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# 中国文化教程

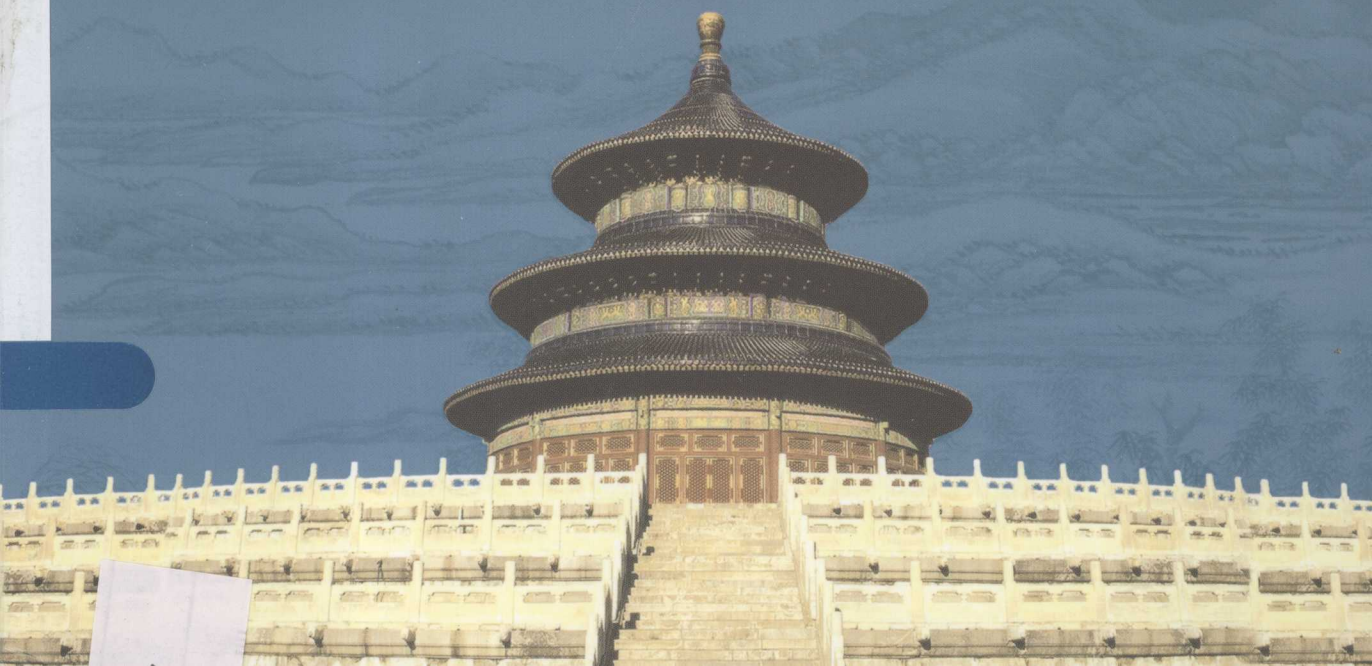
修订本

英文版

主编◎薛 荣

## Chinese Culture: A Course Book (Revised Edition)

南京大学出版社



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## 修订说明

《中国文化教程》(Chinese Culture: A Course Book)是为我国高等院校英语专业学生、具有一定英语基础的大学生和爱好中国文化的外国读者编写的。本书可以作为高校英语相关课程的教材使用,也可以作为外国朋友了解中国文化的基础读物。

我们编写本书,旨在开拓当代大学生的文化视野,提高他们的人文素养以及在对外文化交流中熟练运用英语表述祖国文化的能力。

本书共分 16 章,对中国文化的各个层面进行了系统而有重点的介绍,内容包括中国历史、地理概况、中国哲学、中国宗教、中国教育、中国文学、语言文字、书法绘画、园林建筑、中医中药、科学技术、工艺美术、风俗习惯、饮食服饰等。

在编写过程中,我们努力做到语言简明、表述准确、重点突出,以及教材应有的系统性。为了方便读者阅读和学习,对一些较难的人名、地名、历史事件等采用了汉字夹注的形式,每一章后面提供专用名词、生词短语、难点注释和多样化的练习题,以加强对课本知识的消化与巩固。此外,每章后面还设置了短小有趣的阅读材料,以帮助读者对特定内容进行拓展阅读,开阔视野。为了增加阅读的趣味性和历史感,我们精心选取了一些图片,以求达到图文并茂的效果。

本书由薛荣、谢同、李敦东、冯文杰、杨小惠、苏守玉共同编写,由薛荣负责统稿。美籍专家 Benjamin Creed(柯斌)先生审阅了全书文稿,提出了很多具体的修改意见。本书于 2009 年被列为江苏省教育厅高校立项精品教材项目。在此,我们向关心本书编写的所有部门、领导、同事和朋友表示真诚的感谢。在本教材的编写过程中,我们参考了很多专家、学者和同行的著作以及许多相关网站上的材料,在此,我们对这些材料的作者表示衷心的感谢。

本书自 2011 年出版以来,受到了广大读者的好评,但我们也发现了一些错误。此次修订,我们改正了存在的错误,修订了部分内容,更换了部分图片,使本书总体上更加完善。

中国文化博大精深,用英语将复杂的中国文化讲解清楚绝非易事。由于编者水平有限,时间仓促,书中难免存在疏漏和不当之处,请广大读者见谅并批评指正。

编者

2014 年 3 月



## Foreword

Chinese culture, which has evolved for thousands of years, contains rare beauty and enchantment. As the world's oldest continuous civilization, it has been playing an important role in the world.

China is one of the biggest countries in the world. It has an area of about 9.6 million square kilometers which comprises about 6.44% of the world's total land area. Its population of more than one billion accounts for nearly 20% of the world's population. Situated in the eastern part of Asia and on the western coast of the Pacific Ocean, China is one of the largest countries in the world (third only to Russia and Canada). The distance from east to west measures over 5,200 kilometers and from north to south, over 5,500 kilometers. When the sun shines brightly over the Ussuri River(乌苏里江) in the east, the Pamir Plateau(帕米尔高原) in the west is in the very early morning. When blizzards wrap the north along the Amur River(黑龙江, also the Heilong Jiang River) in the winter, spring sowing is underway on Hainan Island(海南岛) in the south.

China has a land border of more than 22,000 kilometers and is bordered by 14 countries: Korea in the east; Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the northeast and the northwest; Mongolia in the north; Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bhutan and Nepal in part of the west and southwest; Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam in the south.

Besides a vast land area, there are also extensive neighboring seas and numerous islands. The coastline extends more than 32,000 kilometers. Across the Yellow Sea(黄海) and the East China Sea(东海) to the east and the South China Sea(南海) to the southeast are the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia. More than 5,000 islands are scattered over China's vast territorial seas, the largest being Taiwan and the second largest, Hainan. One territorial sea and three neighboring seas altogether constitute 4.73 million square kilometers.

Calligraphy has traditionally been regarded as China's highest form of visual art—to the point that a person's character is judged by the elegance of his handwriting! Decorative calligraphy is found all over the country—in adorned temples and on the walls of caves and the sides of mountains and monuments. The basic tools of calligraphy—brush and ink—are also the



tools of Chinese painting.

Despite the ravages of time, war and ideology, there's still a lot to see architecturally. Traces of the past include the imperial structures of Beijing, the colonial buildings of Shanghai, the Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist temples all over the country. Funerary art was already a feature of Chinese culture in the Neolithic Times(新石器时代, 9000—6000 BC), ranging from ritual vessels and weapons to pottery figures, jade objects and sacrificial vessels made of bronze. Earthenware production is fairly ancient, with the world's proto-porcelain being produced in the Shang Dynasty or earlier, reaching its artistic peak in the Song Dynasty.

China's official language is Mandarin, as spoken in Beijing. The Chinese call it Putong Hua (普通话). About 95% of the population speak Mandarin, but that's just the tip of the linguistic iceberg. The country is awash with dialects, and dialects within dialects—and some of them are mutually intelligible.

China's literary heritage is huge, but unfortunately its untranslatability makes much of it inaccessible to Western readers. Traditionally there are two forms, the classical (largely Confucian) and the vernacular (such as the prose epics of the Ming Dynasty). Chinese theater is also known as opera because of the important role played by music, and has spawned such diverse arts as acrobatics, martial arts(武术) and stylized dance.

Chinese cuisine is justifiably famous and memorably diverse. The Chinese like to say they will eat anything with four legs except a table. For the most part, however, it's a case of doing ingenious things with a limited number of basic ingredients. Tea is the most common nonalcoholic beverage on sale, although Coca-Cola is making inroads, while beer is by far the most popular alcoholic drink. Wine is a loose term which can cover oxidized and herb-soaked concoctions, rice wine and wine containing lizards, bees or pickled snakes. Another favorite is Mao Tai (茅台酒), a liquor made from sorghum.

With such a long history and ancient civilization, the culture of China offers much more than anything or anyone can possibly absorb. It is impossible to explore every aspect of China's culture. However, this book contains and explains general areas of Chinese culture for you to explore, the areas that have touched and lived across the world, the areas that best define China.

For quite a long time, especially in recent years, Chinese culture has been a topic of keen interest to some Western scholars who endeavor to seek the quintessence of the teachings of ancient oriental sages such as Lao Zi, Confucius and Mencius in an attempt to discover the reasons for the successes of Chinese culture. Many enterprises in Asian countries apply the tenets of ancient Chinese sages to the management of their companies, which proves impressively effective, and Western businesses are also alert to some of these trends. So scholars and students of quite large numbers successively come to China for cultural pursuits. Chinese culture is gaining worldwide acceptance.

In sharp contrast to foreigners' enthusiasm for Chinese culture, the Chinese studies of their own culture, especially its introduction and dissemination to other countries, obviously lack zeal




and vitality. Even quite a number of Chinese visiting scholars to foreign countries, when consulted about Chinese cultural issues, do not know how to express themselves in English. Many university students, upon graduation, do not know how to say very essential terms of Chinese culture. To change this situation, Chinese culture was recommended years ago as one of the necessary courses for English majors by the Ministry of Education of China, but has not been adopted so far in many universities.

This book has been written to meet these needs. It is not easy, of course, to tackle such a large topic within the limited space of a book like this. In consideration of the cultural knowledge the readers have already acquired, we underscore systematic introduction with considerably detailed facts and value objective description rather than subjective comment. In accordance with this principle, the book consists of 16 chapters, namely, A Brief History of China, Land and People, Chinese Philosophy, Chinese Religions, Chinese Characters and Language, Chinese Education, Chinese Literature, Calligraphy and Painting, Science and Technology, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Handicrafts, Architecture and Gardens, Customs and Festivals, Food and Clothing, and Chinese Culture in Change. For the convenience of the readers, we provide proper names, new words and expressions as well as notes for each chapter. To make the topics more interesting, we include two passages as supplementary readings in each chapter. Simple but practical exercises are provided after each chapter so that students can practice what they have learned from the chapter.

This book is primarily aimed at Chinese readers, in particular, Chinese college students majoring in English, tourism, foreign trade, foreign affairs and international cultural exchange. It is also of great use and hopefully a necessity for Chinese students studying abroad, for foreign students of Chinese, and all those who know English and are interested in Chinese culture. This book can be used as a textbook in a one-semester course or as supplementary reading in courses dealing with various aspects of Chinese history or culture.

We express our gratitude here to all the friends, editors, and colleagues who gave us their kind help and valuable suggestions in the course of writing this book. We are also very grateful to American expert, Mr Benjamin Creed, who proofread all the manuscripts and offered valuable suggestions. Acknowledgements must also be made to all the authors of the reference books and websites that we used.

Since this book is only an attempt, there is much room for improvement. We sincerely invite the readers to join us in perfecting it in the future by giving valuable criticisms and suggestions.



February, 2014

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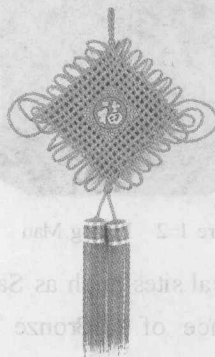
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## Chapter 1

## A Brief History of China

China is one of the world's oldest civilized nations, dating back more than 5,000 years. Turtle shells with markings from the Shang Dynasty have been carbon-dated to around 1500 BC. These records suggest that the origins of Chinese civilization started in the Yellow River Valley(黄河流域). The year 221 BC is commonly used as the date when China became unified under a large kingdom or empire.

Modern archaeological studies provide evidence of still more ancient origins in a culture that flourished between 2500 BC and 2000 BC in what is now central China and the lower Yellow River Valley of north China. Centuries of migration and development brought about a distinctive system of writing, philosophy, art, and political organization that came to be recognizable as Chinese civilization. The foundations of Chinese civilization were the Qin Dynasty's First Emperor's imposition of a common system of writing in the 3rd century BC and the development of a state ideology based on Confucianism(孔教, 儒教) in the 2nd century BC. What makes the civilization unique in world history is its continuity through over 4,000 years to the present century.<sup>1</sup>



Picture 1-1 The Chinese Knot

## 1.1 Prehistory

China was inhabited, possibly more than a million years ago, by Homo erectus(直立人). The excavations at Yuanmou(元谋) and later Lantian(蓝田) show early habitation. Perhaps the most famous specimen of Homo erectus found in China is the so-called Peking Man(北京人) found in 1929. Early evidence for proto-Chinese millet agriculture is carbon-dated to about 6000 BC and associated with the Peiligang Culture(裴李岗文化, 6000—4600 BC) of Xinzheng County in Henan Province(河南省新郑县). With agriculture came increased population, the ability to store and redistribute crops, and to support specialist craftsmen and administrators. In the late Neolithic Times(新石器时代晚期), the Yellow River Valley began to establish itself as a cultural





Picture 1-2 Peking Man

center, where the first villages were founded; the most archaeologically significant of those were found at Banpo (半坡, 4800—4300 BC), Xi'an(西安).

The early history of China is complicated by the lack of a written language during this period coupled with the existence of documents from later periods attempting to describe events that occurred several centuries before. The problem in some sense stems from centuries of introspection on the part of the Chinese people which has blurred the distinction between fact and fiction in regards to this early history. By 5000 BC, the Chinese were farming millet, giving rise to the Yangshao Culture(仰韶文化, 5000—3000 BC). This culture was replaced by the Longshan Culture (龙山文化, 2900—1900 BC).

Archaeological sites such as Sanxingdui(三星堆, 2800 BC) and Erlitou(二里头, 1800—1500 BC) show evidence of a Bronze Age civilization in China. However, the earliest comprehensive history of China, *Records of the Grand Historian*(《史记》) by Sima Qian(司马迁, 145—c. 87 BC), a renowned Chinese historiographer of the 2nd century BC, began perhaps in the 26th century BC, with an account of the Five Emperors. These rulers were semi-mythical sage-kings and moral exemplars, and one of them, the Yellow Emperor(黄帝), is said to be the ancestor of the Chinese people.

Sima Qian related that the system of inherited rulership was established during the following period called the Xia Dynasty, and that this model was perpetuated in the recorded Shang and Zhou Dynasties. It was during these three dynasties that the historical China began to appear.



Picture 1-3 A Sanxingdui Bronze Head with a Gold Foil Mask

## 1.2 The Xia Dynasty

Sima Qian's account dates the founding of the Xia Dynasty(夏朝) to 4,000 years ago, but this date has not been confirmed. Some archaeologists connect the Xia to excavations at Erlitou in central Henan Province, where a bronze smelter from around 2000 BC was unearthed. Early



markings from this period, found on pottery and shells, have been alleged to be ancestors of modern Chinese characters, but such claims are controversial. Proof of Xia's existence still requires further archaeological discovery. With no clear written records to match the Shang oracle bones or the Zhou bronze vessel writings, the Xia era remains poorly understood, although some people think that it lasted from 21st century to 16th century BC.

### 1.3 The Shang Dynasty

The earliest written record of China's past dates from the Shang Dynasty (商朝, 1600–1046 BC) in perhaps the 13th century BC and takes the form of inscriptions of divination records on the bones or shells of animals—the so-called oracle bones (甲骨文).<sup>2</sup> Archaeological findings providing evidence for the existence of the Shang Dynasty are divided into two sets. The first set, from the earlier Shang Period, comes from sources at Erligang (二里岗), Zhengzhou, Henan Province. The second set, from the later Shang or Yin (殷) Period, consists of a large body of oracle bone writings. Anyang (安阳) in modern-day Henan has been confirmed as the last of the nine capitals of the Shang. Chinese historians living in later periods were accustomed to the notion of one dynasty succeeding another, but the actual political situation in early China is known to have been much more complicated. Hence, as some scholars of China suggest, the Xia and the Shang can possibly refer to political entities that existed concurrently, just as the early Zhou is known to have existed at the same time as the Shang.

### 1.4 The Zhou Dynasty

By the end of the 2nd millennium BC, the Zhou Dynasty (周朝, 1046–256 BC) began to emerge in the Yellow River Valley, overrunning the Shang. The Zhou appeared to have begun their rule under a semi-feudal system. The ruler of the Zhou, King Wu (周武王, c. 1087–1043 BC), with the assistance of his uncle, the Duke of Zhou, as regent managed to defeat the Shang at the Battle of Muye (牧野之战). The king of Zhou at this time invoked the concept of the Mandate of Heaven (天命) to legitimize his rule, a concept that would be influential for almost every successive dynasty. The Zhou initially moved their capital west to an area near modern Xi'an, not far



Picture 1-4 A Bronze Bell of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty



from the Yellow River, but they would preside over a series of expansions into the Yangtze River Valley(长江流域). This would be the first of many population migrations from north to south in Chinese history.

## 1.5 The Spring and Autumn Period

In the 8th century BC, power became decentralized during the Spring and Autumn Period(春秋时期, 770—476 BC), named after the influential *Spring and Autumn Annals*(《春秋》). In this period, local military leaders used by the Zhou began to assert their power and compete for hegemony. The situation was aggravated by the invasion of other peoples from the northwest, such as the Qin, forcing the Zhou to move their capital east to Luoyang(洛阳). This marks the second large phase of the Zhou Dynasty: the Eastern Zhou(东周, 770—256 BC). In each of the hundreds of states that eventually arose, local strong men held most of the political power and continued their subservience to the Zhou kings in name only. Local leaders, for instance, started using royal titles for themselves. The Hundred Schools of Thought(诸子百家) of Chinese philosophy blossomed during this period, and such influential intellectual movements as Confucianism(儒家), Taoism(道家), Legalism(法家) and Mohism(墨家) arose, partly in response to the changing political world. The Spring and Autumn Period was marked by falling apart of the central Zhou power. China then consisted of hundreds of states, some only as large as a village with a fort.

## 1.6 The Warring States Period

After further political consolidation, seven prominent states remained by the end of the 5th century BC, and the period in which these few states battled each other is known as the Warring States Period(战国时期, 475—221 BC).<sup>3</sup> Though there remained a nominal Zhou king until 256 BC, he was largely a figurehead and held little real power. As neighboring territories of these warring states, including areas of modern Sichuan and Liaoning, were annexed, they were governed under the new local administrative system of commandery and prefecture(郡县). This system had been in use since the Spring and Autumn Period and parts can still be seen in the modern system of Sheng and Xian (province and county, 省县). The final expansion in this period began during the reign of Ying Zheng(嬴政, 259—210 BC), the king of Qin. His unification of the other six powers, and further annexations in the modern regions of Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Guangxi in 214 BC enabled him to proclaim himself the First Emperor(始皇帝).



## 1.7 The Qin Dynasty

Historians often refer to the period from the Qin Dynasty (秦朝, 221—207 BC) to the end of the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644—1911) as imperial China. Though the unified reign of Emperor Qin Shihuang lasted only twelve years, he managed to subdue great parts of what constitutes the core of the Han Chinese homeland and to unite them under a tightly centralized legalist government seated at Xianyang (咸阳). The doctrine of legalism that guided the Qin emphasized strict adherence to a legal code and the absolute power of the emperor. This philosophy, while very effective for expanding the empire in a military fashion, proved unworkable for governing it in peace time. The Qin presided over the brutal silencing of political opposition, including the event known as the Burning of Books and Burying of Scholars (焚书坑儒). This would be the impetus behind the later Han Synthesis incorporating the more moderate schools of political governance.



Picture 1-5 Qin Shihuang (259—210 BC)—First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty

The Qin Dynasty is well known for beginning the Great Wall (长城), which was later augmented and enhanced during the Ming Dynasty. The other major contributions of the Qin included unifying the legal code, written language, and currency of China after the tribulations of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods (春秋战国时期, 770—221 BC). Even something as basic as the length of axles for carts had to be made uniform to ensure an easy trading system throughout the empire.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.8 The Han Dynasty

The Han Dynasty (汉朝, 206 BC—220 AD) emerged in 206 BC. It was the first dynasty to embrace the philosophy of Confucianism, which became the ideological underpinning of all regimes until the end of imperial China.<sup>5</sup> Under the Han Dynasty, China made great advances in many areas of the arts and sciences. Emperor Wu (汉武帝, 156—87 BC) consolidated and extended the





Picture 1-6 Emperor Gaozu (Liu Bang,  
256—195 BC) of the Han Dynasty

Chinese empire by pushing back the Huns(匈奴) into the steppes of modern Inner Mongolia(内蒙古), wresting from them the modern areas of Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai. This enabled the first opening of trading connections between China and the West, the Silk Road(丝绸之路).

Nevertheless, land acquisitions by elite families gradually drained the tax base. In 9 AD, the usurper Wang Mang(王莽, 45 BC—23 AD) founded the short-lived Xin Dynasty(新朝, 9—23) and started an extensive program of land and other economic reforms. These programs, however, were never supported by the land-holding families, for they favored the peasant and lesser gentry, and the instability they produced brought on chaos and uprisings.

Emperor Guangwu(光武帝, 6 BC—57 AD) reinstated the Han Dynasty with the support of land-holding and merchant families at Luoyang, east of Xi'an. This new era would be termed the Eastern Han Dynasty(东汉, 25—220). Han power declined again amidst land acquisitions, invasions, and feuds between consort clans and eunuchs. The Yellow Turban Rebellion(黄巾起义) broke out in 184, ushering in an era of warlords. In the ensuing turmoil, three states tried to gain predominance in the period of the Three Kingdoms(三国, 220—280). This period has been greatly romanticized in works such as Romance of the Three Kingdoms(《三国演义》).

## 1.9 The Jin Dynasty

At the end of the Three Kingdoms Period, Sima family became prominent in the Wei(魏, 220—265). In 265, Sima Yan(司马炎, 236—290), a descendant of the great historian Sima Qian, usurped the power and founded a new dynasty Jin. They also conquered the Wu(吴, 222—280), thus ending the period of the Three Kingdoms. Jin(晋朝, 265—420) was historically divided into two periods: the Western Jin(西晋, 265—316) with Luoyang(洛阳) as its capital city and Eastern Jin(东晋, 317—420) with Jiankang(建康, present-day Nanjing) as the capital city.

After the death of Sima Yan, there was never again a strong leader. The leaders and princes were often assassinated in the struggles for power. During this time, the Chinese people surrounding the capital suffered due to the fighting and began a migration out from the center of the empire to the more peaceful frontier regions. Although providing a brief period of unity after conquering the Wu, the Jin could not contain the invasion and uprising of nomadic peoples after