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An Outline of CHINESE Geography



**AN
OUTLINE
OF
CHINESE
GEOGRAPHY**

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Foreword

China is a vast and populous country with a long history and rich revolutionary traditions.

China's territory is covered with fertile plains, crossed by sprawling mountains and meandering rivers, favoured with a long zigzag coastline, and studded with islands. It has lush and luxuriant forests, a wide range of products and abundant mineral resources. More than 50 fraternal nationalities have lived and worked generation after generation on this vast land of 9.6 million square kilometres and, together, have created a 4,000-year-old history.

Before liberation, under the ruthless exploitation and oppression of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, China remained a ravaged land full of scars. Life was almost impossible for the people. For long years, political, economic and cultural development was extremely slow.

The Chinese people finally overthrew the rule of the Kuomintang reactionaries after decades of heroic armed struggle under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tsetung and the Chinese Communist Party. On October 1, 1949,

the People's Republic of China was inaugurated. The Chinese people have stood up.

Guided by Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, the Chinese people have, since the birth of the new China, continued the socialist revolution in the political, economic, cultural and ideological fields, and have gone ahead with the rapid development of socialist construction. Since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which started in 1966, Chairman Mao's revolutionary line has taken ever firmer root in the people's hearts. The revolutionary spirit of maintaining independence and keeping the initiative in our own hands and relying on our own efforts has been further developed. The 800 million people are in high spirits, and the whole country has taken on a new look. A picture of prosperity is seen everywhere: Fertile fields cultivated as meticulously as in the pace-setting Tachai Production Brigade of Shansi Province dot the landscape. Crude oil from Taching in northeast China flows to various parts of the country. Like glowing pearls, a string of hydro-electric stations has been built along the turbulent Yellow River. Rainbow-like bridges span the imposing Yangtze River, formerly known as a "natural barrier." The various targets set by the Fourth Five-Year Plan for the gross output value of industry and agriculture have been achieved. . . . Rallying closely round the Party Central Committee headed by Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, the Chinese people are now striving to implement the strategic decision, "grasp the key link of class struggle and bring about great order across the land," consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and, by the end of this century, make China a great and powerful socialist country with modern agri-

culture, industry, national defence and science and technology.

The present volume is intended to introduce our readers to China's beautiful land and the achievements of the Chinese people in their effort to transform nature and build socialism. It deals briefly with China's administrative divisions, physical features, climate, soils, islands, vegetation and animal life, as well as its industrial and agricultural construction.

General Outline

The People's Republic of China is situated in the eastern part of Asia, on the west coast of the Pacific Ocean.

As an Asian country, China borders on Korea in the east; Viet Nam, Laos and Burma in the south; India, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the southwest and west; the Soviet Union in the northwest and northeast; and Mongolia in the north. Across the East China Sea and the South China Sea to the east and southeast, it faces Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

China has vast land and water areas. The distance from east to west measures over 5,000 kilometres, and from north to south over 5,500 kilometres. Its total land area is 9.6 million square kilometres. When the sun rises over the Wusuli River in the northeast, it is still dark over the Pamirs in the west. When blizzards wrap the north in the winter, spring sowing is under way on Hainan Island in the south. The Nansha Islands, the southernmost part of China, are close to the equator and there the weather stays hot all year round.

The People's Republic of China is a unified multinational country. On its vast land live 800 million hard-working and courageous people belonging to different nationalities. The Han nationality makes up 94 per cent of the total population while the rest consists of more than 50 fraternal nationalities, including the Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Uighur, Miao, Yi, Chuang, Puyi, Korean, Manchukuo, Tung, Yao, Pai, Tuchia, Kazakh, Hani, Tai, Li and Kaoshan. The minority nationality peoples are widely scattered, the more concentrated communities being in the northwest and southwest. Under the leadership of the Party Central Committee headed by Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, the people of China's various nationalities are aiming high and, with great dedication, striving to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in building their socialist motherland.

China's topography varies from cloud-capped peaks to basins of different shapes and sizes, from wide, rolling plateaus to low, broad plains. There are great deserts and wilds in the northwest while rivers, streams and lakes stud the plains on the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. The topographical outline is a three-step west-east staircase. It begins with the Chinghai-Tibet Plateau over 4,000 metres above sea level. Crossing the Kunlun and Chilian ranges on the plateau's northern edge and the Hengtuang Mountains on its eastern edge, the land slopes away to highlands and basins mostly from 2,000 to 1,000 metres above sea level; then it descends further eastwards to hilly regions and plains which lie less than 1,000 metres above sea level.

In China, some areas are warm all year round while others have long winters and short summers. A considerable part of its land lies in the temperate and sub-

tropical zones with four distinct seasons. A combination of high temperatures and plentiful rain provides favourable conditions for farming.

In the east, during winter, a dry, cold northwest wind from the hinterland often blows towards the sea; summer often sees a hot, moist southeast wind from the sea. The northwest, being far from the sea, has comparatively little rain and its temperature varies greatly even in the same day. The old proverb, "Fur coats in the morning, gossamer at noon," gives a good indication of the climate in the arid regions of Sinkiang. On the other hand, the temperature on the Chinghai-Tibet Plateau in the southwest is relatively low because of its high altitude. Both Lhasa in the west and Hangchow in the east are at latitude 30° N., but their average July temperatures are 15° C. and 28° C. respectively.

Influenced by the monsoons, the temperature in the north and south varies greatly in winter but little in summer. In January the difference in the average temperature in Harbin in the northeast and Kwangchow in the south is as much as 35° C. While it is still cold winter along the banks of the Sunghua River, the Pearl River valley has already welcomed in spring. But in July the difference is only 5° C., and people swim in both rivers. With rainfall decreasing gradually in a southeast-northwest direction, raincoats, essential in southeast China, are practically useless in most of the northwest.

China's numerous rivers provide rich water resources. From the Changpai Mountains in the northeast to the Hengtuan Mountains in the southwest there exist huge potentials for generating hydraulic power and building water conservancy projects. Though the northwest is

dry, the many glaciers and year-round snows on its high mountains provide favourable conditions for building irrigation works. The Yangtze, China's longest river, has its source on the Chinghai-Tibet Plateau on the first step of the topographical staircase, and flows eastwards across the second and third steps through one autonomous region, eight provinces and one municipality into the East China Sea. With a total course of over 6,300 kilometres in length, it is a vital artery for transport and a rich source of water for irrigation and hydro-power.

The Yellow River, the second longest in China, also has its source on the Chinghai-Tibet Plateau and flows 5,464 kilometres through seven provinces and two autonomous regions to empty into the Pohai Sea at Kenli County in Shantung Province. The middle and lower reaches of this river are the cradle of Chinese history and culture.

China's east and south coasts lie along the Pohai, Yellow, East China and South China seas. The Pohai is an inland sea while the others merge with the Pacific Ocean. On this vast expanse of sea lie scattered more than 5,000 islands, the biggest being Taiwan and Hainan, long regarded as China's "treasure islands" because of their abundant resources. Fine natural harbours, like pearls, dot the 18,000-kilometre coastline from the mouth of the Yalu River on the China-Korea border to the mouth of the Peilun River on the China-Viet Nam border. These seas, islands and harbours are vital to China's national defence, its contacts with other countries and the exploitation of marine resources.

China is rich in material resources. It has 110 million hectares* of arable land. South China produces mainly

* One hectare is equal to 15 mu.

rice while the northern and northwestern parts of the country grow wheat, barley, millet and maize. The main crops in the northeast are soyabean, sorghum and wheat. The country also has rich resources in animal husbandry and fishery.

China possesses great mineral wealth. Iron-ore, copper, aluminium, lead, zinc, tin, antimony, tungsten, molybdenum, mercury, coal and petroleum are found in great quantity and are of high quality.

Administrative Divisions

The People's Republic of China is a socialist state of the dictatorship of the proletariat led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants. The highest organ of state power is the National People's Congress. The Central People's Government is the State Council, which functions as the highest organ of state administration. The local people's governments at various levels are the local revolutionary committees at corresponding levels, which function as the local organs of state administration. China's capital is Peking.

For administrative purposes, China is divided into provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities which fall directly under the control of the central authority. The country now consists of 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions and 3 municipalities directly under the central authority.

Provinces and autonomous regions are divided into autonomous prefectures, counties, autonomous counties, and cities. Municipalities directly under the central authority and other large cities are divided into districts and counties. Autonomous prefectures are divided into

counties, autonomous counties, and cities. Revolutionary committees at the provincial level may establish administrative offices as their agencies in prefectures. China now has upwards of 200 prefectures, 100 cities and 2,000 counties.

Counties and autonomous counties are divided into people's communes and towns.

People's communes are the grass-roots units in China's countryside. They organize the production activities of their members and take care of the latter's well-being at the same time. At present, there are more than 50,000 people's communes throughout the country.

Peking, the national capital, is the country's political, economic, scientific and cultural centre, as well as being the hub of its communications network. Situated more than 100 kilometres from Pohai Bay at the north end of the North China Plain, it is one of China's ancient capitals and is renowned for its many cultural relics and tourist spots. The people of Peking have long revolutionary traditions, and on many occasions the city was the centre of various revolutionary movements. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Peking, one of the three municipalities directly under the central authority, has undergone great changes and turned from a typical consumer city into one of socialist China's important industrial bases. In 1975, the total value of its industrial output surpassed that of the whole country in 1949. With the rapid progress in city construction, the built-up area has been greatly increased. This ancient city has been thoroughly rejuvenated.

The other two municipalities directly under the central authority are Shanghai and Tientsin. **Shanghai**, situated at the Yangtze River estuary, is the birthplace of the Chinese Communist Party, which was founded in 1921. Before liberation, Shanghai was a stronghold for the imperialists' aggression on China and was called the "paradise of adventurers." Following post-liberation transformation and construction, Shanghai has changed radically and has become a comprehensive base for China's industry, science and technology. The total value of its industrial output in 1974 was 18 times that of 1949. Shanghai Harbour has been mechanized to a great extent, and now has trade relations with over 100 countries and regions all over the world.

Tientsin, Peking's outlet to the sea, is another chief harbour and industrial base. By 1974, the total value of its industrial output had reached 27 times that of 1949. Hsinkang Harbour at Tientsin is at present the largest man-made harbour in China. Continuously being expanded, and with a growing level of mechanization, it is handling an increasing volume of exports.

China has five autonomous regions: the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China, the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region and the Ningsia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China, the Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region in central-south China, and the Tibet Autonomous Region in southwest China. Established in accordance with the Chinese Communist Party's policy towards nationalities, they are areas where the nationalities concerned exercise regional autonomy.

The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, set up in 1947, is where the Mongolians live in the biggest com-

compact community, although there are also Hans, Huis and other brother nationalities. Its extensive, luxuriant grasslands make it one of China's chief pastoral areas. Since liberation, the local people, led by the Party, have made great efforts to end both their nomadic way of life and their dependence on the elements for the grazing of their flocks, resulting in a great development of animal husbandry. The centuries-old Hotao agricultural area at the Great Bend of the Yellow River has also taken on a new look and become one of north China's important bases for marketable grain. With the setting up of modern industry since liberation, Inner Mongolia is now an important coal and iron and steel base. Moreover, woollen textile and sugar-beet industries, which use the rich products from agriculture and animal husbandry as raw materials, have also been established.

The Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region was set up in 1955. It is inhabited by 13 different nationalities living in compact or mixed communities, the Uighurs being the most numerous. With vast agricultural and pastoral areas, and rich in forests and mineral deposits, it is one of China's chief livestock-raising centres. Famous breeds from the region include the Ili horse, the Tacheng ox and the Sinkiang fine-wool sheep. After liberation, the people of various nationalities in Sinkiang worked shoulder to shoulder to transform wasteland and the gobi desert. They reclaimed over 20 million mu of land for farming, created several thousand kilometres of forest belts and built more than 17,500 kilometres of irrigation canals, thus increasing the total grain output by 200 per cent over that of the early post-liberation days. Sinkiang is also important for its production of long-staple cotton and its temperate fruits, such as grapes, Hami melons,

apples and walnuts. Modern industries — iron and steel, coal, petroleum, power, chemical, non-ferrous metal, textile and leather — have been built up in the region, while national art crafts have also been developed swiftly.

The Ningsia Hui Autonomous Region was established in 1958. Apart from the Hui nationality, Hans, Mongolians and Manchus also live there. The channels and farmland in the Ningsia Plain irrigated area, known since ancient times as “land of abundance north of the Great Wall,” had been damaged on the eve of liberation, and grain output was low. Since liberation, energetic efforts have been made to conserve both water and soil, including such measures as building an irrigation and drainage network as well as planting trees. All these have brought marked changes in local agricultural production. The region's chief crops include wheat, rice, millet and linseed, while Ningsia sheepskin, boxthorn fruit, and a kind of edible hair-like seaweed are famous specialties. Modern industry came to the region only after liberation and since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a large number of medium and small enterprises have been built. The Chingtung Gorge Hydro-Power Station has been an important factor in changing the region's industry.

The Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region was set up in 1958. Here, together with more than 10 other nationalities, live the Chuangs, the biggest minority nationality in China. Kwangsi's limestone is both more abundant and more widespread than that in any other part of the country. With extensive karst areas, it has many tourist attractions, notably the Kweilin-Yangshuo area, with its bizarre stalactites and stalagmites and in-