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# CHINESE CULTURE

董俊峰  
沈乐敏  
姚佩芝  
著

湖南师范大学出版社  
HUNAN NORMAL UNIVERSITY PRESS



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# 中国文化 CHINESE CULTURE

董俊峰 沈乐敏 姚佩芝 著



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# Preface

## 前 言

China is a country with a long history and splendid culture, which contributed tremendously to the human civilizations. Only in the modern history did China suffer century-old humiliations and tortures, owing to its own backwardness and foreign invasions. Through undaunted and fearless struggles, with heavy national sacrifices, China finally won the thorough national independence and liberation in 1949, and began to embark on an arduous course of great national rejuvenation, which, it could be predicted, will enable China to stand firmly on her own feet, and develop steadily and fast, so as to contribute even more to the cause of peace and justice of mankind. In the first thirty years of the People's Republic of China, a sound foundation of national economy was laid in both agriculture and industry; and ever since the adoption of national policy of reform and opening-up to the outside world in 1979, China's national economic development has been accelerated. Now more and more people want to learn Chinese language and Chinese culture to satisfy their curiosity for China, an ancient country as well as a newly-emerging economy.

Chinese civilization traces its history back to ancient times and produces many great masters of world stature in a variety of fields, such as politics, literature, fine arts, education, sciences and martial arts. China has been universally recognized as one of the most important birth-places of human civilizations. Chinese culture embraces all aspects of human



civilizations, so broad in nature that this book could only include certain representative aspects, hopefully offering a general glimpse of Chinese culture to international readers so as to arouse their interests in learning more about Chinese culture. This book **Chinese Culture** intends to usher international readers to the colourful world of Chinese, the systems, the artifacts and the great people whose contributions helped to create the glorious Chinese civilization. The book contains 15 chapters, including, within its main texts, important political, economic, educational, scientific, as well as other tributary systems, and in the supplementary readings, it introduces famous ancient Chinese engineering artifacts and architectures, man-made canals, as well as great people: great statesmen, artists, scientists, educationists, diplomats and Buddhist masters. In China, there are a sea of excellent fruits of researches in this field, but it is a pity that they are mostly written in Chinese, and the language barrier itself made them inaccessible to many international readers. As English language workers, we are entrusted the responsibility of introducing Chinese culture to the world in English and we sincerely wish that more people will join us in our efforts to promote this great undertaking.

In the process of conceiving and writing of this book, we have been constantly motivated and encouraged by both our international students and English language students as many sections of this book were delivered to them who acted as our first audience, whose great enthusiasm and interest propelled us forward, and whose many insightful suggestions and ideas were absorbed into it. Our intended readers are international readers, English language students and those people who are interested in learning about and disseminating Chinese culture. This book is the result of joint efforts of three authors whose labors are hardly divisible as much of the work was overlapping. We sincerely hope that our prospective readers will offer their feedback without any reservations. We are so indebted to the senior editor of Hunan Normal University Press, Dr Li Yang, whose insightful suggestions and professionalism help to make

this book a much better work.

中国是一个有着悠久历史和灿烂文明的国度,对人类曾做出过巨大贡献。她在近代落伍了,在列强的入侵下,中国人民遭受了百年屈辱与磨难,但是中国人民不屈不挠,付出了巨大的民族牺牲,终于在 1949 年赢得了国家独立和人民解放,从此踏上了民族复兴的伟大征程。可以预见中国必将站稳脚跟,快速持续发展,必将会为人类的和平与正义事业做出更大的贡献。中华人民共和国建立之初的 30 年为国家奠定了坚实的工业基础,1979 年开始的改革开放加速了中国经济的飞速发展。现在愈来愈多的人士渴望学习中文,了解中国文化,希冀探究这个古老而又正在崛起的国家。

中华文明源远流长,在各个领域都曾产生了许多世界级大师。人们普遍公认中国是人类文明最重要的发祥地之一。中国文化包罗万象,但本书仅包括了一些具有代表性的侧面,希望给国际友人一个概括性介绍,以激发他们进一步了解中国文化的兴趣。本书旨在导引国际友人步入中国人精彩的世界,领略中国的制度、建筑以及创造灿烂中华文明的先贤们的风采。全书共分十五章,每章的主体课文包含了对中国的政治、经济、科学、教育、朝贡制度等的评介,补充阅读部分则分别记述中国古代著名工程、人工运河以及伟大的政治家、艺术家、科学家、教育家、外交家、佛学大师,等等,其中的中文部分是对英文课文的解说和补充,用以加深对课文的理解。在中国,有关文化研究的成果,浩如烟海,遗憾的是它们大都是用汉语写成,国际人士无法直接阅读并领略其美妙。作为英语工作者,用英语传播中国文化,责无旁贷。希望有更多的人士加入到这一行列,共襄盛举。在本书策划与写作过程中,我们曾得到国际学生以及英语专业学生的不断激发与感召,许多章节也在他们的课堂上尝试使用过。作为第一批听众,他们的激情与浓厚兴趣不断激励着我们前行,他们的许多建议与想法都反映在本书中。本书的目标读者是国际读者、英语专业学生以及对传播中国文化感兴趣的人们。本书是三位作者通力合作、密切配合的成果,殷切希望读者毫无保留地提出宝贵意见。在此,我们要特别感谢湖南师范大学出版社副编审李阳博士,他的敬业精神、具有启迪意义的建议和专业性指导为本书增色添彩。



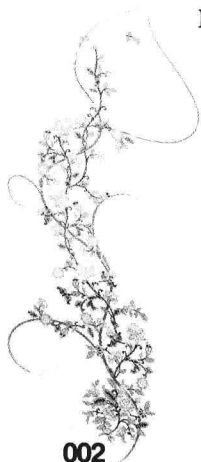
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## Chapter I A General Survey of China 中国简况

China, with a recorded 5000-year old history and splendid civilization, is situated in East Asia, on the western bank of the Pacific Ocean. China, rich in natural resources, is a very large country surpassed in area only by Russia and Canada, stretching for about 5500 km from north to south, 5200 km from east to west, and covering an area of 9600000 square km, approximately one-fifteenth of the land area of the Earth. China's land frontier is more than 20000 km in length, bordering on North Korea to the east, Russia and Mongolia to the north, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan to the west, Pakistan to the south-west, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Laos and Vietnam to the south; China also faces South Korea and Japan across the Yellow Sea, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia over the South China Sea.

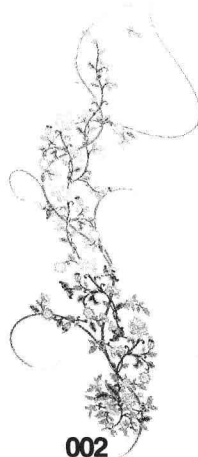
China is topographically varied, with a three-terraced terrain highest in the west and lowest in the east: 1. The first terrace: the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau in the west is 4000 meters above sea level on the average; 2. The second terrace: to the north, beyond the Kunlun Mountains and Qilian Mountains, and to the east, across the Hengduan Mountains, there appear the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, the Loess Plateau and the In-



## ■ Chinese Culture

ner Mongolian Plateau, as well as the Sichuan Basin, the Tarim Basin, and the Junggar Basin, usually 1000 to 2000 meters above sea level on the average; 3. The third terrace; on the east side of the Greater Xing'an Mountains, the Taihang Mountains, and to the east edge of the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, hilly areas and plains are found, usually lower than 1000 or even 200 meters above sea level in certain areas.

China is a mountainous country, with such major mountains as the Altay Mountains, the Tianshan Mountains, the Kunlun Mountains, the Karakorum Mountains, the Qilian Mountains, the Gandise Mountains, the Himalayan Mountains, the Hengduan Mountains, the Yinshan Mountains, the Qinling Mountains, the Nanling Mountains, the Greater Xing'an Mountains and the Changbai Mountains. China is also criss-crossed by the following famous rivers, among them the Yangtze River (6300 km), the Yellow River (5464 km), the Heilongjiang River, the Pearl River, the Liao River, the Hai River, the Huai River, the Qiantang River flowing eastward into the East China Sea; the Nujiang River and the Yaluzangbu River go all the way from Tibet through the Southern Asian Sub-continent, eventually into the Indian Ocean; and in the western and the northern China, there are some inland rivers, such as the Tarim River (2179 km). Ancient Chinese had built the longest man-made canal in the world, the Beijing-Hangzhou Canal (1801km), connecting five major river systems, including the Hai River, the Yellow River, the Huai River, the Yangtze River, and the Qiantang River. China also boasts many lakes, with the fresh water lakes mostly found along the middle and the lower valley of the Yangtze River, such as the Poyang Lake, the Taihu Lake, the Hongze Lake and the Dongting Lake, and salt lakes in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, such as the Qinghai Lake and the Nam Co, the largest inland Lake in Tibet. Along the long coastline of China, there dot a lot of islands, with such large islands as Taiwan, Hainan, Chongming and Zhoushan and thousands of smaller islands scattered within both the East China Sea and the South China Sea. Greater



parts of China are situated in the northern temperate and subtropical zones, with monsoon climate dominating, but climates of China are generally so varied as its territory is vast and topographically different, and the distance of each area from the sea is different. The average annual rainfall in the south-east coastal areas is about 1500 mm, gradually decreasing westward, with the yearly rainfall of relatively dry north-west areas being 50 mm.

Administratively there are 4 municipalities directly under the jurisdiction of the Central Government: Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing; 23 provinces: Hebei, Shanxi, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi, Shandong, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Hainan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and Taiwan; 5 autonomous regions: Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Tibet, Ningxia and Xinjiang; and 2 special administrative regions: Hong Kong and Macau. China is a unified multinationality nation of 1.3 billion people, with the Han nationality accounting for 92% and national minority people 8%. Chinese government adopts the principle of the freedom of religious beliefs, with such major religions as Buddhism, Taoism, Islamism, Catholicism, and Christianity in China.

China is a country with a long history and splendid culture, which contributed tremendously to the human civilizations. Only in the modern history, China suffered century-old humiliations and tortures, owing to its own backwardness and foreign invasions. Through undaunted and fearless struggles, with heavy national sacrifices, China finally won the thorough national independence and liberation in 1949, and began to embark on an arduous course of great national rejuvenation, which, it could be predicted, will enable China to contribute even more to the cause of peace and justice of mankind.

中国位于亚洲的东部,太平洋的西岸。中国文化灿烂,历史悠久,有



记载的历史可追溯到距今 5000 年前;中国物产丰富,幅员辽阔,其疆域南北绵延 5500 千米,东西纵横 5200 千米。陆地面积 960 万平方千米,占世界陆地面积 1/15,仅次于俄罗斯和加拿大。陆地疆界长 2 万多千米,与朝鲜、俄罗斯、蒙古、哈萨克斯坦、吉尔吉斯斯坦、塔吉克斯坦、阿富汗、巴基斯坦、印度、尼泊尔、不丹、缅甸、老挝和越南接壤。隔海与日本、韩国、菲律宾、马来西亚、文莱、印度尼西亚等国相望。

中国地形复杂多样,西高东低,自西向东分三级:西部青藏高原平均海拔 4000 米以上,为第一阶梯;青藏高原向北跨过昆仑山、祁连山,向东翻过横断山,地势陡降至 1000 至 2000 米的云贵高原、黄土高原和内蒙古高原,以及四川盆地、塔里木盆地和准噶尔盆地,为第二阶梯;大兴安岭、太行山、巫山和云贵高原东缘一线以东,是海拔在 1000 米以下的丘陵和 200 米以下的平原,为第三阶梯。

中国是一个多山的国家,其主要山脉有阿尔泰山、天山、昆仑山、喀喇昆仑山、祁连山、冈底斯山、喜马拉雅山、横断山、阴山、秦岭、南岭、大兴安岭、长白山等。中国还是一个河流众多的国家,大多自西向东注入太平洋,主要河流有长江(6300 千米)、黄河(5464 千米)、黑龙江、珠江、辽河、海河、淮河、钱塘江、澜沧江等;也有受山势影响,向南流经南亚次大陆,注入印度洋,如怒江、雅鲁藏布江等;在中国西部和北部,还有许多内河流,如塔里木河(2179 千米)等,中国古人还开凿了世界上最长的人工运河——京杭大运河(1801 千米),它沟通海河、黄河、淮河、长江、钱塘江五大水系。中国有众多的湖泊,长江中、下游多是淡水湖,如鄱阳湖、太湖、洪泽湖、洞庭湖,而青藏高原多分布着咸水湖,如青海湖、纳木错湖等。在中国漫长的海岸线上,在东海和南海分布着为数众多的岛屿,其中有台湾岛、海南岛、崇明岛、舟山岛等大岛屿以及星罗棋布的小岛屿数千个。中国大部分地区位于北温带和亚热带,属于季风气候,由于疆土辽阔,地形复杂,各区域离海洋距离差异较大,形成了复杂多样的气候。年降水量从东南沿海的 1500 毫米逐渐递减,到比较干旱的西北部只有 50 毫米左右。

中国有北京、上海、天津和重庆等四个直辖市,河北、山西、辽宁、吉林、黑龙江、江苏、浙江、安徽、福建、江西、山东、河南、湖北、湖南、广东、海南、四川、贵州、云南、陕西、甘肃、青海、台湾等 23 个省,内蒙古、广西、西藏、宁夏、新疆等 5 个自治区,香港和澳门两个特别行政区。中国是一个



统一的多民族国家,全国人口 13 亿,其中汉族约占 92%,通用汉语,其他少数民族约占 8%,有些民族有自己的语言和文字。中国人信奉的主要宗教有佛教、道教、伊斯兰教、天主教和基督教新教,国家奉行宗教信仰自由的原则。

中国是一个具有悠久历史和灿烂文化的国度,曾经为人类的文明做出过巨大贡献。近代中国由于落伍和列强的侵略,曾遭受百年之久的屈辱与磨难。中国人经过百年浴血奋斗,前赴后继,付出了巨大的民族牺牲,终于在 1949 年赢得了彻底的民族独立和人民解放,从此走上民族复兴的伟大征程。可以预见,中国将对人类的和平事业做出更大的贡献。

## Supplementary Readings

### Text A

#### Mother Rivers of the Chinese Nations

##### 1. Yellow River/黄河

Yellow River is acclaimed as the Mother River of China and the cradle of Chinese civilization, along the valleys of which the Chinese nations have been brought forth. It is the second-longest river in China and the sixth-longest river in the world. Its valleys are ideal environments, favourable for human habitation. In the early history of China, the Yellow River basin, with the drainage area being 75 square kilometres, was the most prosperous and affluent region, and it, however, caused endless calamities and untold sufferings to the people in the valley, owing to the unavoidable cyclical flooding produced by the elevation of the river bed. The River, therefore, is also notoriously known as the “River of Sorrow”. The Yellow River has played an irreplaceable role in Chinese culture and turned into a symbol for our nation, to which every individual Chinese is emotionally attached.

Yellow River, originated in the Bayan Har Mountains (巴颜喀拉山)



## ■ Chinese Culture

脉) in south-central part of Qinghai Province, flows all the way for more than 5000 kilometres through six provinces and two autonomous regions, such as Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Henan, and Shandong, and ultimately empties into the Bohai Sea in Shandong. Major cities along the River are Lanzhou, Yinchuan, Baotou, Luoyang, Zhengzhou, Kaifeng and Jinan. The word "yellow" is accurately used to delineate the yellow



黄河一览

colour of the muddy water swept into the river from the Loess Plateau along its course. The river is roughly divided into three areas, the upper reaches, the middle reaches and the lower reaches.

Characteristic of steep cliffs and turbulent water suitable for installing hydroelectric power plants, the river in the upper reaches, between the river source in the Bayan Har Mountains and Hekou town, Tuoketuo County (托克托县) in Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, flows through pastures, swamps and knolls, covering a distance of 3472 kilometres, with Lake Zhaling (扎陵湖) and Lake Eling (鄂陵湖), two large plateau freshwater lakes, near its source. When it reaches the Yinchuan Plain and Hetao Plain, it flows slowly and irrigates vast stretches of farmland along its course. The Middle Reaches, with 30 big tributaries joining the river, passes through the Loess Plateau to Zhengzhou, provincial capital city of Henan, with a distance of 1206 kilometres. In this section of the river, about 90% of total silts are discharged into it and become deposited on the river bed, making it a "hanging river", a river above the ground (悬河). However, from Hekou Town to Yumenkou, the river passes through the longest valley series, the Jin-shan Valley,



during which course, the well-known Hukou Waterfall can be found. This is another part of the river, quite suitable for constructing hydro-electric power plant as it is rich in hydroelectric power resources. The river in the Lower Reaches, between Zhengzhou to the mouth of the river in the Bohai Sea, runs a 786 kilometres course through the North China Plain, with immense sediments deposited and few tributaries draining into the river. More than a thousand years of levee construction, with silts being perennially accumulated, the Yellow River in the Lower Reaches becomes a real "Hanging River", even 10 metres above the ground in Kaifeng.

## 2. Yangtze River/长江

The Yangtze River, also regarded as the Mother River of China, is the longest river in Asia and the third longest river in the world, covering a distance of 6300 kilometres between its source in the glaciers of the Geladandong Peak (格拉丹东雪峰) of the Tanggula Mountain Range(唐古拉山) and its estuary in Shanghai. The Yangtze River basin accounts for one-fifth of the total land area of the country inhabited by one-third of Chinese population. Like the Yellow River, it has exerted tremendous influences upon Chinese culture and economy, helping to shape the history of China and even the character of Chinese people. One of the most prosperous regions in China, the Yangtze River Delta with the cosmopolitan city, Shanghai, at its front, contributes as much as 20% of the total GDP of the nation. The Yangtze River flows through a variety of diverse ecosystems rich in rare and valuable flora and fauna, with some endemic and endangered species. In Chinese history, the Yangtze River has served the multi-function of water supplies, irrigation, transport, even the production of hydro-electric power in modern time. Some parts of the river are specially preserved either as nature reserves or cultural heritage sites, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas (三江并流).





长江一览

The Yangtze River flows from the glaciers of the Geladandong Peak eastward across southwest, central and eastern China and ultimately empties into the East China Sea in Shanghai. It can be divided into three sections: the upper, middle and lower reaches. The Upper Reaches include section of the river from its source in Qinghai to Yichang City in Hubei. The middle reaches start from Yichang to Hukou County in Jiangxi. The section from Hukou to its estuary in Shanghai forms the lower reaches. The Upper Reaches of the Yangtze River have different names for its different sections, with the river source, the glaciers in the Tanggula Mountain Range, the headwater stream being called the Tuotuo River (沱沱河), or Maqu, meaning the red river in Tibetan language. As the Tuotuo River is joined by Dangqu River (当曲河), it has acquired another name, the Tongtian River(通天河) flowing eastward as far as Yushu(玉树) where the Tongtian River meets the Batang River, it has got the name of Jinsha River or Gold Sand River (金沙江) flowing southward and then eastward to Yibin. Starting from Yibin where the confluence of the Jinsha River and the Min River (岷江) occurs, the River has been called the Yangtze River. When it flows as far as Yichang in Hubei through Chongqing, the most important city in the Upper Reaches, the Yangtze River ends its upper section. The Middle Reaches in-

clude three provinces, Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi, passing through Wuhan, the largest city in Central China where the river receives its biggest tributary, the Han River (汉江), carrying ample amount of water from its source in the Qinling Mountains (秦岭) in southern Shaanxi after receiving abundant water from the Dongting Lake (洞庭湖) in Hunan. From Hukou, Jiangxi, where China's biggest freshwater lake, the Poyang Lake (鄱阳湖), drains into the river, to the estuary at the seaside, the Yangtze River goes through several major cities in East China, such as Yangzhou, Zhenjiang, Nanjing and Shanghai. The Yangtze River has served as the major inland waterway for two thousand years. Through the building of the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, the Lower Reaches of the river connect the Yellow River in Northern China, and by the construction of the Lingqu Canal (灵渠), the Xiang River connects the Li-jiang River, linking the Yangtze River with the Pearl River south of the Five Ridges (岭南).

## Text B

### National Totem of Dragon: Descendants of Yandi and Huangdi

Yan Di or the Fiery Emperor or Shennong (炎帝或神农氏) is a legendary Chinese ruler, also a tribe chief who was defeated by Huang Di in a decisive battle. As a result of that war, his descendants joined the tribe of Hung Di. Yan Di is believed to be the father of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Huang Di or the Yellow Emperor (黄帝) is a legendary Chinese sovereign, universally acknowledged as the founder of Chinese Civilization, generally believed to be the ancestor of all Huaxia people. Probably there was a historical person or several historical persons in the mythicization of the Yellow Emperor. Both of them were the chiefs of their tribes along the Yellow River valley and their tribes had entered into an alliance through a series of wars. Yan Di and Huang Di have been respectably and honourably esteemed as founders of Chinese nations.

