Chinese Lifestyle

# CHINESE LANGUAGE

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# Introduction to Chinese Lifestyle

hina, a country of appealing mysteries.

The Chinese nation, a nation intermittently strong and weak, honorable and infamous, awake and asleep, with a history of five millennia at the shortest and probably longer, has experienced the highest stage of ancient civilization in the most prosperous dynasties of the world, and made indelible contributions to the advance of human societies. As the world's biggest nation, the Chinese people account for approximately a quarter of the whole population on earth.

And as a standing member of the UN Security Council, it is exerting enormous influence on international affairs. Economically speaking, it is the world's largest consumer market and human resource reservoir, as well as the largest base of processing industries.

Over the recent three decades, China's opening to the world has brought about unprecedented contact with the people of all other countries, resulting in great advancement of the Chinese society and drastic growth of its economy, which have drawn ever greater attention of the world.

Now again as in the past when China was in its prime, the world find it impossible to overlook China and its people.

However, for its many sufferings in pre-modern and modern history of social unrest and setbacks, natural disasters and social misfortunes, China has for a long time remained relatively backward, listed as a "developing country" of the world. And for the same reason, The Chinese people and their civilization have been neglected in the developed countries, and what is now known of China to quite many people in the West remains to be what it was 30 or 50 years ago.

In view of the above conditions, we hereby present to our readers this brand-new *Chinese Lifestyle* with the aim to help those interested in things Chinese learn about the people and their social life, and ultimately discover "the last hidden world" and the nation that is once more on the rise

in the Oriental, so as to more effectively communicate with them in all walks of life.

Within this series are five books, respectively on the language, folk culture, rites and rituals, traditional food, and traditional physical exercises of the Chinese people. Drawing upon vast resources from libraries and internet materials, these books are all written with special perspectives of the writers themselves, and infused with their individual insight. What's more, the style of the language may also be interesting to the western English readers because the writers are all native Chinese themselves who teach English in higher institutions of education in China. This means that their English language may smack of some "Chinese flavor," somewhat different from that of the native English writers but nevertheless are pleasantly readable after minor revision by invited native English first readers.

Chinese Language by the undersigned chief-editor of this series begins by a general introduction of various "Chinese languages," languages of different Chinese ethnic groups as well as the majority Han people. The relation between Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects is also explained with fair clarity. Through reading the introduction, you will learn why Mandarin Chinese has become "the Common Language" (Putonghua) of the nation, how Chinese written characters evolved into the present form, and what differences exist between the classic and modern language, and between the formal written style and informal speech. In addition, the systems of Mandarin Chinese Pinyin and Tones are introduced in detail to serve as a threshold for exploring the contents of the book.

After the introduction are six chapters elaborating on the distinctive features of Mandarin Chinese, respectively in terms of its phonology, tones, morphology and syntax. In each chapter, typical and practically usable examples are provided along with annotation of the tones and translations, so as to help readers learn with ease.

Chinese Rites and Rituals is written by Feng Ge (冯鸽), an associate professor with the Northwest University, and translated by Huang Jieting (黄洁婷) and Jiang Yinji (蒋茵信), English teachers of Suzhou Vocational University. It is an overall introduction of the Chinese ritual systems and the related social norms. The first part begins with an elaboration of the central Chinese

concept Li ( $\uparrow$ L), which carries a wide range of connotations including not only rites and rituals but also what are generally concerned as good manners, appropriate behavior and acceptable ceremonies on various social occasions. The contents are divided into two parts, with the first part on traditional rites and rituals and the second on the modern practice. Actually all possible aspects appropriate to be considered under the general title of Li are touched on, from individual social conducts to state rules. With the understanding that Li is a matter of great importance in Chinese culture, we believe this book is of special value for learning about the Chinese society and the Chinese way of thinking and life.

In Chinese Food Life Care, authored by Yang Hua (杨婳) and Guo Wen (郭雯), lecturers of English at Soochow University of Science and Technology, readers are expected to learn about the traditional Chinese way of eating, and find their opinions as regards the choices of food in various situations. They will also familiarize themselves with a great variety of traditionally consumed Chinese food items and understand why some items are more popular than others in China, and why the Chinese people generally believe "food and medicine are of the same origin." It is our hope that the detailed accounts of the properties of different food items will serve as useful references for making decisions on what one should choose to eat according to his or her own physical conditions.

Kaiwen (王开文), an expert in Chinese Kungfu and Taijiquan, and Qu Jianmei (曲建梅) and Sun Lixia (孙丽霞), teachers of English at Yantai University. It begins with a brief account of the basic knowledge of Chinese physical exercises and health care, a short history of the development of various ways of traditional physical exercises such as Taijiquan and Qigong, the basic theories concerning their efficacy and mechanism, and the methods generally adopted in practice. Then, in the following chapters are presented the concrete procedures of exercises, all well illustrated with clear pictures to aid the practitioner. In addition, traditionally practiced supporting like various ways of self-massage is also introduced at length. It is our belief that the explanations and illustrations will not only make the reading of the book an effortless experience but also help in practice.

Chinese Folk Customs, by Zhang Weihua (张伟华) and Fang Huawen (方华文), projects before the readers a changing and kaleidoscopic view of the Chinese social phenomena seen in different areas and ethnic communities, in both the ancient times and present. Although it is understandably difficult for the writers to account for how much or to what extent the old customs have lasted to date, we can well assume that quite a lot have, even though possibly in somewhat changed forms. At any rate, they should have some unelectable impact on the Chinese contemporary way of life. And with growing consciousness of the importance of protecting traditional culture, some wholesome folkways that had once fallen to the verge of extinction are now being recovered, while others are still often found in Chinese literary works even if they have fallen out of date. Thus, reading about them should be awarding, and as I hope could also be a pleasure.

The five books in this *Chinese Lifestyle* on the whole form a kind of knowledge pool for readers interested in the Chinese society, the people and their way of thinking and social behavior. And I believe they will be of very practical use for those who are presently working in China or considering a visit or some time of stay there. And for those who have an interest in Chinese literature, the contents should also be something worth reading.

In the end, I feel obliged to acknowledge the help of many who have given me very good suggestions as regards the contents of the books, including in the first place Professor Fang Huawen, my colleague at Soochow University and a proliferate writer. And of special help in making this series publishable is Mr. Deng Jinhui (邓锦辉) at China International Press, who has cooperated with me from the very beginning of the planning through to the end. Without his far-sighted vision of the possible readership and their expectations, all efforts may have been for nothing.

March 19, 2010 Du Zhengming (杜争鸣) Professor of English Soochow University Suzhou, China



anyu, the language of the Chinese Han people, is im printed with the spirit of the nation's civilization, culture, and five millennia's history. It is interwoven into the style of thinking and life of the people.

As a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, Hanyu displays distinctive features of its own when brought into contrast with languages of other families.

A very unique tonal language and the only one of its type in the world's major languages, Hanyu, or what is tacitly taken to be "the Chinese language", bears distinct musical qualities with the melodious features in its four tones (or more in some dialects). Such musical qualities can be found in full expression in Chinese poetry.

The various written forms and changeful calligraphy of the language would rival paintings with their artistic richness and match up with Chinese poetry perfectly as masterpiece treasures, displayed in many galleries and museums of the world. Among all major forms of written human languages (as represented by all the official languages of the UN), Chinese is the only one featuring pictographic characters.

As a natural human language, Chinese (Mandarin) is used by the most speakers as their mother tongue—approximately a quarter of the world population. In addition, with China being a member of UN Security Council, it plays a leading role in international affairs.

The Chinese language also finds wide application for its high communicational efficiency. In our information era, it stands along with English as one of the two most frequently appearing languages on the internet. Despite the complex strokes and slow speed in traditional forms of hand writing (which led China to adopt simplified Chinese written forms), oral expression of the language shows high

efficiency, for each single syllable may be equivalent in function to a word in expressing some message. In addition, it has been proved that the speed of computer keyboard input of Chinese has exceeded that of English, and for a sufficiently trained master hand, the speed could approximately keep up with the speed of natural speech.

Historically, Chinese had influenced a bunch of languages, with Japanese taking on the greatest influence. Besides the large sum of Chinese words (including words in Chinese dialects) in spoken Japanese, there are several thousand Chinese characters in its written vocabulary. In fact, the different kana signs of Japanese words are also largely evolved from various written forms of Chinese characters. Similar direct impacts are seen in the development of Korean and Vietnamese, in which traces of Chinese could be easily detected in spite of the changes that have taken places through their language system reforms in the past decades.

Of course, considering the long course of cultural exchanges between China and the West, and the language contact involved in this course, it is also no wonder to find some loan words of Chinese origin in some Indo-European languages like English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

For the above reasons, the world finds it impossible to overlook the Chinese language. And In the context featuring ever-growing global economic integration and cultural plurality, along with China's economic development in the past three decades, an increasing number of people in the world have realized the significance of learning the Chinese language—a language of a quarter of the world population, and are eager to master it for direct communication with the Chinese people. As a result, Chinese language education is now enjoying a tremendous boom across the continents, developing with a sustained momentum. Statistics made by the responsible department of China's Ministry of Education show some significant facts: over 30 million people worldwide have attempted somehow to learned Chinese since the last decade; 100 countries with more than 2,500 universities and colleges offer Chinese courses; a rising num-

ber of elementary and high schools and various training institutions also teach Chinese. An estimate based on the growth in the past decade suggests there may be over 100 million Chinese learners worldwide by 2015.

For many Westerners, however, Chinese language system is an abstruse web of strange stokes. Written Chinese defies spelling and has little to do with its pronunciation; the nonexistence of inflexions, the shortage of indications of case, gender, singular/plural differences, and the appearingly abscure grammatical structure and the lack of rigid formal logics all contribute to make it almost a formidable challenge for many peopleing learn it as a foreign language.

Therefore, it is quite understandable that many people and even some organizations have listed it as one of the world's most difficult languages.

This book on the Chinese language is an attempt to help readers keep pace with the time and tide of China's internation of a lidevelopment. I hope it will unveil the mystery of this seemingly esoteric language that is nevertheless used as the first language by the largest nation of the



The Hostesses of Air France are so glad to learn Chinese in China

world. In the meantime, and based on the understanding that a language represents a way of seeing the world, I also expect that the contents will help readers learn about the Chinese people's innermost thought about the objective world.

The book begins with a general introduction of the essential notion of "the Chinese language(s)", and then sets about unveiling the mystery of Mandarin Chinese from Chapter 2 to 6. In particular, the introduction provides some basic knowledge of the languages used in China or by the Chinese people, including Mandarin and non-Mandarin languages, Chinese dialects and their relations and user populations. Chapters 2 and 3 respectively present the fundamentals of the phonology and tonal systems. And through Chapters 4 to 6, structure rules of words, phrases, and sentences are introduced. In the end, a final summary of the features of Chinese is made, highlighting the major characteristic qualities that have been touched upon in different parts of the book, so that readers will find it easy to keep a firm grip on the knowledge they have so far acquired through reading.

I hope, and of course believe, that reading this book will be an exciting and meaningful adventure.

Du Zhengming

# Annotating Abbreviations

AD: adverb

AS: Aspect Particle (着,了,过)

CC: coordinating conjunction

CD: cardinal number

CS: subordinating conjunction

DEC: de as complementizer or a nominalizer (的)

DEG: de as a genitive marker and an associative marker (的)

DER: resultative de (得) DEV: Manner de (地)

FI: free interpretation

IJ: interjection

MW: measure word OD: ordinal number

P: preposition PN: pronoun

SP: Sentence-final particle (吗, 吧, 呢, 呀, 啊, 哪)

VA: predicative adjective

VE: existential and possessive verb

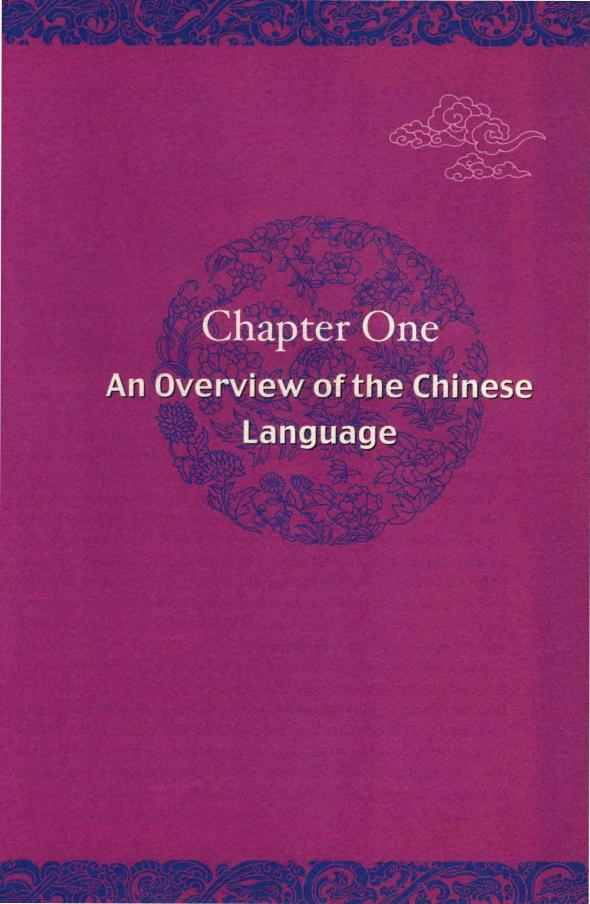
Verb: VV

WFW: word-for-word translation

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### Languages of the Han Chinese and Chinese Ethnic Groups

Hanyu, or the language of the Han nationality, commonly known as the Mandarin Chinese, is certainly the language generally used by the Chinese people. Its standard form is also called Putonghua, Guoyu, or Huayu, respectively in Mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. But it is not the only language used by all Chinese. This is because China is a big country with 55 ethnic minorities in addition to the Han people, and most of them have their own languages. Chinese linguists generally agree that the total number of languages used by China's ethnic groups is over 80, with some ethnic groups using more than one languages. Among these different languages, 30 have written forms. In terms of language genealogy, they are categorized into 5 different families: the Sino-Tibetan, Altai, Austro-Asiatic, Austronesian and Indo-European.

Therefore, the phrase "Chinese Language" should in fact have its plural forms. When used in the singular form, it only means the language originally belonging to the Han people (hence called Hanyu), which has been adopted as the common language used across ethnic boundaries. Among all ethnic groups of China, some have adopted the Han people's language, with their own languages having gone into extinction, such as the Hui and Manchurian people (respectively counting for 9.8 million and 10.6 million in population). Others use both Hanyu and their own languages.

The Chinese central government's language policy is to promote the use of Standard Chinese (or Standard Mandarin) as the national language. In the mean time, however, the policy also encourages protection of the ethnic languages. According to Article 8 of the Law of the Peoples Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, "all the nationalities shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages". As a result, most preliminary and secondary schools in China's ethnic minority areas practice bilingual education in both Mandarin Chinese and their own languages,



Mandarin Chinese is used along with ethnic languages in the minority areas

with the former for public communication across ethnic boundaries and the latter for regional and community activities.

In spite of the great number of ethnic languages across the country, 91.59% of the Chinese population are Han people, while the ethnic population only accounts for 8.41% of the whole nation (according to the fifth Population Census of China in 2000). So it is evident that Hanyu has a prevailing influence in use. From the statistics of a survey on the language conditions in mainland China (not including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) carried out from 1999 to 2004, it is seen that the percentage of people who can use Standard Mandarin (Putonghua) is 53.06%, while the percentage of people who can use a dialect of Hanyu is 86.38%. In contrast, only 5.46 percent of the population use ethnic languages. This means that about a third of the whole ethnic population no longer have their own languages. As for the remaining two thirds or so, a better part can use Hanyu or a dialect of it along with an ethnic language.

For the above reasons, the word Hanyu is tacitly taken as the language of the Chinese people. Its standard form, as the national language of the People's Republic of China, is called Putonghua (or Standard Mandarin). In fact, Putonghua is based only on the Beijing sub-dialect of the Northern Dialect (or Guanhua) though nationally used.