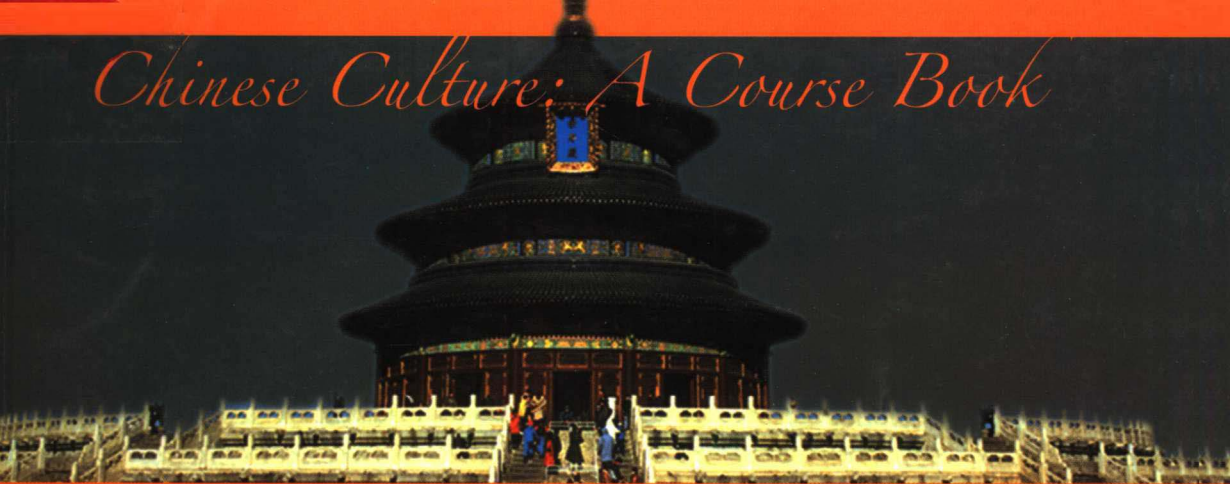


Chinese Culture: A Course Book



新目标英语阅读

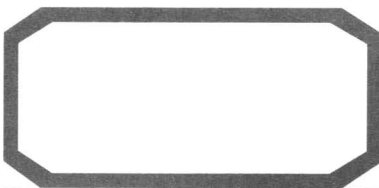
中国文化

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编写说明

英语《中国文化》(*Chinese Culture; A Course Book*)一书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及爱好中国文化的外国读者而编写,因此它既是一册英语专业相关课程的教材,也可以作为了解中国文化的英语入门读物。

本书的编写旨在开拓当代大学生的文化视野,提高大学生的人文素养以及在对外文化交流中熟练运用英语表述中国文化的能力。

本书共分 15 章,对中国文化的各个方面进行了系统而有重点的介绍,内容包括中国地理概况、历史、语言文字、哲学、宗教、教育、文学、书法绘画、园林建筑、中医中药、科学技术、工艺美术、饮食服饰等。

在编写过程中,我们努力做到语言简明、文笔生动、重点突出,并且注意保持教材应有的系统性。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,每一章后面提供生词短语、难点注释和多样化的练习题,以加强读者对课本知识的消化与巩固。此外,我们还在每章后面提供了短小有趣的阅读材料,帮助学生对相关内容的知识扩展,开阔视野。为了增加阅读的趣味性和历史感,我们还为每章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、冯文杰、李敦东、谢同、王胜利、苏守玉、陈垚共同编写,薛荣负责统稿。中国文化博大精深,用英语将复杂的中国文化现象讲解清楚绝非易事,因此,书中难免存在不够完善之处,欢迎广大读者批评指正。

编者

2007. 8

Foreword

What is culture? Is it characterized by art or literature? Does it include actions, feelings or thoughts? Is it ideas, objectives or ways? What about beliefs or values, or customs or tradition? Is it something as simple as a field of activity or as complex as a never-ending experiment?

Culture is all of these, but it is true that it cannot be truly defined by a single stroke of words. In everyday conversation, the word “culture” might refer to such fields as literature, art, or music; yet scientists who study culture see it as something more complex, a way of life as well as acting, feelings, and thinking. And even within these “definitions” of culture there are different views on what exactly culture is.

So what exactly is culture? The answer depends on you. However, it is not what culture is that makes it so important and fascinating; it is what it means and what it represents. A culture defines and sets something apart from everything else. It makes something unique and therefore meaningful, not only to itself but also to the diversity of the world. A culture brings awe and inspiration as well as interest and curiosity.

For thousands of years, the culture of China has attracted many people from all over the world, being so unique, elegant and inspiring. The Chinese culture, a culture that has evolved for thousands and thousands of years, contains rare beauty and enchantment with history. It has drawn so much interest that it is integrating with other cultures and has played an important role in world society, and in China itself.

China is one of the biggest countries in the world. It has an area of about 9.6 million square kilometers which comprises about 6.5 percent of the world total land area. Its population of more than one billion accounts for 23 percent of the world's population. China is the world's oldest continuous civilization. World Travel Organization predicts that by year 2020, China will become the number one travel destination in the world.

China is situated in the eastern part of Asia on the western coast of the

Pacific Ocean. It is the third largest country in the world (after 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 Wusuli River(乌苏里江) in the east, the Pamire Plateau(帕米尔高原) in the west is in the very early morning. When blizzards wrap the north along the Heilongjiang River(黑龙江) in the winter, spring sowing is underway on Hainan Island(海南岛) in the south.

China has a land border of 22,143 kilometers long and is bordered by twelve countries: Korea in the east; Russia in the northeast and the northwest; Mongolia in the north; India, Pakistan, Bhutan and Nepal in part of the west and southwest; Burma, Laos and Vietnam in the south.

Beside a vast land area, there are also extensive neighboring seas and numerous islands. The coastline extends more than 14,500 kilometers. Across the East China Sea(东海) to the east and South China Sea(南海) to the southeast are Japan, the Philippines, 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 was judged by the elegance of his handwriting. Decorative calligraphy is found all over the country, in temples, adorning 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 occasional rural village and Buddhist, Confucian and Daoist temples. Funerary art was already a feature of Chinese culture in Neolithic Times (新石器时代, 9000 B. C. — 6000 B. C.), ranging from ritual vessels and weapons to pottery figures, jade and sacrificial vessels made of bronze. Earthenware production is very ancient, with the world's first proto-porcelain being produced in China in the 6th century A. D., reaching its artistic peak in the Song dynasties.

China's language is officially Mandarin, as spoken in Beijing. The Chinese call it Putonghua. About 95% of the population speaks Mandarin, but that's just

the tip of the linguistic iceberg. The country is awash with dialects, and dialects within dialects — and few 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 theatre is also known as opera because of the important role played by music, and has spawned such diverse arts as acrobatics, martial arts and stylized dance.

Chinese cuisine is justifiably famous, memorably diverse — and generally not for the squeamish. The Chinese like to say “they'll 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. The cuisine can be divided into four regional categories: Beijing/Mandarin and Shandong (with steamed bread and noodles as staples), Cantonese and Chaozhou (lightly cooked meats and vegetables), Shanghaiese (the home of “red cooking” and Wuxi spare ribs) and Sichuan (spicy, with lots of chilli). 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 Maotai(茅台酒), a spirit made from sorghum.

With such a long history and old-living civilization, the culture of China offers much more than anything or anyone could possibly receive. For any country, and especially China, it is impossible to explore every little aspect of its culture. However, this book contains and explains general areas of the 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, and 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 of English, upon graduation, do not know how to say very essential terms of Chinese culture. What is more, 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 because of the lack of a proper textbook.

This book has been written to answer 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 15 chapters, namely, Land and People, A Brief History, Characters and Language, Customs and Festivals, Religions, Education, Science and Technology, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Literature (1), Literature (2), Philosophy, Calligraphy and Painting, Handicrafts, Food and Clothing, Architecture and Gardens. For the convenience of the readers we provide glossary and 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. What's more, we also provide a list of suggested readings at the end of each chapter as a guide for further reading.

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 particularly indebted to Mr. Wang Jie of University of Science and Technology of China Press for his most invaluable encouragement and 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 their valuable criticism and suggestions.

Xue Rong

July, 2007

CONTENTS

Foreword	(I)
Chapter One Land and People	(1)
<i>Exercises</i>	(16)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(17)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(20)
Chapter Two A Brief History of China	(21)
<i>Exercises</i>	(39)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(39)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(43)
Chapter Three Chinese Characters and Language	(44)
<i>Exercises</i>	(57)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(58)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(61)
Chapter Four Customs and Festivals	(62)
<i>Exercises</i>	(76)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(77)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(79)
Chapter Five Chinese Religions	(80)
<i>Exercises</i>	(94)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(95)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(99)
Chapter Six Chinese Education	(100)
<i>Exercises</i>	(118)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(119)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(122)
Chapter Seven Science and Technology	(123)

<i>Exercises</i>	(144)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(145)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(148)
Chapter Eight Traditional Chinese Medicine	(149)
<i>Exercises</i>	(171)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(172)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(175)
Chapter Nine Chinese Literature (1)	(176)
<i>Exercises</i>	(200)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(201)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(203)
Chapter Ten Chinese Literature (2)	(204)
<i>Exercises</i>	(228)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(229)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(230)
Chapter Eleven Chinese Philosophy	(231)
<i>Exercises</i>	(254)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(255)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(256)
Chapter Twelve Calligraphy and Painting	(257)
<i>Exercises</i>	(281)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(283)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(286)
Chapter Thirteen Handicrafts	(287)
<i>Exercises</i>	(298)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(299)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(302)
Chapter Fourteen Food and Clothing	(303)
<i>Exercises</i>	(326)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(327)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(329)
Chapter Fifteen Architecture and Gardens	(330)

<i>Exercises</i>	(344)
<i>Supplementary Readings</i>	(345)
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	(348)
Chinese Culture in Change	(349)
Key to Exercises	(358)
References	(364)

Chapter One

Land and People

In East Asia, on the western shore of the Pacific Ocean, lies Zhongguo (the Central Kingdom), the cradle of the Chinese people. It is right on this piece of land that one of the four greatest civilizations was created and flourished and are still going to a further development.

The Land of China

The vast land covers an area about 9.6 million square kilometers, and is the third-largest country in the world, next only to Russia and Canada. From north to south, the territory of China measures some 5,500 kilometers, stretching from the northernmost town of Mohe (漠河) to the Zengmu Reef (曾母暗沙) at the southernmost tip of the Nansha Islands (南沙群岛). When north China is still covered with snow, people in south China are busy with spring plowing. From west to east, the nation extends about 5,200 kilometers from the Pamirs (帕米尔) to the confluence of the Heilongjiang and Wusuli rivers, with a time difference of over four hours. When the Pamirs are cloaked in night, the morning sun is shining brightly over east China. China borders 14 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar (缅甸), India, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan (吉尔吉斯斯坦), Laos (老挝), Mongolia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan (塔吉克斯坦) and Vietnam. Across the seas to the east and southeast are the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Brunei (文莱), Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Chinese mainland is flanked to the east and south by the Bohai Sea, Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea, with a total maritime area of

4.73 million square kilometers. The Bohai Sea is China's continental sea, while the Yellow, East China and South China seas are marginal seas of the Pacific Ocean. A total of 5,400 islands dot China's vast territorial waters. The largest of these, with an area of about 36,000 square kilometers, is Taiwan, followed by Hainan(海南) with an area of 34,000 square kilometers. The islands, islets, reefs and shoals on the South China Sea, known collectively as the South China Sea Islands(南海群岛), are subdivided into the Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha island groups.

China's coastline totals 32,000 kilometers, with the mainland coastline measuring approximately 18,000 kilometers and the island coastline 14,000 kilometers. The mainland coastline has a flat topography, and many excellent docks and harbors, most of which are ice-free all year round.

It should be noted that the name of Zhongguo has experienced some changes. Originally, it referred to the living place around Luoyi(洛邑, later Luoyang), which was then the territory of Xia Dynasty(夏朝). Later the idea of Zhongguo became broader, it came to be regarded as the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, the North China till the modern China. The name of Zhongguo has some other versions in the long history — Jiuzhou, Huaxia, Zhonghua and so on. Whatever the name is, it is right on this land that Chinese people have lived for over 5,000 years and created their colorful culture.

1. Landform

China's topography is varied and complicated, with towering mountains, basins of different sizes, undulating plateaus and hills, and flat and fertile plains.

A bird's-eye view of China would indicate that China's terrain descends in four steps from west to east.

The top of this four-step "staircase" is the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau(青藏高原). Averaging more than 4,000 m above sea level, it is often called "the roof of the world". Rising 8,848 m above sea level is Mt. Qomolangma(珠穆朗玛峰), the world's highest peak and the main peak of the Himalayas(喜马拉雅山).

The second step includes the Inner Mongolia, Loess and Yunnan-Guizhou plateaus, and the Tarim, Junggar(准噶尔) and Sichuan basins, with an average elevation of between 1,000 m and 2,000 m.

The third step, about 500—1,000 m in elevation, begins at a line drawn

around the Greater Hinggan mountain ranges(大兴安岭), Taihang, Wushan and Xuefeng mountain ranges and extends eastward to the coast. Here, from north to south, are the Northeast Plain(东北平原), the North China Plain(华北平原) and the Middle-Lower Yangtze Plain(长江中下游平原). Interspersed amongst the plains are hills and foothills.

To the east, the land extends out into the ocean, in a continental shelf, the fourth step of the staircase. The water here is less than 200 meters deep.

2. Mountains and Rivers

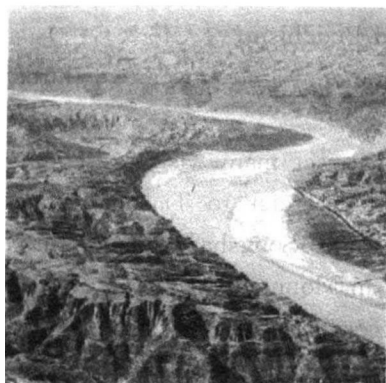
China is home to many famous mountains, such as the Five Great Mountains(五大名山), the Four Sacred Mountains of Buddhism(四大佛教名山), and the world-famous Huangshan, Lushan, etc. Mountain areas cover two thirds of the countrys land area.

The spectacular mountain landscapes attract many visitors, climbers and adventurers alike. The Five Great Mountains refer to Taishan Mountain in Shandong, Hengshan(恒山) Mountain in Shanxi, Songshan Mountain in He'nan, Huashan Mountain in Shaanxi and Hengshan Mountain(衡山) in Hunan. They are located in central China and named according to the cardinal points on the compass. As Buddhists used to build temples on the mountains, over time there appeared the Four Sacred Mountains worshipped by the followers: Wutai in Shanxi, Emei in Sichuan, Jiuhua in Anhui and Putuo in Zhejiang. Huangshan Mountain in Anhui is famed for its spectacular rocks, odd-shaped pines, hot springs and sea of clouds. Some other mountains, like Lushan Mountain in Jiangxi and Wuyi Mountain in Fujian are also world-famous.

Of course China abounds in rivers, too. More than 1,500 rivers drain 1,000 square kilometers or larger areas individually. More than 2,700 billion cubic meters of water flow along these rivers, 5.8 percent of the world's total. Most of the large rivers find their source in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and as a result, China is rich in water-power resources, leading the world in hydropower potential, with reserves of 680 million kilowatts.

China's rivers can be categorized as exterior and interior systems. The catchment area for the exterior rivers that empty into the oceans accounts for 64 percent of the countrys total land area. The Yangtze, Yellow, Heilongjiang, Pearl, Liaohe, Haihe, Huaihe and Lancang rivers flow east, and empty into the

Pacific Ocean. The Yarlungzangbo River(雅鲁藏布江) in Tibet, which flows first east and then south into the Indian Ocean, boasts the Grand Yarlungzangbo Canyon(雅鲁藏布江大峡谷), the largest canyon in the world, 504.6 kilometers long and 6,009 m deep. The Ertix River(额尔齐斯河) flows from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region(新疆维吾尔自治区) to the Arctic Ocean. The catchment area for the interior rivers that flow into inland lakes or disappear into deserts or salt marshes makes up 36 percent of China's total land area. Its 2,179 kilometers make the Tarim River(塔里木河) in southern Xinjiang China's longest interior river.



Pic. 1-1 The Yellow River



Pic. 1-2 Mountain Taishan

In addition to those endowed by nature, China has a famous man-made river - the Grand Canal(大运河), running from Beijing in the north to Hangzhou in the south. Construction work of the Grand Canal first began as early as in the fifth century B. C. With a total length of 1,794 kilometers and a drainage area of 4,583 square kilometers, the Grand Canal is the longest as well as the oldest man-made waterway in the world topography.

3. Climate

China has a marked continental monsoon climate characterized by great variety. Most parts of China are in the northern temperate zone(北温带) while parts of the southern area are in the tropical or subtropical zone and parts of the northern area in the frigid zone(寒带).

Most of China lies in the north temperature zone, characterized by a warm climate and clear division between seasons, a climate well suited for habitation.

In winter, northerly winds from high latitude areas keep the northern parts cold and dry; while in summer, monsoons from eastern and southern coastal areas bring warmth and moisture.

The climate also varies with the extensive territory and various topography from region to region. In north China, summer is warm and short, while winter is cold and long. In south China, summer is long, humid and hot, and winter short and warm, with temperature rarely below freezing. In central China (the valley area along the Yangtze River), division between seasons is clear — summer is long, hot and humid while winter, short and cold.

In northwestern China, such as Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia (内蒙古), summer is dry and sweltering and winter is formidably cold. On the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (about 4,000 meters above sea level) in southwestern China, winter is extremely cold and summer is short and moderately warm, with little precipitation and great difference in temperature between day and night.

4. Disparity among Regions

A recurrent problem, however, is that some regions in China have developed more quickly than others because of their locations. For example, the coastal areas of China with its ports and fertile soil have developed more rapidly than western China with its deserts and mountains. Western China is more isolated and thus lags behind the coastal regions.

China's arable land is primarily in the eastern region, the same area where a majority of China's vast population scatter. In addition to extensive areas of western China which are relatively uninhabited, substantial portions of southern China are unfavorable for agriculture because of mountainous topography. There are significant variations from province to province in terms of cultivated land, multiple-cropping, and overall production of various crops.

5. Geographical Influences on the Chinese Culture

So far, we have got a general knowledge of the land. Behold, the varied landforms and diverse climates inevitably have a great effect on the Chinese culture.

(1) Different life styles

The east part of China is flat and moist, with abundant arable farmland while