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中国文化导读

Aspect of Chinese Culture

杨恩华 王锡艳 于静 许旭 编



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内 容 简 介

《中国文化导读》一书共分十二个章节,内容涉及中国文化中的饮食、建筑、武术、艺术、工艺、文学、中国传统小说和现代作家、神话传说、医药、宗教与传统节日等方面。读者在阅读该书后对中国博大精深的文化有“以一斑窥全貌”的感觉。该书形式新颖,以中国传统文化中的十二生肖为导游带领某外国旅游团来华参观博物馆或游览名胜古迹的形式,通过导游的介绍与游客和导游之间的一问一答,较为系统地介绍了中国的传统文化和风俗礼仪中最精彩的部分,让读者有身临其境的感觉,提高读者的阅读兴趣。本书编排合理,全书采用英汉对照的方式,每一章节都包括英文、中文对照和该章节中相关重要词汇的汉英解释,便于读者查阅和掌握。

读者对象:大、中学生,涉外导游,对中国文化感兴趣的外国友人。

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Preface

It is well-known that China has a great diversity of culture among its fifty-six ethnic groups. Under the wind of globalization today, the dynamics of its culture, which have been intensively studied overseas, become more outstanding. Many people from other countries feel curious about it. They are earnest to know the culture of China.

Advised by my friends to write an English book to enable both Chinese and English readers with their cultural or intercultural competence, I sat down with one of my colleagues and some of my MA students to generate ideas for the compilation. After a discussion, we decided to produce a bilingual book that would familiarize both Chinese and English readers with some aspects of Chinese culture. When we started to look for the cultural information, we found that the scale of the project was too small to cover the immensely complex Chinese culture. So we decided to focus on the cultural issues in which foreign visitors might feel more interested.

It is assumed as a background in this book that some foreign visitors are on a package tour for Chinese culture. They are introduced to the basics of Chinese culture either by visiting an exhibition or by sightseeing. During their tour, they learn something about Chinese food and drink, Chinese architecture, Chinese martial arts, Chinese art, Chinese crafts, traditional Chinese literature,



traditional Chinese novels and modern writers, Chinese mythology, traditional Chinese medicine, religions in China and Chinese traditional festivals.

Each chapter presents a text in English about a particular aspect of Chinese culture. Key words and expressions related to the chosen topic are introduced and Chinese versions provided simultaneously for easy reference. Altogether there are 12 topics in this book that elaborate on particular aspects of Chinese culture. The topics will be presented in the same order as the 12 animals in the Chinese *Shengxiao* or *Shuxiang* (zodiac or calendar) with the narrators named respectively as Dr. Mouse, Dr. Ox and so on.

Special thanks should be given to my friends Dr ZHANG Xiaoling from Nottingham University and Dr. Lv Zhongshe from Tsinghua University for their great advice and help.

Chang Zonglin
Ocean University of China
27th October, 2004



Shengxiao (or *shuxiang*), birth sign, refers to the twelve animals traditionally used in China to symbolize years. Each of these animals, mouse, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep,



monkeys, rooster, dog, and pig, represents one year, in the given order to constitute a 12-year cycle. Thus we have the Year of the Mouse (which is 2008), the Year of the Ox (2009), and the Year of the Tiger (2010) and so on.

The animal that symbolizes the year in which a person is born is called his or her *shengxiao* (birth sign). It is not always easy to remember a person's age, but it is easy, generally speaking, to remember his *shengxiao*, which never changes and has an amusing connotation. So since ancient times this has been a convenient way of finding out how old a person is. As an example, 2000 was the Year of the Dragon so a child born that year will be eight years old in the Year of Mouse when the Olympic Games are held in Beijing. By using the 12-year cycle, we can tell at once the ages of all persons with the same *shengxiao*, at whatever stage of life they may be: a



boy in his teens is 16; a young woman is 28; a middle-aged man is 40 or 52; and an old grandmother is 64 or 76 or . . .

Chinese children are sometimes given pet names derived from their *shengxiao*, so we hear parents calling their children *Xiao Gou* (Pup) or *Xiao Long* (Little Dragon). Sometimes a person's real name may be associated with his or her *shengxiao*, though this is not common.

In greetings and birthday celebrations, Chinese people prefer to send cards with the receiver's pictorial *shengxiao* printed on them. If you want to know about your *shengxiao*, please look it up in the following table:

TABLE OF SHENGXIAO—BIRTH SIGNS

Mouse	1912	1924	1936	1948	1960	1972	1984	1996	2008
Ox	1913	1925	1937	1949	1961	1973	1985	1997	2009
Tiger	1914	1926	1938	1950	1962	1974	1986	1998	2010
Rabbit	1915	1927	1939	1951	1963	1975	1987	1999	2011
Dragon	1916	1928	1940	1952	1964	1976	1988	2000	2012
Snake	1917	1929	1941	1953	1965	1977	1989	2001	2013
Horse	1918	1930	1942	1954	1966	1978	1990	2002	2014
Sheep	1919	1931	1943	1055	1967	1979	1991	2003	2015
Monkey	1920	1932	1944	1956	1968	1980	1992	2004	2016
Rooster	1921	1933	1945	1957	1969	1981	1993	2005	2017
Dog	1922	1934	1946	1958	1970	1982	1994	2006	2018
Pig	1923	1935	1947	1959	1971	1983	1995	2007	2019

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1 Chinese Food and Drink

Here comes Dr. Mouse with the first cultural topic.

Dr. Mouse: Ladies and gentlemen, our master, Confucius once said, "Eating is the most important part of life." Chinese cooking is famous all over the world for its unique flavors and enjoyable arts. Though its ingredients and cooking styles vary



from region to region, you can always find something to suit your taste, wherever you go in China. Today I'm going to talk to you about Chinese food and drink, and that is why we stop at the Chinese Food and Drink Section of the Chinese National Museum. It can be argued that no

culture in the world is as food-oriented as Chinese culture. As one of the best ways of cooking in the world, Chinese cuisine has been greatly influenced by many cultural factors. Chinese people from different social status enjoy eating their delicious food so much that Chinese cuisine has grown into a very sophisticated art. A delightful and delicious meal creates happiness, harmony as well as substantial and mental satisfaction. Prosperity is one of the factors that have influenced Chinese cuisine. In its long history, China underwent several "golden periods"





during which there were peaceful life, good weather and intelligent emperors. It was further developed by both commons and rulers through art, science, and countless good recipes. Eating is also reflected in people's daily greetings, but I'd like to talk about this by asking you a question. How do you greet people when you meet them?

Tourist A: We usually say "Hello," "Hi," or "Good morning" if we meet in the morning or "Good afternoon" or "Good evening" if we meet in the afternoon or evening.

Dr. Mouse: Good, thank you. We Chinese people tend to greet people, especially in the past, by asking "Have you had your meal?" This is why we say Chinese culture is "food-oriented". Chinese people used to be preoccupied with eating, because famine played an important role in the development of the cuisine. As a civilized agricultural country for thousands of years, China suffered from poor harvests as well. During those famine years, people would try everything edible to stay alive. Many unusual and incredible things, such as fungus and lily buds, were discovered and added to Chinese recipes during the famine years. The lack of food taught people how to make full use of anything edible. Thus many kinds of fruit and vegetable peels and even shark fins turned out to be delicacies in Chinese food. After one hundred years of suffering, Chinese people are now enjoying stability and good life. One can try tasty Chinese food all over the world. You see everything has its two sides. Chinese food is healthful and tasteful. Unlike Western style dish, most Chinese dishes are cooked with meat and vegetables together so that the foods contain comparatively lower calories





and fat. The short-time cooking over high heat also makes vegetables stay bright and crisp. It keeps the vitamins and minerals preserved in the dishes. So far, I've talked to you about the characteristics of Chinese cuisine and factors that have influenced Chinese cuisine. Do you have any questions?

(*There is no response from the tourists.*)

Dr. Mouse: Ok, if you don't have any questions, let's go to Room 1 for the different cuisines of Chinese cooking. As we know, there is an enormous variety of Chinese food that differs greatly from region to region in China. One of the amusing things to do while traveling in China is to taste different kinds of food. You will discover how various Chinese foods are, if you do not have a particular preference or very strict limit to your diet. Generally speaking there are four major distinctly different cooking styles in China. They are *Sichuan*, *Cantonese*, *Shandong* and *Huaiyang*. *Sichuan* cuisine is distinctly spicy. Chili peppers, *huajiao* (mild Chinese pepper), black peppers and fresh ginger are indispensable ingredients. The ingredients in Cantonese (*Yue*) Cuisine range from fish, shrimps and poultry to snakes, wild cats and giant salamanders. Snake dishes have been part of the Cantonese diet for 2,000 years. The most famous dish is called "Combat between the dragon and the tiger". The dragon is a cobra, and the tiger is a spotted undomesticated cat.

Shandong (*Lu*) Cuisine refers to the cuisine that originated in Shandong province. Thanks to its coastline, the province excels in fish and seafood dishes such as sea cucumbers, "squirrel fish," jumbo prawns and crabs. Simmering, boiling or baking in earthenware pots over a low fire is a feature of





Huaiyang cuisine. Its specialties are “West Lake Fish” and “Beggar’s Chicken,” baked in lotus leaves in a clay pot. Legend has it that a *Hangzhou* thief invented “Beggar’s Chicken”. As the thief had no stove, he wrapped the stolen bird in clay and baked it in a hole in the ground.

Besides the four major regional styles, there is the popular *Beijing* cuisine, which keeps its traditional palace cooking styles inherited from the *Qing* Dynasty and absorbs different features of the *Han*, *Man* and Inner Mongolian peoples’ ways of cooking. Having adopted a variety of local cuisine flavors, especially those of *Shandong* cuisine, it offers its own unique flavors. *Beijing* food is characterized by deep-frying, roasting, boiling, sautéing, stir-frying and stewing, which make the food crisp, tender and tasty. I’m sure that all of you know the typical course in *Beijing* cuisine. What is it?

Tourists: Peking Roast Duck.

Doctor Mouse: Right. It’s Peking Roast Duck. It is one of the most delicious dishes in *Beijing* cuisine. It is said that there are two worthwhile things to do during visits in *Beijing*. One is to enjoy Peking Roast Duck. Another is to visit the Great Wall. Peking Roast Duck has a long history. It dates back to the period of the *Song* and *Yuan* Dynasties, when the records of “broiled duck” and “grilled duck” could be traced in writing. It was originally the imperial delicacy of the *Yuan*, *Ming* and *Qing* Dynasties and was passed down later on to the common people. Now it has become the specialty of *Beijing* cuisine and is well-known home and abroad. Well-chosen force-fed *Beijing* ducks were used for cooking. A genuine Peking Roast Duck





involves meticulous processes. After the bird is plucked, air is pumped into it. With its skin painted with molasses it is hung up to dry itself in the open air. Then it is roasted in an oven directly over the burning wood of peach, jujube or date trees, which give off a special fragrance with very little smoke. Finally it becomes crisp and golden-brown outside and succulent inside with fragrance. The duck meat is cut by the chef into thin slices, each of which has to be perfect with the complete layers of the meat and a piece of skin. The sliced meat is served with pancakes, Chinese onions and sweet soy sauce. You can coat a thin pancake with some sauce, put in a few slices of meat and then roll up the pancake for eating. The use of chopsticks is optional, because it is easier to make such a roll with your hands. The place that offers the best Peking Roast Duck is the 130 year-old *Quan Ju De* Restaurant, which has outlets at *Qianmen*, *Hepingmen* and *Wangfujing* and new chain restaurants all over China. Ladies and gentlemen, the different cuisines of Chinese cooking are too varied to display. Let's take a tea break for a while at the neighboring Tianyi Teahouse. We'll walk there since it is only 300 meters away and after the break, we'll come back here for another part of Chinese cooking.

(At Tianyi Teahouse, the tourists are marveled at the tea sets and the cozy atmosphere there.)

Doctor Mouse: May I call your attention, please? I'm sure that after the walk, you must be thirsty. Please sit down and enjoy some Chinese tea. While you're sipping your tea, I'll tell you something about it. You know, the word "tea" in English was borrowed from Chinese. As the most popular drink, tea





became popular in China in the *Tang* Dynasty and prevailed in the *Song* Dynasty. Now it has been known as one of the three most famous drinks in the world (i. e. tea, coffee and cocoa). Although tea is grown in over fifty countries, China is renowned as the “birthplace” of tea. So tea is the pride of the nation. Traditionally the Chinese have two main types of drinks; Chinese alcohol and tea. Although Chinese culinary art and tea brewing have reached great heights unequalled in the world, Chinese alcohol has not become popular in the West. However, the Chinese people make up for the lack of variety by having a proper philosophy for drinking and by insisting on drinking at proper situations. As a result they have special feelings towards it. One writer says Chinese alcohol entices encouragement and Chinese tea inspires academic writings. This is why this teahouse is calm and cozy rather than noisy and exciting. The position of tea in China equals that of coffee in your country.

Tourist B: We have different kinds of coffee, such as cappuccino.

Doctor Mouse: There are also different kinds of tea. Different ways of processing and degrees of fermentation result in some internal changes of tea, which produce a variety of tea with various colors, scents, flavors and shapes. Chinese tea is mainly classified into six categories: green tea, black tea, oolong tea, scented tea, white tea, and compressed tea, according to their places of production, species of plants, ways of production and special qualities. The well-known types of Chinese green tea are *Longjing*, *Huangshan Mao Feng*, *Bilochun*, *Putuofeng Cha*, and *Liu'an Guapian*. The leaves of green tea are





yellowish-green, because, as green tea, they are not fermented. China is the world's largest exporter of green tea, supplying 90 percent of the total in the international market. By the way, how do you drink your tea?

Tourist C: With milk.

Tourist D: Sugar as well for me.

Doctor Mouse: By the way, have you ever seen typical Chinese tea sets? Chinese tea sets consist of teapots, teacups and saucers, etc. Tea sets have been used in China for a long time. With the gradual popularity of tea drinking, various kinds of tea sets have been developed. Their materials are so various that sets of pottery, porcelain, gold, silver, copper, tin, jade and glass etc. can be found. Among them, sets of porcelain made in *Jingdezhen*, *Jiangxi* Province and set of purple clay made in *Yixing*, *Jiangsu* Province are widely used. Chinese tea contains major cultural connotations. *Kungfu* Tea is a typical example. Here *Kungfu* refers to the skills and methods used in making, tasting and sampling tea. For example, the tea from one teapot should be poured into cups in less than one minute by moving the teapot around in a continual motion over the cups so that the cups are filled almost simultaneously. Only in this way can all cups of tea taste exactly the same. The water used in making the tea is as particular as the tea itself. For example, water with high mineral content can bring out the richness and sweetness of green tea. But if the water is too hot, it might ruin the taste of the green tea. For centuries it has been a ritual that a cup of tea should be served to every guest. At home or in a restaurant a teapot always appears on the table





before meals for the guests to refresh themselves while waiting for food, and after meals for digestion. As a Chinese proverb says "There are seven necessary items in every household. They are fuel, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar and tea." The important role the tea plays in daily life can be clearly seen here. Ladies and gentlemen, I believe you all have got a personal experience of the color, taste and flavor of Chinese tea. Let's go back to the National Museum for another part of today's exhibition, the Etiquette of Eating in Formal Dinners. We'll then go to a restaurant for lunch.

(At the National Museum)

Doctor Mouse: You know the saying, "While in Rome, do as the Romans do." Now I'm going to talk to you about the eating habits in China. Chinese eating habits have a long history. It's said that the etiquette of eating, which originated a thousand years ago, is still much valued and well preserved in China. Formal dinner, as a kind of social activities, is considered more formal than family dinners or friends meeting dinners. Usually the hosts invite the guests one or two weeks in advance. The invited guests should reply as quickly as possible, whether they accept the invitation or not. If they accept the offer, they are expected to arrive on time. It is considered impolite to be late. When they go to the dining room, the most honored guest is supposed to enter first. It is, however, very often the case that they may hold up their entry modestly, each insisting that the other is more worthy of this honor. Their reverent hold-up will not last long before they enter the room together. Once in the room they are supposed to sit in their proper places at the table. Seating arrangements are made according

