

UNIT ONE

关于中国 Guānyú Zhōngguó Let's Talk About China

LESSON 01

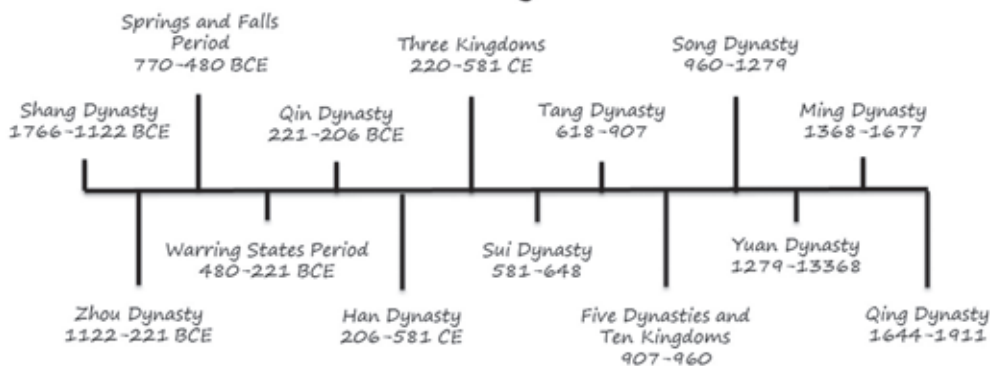
Introduction of China

China is one of the ancient civilizations in the world. It is officially called the People's Republic of China (PRC). China is the 2nd largest country by area in Asia and the world's most populous country. China has 14 neighbouring countries including India. Shanghai and Beijing are the largest cities followed by Tianjin, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen etc.

Beijing is the capital city and Shanghai is commercial capital of China. Yangtze River (Cháng Jiāng) and Yellow river (Huáng Hé) are the largest rivers in China which have played crucial role in the rise of Chinese Civilization.

China has been ruled by various dynasties for centuries together, few prominent dynasties are Qing, Han etc.

Chinese Dynasties



China officially recognizes 56 ethnic groups out of which Han ethnic group holds the major population. China also has different dialects with regards to different ethnic groups. Mandarin is the dialect spoken by Han people.

Chinese language is also known as Mandarin, pǔtōnghuà (फ़ थोंग हुआ)(Common Dialect) or zhōngwén (चुंग वन).

Mandarin is used for education and all official communication and one of the 6 languages in the UN.



How China got its name?

It is believed that China got its name from the Qin Dynasty, which was the first imperial dynasty to bring whole China together as a single country. “Qin” is pronounced as “chin” and that is how it became China. Of course, this is one of the many stories about etymology of China. It is also believed that the word China is derived from the Sanskrit word Cīna (चीन), which was used to refer to a country located in the north of India.

Provinces (states) in China

Anhui (安徽) : Héfēi (合肥)

It is one of the oldest provinces in China, located in eastern region. There are many historic sites found in this province from the period of the Xia dynasty (2100 B.C.). The main attraction is Huang mountain - Huángshān, a jumble of granite cliffs wrapped in cottony clouds. This mountain inspired many artists for ink painting during the 17th and 18th centuries.



Huang Shan

Fujian (福建) : Fúzhōu (福州)

The name of Fujian is the combination of Fuzhou (capital of the province) and

Jianzhou (present Nanping), two cities of Fujian during Tang Dynasty. It is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse provinces in China.

Gansu (甘肃) : Lánzhōu (兰州)

Gansu province was the region through which thick traditional Silk route passed. It provided the passage for goods, cultures and ideas to connect China with Central Asia.



Zhangye Rainbow Mountain

Guangdong (广东) : Guǎngzhōu (广州)

Guangdong was formerly known as Canton. It was the starting point of Maritime Silk Road. It is now the third richest province in China.



Guangzhou Opera House

Guizhou (贵州) : Guìyáng (贵阳)

Guizhou province has six county-level cities, three autonomous regions,



88 counties. Guizhou is a province with abundant resources. Its power relies mainly on water and coal mines.

Hainan (海南): Haikou (海口)

Hainan Island is China's largest island. Located in the tropical area at the southern end of China, this place is warm all year round and has no winter.

Hebei (河北): Shijiazhuang (石家庄)

Hebei province has 278 historic sites under national protection, ranking foremost in the country. The Great Wall of China starts from this province. The major cities, Beijing and Tianjin are surrounded by Hebei.



Pu Tuo Zongcheang Temple

Heilongjiang (黑龙江): Harbin (哈尔滨)

Heilongjiang is China's northernmost province. It is bounded by Russia to the north and east, by Jilin to the south, and by the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to the west. Its name comes from the Heilong Jiang – Black Dragon River. Heilongjiang contains China's northernmost and easternmost points.



Harbin International Ice and Sculpture Festival

Henan (河南): Zhengzhou (郑州)

Henan province is a home to a large number of heritage sites. It has ruins of Shang dynasty, capital city Yin and the famous Shaolin Temple.

Hubei (湖北): Wuhan (武汉)

Hubei is slightly larger than Syria. Its name means 'North of the Lake' referring to its location north of Dongting Lake as compared to Hunan which means 'South of the Lake'.



Sakura Garden, Wuhan

Hunan (湖南): Changsha (长沙)

Hunan is the birthplace of Mao Zedong, founding father of People's Republic of China. Hunan food is renowned



throughout China for being both delicious and incredibly spicy. Zhangjiajie national park is situated in this province, which has sandstone peaks. Souther Sky Column, one of the peaks had been officially renamed “Avatar Hallelujah Mountain” in honor of the movie Avatar. According to park officials, photographs from Zhangjiajie inspired the floating Hallelujah Mountains seen in the film.



Hallelujah Mountains (Avatar Movie)

Jiangsu (江苏) : Nánjīng (南京)

Jiangsu is coastal Chinese province and the richest among other provinces in China. The capital city of the province is Nanjing, located roughly in the centre of the province. The name Nanjing means ‘Southern Capital’ and the city has been the capital of China on several occasions throughout history.



**City Skyline and Modern Buildings,
Nanjing**

Jiangxi (江西) : Nánchāng (南昌)

Jiangxi province is the largest timber-harvesting region. This province lies between China’s western highlands and China’s coastal ranges.

Jilin (吉林) : Chángchūn (长春)

Jilin, along with Heilongjiang and Liaoning, was one of the three provinces that made up what was formerly called Manchuria and what is now referred to as China’s northeast (Dongbei). Jilin borders Russia to the east, North Korea to the southeast.



Mount Changbei Nature Reserve

Liaoning (辽宁) : Shěnyáng (沈阳)

It is a province of People’s Republic of China located in the north eastern part of China. It is the smallest but the most populous province in the region.

Qinghai (青海) : Xīníng (西宁)

It is a province of the People’s Republic of China located in the northwest of the country. It is home to many cultures including Tibetan, Muslim, Mongol and Han and is home to the source of the two major rivers of China.



Men Yuan

Shaanxi 陕西 : xī ān (西安)

It is a province of the People’s Republic of China and it lies in central China. In this province fossils of lantian Man, from 500,000 to 600,000 years ago have been found here.

Shandong 山东 : Jīnán (济南)

It is a coastal province of the People’s Republic of China, and is part of the East China region. The name Shandong, which means “East of Mountains”.



Nantian Men, Tai Shan

Shanxi 山西: Tàiyuán (太原)

It is a province of the People’s Republic of China, located in the North China region. Shanxi Province got its name due to its location to the west of Taihang Mountain.

Sichuan 四川: Chéngdū (成都)

Sichuan Province is one of the largest province in China. It is located in the upper Yangtze River (Chang Jiang) valley in the southwestern part of the country.



Panda Breeding Center

Yunnan (云南): Kūnmíng (昆明)

It is a province of the People’s Republic of China. It is located in Southwest China. Tiger leaping Gorge was named a UNESCO World Heritage Natural Site.



Limestone Forest, UNESCO World Heritage Site

Zhejiang 浙江: Hángzhōu (杭州)

It is an eastern coastal province of China. Zhejiang province is reputed as “The Land of Silk” and produces one third of China’s raw silk, brocade and satin.



West Lake

The Great Wall of China (Chángchéng.)

The Great Wall of China is one of the greatest wonders of the world. It is the longest wall in the world. It was listed as a World Heritage by UNESCO in 1987. The Great Wall is an ancient series of walls and fortifications located in northern China, it winds up and down across deserts, grasslands, mountains and plateaus, stretching approximately 21, 196 km from east to west of China. It was built across the historical northern borders of China to protect against the foreign invasions.



The Terracotta Warriors

Terracotta Army museum in Xian is a collection of more than 8000 terracotta sculptures of warriors. The first emperor of China constructed this terracotta army sculptures during 210–209 BCE. With course of time, it got buried under the earth. It was excavated by local farmers in 1974. Terracotta Army sculpture has more than

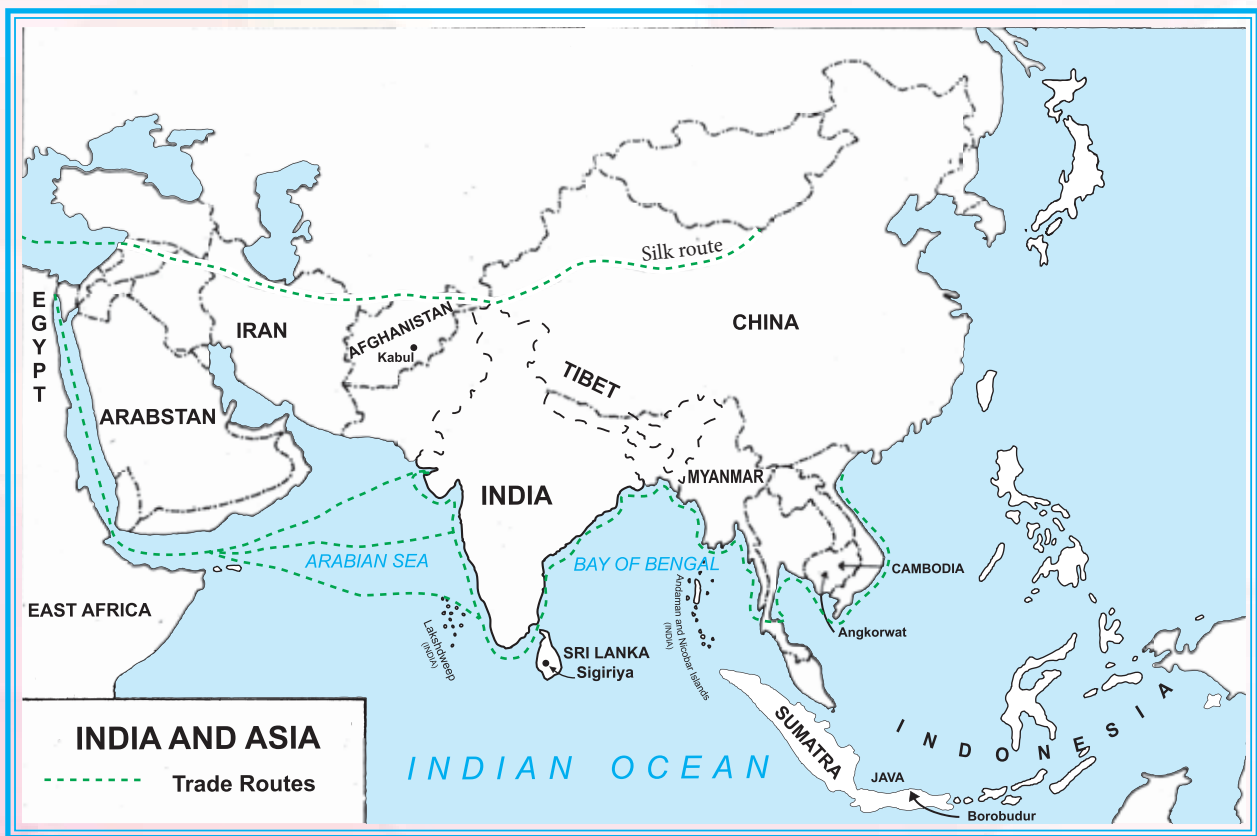


8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses, and 150 cavalry horses. It is considered as one of the greatest archaeological sites in the world.

Ancient Silk Route

Silk route was an ancient trade route connecting China with other countries. The road was used to carry goods between China and the world. Silk from China went to western countries and wool, gold and silver came to China. Various religious teachings also reached China from western world and India through this route. Silk route played a

significant role in the development of the civilization of China, Korea, Japan and Indian subcontinent. China is renovating this old silk route into modern trade route, called One Belt One Road project. Not only trades but diseases, such as plague, also spread along the silk route. Silk route was used from second century B.C. till 14th century.



Four Big Inventions – (sì dà fā míng)

Papermaking, gunpowder, printing technology and the compass are four great inventions of China. Ancient China invented these 4 discoveries, which made a huge impact on the entire world. These four great inventions also influenced the development of China's economy, politics and culture.

(1) Papermaking

In ancient China, people used bones, tortoise shells, and bamboo slips as writing surfaces.

China was the first country in the world to make proper paper. During western Han period (206 BC – 220 AD) the paper was invented. A further development of paper is credited to Cai Lun. He used rags and the fibres of trees

and plants. To make a sheet of paper, these kinds of substances are repeatedly soaked, pounded, washed, boiled, strained and bleached. After 400 years, this unique paper making technology reached Europe via Silk route. Arab army acquired paper making technology when they attacked China along the Silk Road in the 750 AD and took this technology to Europe.

(2) Printing Technology

Inspired by engraved name seals, Chinese people invented fixed-type engraved printing in around 600 A.D. During the reign of Northern Song Dynasty, Bi Shēng invented moveable, reusable clay type after numerous tests. Single types were made and picked out for printing certain books. These types could be used again and again for different books. Because of the large number of different characters in the Chinese written language, this technique did not have a dramatic impact at that time. However, today, this typesetting technique is regarded as a revolution in the industry. About 200 years later, this moveable-type technique spread to other countries and advanced the development of world civilization.

(3) Gunpowder

In Chinese, gunpowder is called huǒyào 火药, meaning flaming medicine. Unlike papermaking and printing technology, the birth of gunpowder was quite accidental. It was first invented inadvertently by alchemists while attempting to make an elixir of immortality. It was a mixture of sulphur, saltpeter and charcoal. At the end of the Tang Dynasty, Chinese started using

gunpowder for military purposes. In the 12th and 13th centuries, gunpowder spread to the Arab countries, other European countries and all over the world.



(4) Compass

During the Warring States period, a device called sī nán became the forerunner of the compass. A Si Nan was a ladle-like magnet on a plate with the handle of the ladle pointing to the south. In the 11th century, tiny needles made of magnetized steel were invented. One end of the needle points north while the other points south. The compass was thus created. The compass greatly improved a ship's ability to navigate over long distances. It was not until the beginning of the 14th century the compass technology travelled to Europe from China.



Written Language



The Chinese language is believed to be the oldest written language in the world with over 4000 years of history. Chinese character inscriptions have been found in turtle shells and on animal bones dating back to the Shang dynasty (1766-1123 BC) proving the written language has existed for more than 4,000 years. It can be seen from their ancient writing that many of the earliest characters were pictographs or pictures. These pictures slowly and slowly evolved into the modern day characters. As the time went on people needed to express more complex ideas or concepts and thus ideographs came into existence. For example, the sun and moon together means 'bright', a woman under roof means 'peace', a woman with a child besides her means 'good', tree doubled forms the character for 'forest' and if tripled it means 'dense forest'.

The Chinese written language uses single distinctive symbols, or characters, to represent each word of the vocabulary. The vast majority of characters are written versions of spoken sounds that have meaning.

It is believed that there are more than 50,000 characters in existence. One must be able to recognize 2,000 to 3,000 characters to read a newspaper. Although the written system has been altered over a period of time due to revolutions and political changes, the principles of the language along with the symbols and characters have remained basically the same.

There are many dialects in Chinese language to name a few, Cantonese spoken in HongKong, Xiang dialect also known as Hunanese is spoken primarily in the Hunan Province, located in



southern China, Min dialect is spoken mostly in Fujian, Taiwan and Hainan, and parts of eastern Guangdong, Gan dialect is used mostly by the people living in Jiangxi and the south-eastern corner of Hubei, Wu dialect is spoken by a majority of the people living in Zhejiang and the southern areas of Jiangsu and Anhui, Hakka dialect is spoken in the south-eastern Guangdong area, south-eastern Fujian. The written language is a common form of communication. Even though people are not able to verbally



communicate in different provinces, they are able to understand each other in writing.

Han community is one of the largest communities in China, which comprises over 90% of total population of China. Hence Chinese language is also called as Han Yu.

However, the written language can be further subdivided into simplified and traditional or Classical characters.

Simplified Characters

Primarily Chinese in China use simplified characters. These characters are simpler, i.e., have less pen-strokes, than traditional Chinese characters. People who are literate in simplified

Traditional Chinese 中國

Simplified Chinese 中国

	Anc.	Mod.	Anc.	Mod.	
Tortoise		龜		明	Bright
Above		上		月	Moon
Hill		山		下	Below
Stag		鹿		鳥	Bird
Eye		目		耳	Ear
Forest		林		人	Man

Chinese characters may not be literate in traditional Chinese.

Traditional or classical characters

All those characters which are not simplified can be considered as original characters. Traditional or classical Chinese characters are taught and still used in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and elsewhere. Many textbooks, newspapers, and subtitles for movies in China are still written in traditional Chinese.

