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MANDARIN CHINESE II

READING BOOKLET

Travelers should always check with their nation's State Department for current advisories on local conditions before traveling abroad.

Graphic Design: Maia Kennedy

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MANDARIN CHINESE II

VOICES

English-Speaking Instructor. . . . . *Ray Brown*
Mandarin-Speaking Instructor . . . . . *Qing Rao*
Female Mandarin Speaker . . . . . *Mei Ling Diep*
Male Mandarin Speaker . . . . . *Yaohua Shi*

COURSE WRITERS

Yaohua Shi ♦ Christopher J. Gainty

REVIEWER

Zhijie Jia

EDITORS

Joan Schoellner ♦ Beverly D. Heinle

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Beverly D. Heinle

PRODUCER & DIRECTOR

Sarah H. McInnis

RECORDING ENGINEERS

Peter S. Turpin ♦ Kelly Saux

Simon & Schuster Studios, Concord, MA

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Unit 1

Regional Accents

Mandarin, China's standard spoken language, is taught in schools throughout Mainland China and Taiwan. It has become even more widespread through the reach of television. Today virtually all young people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait understand and speak Mandarin, in addition to their native dialects.

As you might expect, the degree of fluency varies. Few people in the South can reproduce the kind of Mandarin heard on television or in films. For instance, when southerners speak Mandarin, they tend to stress every syllable. The "soft sound," also known as the "neutral tone," is often absent from their speech. Whereas Northerners will leave particles and the last syllable of certain compound words unstressed, people from Taiwan or Hong Kong are more likely to give equal stress to each syllable. For example, Northerners will pronounce the word that means "to be acquainted with" as *renshi* (falling and neutral tones), while Southerners will pronounce it *ren shì*, stressing the last syllable and giving it its full dictionary tonal value. The neutral tone always occurs in the last syllable of a compound word. The absence of this tone does not usually cause confusion or misunderstanding, but it does mark the speaker as a Southerner.

Unit 1 *(continued)*

Particles

In Chinese, particles, such as *le, de,* and *ne*, perform a number of important functions; for this reason, they are sometimes called "function words." For instance, to indicate that an action has already taken place, you add *le* to the verb: *chi le*, "ate;" *kan le*, "saw." The particle *de* can indicate possession: *wo de shu*, "my book." You have also come across *ne* as in *ni ne*, "What about you?" Some particles, including these three, are always pronounced with the neutral tone. The word "neutral" is used because their exact tonal value depends on that of the preceding syllable. Whatever tonal value they acquire in natural speech is barely audible. That is why they are also said to be "soft."

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Unit 2

Dining Out

Apart from the imperial cuisine associated with the Manchu emperors, in the past Beijing was not particularly known for fine dining. The restaurant scene, however, has changed dramatically in recent years. Now thousands of restaurants featuring a vast array of cooking styles dot the city. Good and inexpensive local food is plentiful, as well as exotic fare from all over the world. As people become more and more affluent, they are increasingly dining out. One of the most famous traditional restaurants in Beijing is *Quanjude*. Its Peking duck is renowned throughout China.

Chengde

Chengde is a resort city about 135 miles northeast of Beijing. In 1703 Emperor Kangxi built a summer palace in what was then an obscure provincial town. Eventually the palace grew to the size of Beijing's Summer Palace and the Forbidden City combined. The summer retreat, called *Bishu shanzhuang,* or Heat-Fleeing Mountain Villa, boasts a vast park. Because their empire was both large and multi-ethnic, the imperial family made a concerted effort

Unit 2 *(continued)*

to appease the Mongolians and other followers of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. To this end they built a group of Lamaist monasteries to the north of the palace. Recently the local government has restored many of the palace structures and monasteries for the sake of tourism. UNESCO has designated the former imperial Summer Palace at Chengde a World Heritage Site.

Unit 3

Alcoholic Beverages

Among urban and westernized Chinese, beer is the most popular alcoholic beverage. Despite joint ventures with international wine makers, the production and consumption of wine lag far behind that of beer. Many people, however, prefer Chinese hard liquor to either beer or wine. A formal meal or banquet would not be complete without what the Chinese call *bai jiu,* or white liquor made from grains. Rice wine, served warm, is popular in certain parts of China as well. Almost all liquor is consumed to accompany food.

Although many people have heard of cocktails, they are not common even among Chinese who are reasonably familiar with western ways.

Friends and Family

Foreigners visiting China are most likely to interact with the Chinese in a business setting. After a meeting, guests are often treated to a lavish multi-course meal in a fancy restaurant or hotel. Some tourist agencies also arrange for tourists to spend a day with a Chinese family. Away from tourist hotels and official interpreters, however, spontaneous invitations to one's home are infrequent.

Since most Chinese live in cramped apartments, they are less inclined to invite friends to their home than are Americans. Relatives, of course, are another matter. While three generations living under one roof is becoming increasingly rare, especially in urban areas, close relatives still frequently visit one another.

Unit 4

Teahouses

Teahouses were once ubiquitous in market towns and other urban centers in China. The mainly male clientele went to teahouses not only to quench their thirst, but also to socialize. To attract more patrons, teahouses provided various forms of entertainment such as storytelling and puppet theater. Although tea remains the most popular non-alcoholic beverage today, during the 1960s teahouses virtually disappeared from the Chinese urban landscape, as they were replaced by modern, western-style theaters, cinemas, and the like. In recent years, as the Chinese become more and more affluent, teahouses are making a comeback. Many of the new teahouses feature antique furniture or old farming implements to play on people's sense of nostalgia. *San wei shu wu* is named after a story by the famous early twentieth century writer Lu Xun. *San wei shu wu* literally means the Studio of Three Flavors (meaning, "diverse flavors").

Unit 4 *(continued)*

Women in the Workforce

The percentage of women working outside the home is quite high in China. In cities, virtually all women have jobs. As in the U. S., women dominate certain professions, such as teaching and nursing. There are also many women doctors and scientists. In other important areas, however, they haven't yet achieved parity with men. Women who occupy positions of power are still rare. The burden of restructuring the manufacturing industries in the last twenty years has also fallen more heavily on women, as they are more likely to be laid off than their male counterparts. Older, unskilled women in particular have difficulty finding a job.

Unit 5

Travel in China by Train and Plane

The transportation system in China has seen vast improvements in recent years. The coastal areas are well served by an ever-expanding network of railroads and highways, while all over the country, numerous airports have been built or expanded.

Unit 5 *(continued)*

Trains, often packed to capacity, are the traditional people-movers in China. Instead of first or second class, passengers choose hard seat, hard sleeper, soft seat, or soft sleeper. Despite its name, hard seat is in fact not hard, but padded. Since those fares are the cheapest, hard seat is often uncomfortably crowded. By contrast, a sleeper carriage can accommodate only a limited number of people. There are half a dozen bunks in three tiers; sheets, pillows, and blankets are provided. On short distances some trains have soft seats, which cost about the same as hard sleeper. In soft seat, overcrowding and smoking are not permitted. Soft sleeper is the ultimate luxury, with four comfortable bunks in a closed compartment complete with wood paneling, potted plants, lace curtains, and often air-conditioning. Since few Chinese can afford soft sleeper, tickets, which cost twice as much as those for hard sleeper, are easy to obtain.

China has many different types of trains, although there are three main ones: slow, direct express, and special express. The *zhike* and *ke*, colloquially known as *manche* or "slow trains," stop at every station. Some of these are still powered by steam engines. The faster direct express *zhikuai* make fewer stops. For a surcharge, passengers can take

one that runs at a higher speed. The special express *tekuai* make the least number of stops and are usually fueled by diesel or by electricity. For a still faster special express train, the surcharge for higher speed is roughly twice that of the direct express.

Conditions in trains have also improved considerably. Faced with stiff competition from airlines and long distance buses, the state-owned rail bureaus have tried to introduce faster and cleaner services, especially to tourist destinations. A super speed railway between Beijing and Shanghai is in the planning stage.

In the past few years, air travel has become increasingly popular. There are now frequent flights between major cities. Furthermore, modern Boeings and Airbuses have for the most part replaced the earlier rickety Soviet-built planes that caused western tourists much consternation.

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Unit 6

Stores and Shopping

Shopping is a favorite pastime for many Chinese. Department stores in major cities remain open well after 9:00 PM Western-style convenience stores have also appeared in big cities; so has warehouse merchandizing. Many of the more popular department stores and supermarkets are joint ventures with international retail giants. Service standards in these upscale commercial establishments, still limited in number, are comparable to those of their western counterparts. Designer brands and labels are available to those who can afford them. By contrast, state-owned stores cater to the tastes and purchasing power of the working class. Street peddlers selling counterfeit goods, fake Prada jackets, Gucci shoes, etc., are popular with local residents and western tourists alike.

Taiwan

Taiwan lies across a narrow strait from southeastern China. It was first settled by aboriginal peoples from Southeast Asia. The Chinese began to move to Taiwan in large numbers after the fall of the Ming dynasty in the 1660s. After a humiliating defeat in

the Naval Battle of 1895, the Manchu government ceded Taiwan to Japan, which became its colonial master for half a century. After the Second World War, Taiwan reverted to Chinese sovereignty. In 1949 the Nationalist government retreated to Taiwan after losing the civil war with the Communists. Today the People's Republic of China is eager to reunite with the island under the "one country, two systems" model. This formula, first proposed to Hong Kong, is meant to assure the Taiwanese that they will be able to maintain their economic and political system after reunification with the mainland.

While official relations across the Taiwan Strait have experienced ups and downs in the last two decades, economic integration is progressing apace. Taiwanese businessmen are eager to exploit their cultural and linguistic ties to the mainland. Today they can be found in all corners of the People's Republic, setting up factories and running hotels and restaurants. Despite the Taiwanese government's misgivings, a number of small and medium-sized companies have shifted their manufacturing operations to the mainland, where land and labor costs are far lower than in Taiwan. According to the Chinese government, the greater Shanghai metropolitan area alone is now home to over a quarter million Taiwanese businessmen and their families.

Unit 7

Days and Months

It's easy to remember the days of the week in Chinese. Monday is considered the first day of the week and is called "week-one" — *xingqi yi*. To name the rest of the week, one simply adds the appropriate number to the word *xingqi*: *xingqi er* (Tuesday), *xingqi san* (Wednesday), *xingqi si* (Thursday), *xingqi wu* (Friday), and *xingqi liu* (Saturday). Sunday is called *xingqi tian,* in colloquial Chinese, or *xingqi ri*, in written formal Chinese. *Tian* and *ri* both mean "day."

The seven-day week was introduced to China by Christian missionaries who, instead of using *xingqi*, settled on the word *libai*, meaning "worship." The seven days, therefore, were known as *libai yi* (Monday), *libai er* (Tuesday), and so on, with *libai tian* for Sunday. Because of their religious overtones, the terms fell out of use in the official media, but they have been preserved in spoken Chinese, particularly in the south and in Taiwan. In fact, there the word *libai* is the norm rather than *xingqi*.

Before the introduction of the seven-day week, the Chinese followed the lunar calendar. Each month was divided into three lunar phases of ten days each.

Unit 7 *(continued)*

The first ten days of the month were called *chuyi*, *chu'er*, *chusan*, continuing up to *chushi*. The word *chu* itself means "beginning." The lunar calendar, or *yinli*, was abolished in 1911. However, traditional holidays and festivals are still observed according to the *yinli*.

The names of the months are similarly straightforward. However, one puts the number before, rather than after, the word for "month," *yue.* January is known as the first month, February the second month, and so on. Therefore, the twelve months in Chinese are: *yi yue*, January; *er yue*, February; *san yue*, March; *si yue*, April; *wu yue*, May; *liu yue,* June; *qi yue*, July; *ba yue*, August; *jiu yue*, September; *shi yue*, October; *shi yi yue*, November; and *shi er yue*, December.

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Unit 8

Movies

Cinema was introduced to China one year after its debut in Paris on December 28, 1895. Ever since, film has been an important form of entertainment for the Chinese, especially those living in cities. Hollywood films dominated the Chinese market in the 1930s and '40s. Then, after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Hollywood films disappeared from the scene. Since the 1990s, when the Chinese government reversed its policy, American blockbusters such as *Forrest Gump* and *Titanic* have drawn large crowds wherever they were shown in China. On the whole, however, audiences are dwindling. To attract more customers, Chinese movie theaters have started to convert to American-style multiplexes. Most people, however, watch films at home on pirated VCDs and DVDs, which can be found on every street corner in Chinese cities.

Westerners may be familiar with a number of Chinese films that the Chinese themselves have never seen. Some Chinese movies were banned; others, like *Raise the Red Lantern*, had a very limited release. However, a number of new, young film directors and producers are beginning to attract notice worldwide. *The Road Home* is just one of

the newly-released films that have received critical and popular acclaim abroad.

Popular Entertainment

As movie audiences dwindle, other forms of entertainment have taken hold. Karaoke, for instance, has become wildly popular with both young and old at banquets, in bars, or at family gatherings. Guests are often invited to join in the fun. At times like these it's best to be a good sport and play along, even if you can't hold a tune. Good-natured ribbing and hamming are part of the merriment.

Mahjong, traditionally a game for men and women of leisure, has also regained its popularity after being banned for decades. Small fortunes are won or lost at the mahjong table. Quartets of men or women often play late into the night amidst clouds of cigarette smoke. Card games are also eagerly arranged and anticipated at family reunions and parties.

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Unit 9

Beijing Opera

Beijing opera, or literally Beijing drama, is more than just opera. It combines vocal and instrumental music, dance, mime, acrobatics, and occasionally even magic. Props and scenery are minimal: except for a table and a couple of chairs, the stage is bare. Actors specialize in one of four types of roles: the *sheng*, *dan*, *jing*, or *chou*. The *sheng* are the leading male roles. They portray characters like scholars, officials, and warriors. The *dan* are the female roles. Traditionally, they were played by men; today, however, only a few female impersonators are left. The *jing* are the painted-face roles. These usually include martial or heroic characters and supernatural beings. The *chou* are essentially comic roles. The actors wear clown make-up — often a small white triangle between the eyes and across the nose. The libretti of Beijing opera are adapted from classical Chinese literature and are well known to those who regularly attend the performances. The language, however, is archaic and difficult to understand. For this reason, lyrics are sometimes projected on top of the proscenium arch or on one side of the stage. Reportedly, opera star Beverly Sills attended a performance of Beijing opera during a visit to China and subsequently decided to introduce super-

Unit 9 *(continued)*

titles at the New York City Opera. Although most performances of Beijing opera take place in modern theaters, some ornate, traditional courtyard theaters have been renovated for tourists.

Unit 10

Business Travel

In the days when the state dominated all facets of the economy, only a small portion of the population, factory directors, party secretaries, and so on, took business trips. The state paid for all their expenses. Today, with a booming private economic sector, China is seeing more and more people criss-crossing the country seeking business opportunities or cementing business ties.

The sight of businessmen in crisp suits and shiny leather shoes boarding trains and planes contrasts starkly with the scene at bus terminals and train stations. There, hordes of peasants from China's inland provinces descend upon the coastal cities. For lack of other accommodations, many remain in the depots. Arriving by the thousands every day, these migrants are fleeing rural poverty and looking for better jobs.

Unit 10 *(continued)*

Coffee

Although tea is by far the most popular beverage in China, coffee has made inroads, particularly in big cities.

In the 1920s and ’30s, coffee houses in western enclaves in Shanghai and Tianjin were favorite hangouts for writers and students. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), coffee houses, along with western restaurants, virtually disappeared. In recent years, however, American franchises such as Starbucks, called *xingbake* in Chinese, have opened in Beijing and Shanghai.

Parts of Yunnan province and Hainan Island in southern China are ideal for growing coffee. Nevertheless, to most Chinese in small cities and rural areas, coffee remains a bitter, exotic drink.

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Unit 11

Holidays and Leisure Time

In recent years China reduced the six-day work week to five. In addition, employees get at least several days off for each major holiday: the Chinese New Year (late January or February), May Day or Labor Day (May 1), and National Day (October 1). These, however, are presently the only paid vacations. On average, Chinese people, at least those who live in urban areas, have from two to three weeks of vacation. Because everyone goes on vacation at the same time, tourist destinations are jam-packed. Those who crave peace and quiet would do well to avoid traveling around these major holidays.

The increase in leisure time is having a far-reaching impact on China's economy and society, creating financial windfalls for restaurants, amusement parks, hotels, and towns with picturesque waterways or pagodas. Unlike Americans, the Chinese are far less likely to take part in outdoor sports such as skiing or scuba diving when they go on vacation.

Unit 11 *(continued)*

Chinese Pastries

Mung bean cakes are small, bite-size pastries made from mung beans; they are especially popular in the south and in Taiwan. Moon cakes are another favorite; they contain various fillings such as red bean paste, lotus seeds, ham, and salted yolks of ducks' eggs. During the Mid-Autumn Festival (August 15th on the lunar calendar, usually sometime in September in the western calendar), the Chinese eat moon cakes in celebration of the full moon. Elaborately packaged moon cakes are frequently exchanged as gifts. Many restaurants derive a substantial part of their annual profits from the Mid-Autumn Festival. Mung bean cakes and moon cakes are frequently served with tea. Desserts are not normally part of a meal in China; they are served only as part of a formal banquet. Instead, pastries are eaten as snacks.

Modesty and Politeness

When the Chinese invite friends over for dinner, the host almost always begins a meal with the apology, "There's nothing to eat" — despite the fact that he has probably gone all out and prepared a feast.

Unit 11 *(continued)*

Guests then express unease over the abundance of food on the table and the host's extravagance. This exchange is a social ritual for most Chinese, as Chinese culture highly values modesty. Once the meal begins, the host heaps food on the plates in front of the guests, while the guests exercise restraint. If a guest does not care for a particular dish, it is best to leave it discretely on the plate. This is also a good way to politely discourage overzealous hosts from continuously offering more.

The high value placed on modesty also explains why Chinese will deflect a compliment rather than accepting it graciously. For example, when Chinese people receive a compliment, instead of *xiexie*, or "thank you," they say *nali nali*, literally, "Where? Where?" meaning, "There's nothing anywhere worthy of praise." A suitably embarrassed expression accompanies the saying to further show one's modesty. When they accept an offer of help or receive a gift, again, rather than "thank you," the Chinese say *bu hao yi si*, meaning, "This is embarrassing" or "I feel embarrassed [for having imposed on you]."

Like all languages, Chinese has a number of frequently-used formulaic expressions and

Unit 11 *(continued)*

responses. When an important guest or a customer arrives, Chinese people say *huan ying guang lin*, or "Welcome." When seeing someone off, they often say *yi lu shun feng*, or "May the wind be with you."

Unit 12

Hangzhou

Hangzhou lies south of China's largest city, Shanghai; the journey from Shanghai to Hangzhou takes slightly more than two hours by train. Tourism is an important part of Hangzhou's economy. It is famous for its picturesque West Lake, which is surrounded by lush hills and has long been eulogized by Chinese poets. Many of the sights around the lake have literary associations. These sights include the Leifeng Pagoda, which collapsed in the 1920s and is now being reconstructed; the causeway; and the stone bridge, especially beautiful when snow-covered in winter. Besides West Lake, Hangzhou is also known for several important Buddhist temples. The villages surrounding Hangzhou produce some of the best tea in China.

Unit 12 *(continued)*

Suzhou

An hour to the northwest of Shanghai, Suzhou was an important cultural center during the Ming and Qing dynasties, which lasted from the fourteenth century through the nineteenth century. During this period it was also home to a disproportionately large number of scholar-officials. Most of the famous gardens in Suzhou date from this era. Much of the charm of the city came from its dense network of waterways. Unfortunately, many of the small canals and rivers were paved over. With tourism booming, efforts are being made to restore some of the surrounding small towns, which are miniatures of Suzhou and feature the same combinations of landscaped gardens, stone arch bridges, and canalscapes.

Today Suzhou is also an economic powerhouse. Its suburbs have become especially popular with Taiwanese high-tech firms. The Suzhou metropolitan area is rapidly becoming one of the world's most important manufacturing centers of laptop computers.

Unit 13

Combating the Summer Heat

Summer, which extends from mid-June to the end of September, can be unbearably hot and humid in some parts of China. Before the advent of modern air-conditioning, the Chinese resorted to other methods to stay cool. One inexpensive way was using a fan. Scholars and intellectuals preferred folding, paper fans. Light in weight and easy to carry around, these folding fans were often works of art as well as highly functional objects. In fact, fan paintings were prized possessions among Chinese men of letters. Women's fans were oval-shaped and made of paper, silk, or feathers. They were often painted as well. Banana trees and legendary beauties were favorite subjects. Today air conditioners are becoming more and more common, yet many Chinese still find fans indispensable.

Moreover, not everyone can afford an air conditioner. Chinese who live in crowded, poorly ventilated old quarters sit under shady trees, playing cards or chatting with their neighbors, trying to catch the cool evening breezes as the sun sets. In addition, all Chinese enjoy popular summer drinks such as ice cold mung bean soup and, especially in the south, barley tea. Those lucky enough to live near the coast

take to the beaches in droves. Swimming pools and water parks with various rides are also popular destinations, especially for families with children.

Forms of Address

Unlike Americans, most Chinese are not on a first-name basis with many other people. Personal names alone are rarely used. (In the U.S. they are called "first names," but remember that in China, the family name is spoken first.) It's considered impolite to address one's superior by his or her personal name. The usual practice is to use the official position or title plus the family name, for example, Principal Tian, Manager Liu, etc. Similarly, the personal pronoun *ni* ("you") is best avoided when talking to one's superior; the more formal *nin* is preferred. Depending on their respective ages, co-workers commonly address each other by adding either *lao* (meaning "old") or *xiao* (meaning "young") to the family name. Personal names are reserved for intimate friends and family members. However, even younger siblings are discouraged from using their older brothers' and sisters' personal names. Instead they say *gege* ("elder brother") or *jiejie* ("elder sister"). In other words, hierarchy and the nature of the relationship play an important role in

Unit 13 *(continued)*

determining how one refers to or addresses someone else. Also, as in the U.S., it's a good idea to avoid using the third person singular pronoun *ta* ("he" or "she") if the person in question is present.

Unit 14

Travel outside China

After 1949, when the Communist Party came into power, China became closed to the rest of the world. For nearly forty years it was almost impossible for ordinary citizens to leave the country. Furthermore, except for state guests, no foreign visitors were allowed into China. Starting in the 1990s, Chinese began to travel abroad as tourists, reflecting the new official "open-door" policy and the increasing prosperity of ordinary Chinese. Popular destinations include South Korea and Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. With their recent economic downturn, these countries eagerly welcome Chinese tourists. Japan and Australia also began granting visas to Chinese tourists within the last couple of years. However,

until recently, Chinese wishing to go abroad had to participate in package tours. It is still very difficult to travel overseas as an individual, although less so than in the past. Likewise, obtaining a passport is also becoming more "hassle-free."

The "Three Links"

After the Civil War between the Communists and the Nationalists, communications between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan were broken off. As tension mounted across the Taiwan Strait, the two sides exchanged daily barrages of cannon fire. These have ceased. In order to pressure Taiwan into closer integration with mainland China, the Chinese government has given high priority to the renewal of three ties: (1) the resumption of commerce; (2) the exchange of mail, both business and personal; and (3) the establishment of direct connections by air and sea, for both goods and people. Fearing the inexorable pull of these so-called "three links," but also wanting to avoid conflict, the Taiwanese government has reacted with its own "Three No" policy: "no" to reunification, "no" to complete independence, "no" to confrontation. Despite the mainland's call for direct navigational links, traffic

Unit 14 *(continued)*

across the narrow Taiwan Strait still has to be routed through a third destination — often Hong Kong or Macau. However, bowing to increasing internal and external pressure, the Taiwanese government has recently allowed several small offshore islands to resume direct links with the mainland. This experiment is dubbed *xiao san tong*, which means "small three links." A scaled down version of the mainland's "three links," it is widely seen as the first step in the full restoration of direct communication ties.

Unit 15

Personal Questions

Westerners who go to China are often asked about their age, salary, or marital status. Much of China is still predominantly rural in form and mentality, and notions of privacy differ from those in the West. Raised in a culture that venerates old age, the Chinese consider asking how old someone is a perfectly innocuous question. And for decades, everyone in China had more or less the same income. Therefore, the amount of money an acquaintance made was

usually not a big secret. Even today, asking about salary is not a breach of etiquette, and can even be polite, indicating an interest in you and your financial well-being. Finally, if a Chinese shows interest in a Westerner's marital status, it is because family is important to the Chinese. Like one's salary, it is also a good topic for conversation. Westerners should not take offense at any of these questions. Rather, anyone who is not comfortable answering them directly can simply deflect them with a general or vague reply.

On the other hand, Chinese people are apt to find Americans' openness to discussing inner turmoil rather puzzling. There is less willingness among the Chinese to talk about issues of depression and other mental health problems.

However, as China becomes more urbanized and commercialized, and the gap in income levels becomes wider, western notions of privacy are beginning to seep into Chinese society. It remains to be seen whether advertising will make the Chinese as youth-obsessed as Americans, but newspaper advice columns are already exhorting readers to refrain from asking women about their ages. *yinsi* (privacy) is being gradually assimilated into everyday vocabulary.

Unit 15 *(continued)*

China's One-Child Policy

China has had an official one-child policy since 1979. The policy may seem Draconian to Westerners, but it was deemed necessary by the Chinese government. A fifth of the people in the world live in China. However, only 15 to 20% of the country's land is suitable for agriculture. To ensure sustainable growth, the Chinese government began to enforce population control in earnest in the late 1970s. Exceptions are made in cases of remarriages where one spouse does not have a biological child. Couples whose first child is physically or mentally handicapped are also allowed to have a second child. Minorities are exempted from the one-child policy as well.

For the most part, family planning has taken hold in the cities. For example, Shanghai and Beijing have achieved zero, or even negative, population growth. Most Chinese people, however, live in rural areas. Implementing the one-child policy in China's vast hinterland has been far more challenging. The increasing mobility of the population also makes it difficult for the government to catch violators of the one-child policy. Those who are caught are subject to penalties that range from fines to the child's being ineligible for free education. On a long-term basis, the impact of the one-child policy on Chinese society remains to be seen.

Unit 16

The Phone System

Twenty years ago, even in big cities, it was a rare Chinese family that had a telephone. Most people relied on public pay phones. Today practically every adult in China's urban centers owns a cell phone, not to mention a beeper. In fact, with one hundred twenty million cell phone users, China is the largest market for cell phones in the world. Pay phones can be found on almost every street corner. Most of them accept cards only; coin-operated phones are rare.

Paradoxically, because China's phone system was until recently so inadequate, even non-existent in rural areas, the country has been able to leapfrog the old analog technology and employ the latest digital technology that western telecommunications companies have to offer. Today Motorola, Ericsson, Nokia, and Bell-Alcatel all have joint ventures in China.

Unit 16 *(continued)*

Banks

The Big Four of China's state-owned banks are Bank of China, Agricultural Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), and Construction Bank of China. In addition, many provinces and municipalities have established their own banks; and over the last decade, major international banks have opened branches in China as well. Until recently, foreign banks were required to limit their business solely to foreign currency transactions. However, with China's formal acceptance into the World Trade Organization, foreign banks will increasingly be allowed to conduct business in the local currency, *renminbi*, thus creating competition for the more inefficient state-owned banks.

Nevertheless, Chinese banks have made great strides on the technological front. Computers have replaced abacuses, and ATMs are cropping up everywhere in big cities. A few years ago, Chinese ATMs accepted only local cards. Today, foreign tourists can access their accounts from almost any ATM in China.

Unit 17

zhongguo

The Chinese refer to their country as *zhongguo*, which literally means the Middle or Central Country. In ancient times *zhongguo* referred to the various Chinese states in the central plains in northern China. The word was invented to distinguish the original, ethnic Chinese states from the territories outside Chinese civilization.

Before the twentieth century, the country was named after the reigning dynasty. Therefore, from 1644 to 1911, when China was under Manchu or Qing rule, the country was known as the Great Qing Empire. After the Qing dynasty was overthrown in 1911, Chinese nationalists called the new republic *zhonghua minguo* (Republic of China) — *zhong guo* for short. When the Communists came to power in 1949, the country was renamed *zhonghua renmin gongheguo* (People's Republic of China). To this day, however, the short version remains *zhongguo*.

Unit 17 *(continued)*

Measurements

Like most other countries, China now uses the metric system. Traditional measurements have largely become a thing of the past. One exception is weights. For example, people still ask for a *jin* (half a kilogram, or about a pound) of spinach in a grocery store, or two *liang* (two hundred grams, or about seven ounces) of wonton in a restaurant. In rural areas peasants cling to tradition and measure distance in *li* (half a kilometer, or about a third of a mile). However, only the metric system is officially recognized.

Temperatures are measured on the Celsius scale. Shoe sizes follow the continental European system. Clothing sizes vary. Most follow the European system. Those bearing American brand names, whether or not they are authentic, are often labeled Small, Medium, Large, and Extra Large. These do not necessarily correspond to American sizes, however; an article of clothing marked "Extra Large" in China may be closer to a Medium in the U.S.

Unit 18

Chinese Students Abroad

In its heyday during the Tang dynasty (618-907), China was a magnet for students from neighboring countries, particularly Japan and Korea. Many took the perilous journey by land or sea to the Tang capital, Chang'an, to study Buddhism, government, and the Chinese language. At the same time, a handful of brave Buddhist priests from China went on an arduous trek to India in search of Buddhist scriptures. However, the Chinese did not begin to study abroad in any significant numbers until the early twentieth century.

After a series of disastrous confrontations with the West and with Japan, the Chinese realized how far they had fallen behind and began for the first time to send students abroad en masse. Because of its geographic proximity and its early start in modernization, Japan became the most popular destination for Chinese students, reversing the historic traffic between the two countries. However, as relations between China and Japan deteriorated in the 1920s and '30s, Chinese headed instead to European and American universities. Then came the Communist Party's rise to power and the Korean War. As a result, during the 1950s and early '60s, the former

Unit 18 *(continued)*

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe replaced the West as the training ground for Chinese scientists and engineers.

In the ensuing two decades, China isolated itself from the rest of the world. But, in the 1980s, China's brightest and most ambitious were again able to leave the country. From 1978 to 1998 an estimated three hundred thousand Chinese pursued advanced degrees abroad. This time America was the overwhelming destination of choice. Today fifty thousand Chinese students are in the U.S. alone. Chinese students make up the largest group of international students at America's universities, particularly in science and engineering programs. At some of America's best universities, after English, Chinese is the language most commonly heard in the research labs. Many of the key figures in twentieth-century Chinese history studied abroad. Their experiences in Japan, Europe, the former Soviet Union, and America helped to shape every aspect of Chinese society. Chinese students with a foreign education are one of China's most important assets in its quest for modernization.

Unit 19

Medical Care

Like many other things in China, the health care system is also in flux. State-owned companies used to reimburse most, if not all, of their employees' medical costs, as well as those of family members. Recently, however, the Chinese government has begun to reorganize the system. A substantial number of state-owned companies are ailing financially and can no longer afford to fully fund their workers' medical care. Employees are now required to share medical costs. At the same time, medical insurance for children, paid for by the family, has become mandatory in certain parts of China. These changes are all part of the government's plan to spread out the cost of welfare.

China was once famous for its "barefoot doctors," who served in rural areas. These itinerant doctors were often peasants themselves. They had a rudimentary, but highly practical knowledge of medicine and provided basic medical services to their fellow villagers. Unfortunately, barefoot doctors have largely disappeared. Generally speaking, rural residents receive inadequate medical care. Unlike their urban cousins, they have to assume complete responsibility for their medical costs.

Unit 19 *(continued)*

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Most people in China swear by traditional Chinese medicine. In the West, the Chinese art of healing is also attracting believers. However, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Chinese medicine was under attack by intellectuals educated in America and Europe. Along with imperial rule and foot-binding, Chinese medicine was dismissed as part of an outdated, moribund tradition, or even worse, as spurious science. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, traditional Chinese medicine regained respectability. Specialized colleges were established to train practitioners of Chinese medicine. Today, most Chinese doctors of traditional medicine are schooled in western medicine as well, and they routinely use modern diagnostic tools such as X-rays and MRIs, along with more traditional means.

What primarily sets traditional Chinese medicine apart from its western counterpart is its holistic nature. Rather than treating symptoms, Chinese medicine aims at redressing the imbalance of positive and negative energies. This view of the workings of the human body stems from Chinese cosmology, which sees the universe in dualistic,

counteracting terms. In addition to herbs and minerals, acupuncture, massage, and diet are frequently used. Moxibustion is another common therapy; this involves the application of moxa, a substance obtained from wormwood plants. All these tools make up the therapeutic repertoire of the traditional Chinese physician.

Unit 20

E-mail and Internet Cafés

Like the rest of the world, China has caught the Internet fever. Until a few years ago, dot-com businesses were thriving. Although the fever has subsided as many dot-coms have fallen by the wayside, Internet cafés are becoming permanent fixtures of the urban landscape. Public libraries and large bookstores are also good places to get online. The charges average about five *yuan* (about sixty cents) an hour. Meanwhile, computer ownership is increasing by leaps and bounds. Each year tens of millions of Chinese add computers to the increasingly long list of electronic equipment they own. Cable companies in major cities already offer broadband services.

There is a regional and socioeconomic imbalance in Internet access, reflecting the larger overall disparity in development between the more progressive coastal provinces in the east and the more traditional inland provinces in the west. Because of its capital-intensive nature, the new technology also attracts the young and the affluent of Chinese society. In a country where the government controls the media, the Internet provides an alternative venue for the young and the opinionated to sound off. Internet chat

rooms have become an important barometer of the mood of an increasingly influential sector of Chinese society. The government, however, is vigilant in suppressing what it considers subversive views, and must walk a tightrope between nurturing the nascent technology and maintaining political stability.

Shanghai

The largest city in China, Shanghai is a thriving metropolis. Situated at the mouth of the Yangtze River in the middle of China's east coast, Shanghai's location gives the city an unbeatable competitive advantage. On one hand, it reaches along China's longest river into the vast hinterland to the west. On the other hand, it is nearly equidistant from all the major cities in northeast Asia. Beijing, Tokyo, Osaka, Seoul, Hong Kong, and, when direct flight becomes possible, Taipei, are all about two hours away by air.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, Shanghai was a sleepy county seat. Once opened to the West, Shanghai was transformed into a world-class metropolis within decades. By the 1920s it had become China's economic, financial, and cultural

Unit 20 *(continued)*

center. At the same time it had also acquired a reputation for being one of the most iniquitous places on earth. After 1949 the Chinese government closed down brothels and opium dens; it turned Shanghai into an industrial city, thus stripping it of its dominance in trade, finance, and culture. With the new policy of reform and re-opening up to the West, Shanghai began to experience a renaissance in the 1990s. Today Shanghai is sizzling once again, attracting the brightest and the most adventurous from China and from other parts of the world.

Unit 21

The Postal System

The Chinese postal system offers more services than its American counterpart. For instance, most newspapers are delivered by mail. Also, in the days when private phones were few and far between, telephones in the post office provided one of the few options for making domestic and international long-distance calls. Even today the bigger branch

offices contain phone booths. However, fewer people are lining up to use them, as phone cards and private phones become more and more common. A relatively new service that is gaining in popularity is postal savings, which offers a convenient alternative to traditional banks. Consumers can now open a savings account at any major post office.

Foreigners using the postal system may encounter more red tape than they are used to. Packages and boxes must be left open for postal clerks to inspect before they can be mailed. Sending audio or video materials often requires prior authorization at a designated government office. The government considers these precautions necessary to prevent the dissemination of pornographic or anti-government materials.

"wo zuo di tie qu wo de peng you nar chi wan fan," or Chinese Word Order

A salient feature of Chinese word order is the observance of the chronological principle. Note the example in the title, which means: "I'm going to take the subway to go to my friend's place to have dinner." In English, you could also say: "I'm going

to my friend's place by subway to have dinner." Not so in Chinese. In Chinese, the word order is determined by the sequence of actions: You must get on the subway before you can go to your friend's place. You have to go to the place before you can have dinner there. Similarly, to say that you're going to pick up a friend at the airport, you must literally say, "I'm going to drive my car to go to the airport to pick up my friend." Saying, "I'm going to pick up my friend at the airport" is not possible in Chinese. Another example is the English sentence, "My son is studying at Boston University." Because you have to be *at* the university *before* you can study there, Chinese says literally, "My son at Boston University is studying." Here again the chronological principle is at work.

Another factor affecting word order in Chinese is "topicalization." When someone or something has already been mentioned, or is the focus or topic of a discussion, then that thing or person must be stated first. For instance, if a Chinese person were asked, "Where did all the tea go?" he or she might answer, "The tea, I finished it all," rather than saying, "I finished all the tea."

Unit 22

Sports and Board Games

For many years table tennis was perhaps the most popular sport in China. The reason is simple: it doesn't require expensive equipment or much space. Amateur teams were established all over the country, and China dominated the sport in international competitions for decades.

Bowling was introduced to China in the late 1980s. It quickly replaced table tennis in popularity. However, so many bowling alleys were built that today many stand empty.

The most popular spectator sport in China is soccer. There are two professional leagues. All over the country, soccer clubs have loyal followings. Fans often travel to different parts of the country to follow the matches of local clubs against their competitors.

Traditional sports such as shadow boxing, or *taijiquan*, are popular with women and the elderly. Every morning tens of thousands of retirees practice it in parks and on street corners to taped music. In addition to *taijiquan*, other Chinese martial arts are also popular. But because they are so intense, martial

arts require years of training under experienced masters. There are many different styles and schools of martial arts, which are often rivals. Perhaps the most famous school of martial arts is the Shaolin temple in the Henan province. It is the birthplace of Chinese *chan* Buddhism, better known in the U.S. by the Japanese pronunciation, *zen* Buddhism. Shaolin is also famous for having produced generations of martial monks. Today Shaolin's reputation is built primarily on its martial arts school. Its history as the place where Bodhidharma, the founder of *chan* Buddhism, achieved enlightenment is much less well known.

Besides *taijiquan* and martial arts, the Chinese also enjoy more cerebral sports such as Chinese chess and the board game *weiqi*, better known in the West by its Japanese name, *go*. Chinese chess is said to descend from the same ancestor as international chess. All over China, in villages and cities, young and old play Chinese chess.

The esoteric *weiqi* has a more exalted status. Traditionally, it was one of the four requisite accomplishments for the well-educated man of leisure — the other three being music, calligraphy, and painting. *Weiqi* still has an elitist image today. Its

Unit 22 *(continued)*

name means, "game of encirclement." Played with 180 white stones and 181 black stones on a grid consisting of 19 horizontal and 19 vertical lines, the game appears deceptively simple. Its complexity rises from the immense number of possible board positions. Every year corporations in Japan, China, and Korea sponsor tournaments attracting the best professional players from these three countries.

Unit 23

Getting Around

Finding one's way around large Chinese cities is a relatively straightforward affair. Many cities, especially provincial capitals, were laid out in a grid pattern. Street names are often written in both Chinese characters and *pinyin* (a transcription into Roman letters). Buses are plentiful, but they can be uncomfortably crowded; and for foreigners who don't know the local language, it can be difficult to know where to get off.

Unit 23 *(continued)*

Several cities, such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, boast subways, and still others have plans to build them.

For city-dwellers who are in a hurry or do not wish to fight for standing room in a crowded bus, taxis, or *chuzu qiche,* have become a welcome alternative. "To take a taxi" in Mandarin is *zuo chuzu qiche*, or simply *zuo chuzu*. In recent years, another term has come into popular usage: *da di*, which comes from Cantonese. *di* is a short form of the Cantonese word for "taxi." Although taxis are more expensive than buses, they are still affordable for the average citizen.

Several models of taxis predominate, depending on the city. Because of regional protectionism, locally made cars are often favored over models made in other parts of the country. For this reason, nearly all the taxis in Shanghai are Volkswagen Santanas made by a Shanghai-based joint venture with the German carmaker. In Tianjin the city is overrun with small taxis called *xiali* made locally with Japanese parts. The municipal government of Shanghai banned *xiali* from the city several years ago, claiming that they were big polluters and incongruous with the image of the city as a world-class metropolis. In any taxi,

Unit 23 *(continued)*

it's a good idea to ask for a receipt; this will help to ensure that you are charged a fair rate.

Rickshaws, once ubiquitous in China, disappeared decades ago and can be seen only in films or tourist spots in a few cities.

Unit 24

Parks

Parks in the English sense of the word did not exist in imperial China. Emperors had their hunting preserves, scholar-officials their private gardens. Both had long traditions in China, and both were off limits to intruders (or commoners). For ordinary urban dwellers in a predominantly rural society, temple grounds and open-air markets provided the main public spaces. Western-style parks were first introduced to urban Chinese in the late nineteenth century in semi-colonial cities such as Shanghai and Tianjin. The first park in Shanghai, laid down by the British, was known as the Public Park. Its front gate reputedly featured a placard forbidding dogs and Chinese from entry. The authenticity of this

Unit 24 *(continued)*

legend is disputed, but it has become part of the nationalistic Chinese lore. After the Republican revolution in the early twentieth century, former imperial playgrounds were opened to the public. Many of the famous parks in Beijing, such as the Summer Palace Park and Beihai Park, had imperial beginnings.

Unit 25

Currency

In the old days of chronic shortages, western hard currencies were highly coveted by the Chinese. Those lucky enough to have foreign currency remittances from overseas could shop in special stores. As a result, black markets dealing in foreign currency exchange thrived. Today, China is one of the biggest trading nations in the world with a huge foreign exchange reserve. The government has therefore somewhat relaxed its control on currency exchange.

Unit 25 *(continued)*

Foreign tourists, of course, have no trouble exchanging money in China. Big tourist hotels, airports, major bank branches, upscale department stores — all provide currency exchange services. Chinese wishing to travel abroad can also obtain foreign currency up to an amount set by the government at local banks. However, the Chinese currency, *renminbi*, (literally, "people's money,") is still not fully convertible, which to a certain extent insulates the Chinese economy from the rest of the world. The government has plans to make the *renminbi* fully convertible, but there is no formal official timetable.

Unit 26

Feng shui

Feng shui, the traditional art of auspicious siting, has become a fad in the West in recent years. Even some Fortune 500 companies have hired feng shui masters to improve the circulation of positive energy. Ironically, in China the practice largely disappeared after the Communists came into power, and feng shui was dismissed as feudal superstition. Since then it has made a comeback, especially in south-eastern China. Private business owners frequently consult with feng shui experts in order to site their factories and homes in the most auspicious locations and thereby improve their balance sheets.

Feng shui is an amalgam of ancient Chinese beliefs. The aim of feng shui is to bring various water bodies and land configurations into complete harmony so as to direct the flow of *qi*, or vital energy. Benefits of good feng shui encompass health and longevity, prosperity, fecundity, and general happiness, and they extend to one's descendents. According to the principles of feng shui, an ill-chosen site for a grave, for instance, will adversely affect the well-being of one's children.

Unit 27

Qingdao

Qingdao, also known as Tsingtao, sits on a peninsula in Northern China. The city is known for its abundant local seafood and for its previous incarnation as a German colony. In the minds of most Chinese, and frequent patrons of Chinese restaurants in the West, the name of the city is synonymous with its eponymous beer. The local brewery is the largest domestic producer of beer in China and part of the city's German legacy. In addition to the light thirst-quencher, Qingdao's beaches, fresh air, clean streets, and German architecture make the city one of the most popular tourist destinations in China.

Beijing

Except for a brief period of time when the Nationalist Party was in power, Beijing, formerly known in the West as Peking, has been the capital of China since the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368). In 1928 the Nationalist government moved the capital to Nanjing and renamed Beijing "Beiping." When the Chinese Communist Party drove the Nationalists to Taiwan in 1949, Beijing resumed both its original

Unit 27 *(continued)*

name and its status as the capital of China. Beijing, literally "Northern Capital," is the political and cultural center of a highly centralized country. While the massive wall surrounding the city was destroyed in the 1950s, the vast former imperial palace complex, known as the Forbidden City, can still be visited. It now houses the Palace Museum. Other tourist attractions include the Great Wall, which lies outside the city, the Summer Palace, and the Temple of Heaven.

Unit 28

Boat Travel

Chinese travelers are abandoning boat travel en masse in favor of other means of transportation. China's network of highways is expanding, and air travel is increasingly affordable. Several long-standing services, for instance those from Shanghai to Ningbo, a seaport to the south, were recently discontinued. Cruise ships, however, are another matter. Each year thousands of Chinese book trips on cruise liners up the Yangtze River to see the Three Gorges before they are permanently submerged by the huge dam under construction.

Unit 28 *(continued)*

Boat travel may be declining, but Chinese waterways are getting busier every year. The government is dredging rivers and widening canals in hopes of increasing freight shipping. In fact, one of the benefits of the controversial Three Gorges dam project is the improvement of the navigability of the upper Yangtze River. With the creation of a huge reservoir, there will be a more constant water level and wider shipping lanes.

Unit 29

Nanjing

Nanjing, in southeastern China, is one of the more attractive cities in the country. It was the capital of China during the Six Dynasty period, from 222-589. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the city was an important economic and cultural center. The old pleasure quarter along the Qinhuai Creek was famous throughout China, as was the Confucian Temple. Both have been restored for the benefit of tourists. In addition, Nanjing boasts the longest city wall in the world, as well as numerous other historic

sites. Nanjing is also known for its steamy summer weather. Together with Wuhan and Chongqing, Nanjing is one of the so-called "Three Furnaces" on the Yangtze River.

Tianjin

Tianjin, an hour away from Beijing, is the capital's gateway to the sea. It is also the largest industrial center in northern China. It was one of the five cities opened to foreign trade in the nineteenth century by the Qing government. Western powers were able to carve out enclaves in the city, and this history is reflected in its architecture. Because of its proximity to Beijing, however, Tianjin often finds itself playing second fiddle to its powerful neighbor.

Unit 30

English in China

English is a highly marketable skill in present-day China. Proficiency in English can lead to a high-paying job with an international company or to a chance to study abroad. Although Chinese students begin learning English as early as elementary or middle school, teachers and textbooks emphasize grammar over communication. Therefore, while many educated Chinese can read English, few can speak it fluently. For this reason many people attend special English language schools or classes in their spare time. In fact, many government institutions and offices pay employees to take English classes during work hours. English language schools abound, as do textbooks and instructional tapes. English teachers are in great demand, and it is not unusual for tourists to be approached by young people wishing to hone their conversational skills.

With China now a member of the World Trade Organization, and with the 2008 Olympics to be held in Beijing, English will only become more popular. In preparation, taxi drivers listen to instructional tapes designed especially for them. In the near future, they will also have to pass an English language test before obtaining their license to drive a cab.

Unit 30 *(continued)*

Others in the service industry are equally eager to polish their English language skills. Beijing has also instituted an English-word-of-the-day program: every day, people are encouraged to add the designated word to their vocabulary. Furthermore, a recent government policy stipulates that some courses in selected universities be taught in English.