundberg
^{699, 700, 701, 702}

Status of Women

Until the 20th Century

Prior to the Communist Revolution, marriage was a contract between families rather than individual choice. A woman's place in her husband's household was secured through the birth of a son who could perpetuate the bloodline.⁷⁰³ Into the early 20th century, wealthy households may have included more than one wife and concubines.⁷⁰⁴ Female foot-binding, a symbol of subjugation and beauty, was a common practice until it was outlawed in 1912.^{705, 706} Even in rural areas, "lotus feet" were a status symbol

that made women more desirable as wives.⁷⁰⁷ Within the household, women did not achieve any power until they reached old age, and this power was largely limited to control over younger women who had married into the family.⁷⁰⁸ Until the 1900s, most women were forbidden from learning written Chinese. In Hunan Province, women invented a secret script called *Nüshu* (women’s writing). The script was guarded from men and passed down through generations by “sworn sisters.”^{709, 710}

Communist Revolution and Beyond

The CCP came to power with a commitment to raising the status of women.⁷¹¹ In the cities, men and women were assigned jobs without regard for traditional gender roles. Thus, a woman could be hired to drive a city bus, requiring her to learn to drive and complete a course in auto mechanics. A man might be assigned to the unskilled job of onboard ticket seller. Nonetheless, they earned the same salary. In 1950, the government outlawed arranged marriages, polygamy, and concubines.

Since that time, gender relations and family structures have undergone enormous changes. Women’s socioeconomic status has significantly improved. Financial freedom and better education have provided more opportunities for young urban women, making them more self-reliant.⁷¹² In 2014, more than half of China’s undergraduate and graduate students were women.⁷¹³ The number of successful female entrepreneurs, and even billionaires, is growing.^{714, 715} Despite this, the perceived value of women remains low and traditions persist. Women earn 35% less than men, and there is tremendous pressure on women to “marry up” and have a son (daughters rarely inherit family property). Once married, a wife’s primary role is maintaining the household.⁷¹⁶ Even the independence urban women have achieved has a narrow window. Those who delay marriage past 28 are dubbed *sheng-nu* (leftover women).⁷¹⁷



*One of an increasing number of women entrepreneurs in China
Flickr/World Economic Forum*

Family Planning

Confucianism, the guiding philosophy in China even today, holds that “there are three things which are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them.” In China,

posterity means “having a male child.” A family without a male heir often faces difficulties on social, economic, and emotional levels.^{718, 719} Thus, the Chinese have historically favored male children, and evidence of female infanticide dates to the sixth century B.C.E.⁷²⁰



Woman in traditional costume, Tongren County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Flickr/Ding Zhou

For 40 years, China restricted family size through its “one-child” policy and other family planning measures. While these laws and mandates had the desired effect of ending the population explosion that occurred during the first decades of the PRC, they may have worked too well. China will soon be facing a shortage of workers to support its aging population. Because respect for one’s elders is a key characteristic of Chinese culture, adult children are morally and legally obligated to support their parents both economically and socially.⁷²¹ This has become a greater responsibility since pensions are no longer automatically state funded and social services are not widely available.^{722, 723, 724} Demographic changes created by family planning have left a China with far more elderly than young people to provide for them.

The Chinese government is also concerned that a dwindling workforce will become a drag on economic growth. Faced with these problems, China lifted the one-child policy in 2016.⁷²⁵ Most families today are restricted to two children, but financial constraints lead young couples to continue limiting the number of children they have, particularly in urban areas.⁷²⁶ Many couples in China’s fast-paced and overcrowded cities have only one child, or none at all.⁷²⁷ The result is a national birth rate far below the “replacement rate” of 2.1 children per woman.^{728, 729, 730, 731}

Are these your children?		
Visitor:	JeShie shi ni de haitsi ma?	Are these your children?
Local:	shi	Yes.

Exchange 48

One-Child Policy

With the founding of the PRC, government propaganda encouraged large families; birth control was condemned and some contraceptives were banned.^{732, 733} This resulted in unprecedented population growth over the next few decades and ultimately a period of famine. In 1980, the CCP launched a family planning campaign with little concern that it might reverse decades of effort to promote gender equality.^{734, 735} Under the policy, couples were offered incentives for



Young boy, Mongolian steppes, Inner Mongolia Flickr/Alan Fieldus

complying, but those who had more than one child faced fines, and at times, forced sterilization and abortion.^{736, 737} With boys viewed as a vital element to providing for parents' old age, female infanticide resumed in some areas.⁷³⁸ The law allowed one child per family, and a second child only under certain circumstances.⁷³⁹ Some families would bribe doctors to learn the gender of the fetus and elect to abort if it was a girl.⁷⁴⁰ The Chinese government acknowledged the problem and introduced laws prohibiting female infanticide, using ultrasound to determine sex, and discrimination against women who defy societal pressure and choose to keep female babies.



Mother with infant, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province Flickr/Connie

In the cities, the policy was easy to enforce and single-child families quickly became the norm. But in the countryside, the restrictive policy was a threat to family survival and met with resistance; births of girls were underreported or hidden from authorities.^{741, 742} Thus, today's gender gap, while real and consequential for Chinese society, might not be as extensive as it could have been. In fact, researchers estimate that the births of 30-60 million girls went unreported.^{743, 744}

Education

Chinese culture places an extremely high value on education. As one Chinese proverb states: Jade that has not been polished cannot be used. A person that has not studied cannot know righteousness.⁷⁴⁵ Families understand that education, and the money to pay for it, is what it takes to compete in the new China. Parents invest all their financial and emotional resources in their children's education. Children are expected to be the best in whatever they attempt.⁷⁴⁶



Primary school students, Sichuan Province Flickr/gill_penney

Since the late 1980s, schooling has been compulsory through ninth grade, and Chinese children typically start their formal education at age two. This has boosted literacy to over 96%. Tuition is technically free until high school, but in addition to a small administrative fee per semester, there are many incidental expenses, from water usage fees to charges for supplemental lessons.⁷⁴⁷ Changing schools is also costly; parents who can, pay huge “donation” sums to secure a space for their child in an elite school at any level.⁷⁴⁸



Assembly-line worker, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province Wikimedia/Robert S Donovan

Education beyond junior middle school is not compulsory, and the average young person in China enters the workforce at age 15. Education beyond this point is too costly for most Chinese. For those who continue their education, an entrance exam is required. The results allow students to enter a vocational middle school, which leads down a trade path, or an academic middle school, which leads to college. College acceptance is based solely on the two-day entrance exam (*gaokao*), held the first Thursday and Friday in June.^{749, 750} In 2015, over 9 million students took the exam.

Rural–Urban Education Gap

The education gap between urban and rural Chinese is wide. A study in 2015 showed

that 88-93% of rural adults had less than a high school education, compared to 55-61% of urban adults.⁷⁵¹ The offspring of legal city residents are 35 times more likely than those from rural families to attend college.⁷⁵² While this reflects a difference in quality of education and home environment, rural applicants are also disadvantaged because there are many more college slots allocated to city students.⁷⁵³ Scoring competitively on the *gaokao* is the only way for rural students to break free of village life or a future as a migrant worker.⁷⁵⁴

Rural schools are typically poorly equipped and teach Mao-era curriculum. There are also fewer of them; schools in the countryside were consolidated with the drop-in students (a result of family planning policies).⁷⁵⁵ Children who live far from school may board for long periods; living conditions are often poor.⁷⁵⁶

Is there a school nearby?		
Visitor:	fujin you ShuShiao ma?	Is there a school nearby?
Local:	you	Yes.

Exchange 49

Do your children go to school?		
Visitor:	ni haidzi shangShue ma?	Do your children go to school?
Local:	shangShue	Yes.

Exchange 50

Marriage



Red veil drapes bride's head in traditional Chinese wedding ceremony, Dalian, Liaoning Province, northeast China Flickr/kanegen

Marriages were traditionally alliances between families, rather than romantic partnerships between individuals. Wealthier families, who could plan far in advance, might arrange an infant child's marriage. This was done directly with other families or through a matchmaker. Chinese families at every strata of society often referred to astrology and fortune-telling to select spouses and wedding days.⁷⁵⁷ On the day of the wedding ceremony, the bride arrived with her head covered by a red cloth. She laid eyes on her husband only

when the cloth was removed so they could bow in front of his family’s ancestral altar three times. That act of bowing made them husband and wife, and a celebratory banquet followed. Wedding banquets, even among families who were not wealthy, were, and still are, known for their extravagance.⁷⁵⁸

In 1950, both women and men were given the legal right to choose their partners, though most still consulted their parents.^{759, 760} Until the late 20th century, marriages were arranged by class and the needs of the prospective husband’s family.⁷⁶¹

Is this your wife?		
Visitor:	Jeshi taitai ma?	Is this your wife?
Local:	shi	Yes.

Exchange 51

Congratulations on your marriage.		
Visitor:	gongShi ni jiehun le	Congratulations on your marriage.
Local:	ShieShie	Thank you.

Exchange 52

Contemporary Urban Unions

In contemporary China, courtships are increasingly Western in style; dating and cohabitation before marriage are more common in urban areas. A 2013 survey by Peking University indicated that 33% of couples lived together before marriage.⁷⁶² Marriage arrangements and ceremonies are often a mixture of Chinese and Western cultures.⁷⁶³



*Couple on the beach, Haikou, Hainan Province
Flickr/Kan Wu*

Long engagements are the norm among young urban couples, sometimes because they are waiting for housing to become available. Additionally, financial freedom and better education have made young urban women more self-reliant and selective.⁷⁶⁴ Still, Chinese men are viewed as the primary provider. Women earn 35% less than men, and financial stability is a large determining factor when choosing a partner.^{765, 766} Thus, bachelors need to demonstrate they can

provide for a family. For young men, part of the only-child generation brought up in an age of wealth and material comfort, marital prospects often hinge on the ability to buy an apartment.^{767, 768} A person must own property to receive local household registration, which is needed to register a marriage in that city.⁷⁶⁹ Dating websites are filled with requirements for a house and often a car.⁷⁷⁰

Are you married?		
Visitor:	ni jiehun le ma?	Are you married?
Local:	Meiyou	No.

Exchange 53

Urban weddings are typically smaller and more modest than rural celebrations, as families are less involved in the event. “Naked marriages,” are on the rise—a couple may take only the day off work to register the marriage, and have dinner afterwards to celebrate. Guests are more often colleagues or friends than distant relatives or friends of the parents.^{771, 772}

Divorce

Divorce is historically rare in China. In feudal times, it was relatively easy for men to divorce; for women, it was shameful and they faced public stigma.⁷⁷³ Despite new freedoms given women during the Cultural Revolution, permission to divorce remained difficult to obtain; in part, marital dissolution reflected a bourgeois lifestyle choice associated with the decadent West. Additionally, Chinese cities faced housing shortages, and divorce necessitated establishing two households. The upshot was that most unhappy couples were forced to stay married, just as earlier generations had done.



Elderly couple, Beijing Flickr/Omer

Marriage laws passed in the 1980s made divorce easier, but couples still needed permission from their employers, which was not always given.⁷⁷⁴ In 2003, the Chinese government waived the employer permission requirement.⁷⁷⁵ Since then, the national divorce rate has increased. In 2015, roughly 4 million couples

divorced, more than twice the number from a decade before. All the while, the number of people marrying has dropped.⁷⁷⁶ In contemporary China, more Chinese couples divorce than marry.⁷⁷⁷

A recent survey indicates that infidelity is a major cause of divorce in China. Newfound wealth has led some men to keep mistresses. Many divorce cases involve third parties, and China is moving to restrict the legal rights of the *ernai* (second wife); the *ernai* may have to return property she received from a married man if his wife sues to get it back.^{778, 779, 780} Additionally, changes to real estate laws have led many couples to divorce to avoid a tax on property sales and purchases of second homes.⁷⁸¹ Divorce among migrant workers is also increasing because of long separations.⁷⁸²

Funerals



Men carrying a coffin in funeral procession, Weishan, Yunnan Province Flickr/Carlo Ghio

Like many Chinese traditions, those surrounding funerals have a long history and they are filled with complicated rites and detailed customs. These are determined by the deceased's age, the manner of death, position in society, role in the family, and the region. Funeral traditions differ throughout China, ranging from traditional ground burials to cliff burials and Tibetan sky burials. Most, however, are closely aligned with ancestor worship. The belief is that souls can assist future generations only if the family pays special attention to their care and follows very specific rules.^{783, 784}

Traditionally, Chinese families bury their dead in an ancestral plot; some may consult a feng shui master to select the best location for the gravesite.⁷⁸⁵ A wake takes place before the burial and may last several days. The next of kin will wear mourning clothing, light incense, and burn paper money, houses, and other objects the deceased may need in the afterlife. After Buddhist tradition, the ceremony lasts 49 days. The extent of the grieving period varies, but the eldest son often remains in mourning for 72 days, during which time public displays of grief are expected.^{786, 787}

In recent years, arable land is scarce and cremation is required by law in most of the country. But land for even these small graves is running out in densely populated

areas. In 2013, the government began to subsidize ecoburials, such as scattering ashes at sea or under trees.^{788, 789} The land deficit has become so critical that officials have flattened graves to create land for farming and development.⁷⁹⁰ While cremation is almost universal in cities today, the practice has not taken hold in the countryside, where people sometimes bury their dead in secret and pay a fine if caught.^{791, 792}

I would like to offer my condolences.		
Visitor:	wo dui ni he ni jialiRen biaoshi aidao	I would like to offer my condolences.
Local:	ShieShie	Thank you.

Exchange 54

Naming Conventions

Most Chinese names are made of two or three characters. The first character is the family or surname, and the second character, and sometimes the third, are the given or first name. For example, Chinese basketball star Yao Ming’s family name is Yao. Recently, some Chinese have begun to write their names in the Western fashion, with the family name placed second.⁷⁹³



Boy in a traditional Chinese costume at a temple fair to celebrate the Lunar New Year, Beijing Flickr/Capital Mandarin

The Chinese use of names in everyday life is more formal than in the United States. Adults address each other by their family name and a term of address, such as Yao Xiansheng (Mr. Yao), Wang Nushi (Ms. Wang), or Chen Xiaojie (Miss. Chen). (Avoid using *xiaojie* on its own, as it has a different meaning in some areas of China.) In business situations, it is customary to use a person’s professional title, such as Cho Jingli (Manager Cho).⁷⁹⁴ Given names and nicknames are normally used only by family and close friends.

Chinese families emphasize the distinction between junior and senior, father’s and mother’s side, and between blood relations and relations by marriage. Kinship terms are precise and extensive; every member of a family addresses the others according to kinship.^{795, 796} For example, Mandarin has no word for brother or sister. Instead, the terms *jiejie* (older sister) or *meimei* (younger sister), *gege* (older brother), or *didi* (younger brother) are used.⁷⁹⁷

100 Family Names



Portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi and her attendants, Qing Dynasty, China's last ruling dynasty Wikimedia/Derling

There is a deep respect for family names in Chinese culture. Shaped in part by Confucian values, it has led many women to keep their surnames after marriage. Rather than expressing marital equality, it reflects the importance of ancestry through the father's line.^{798, 799} Children typically inherit their father's family name as their surname; parents will often choose two first names—one ancestral name, and another name to represent characteristics they hope their child will develop. Sometimes a child's given name will be changed if he or she has been chronically ill, as some parents believe this will change the child's fortune for the better.⁸⁰⁰

In 2006, a survey by the Chinese Academy of Sciences revealed that roughly 85% of the Chinese population shared only 100 different family surnames. With a population of 1.4 billion and such a limited number of surnames, creating a unique name was challenging. The duplication of names causes confusion with official documents and identification.⁸⁰¹ To remedy this, in 2007 the Chinese government created a new regulation allowing parents to give their newborns the surname from either or both parents. Additionally, adults could make a one-time change to their surname and/or given name.^{802, 803, 804}

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Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Chapter 6 | Family Life

Assessment

1. In China today, divorce is difficult to obtain.
2. Urban Chinese can only marry in the city in which they are registered to live.
3. Chinese women always take their husband's name upon marriage.
4. Chinese families traditionally divided their assets equally between all children.
5. In recent years, cremation is mandatory across China.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True

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Chinese-Mandarin Cultural Orientation

Final Assessment

1. Urban Chinese increasingly use mobile apps to pay for most things.
2. Broadly speaking, China's relief is high in the east and low in the west. Consequently, major rivers flow generally westward.
3. If a speaker of Gan cannot speak Mandarin, he or she cannot read Mandarin either.
4. During the Great Leap Forward, between 15 and 40 million people in the countryside starved to death.
5. The 1989 Democracy Movement was the first student-led protest movement in China's history.
6. Rapid economic expansion has brought severe air and water pollution in and around China's industrialized areas.
7. Confucianism emphasizes that all men are created equal.
8. A person can be both Buddhist and Taoist.
9. Beijing is not only China's capital, but its most populous city.
10. Chinese citizens may not elevate allegiance to any religious authority over the government.
11. In China, the Mid-Autumn Festival is the most important holiday to spend with family.

12. The *qipao* dress is of Manchu origin.
13. The Dragon Boat Festival commemorates the self-sacrifice of an imperial official who spoke out against imperial corruption.
14. “Eating bitterness” (*chi ku*) refers to the taste of certain types of food.
15. Toasting is part of a Chinese banquet.
16. The *danwei* work unit provided employment, free housing, schooling, and health care.
17. The iron rice bowl referred to a system of food rationing coupons.
18. The “floating population” refers to people who change jobs often.
19. The Hans unified China and created the country’s first dynasty.
20. China’s roads are exceptionally dangerous.
21. Long engagements, Western-style dating, and cohabitation are increasingly common in urban China.
22. Most migrants leave their villages to make the money needed to return home and start a family business.
23. Elections were introduced to select village heads after villagers demanded a say in choosing their leaders.
24. Over 100 million rural Chinese have sought work away from their village homes.
25. *Hukou* reform is a politically sensitive topic.

26. China has two main languages, Mandarin and Cantonese, with hundreds of dialects.
27. Many Chinese who would claim no religious identity are often devotees of Chinese folk religion.
28. The CCP holds the most political power in China.
29. Business executives may consult a feng shui expert on the best location for a new business or building project.
30. Rural Chinese are disadvantaged by the college entrance exam system.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False; 6. True; 7. False; 8. True; 9. False; 10. True; 11. False; 12. True; 13. True; 14. False; 15. True; 16. True; 17. False; 18. False; 19. False; 20. True; 21. True; 22. False; 23. False; 24. True; 25. True; 26. False; 27. True; 28. False; 29. True; 30. True