

# FUNDAMENTALS OF CHINESE CULTURE



中国文化 ABC

E-C Bilingual Version  
英 汉 双 语 版

Compiled by : Zhu Fayuan, David Wu, Xia Hanning, Brad Goldhorn

主 编：朱法元 吴琦幸 夏汉宁 (美)高 汉



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# Introduction

As one of the world's oldest civilized nation with 5000-years culture, China is a great nation given with two spectacular mother rivers—the Yangtze River and the Yellow River. It's also a magical land pregnant with amazing tourist attractions like the Great Wall and Huangshan Mountain. And fifty-five minority ethnic groups such as Zhuang and Manchu are officially recognized besides the Han majority.

To understand China, feasting your eyes on beautiful sceneries of great mountains and grand rivers is necessary and important. However, if you want to have best knowledge about China, you should step into the gorgeous palace of Chinese culture and explore her rich and time-honored history because you can't expect an acute insight into China before you have a good understanding of Chinese civilization.

Therefore, scholars from China and America join their hands in planning and compiling this book as the supplementary reading material to bilingual teaching of Chinese culture on the basis of deliberation. Since this reading is designed for college students who're intended to learn Chinese in America, we establish three guidelines for the compilation of the book as follows. Firstly, we put an emphasis on its comprehensiveness. We try to offer a panoramic view of Chinese five thousand years culture within limited chapters. Secondly, we make our great effort to guarantee its representativeness, to introduce the most typical part of Chinese civilization. Thirdly, accuracy is another great concern for us. We strive to make this book accessible to its readers with spot-on information illustrated within it. To this end, we've invested more than three years' time hosting multiple conferences for the project. Meanwhile, much effort has

been spent on frequent reviewing and rewriting. Furthermore, in order to guarantee this publication's readability and authenticity, we've invited Mr. Gao Han, a prominent American sinologist, to take responsibility to examine and revise the English version. Hence, this reading arises and evolves through the concerted efforts of people from China and U.S. academia, educational circles and the publishing company.

This book is dubbed *Fundamentals of Chinese Culture* due to, at least, the following two factors. In the first place, it contains the fundamental elements of Chinese civilization which, we believe, are some common sense necessary for any Chinese learner, although so many former compilers always overlook it. In the second, this is a popularization of Chinese culture and the Chinese academic community has achieved consensus on the validity of its content.

According to the time setting of Chinese language teaching in American universities, and the principle of gradual and orderly progress, the book is divided into four chapters with each chapter consisting of five units.

Chapter One covers the hallmarks of Chinese Character and Chinese language and related knowledge. In addition, it includes common sense of Chinese names, family appellation, greeting modes. At the same time, it introduces some appealing subjects about traditional Chinese festivals, calendar, solar terms, myths and legends. You can begin your travel into Chinese culture if you would like to equip yourself with above fundamental information.

Chapter Two is designed to lead you further into Chinese civilization and its time-honored history. It provides information for 5000-years historical vicissitude and the shifts between dynasties. It also introduces 56 Chinese ethnic groups, various wedding customs and Chinese people's conception of family. Besides, you can obtain an insight into China's four great ancient inventions, abacus and its usage, dak, post road, palanquin and horse-drawn trolley. Still, this chapter can guide you to take a cultural travel to the Great Wall, Terra-cotta Warriors and Horses, Yellow River (the birthplace of Chinese civilization), the old Silk Road, the Five Sacred Mountains and big rivers and lakes. Of course, you may be carried away either by the historic celebrities who made enormous contributions to Chinese culture, such as Lao Tzu, Confucius and Chuangtse, or by the immortal masterpieces like *The Book of Songs*, *Lyrics of Chu*, *Han Prosodies*, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, and *History of the Han Dynasty*, etc.

Chapter Three continues to engage unique cultural China. Your mind will wander among Yangtze River Culture, eight great ancient capitals of China, palace and temple architecture. We believe you'd also admire tea and wine culture and eight cuisines because they're so typical of China. Moreover, this part provides a kaleidoscope of Han Chinese costume, cheongsam, Chinese folding fans, and folk handcraft. If you wish, you can probe into Chinese medicine, Chinese chess, Kungfu and so on. Apart from all these, you can immerse yourself into the sea of charismatic Chinese classics by reading Four Books and Five Classics, Tang Dynasty poetry, Song Dynasty poetry, Yuan Dynasty Opera and sundry dramas, novels of the Ming and Qing Dynasties...

Chapter Four unfolds a fun world in front of you. Everything presented here, including Chinese gardens, residence, the imperial mausoleums, porcelain wares, I-go, Beijing Opera, Kunqu Opera, Yue



Opera, Huang Mei Opera and Dun Huang Murals, is so special and fresh to you. Some other glittering gems of the cultural treasure house in China are the scholarly Confucian study, the study of Taoism, the Buddhist study, the ancient book-collecting culture, the imperial examination culture. In the end, you can not only enjoy a cultural feast on “China’s Four Famous Classical (i.e. *The Dreams in Red Mansion*, *Heroes of the Marshes*, *The Romance of Three Kingdom*, *Journey to the West*), but also walk in the literature wonderland full of prevailing master-works produced by eminent modern Chinese writers, such as Lu Xun, Guo Mo-ruo, Hu Shi, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, Lao She, Cao Yu.

Dear readers, if this book can offer you a happy reading and enkindle your interest in Chinese civilization; if it can catalyze an unquenchable interest for your exploring China, we will feel very happy and honored, because this shows that our original intention of composing already achieved.

And we’re looking forward to your enthusiasm about Chinese culture.

Editorial Board of *Fundamentals of Chinese Culture*

March.1, 2010



## 导 言

中国是一个伟大的国家,中国又是一个神奇的国家。因为,在这片国土上,有长江、长城,有黄山,黄河,有汉族、壮族、满族等 56 个民族,更有历经五千年至今仍绵延不绝的华夏文化。

要了解中国,饱览她那充满魅力的名山大川和旖旎风光,这毫无疑问是非常重要的。但是,要想真正了解中国,更应该步入她那绚丽多彩的文化殿堂,去解读她那丰厚而又悠久的历史。因为,只有读懂中国文化,才能真正读懂中国!

正是基于这样的思考,中美两国的学者共同策划和编写了这部关于中国文化的英语教学辅助读物。由于这部读物是写给美国学习汉语的大学生阅读的,所以在编写时,我们确立了三个原则:第一,全面性。力图以有限的篇幅对五千年的中国文化作一个全景式的勾勒。第二,代表性。力图把最具代表性的中国文化介绍给读者。第三,准确性。力图做到所介绍的知识准确无误,语言通俗易懂。为此,我们付出了两年的时间,多次商讨,多次审稿、改稿。而且,为了保证英文翻译的准确与地道,我们还特别邀请了美国著名汉学家高汉先生对全书英文翻译进行修改和审定。可以说,这部读物是中美两国学术界、教育界、出版界共同努力的结晶。

这部读物之所以取名为《中国文化 ABC》,至少出于这样两个考虑:第一,书中所介绍的都是中国文化的基本常识。我们认为,这些常识应该是汉语学习者必须了解的,但遗憾的是,它又往往容易被编写者所忽视。第二,这是一部中国文化的普及读物,因此书中介绍的都是为学术界所认定的并达成共识的内容。

根据美国大学汉语教学的时间设置,同时也是本着循序渐进的原则,我们在编写时把这部读物分为四大部分,每个部分又分为五个单元。



第一部分,主要介绍了汉字、汉语及其相关的知识;介绍了中国人的姓名、问候语、称谓等常识;介绍了中国的节日、历法、节气和神话传说等饶有趣味的话题。可以说,掌握了这些知识,你就迈开了了解中国文化的第一步。

第二部分,我们开始试图引领你向中国文化的纵深迈进,以了解中国悠久的历史。在这个部分,你可以看到中国五千年的历史变迁和朝代更替;你可以了解为泱泱中华作出贡献的56个民族;你可以熟悉中国人的婚俗和家的观念;你可以知道中国的四大发明以及中国的算盘、珠算、驿站、驿道、轿子、马车;你可以领略神奇的长城、兵马俑、黄河文化;你可以踏上古老的丝绸之路、游览五岳和湖泊;你可以和那些为中国文化作出巨大贡献的历史名人老子、孔子、庄子等亲密接触;你还可以欣赏到流传千古的名篇巨制——《诗经》《楚辞》《汉赋》《史记》《汉书》……

第三部分,你仍将徜徉在中国历史文化的殿堂中,在寻访长江文化、八大古都、宫廷建筑、寺庙建筑之后,你还可品味到独具中国特色的茶文化、酒文化和八大菜系;在观赏汉服、旗袍、折扇及各地民间工艺之余,你还能探秘中医中药、中国象棋、武术等等;你还可以品读魅力无穷的中国经典——四书五经、唐诗宋词、元曲杂剧、明清小说……

第四部分,一个新奇的世界在你面前打开:中国园林、民居、皇陵、陶瓷、围棋、京剧、昆曲、越剧、黄梅戏、敦煌壁画等等,一定会带给你耳目一新的感觉;儒学、道学、佛学、中国藏书文化、科举文化等等,让你尽享中国文化的博大与精深;中国古代小说四大名著《红楼梦》《水浒传》《三国演义》《西游记》,中国现代作家鲁迅、郭沫若、胡适、茅盾、巴金、老舍、曹禺等人的佳作名篇,带着你在文学的天空中尽情地翱翔。

亲爱的读者朋友,当你读完这部书,你能将对中国文化的兴趣,化作对中国的向往,化作你走进中国的行动,那么,我们将感到万分荣幸,因为这证明了我们编写这部读物的初衷得到了实现。

为此,我们期盼着!

《中国文化ABC》编委会

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