

# Traditional Chinese Rites and Rituals



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By

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By Ge Feng and Zhengming Du

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## SERIES INTRODUCTION

China, a country of appealing mysteries.

The Chinese nation, a nation intermittently strong and weak, honorable and infamous, awake and asleep, with a history of five millennia at the shortest, though probably longer, has experienced the highest stages of ancient civilization in the most prosperous dynasties of the world, and made indelible contributions to the advance of human societies. As the world's biggest nation, the Chinese people account for approximately a quarter of the whole population on Earth.

As a standing member of the UN Security Council, China exerts enormous influence on international affairs. Economically speaking, it is the world's largest consumer market and human resource reservoir, as well as the largest base of processing industries.

Over the recent three decades, China's opening up to the world has brought about an unprecedented level of contact with people from all other countries, resulting in great advancements in Chinese society and a drastic growth of its economy, which have drawn even greater attention from the world.

As was the case in the past when China was in its prime, again, the world finds it impossible to overlook China and its people.

However, for its many sufferings in pre-modern and modern history – social unrest and setbacks, natural disasters and social misfortunes – for a long time, China has remained relatively backward, listed as a “developing country” of the world. For the same reasons, the Chinese people and their civilization have been neglected in the developed countries, and to many people in the West, what is now known of China remains what it was 30 or 50 years ago.

In view of the above conditions, we hereby present to our readers these brand new Chinese Way books with the aim of helping those who are interested in all things Chinese to learn about the people and their social life, and ultimately to discover “the last hidden world” and the nation that is once more on the rise in the Orient, so as to more effectively communicate with Chinese people in all walks of life.

Within this series, there are five books, respectively on the language, folk culture, rites and rituals, traditional food, and traditional physical exercises of the Chinese people. Drawing upon vast resources from libraries and internet materials, these books are all written from the special perspectives of the writers themselves, and infused with their individual insights. What's more, the style of the language may also be interesting to Western English readers because the writers are all native Chinese themselves who teach English in higher institutions of education in China. This means that their English language may smack of some "Chinese flavor," somewhat different to that of the native English writers, but pleasantly readable nevertheless after minor revisions by native English speakers.

*The Chinese Language Demystified* by the undersigned chief-editor of this series begins with a general introduction of various "Chinese languages," languages of different Chinese ethnic groups as well as the majority Han people. The relation between Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects is also explained with fair clarity. Through reading the introduction, you will learn why Mandarin Chinese has become "the Common Language" (Putonghua) of the nation, how Chinese written characters evolved into the present form, and what differences exist between the classic and modern language, and between the formal written style and informal speech. In addition, the systems of Mandarin Chinese Pinyin and Tones are introduced in detail to serve as a threshold for exploring the contents of the book.

After the introduction are six chapters elaborating on the distinctive features of Mandarin Chinese, respectively in terms of its phonology, tones, morphology and syntax. In each chapter, typical and practically usable examples are provided, along with annotations of the tones and translations in order to help readers learn with ease. Finally, the book is rounded up with a seventh chapter summarizing the most prominent features to reinforce what the readers have read.

*Chinese Rites and Rituals* is co-authored by Ge Feng (冯鸽) and Zhengming Du (杜争鸣), professors of Chinese at the Northwest University and English at Soochow University respectively. The English translation has been done by Jieting Huang (黄洁婷) and Yinji Jiang (蒋茵佶), who are both English lecturers at Suzhou Vocational University. The book comprises an overall introduction of the Chinese ritual systems and the related social norms and customs. The first part begins with an elaboration of the central Chinese concept Li (礼), which carries a wide range of connotations including not only rites and rituals, but also what are



generally concerned as good manners, appropriate behavior and acceptable ceremonies for various social occasions.

The contents are divided into two parts, with the first part on traditional rites and rituals and the second on the modern practice. Actually, all possible aspects, which are appropriate for consideration under the general title of Li, are touched upon, from individual social conduct to state rules. With the understanding that Li is a matter of great importance in Chinese culture, we believe this book is of special value for those who wish to learn about the Chinese society and the Chinese way of thinking and life.

In *Chinese Food for Life Care*, authored by Hua Yang (杨娅) and Wen Guo (郭雯), lecturers of English at the Soochow University of Science and Technology, readers are expected to learn about the traditional Chinese way of eating, and find their opinions as regards the choices of food in various situations. They will also familiarize themselves with a great variety of traditionally consumed Chinese food items, and learn to understand why some items are more popular than others in China, as well as why the Chinese people generally believe “food and medicine are of the same origin.” It is our hope that the detailed accounts of the properties of different food items will serve as useful references for making decisions on what one should choose to eat according to his or her own physical conditions.

*Traditional Chinese Exercises* is written by Jianmei Qu (曲建梅) and her daughter Xinqing Wang (王新清), respectively an associate professor of English at Yantai University and an MA student of English at Shandong University.

The book begins with a brief account of the basic knowledge of Chinese physical exercises and health care, a short history of the development of various methods of traditional physical exercises, such as Taijiquan and Qigong, the basic theories concerning their efficacy and mechanisms, and the methods generally adopted in practice. Then, in the following chapters, the concrete procedures of exercises are presented, all well illustrated with clear pictures to aid the practitioner. In addition, traditionally practiced supporting “minor exercises” including various methods of self-massage are also introduced at length. It is our belief that the explanations and illustrations not only make interesting reading, but also help in practice.

*Traditional Chinese Folk Customs* is written by Huawen Fang (方华文), my colleague at Soochow University. Its first draft translation was completed by Weihua Zhang (张伟华), associate professor of English at

Wuxi Institute of Arts and Technology. At the request of the writer and the publisher, I gladly sign my name as a co-translator after reading and revising the manuscript. This book projects to the readers a changing and kaleidoscopic view of Chinese social phenomena seen in different areas and ethnic communities, in both ancient times and the present. Although it is understandably difficult for the writers to account for how much or to what extent the old customs have lasted to date, we can well assume that quite a lot have, though possibly in somewhat changed forms. At any rate, they should have some ineluctable impact on the contemporary Chinese way of life. In addition, with the growing consciousness of the importance of protecting traditional culture, some wholesome folkways that had once fallen to the verge of extinction are now being recovered, while others are still often found in Chinese literary works even if they have fallen out of date. Thus, reading about them should be rewarding, and as I hope, it could also be enjoyable.

On the whole, the five titles in these Chinese Way books form a kind of knowledge pool for readers interested in Chinese society, the people, and their way of thinking and social behavior. I believe they will be of very practical use for those who are presently working in China, or considering a visit or some time staying there. For readers of Chinese literature, the contents should also be worth reading because they provide knowledge of the social and cultural background to aid understanding.

I feel obliged to acknowledge the help of many who have given me very good suggestions as regards the contents of the books. First, I am grateful to Professor Xiaoming Tian (田晓明), Vice President of Soochow University and an open-minded scholar in arts and education who has seen the meaningfulness of these books and urged me to carry on. Then, for making the plan more concrete and practical, I feel indebted to Mr. Jinhui Deng (邓锦辉) and Mr. Lei Zheng (郑磊), editors of China Intercontinental Press, for providing many insightful suggestions. Last but not the least, my gratitude goes to Mr. Mingming Chen (陈明明), vice-chairman of the Translators Association of China and an ex-ambassador of China to New Zealand and Sweden, for he has been a constant source of encouragement in any of my endeavors of translation and writing.

July 5th, 2015  
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## INTRODUCTION

China, with her long history and splendid culture, has earned the high reputation of being “a state of ritual courtesy” through her communication with other civilizations. This is not only because her comprehensive ritual system, established as early as in the pre-Qin era (before 221 BC), has regulated and coordinated people’s behavior, it is also because of an extremely influential concept that is uniquely found in China known as *Li* (礼), a concept vastly different from its counterpart notions like rituals and manners in other nations (which refer to little more than social behavior related with courtesy or etiquette). During its continuous course of development, China’s *Li* has been integrated with the nation’s politics, law, religion, ideology, philosophy, custom, literature, art, economy, and military affairs. It has become an ingredient in the combination of material and spiritual civilizations and a finely detailed, rigorous ritual system, full of cultural connotations and associations. On the one hand, it is regarded as “red tape” owing to its emphasis on formalities. On the other hand, more importance is attached to its spiritual content. That is why *Li*, also called *Li-zhi* (meaning patriarchal system), or *Li-jiao* (referring to the feudal ethical code), has become one of the basic constituents of Chinese culture. This concept has a very important position in China’s social and cultural life, and related to it is a long series of values and norms, like ethical values, moral training, codes of conduct, etc. In Chinese history, the ritual system has played an irreplaceable role in appeasing subjects and stabilizing society for rulers by setting norms to regulate people’s behavior, interpersonal communion as well as property distribution. Therefore, it certainly has had some impact on the Chinese way of thinking.

Chinese ritual systems, as part of the social system that began with the beginning of human society as did all other social institutions, gradually became systematic, comprehensive, and eventually came to be regarded as the code of conduct for the subsequent generations of the nation. It is also known as the Five-Rite system of ancient times, meaning that it includes rituals concerning sacrifice, growing-up and marriage, guest reception, military conducts and mourning, respectively pronounced in Chinese as *Ji-li*, *Jia-li*, *Bin-li*, *Jun-li* and *Xiong-li*. These Five Rites cover all aspects of

social life for the Chinese people and embody the spirit of the Chinese nation.

There are a great number of classic Chinese books on ritual courtesy, among which *Rites of Zhou*, *Rites* and *Classic of Rites* are the most important. In *Rites of Zhou* is recorded the Chinese people's simple view of the relations of space and time, Yin-Yang relations, as well as ancient bureaucracy. *Rites* describes various aristocratic manners. Contained in *Classic of Rites* is the pre-Qin ritual system, the conversations of Confucius and his disciples, and the criteria of self-cultivation.

Among the three books, *Classic of Rites* is the first ceremonial textbook that is rich in contents, covering politics, morality, law, philosophy, history, religion, literature and art, the calendar, geography, daily life, etc. It is important for research in pre-Qin culture, especially because it discusses in detail the meaning of various rites and teaches the Confucian thought of *Li-zhi*, which has been helpful in the maintenance of long-term stability under monarchical domination. Therefore, *Classic of Rites*, valued by the rulers in every dynasty, has always enjoyed a lofty status and was widely spread for generations. The above three books have provided important theories for traditional Chinese ritual culture. Although not completely implemented, many rituals as regulated in the books have been passed down to modern times, and have become codes of conduct for Chinese people.

Without the help of the rituals, people would have nothing to help them to determine interpersonal relationships, distinguish right from wrong, resolve disputes, establish prestige, enforce the law, educate students, and express piety and sobriety. So, rituals are even regarded as criteria to distinguish humans from animals. This is why rituals have been widely and continuously underscored in China, from daily life to national affairs, and from psychology to behavior. It is just because Chinese people attach so much importance to rituals that China is referred to as "a state of ritual courtesy".

# **PART 1**

## **TRADITIONAL CHINESE RITES AND RITUALS**



# CHAPTER ONE

## rites and rituals in daily life

In the daily life of a traditional Chinese person, there are ritual norms everywhere, to which even the most common behavior should conform. Hereinafter is an introduction to some of the chief aspects of traditional Chinese rites.

### **I Daily social conducts**

#### **Terms of addressing people**

Chinese people advocate respect for seniority. Only acquaintances of the same generation can be called by name. Family members, relatives or neighbors are often addressed as “brother,” “sister,” “uncle” or “aunt” to show their close relationship and affectionate attitude. It is impolite to call one’s elders by name, such as teachers, grandparents, parents, etc. On social occasions, when introducing others, Chinese people like adding a title to the family name, Manager Zhao and Professor Wang for instance, for it represents a person’s status.

#### **Stance, posture and attitude**

##### **Sitting**

Sitting is a comfortable posture, but the proprieties concerned are rather complicated, especially at meals. In general, a person should sit in a dignified and solemn way, without opening the legs. Aside from this, the position in which to sit is also a matter of scrutiny. East-facing is considered to be the most respectful position, followed by south-facing, north-facing, and finally, west-facing. If accompanying an elder, you may sit down nearby only after he has sat down. Standing up to greet a senior

person is accepted practice, but it is not necessary to stand up when seeing peers, although the host is supposed to get up to greet guests.

### **Standing**

It is usual to stand with the body slightly bent to show respect. Keep your head straight up and feet parallel and close together. Otherwise, you are seen as being disrespectful. You should not stand in the middle of a doorway, which is supposed to be VIP access. Also, be aware not to squeeze in between any two people if they are standing side by side.

### **Walking**

In ancient times, a traditional courtesy called *Qu* was commonly observed on a particular occasion, according to which people of lower status should hang their heads, bend their waists and walk on their way in quick short steps to express respectful obedience to the elderly or the more senior in position. When passing by someone of an older generation, younger people must walk in this way instead of taking big strides with their chins held high. In addition, they should not walk in the middle of the road, as it is only supposed to be accessible to elders. When going upstairs, it is proper to set one foot first, then the other one right beside it on the same stair before taking another step. Usually, short steps are required on important occasions and striding freely is permitted only in informal places.

### **Sleeping**

Although a matter of privacy, sleep is also subject to some rules and regulations. When sleeping, you are not supposed to stretch out your limbs or lie facing down on the bed. It is appropriate to lie on your side and bend your body slightly, which is known as “sleeping in a bow-like stance”, a stance of health significance.

### **Greeting**

Greetings, pronounced as *han-xuan* in Chinese, are the polite expressions Chinese people use on meeting others, which will usually be concerning topics of daily life or the weather. At the first meeting, topics to show your care for the other person are very common, such as each



other's name, age, occupation, income, marital status, children, although this is changing in contemporary times under the influence of the western idea of "personal privacy". In order to show concern, hospitable Chinese people will usually offer some suggestions, such as "You'd better go to the hospital," "I can introduce you to a girlfriend," "You look thinner, and you should pay attention to your health." The main reason for the above is that, in the eyes of the Chinese, people should care for each other, for they are part of a collective. As a result, a Chinese person will often care about another's feelings, while the other party is also willing to discuss his personal problems frankly in order to look for a solution.

It is also common to praise the person you meet for his personal appearance, belongings, families, performance, and so on. For example, "Your kid is really cute," "You've got a beautiful girlfriend," etc. To such compliments, Chinese people often respond in a modest way with such words as "I don't deserve it," "You flatter me," etc. As modesty and prudence are regarded as traditional virtues in China, you may give an impression of being conceited if you agree with the compliments.

### **Utensil use**

In ancient China, household utensils were not bought and used at random, but were subject to many restrictions according to the ritual system.

First of all, precious gold and jade wares were not for ordinary officials but only for royal family members. As early as the Tang Dynasty, it was specified in government regulations that officials lower than the first rank were not allowed to use kitchen ware made of pure gold or jade. Similar detailed provisions can be found in the texts of other dynasties. Anyone found breaking these regulations would be punished and the items confiscated. Secondly, rosewood lacquer ware was also made exclusively for royal families. Thirdly, there were stipulations as to the right to use articles and tools made of certain materials, such as tents, bedclothes, etc., for they should be appropriate for the different social positions of the users. Here is an example of the use of cushions in the Qing Dynasty. Officials from the first rank to the ninth rank were allowed to use the following in winter and summer respectively:

- 1) wolf skin and red coarse cloth;
- 2) badger skin and red coarse cloth or green and black coarse cloth;

- 3) raccoon skin and black coarse cloth or green and red coarse cloth;
- 4) goatskin and black cloth;
- 5) grey goatskin and blue cloth lined with white felt;
- 6) black goatskin and black brown cloth;
- 7) deer skin and grey cloth;
- 8) roe deer skin and hand-woven cloth;
- 9) otter skin and hand-woven cloth.

## II Meeting Rites

In ancient China, meeting rites were important and the concerned rituals rather complicated, for people should not only talk and behave in conformity with ritual norms but should also present gifts in accordance.

Ordinary people and officials had to kowtow when seeing emperors. The same was true when low-ranking officials met high-ranking officials. In ancient officialdom, officials paying a visit to their superiors should ask for reception by delivering name cards and would be received only after approval. When officials met, they would make a slight bow to each other with hands folded in front as a salute. It was even more troublesome for the meeting of noblemen. The hosts would come out to welcome the visitors at the door, and then they would bow to each other. Then, they would bow again after entering the house and when gifts were presented. The guests would be invited to a dinner before leaving, make their farewells after dinner, and then be seen off outside the door, when they would bow again.

Stricter rules were laid down for common people. They should dodge away to the roadside when meeting officials. If sitting in a wagon, they must get off as soon as possible to show respect; otherwise there would be punishments, such as flogging. Particularly harsh was the punishment for breaching the norms concerning meetings between men and women, because men and women were supposed to keep a clear distance. Generally, they were not allowed to meet face to face. If they had to meet men, women were usually veiled and would make a curtsy with their legs slightly bent and ten fingers closed together in front of the left side of the chest.

When meeting the elderly, you are supposed to be serious in attitude, look steadily forward, and not move your hands or feet. Use two hands to receive if handed something by elders. Answer questions in a gentle voice and do not speak recklessly. When encountering elders such as teachers on

the road, step forward quickly with a cupped-hand salute. If spoken to, you might speak; if not, stand aside quickly.

## Kneeling

Kneeling, one of the most common traditional daily decencies in ancient China, falls into nine categories called the *Nine-kneeling-rituals*, including *Qi-shou*, *Dun-shou*, *Kong-shou*, *Zhen-dong*, *Ji-bai* (which refers to auspiciousness), *Xiong-bai*, *Ji-bai* (which refers to oddness), *Bao-bai* and *Su-bai*. Among them, the first four were seen in daily life and the others only on special occasions. For instance, *Ji-bai* and *Xiong-bai* were performed during funerals and *Su-bai* by servicemen and women. *Qi-shou*, made by officials meeting their emperors, was the grandest ritual of kneeling, in which the hands and the forehead touch the ground and stay in that position for a while. *Dun-shou*, used between peers and also known as kowtow, was similar to *Qi-shou*, but in practice, the forehead could be raised up immediately after touching the ground. *Kong-shou* (or *Bai-shou*), in which *Kong* meant that the forehead did not touch the ground, was often used by men, who should kneel down with hands before the chest at heart-level first and then touch the ground, and with the forehead falling down onto the hands. Comparatively, *Zhen-dong* was a casual ritual of kneeling down and shaking the hands at chest level, with one hand cupped in the other.

In the historical records, kneeling rituals varied in different situations. For example, it would be performed twice, three times or with performers forming a circle. Newlyweds should kneel three times in the wedding ceremony. Hosts might kneel three times to express greetings to all, and the junior must kneel before the senior. This ritual became different in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) because of the inconvenience caused by the changes to the use of furniture and the custom of sitting on the heels.

From a greeting gesture of the primitive people, kneeling developed into an expression of respect and obeisance. Before the 1911 Revolution, many men of vision began to criticize the complicated rituals. With the spread of the idea of freedom and equality that was introduced from the West through translation, it became a general trend and public will to abolish the degrading rituals used to maintain the feudal system. In 1912, this traditional ritual was declared abolished and was replaced by bowing with the hat off by Sun Yat-sen on the establishment of the Republic of China.

The cupped-hand salute (pronounced in Chinese as *Gong-shou* or *Peng-shou*) was made by cupping one hand in the other before the chest without bending the body. It was so easily made and was often seen in China, from long ago to a time nearer the present.

Another common meeting ritual was to leave a seat and make a slight bow with the hands folded in front. If greetings were expressed at the same time, it became another ritual, *Chang-re*.

### **Bow**

A man can show his respect to another person by bending his upper body while standing up straight with his feet close together and hands hanging down by his sides. The lower the upper body is, the more respect is expressed. Now this is prevalent in Japan and Korea, and each time, a salute must be returned. In modern China, a bow is often made when a person accepts an award, delivers a speech, holds a wedding, or expresses his respect or condolence. On festive occasions, there is no need to bow three times, because this is supposed to be appropriate for memorial services.

### **Crossing Hands**

The tradition of crossing one's hands over the chest upon meeting was observed for a long period through the Tang Dynasty, Five Dynasties and Song Dynasty (618-1127). The right hand was rested on the left one, with the left-hand little finger to the right wrist, the right thumb upward and the other four fingers straightened before the chest.

### **III Residence**

Visitors to China will see many classic style buildings such as the well-known Palace Museum, which was occupied by the Chinese Emperors and the royal families. The diversity of Chinese residential forms is related to people's social status, living habits and working styles and reflects the relevant rites and customs in China.

In class society, there were strict stipulations on the housing of different classes throughout the dynasties. These stipulations, reflected in every aspect of the constructions, helped to maintain the benefit of the ruling class as an integral part of the ritual system of the time. As early as

the Spring and Autumn Period, it was declared that the city wall of a principality should not exceed 100 *zhi* (which is 3.3 meters high and 10 meters long). In *Rites of Zhou*, it was set forth that the cities of the emperor, the princes and their children should decrease in proper order in urban scale, wall height and road width. The ritual regulations in this respect became increasingly complete in the following dynasties. For example, stipulated clearly in *the History of Song Dynasty* were the names of private residences, such as princes' *fu*, officials' *zhai* and common people's *jia*. Even stricter regulations came into being in the Ming Dynasty. For example, princes were entitled to cities, palaces of no fewer than 800 rooms as well as gardens, while ordinary people could not have engravings on their houses bearing the likeness of emperors, saints, the sun, the moon, or such animals as dragons, phoenixes, *kylins*, elephants, and so on. In conclusion, special regulations were laid down for the construction of Chinese houses, on size, quantity, form, structure, decoration, etc. Such regulations were so strictly observed that a person's status could be seen at a glance of his house.

As for the differences between imperial and civil buildings, the relevant ritual system is as follows.

### **The imperial buildings**

Throughout China's history, all the emperors attached great importance to the construction of capitals and palaces, for it was meaningful in consolidating their rule and meeting their luxurious lifestyles. They spent huge sums on the most expensive materials for constructing extravagant palaces, which represented the highest levels of architectural engineering and artistry of the time.

In most dynasties, the capitals were built after the ritual system of the Zhou Dynasty (approximately 1100-771 BC). They were designed as squares, with nine *li* in length and three gates on each side. In the city, there were nine roads from east to west and nine from north to south, with each road containing nine lanes. Located in the very center was the imperial palace, with the imperial ancestral shrine on the left, the altar of land and grain on the right, the government office in front and the commercial district behind. This design reflects an architectural concept that the crown is above all else, which is especially noticeable in Beijing, the capital city of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

In ancient China, the highest and largest building was the royal palace. Since the Han Dynasty (206 BC- 220 AD), this word has been used to indicate where the emperors lived and worked. Usually, the front of a palace would be designed as the place for work, and the back the area for repose. Located in the center were the main buildings surrounded by the secondary ones, which certainly carries the sense of hierarchy and the ritual system. The difference in order could also be observed from the various buildings themselves, owing to the strict regulations concerning the construction materials, size, weight, decoration, color, and so on. For example, yellow was regarded as the most honorable color, and green the second. As for the decorative patterns, dragons were only used for the decoration of the emperors' rooms, while dragons and phoenixes existed together only in the imperial harem. In addition, high-grade materials such as marble would be used to construct the aboveground foundation of the main hall in the imperial palace, while brick was used just for ordinary surfaces. Such regulations should be strictly observed, otherwise punishment could be very severe. For instance, in the worst-case scenario the whole family of the offender would be sentenced to death. This distinction in such requirements to match the place with the social order made it easy to distinguish the superior from the inferior. As a representation of the ritual system, it met the rulers' demands to make their power and influence known.

### **Civil buildings**

Owing to the dominant natural economy in traditional Chinese society, people usually had large families in the past. Households with three or four generations living together used to be the common reality, and there could even be twenty-generation families, which can be explained by the notion of a family that has all its members with direct blood or marital relations living together in a complex of houses. In such a case, a family member who is younger by age could be of the earlier generation than another who is older in age but of the later generation. For this reason, residential planning had to be well-conceived in order to demonstrate the difference between close and distant relationships, men and women, junior and senior, and master and servant. This residential design clearly reveals the strict ritual systems at that time.

Take the Qing Dynasty, for instance; rich families with many members living in the plains usually had their mansions constructed with three

specially planned areas – left, middle and right – each containing a number of small courtyards. A mansion was like a small city with its gate, courtyard walls and corner towers. If they were in the mountains, they would build many Chinese quadrangles on hillsides, symmetrically in most cases and enclosed with walls, in line with the ritual system. Much simpler were tenants' houses, usually built with thatch or earth, consisting of a row of two or three rooms or two crossed rows of rooms. In the middle was the central hall, where offerings were presented to the ancestors, with the living room and bedrooms on both sides. Small landlords of some property usually lived in courtyard dwellings with a principal room and wing rooms on three sides, and with a screen wall in front; or they could live in quadrangles consisting of the principal room, wing rooms and a servant's room. The principal room was the central place, used for making offerings or meeting guests. The wing room may be a bedroom or a kitchen, and the servant's room may be for servants or seasonal laborers, or it may be used as a storeroom for keeping farm tools. Businessmen, officials and landowners in cities often resided in quadrangles with a sitting room, dining room, servant's room and a carriage house. The rich usually had two or three overlapping quadrangles, with gate and gate room in the front, and a second gate, middle gate or main hall, as well as wing rooms in the middle, the inmost inner chamber, and kitchen in the backyard or side yards. This layout reflects the ritual system that contains the spirit of hospitality. The reception takes place in the sitting room, the center of activity in a family, and is thus considered the most important room of the home. In addition, clan halls, also known as ancestral temples or memorial temples, were usually built to offer sacrifices to the ancestors in large families. As the symbol of the clan's power, they would occupy a prominent position in the civil residences, which would be revealed by its important location, precedence in construction and its dignity and stateliness.

### **Other civil buildings**

The rich forms of Chinese civil buildings are attributed to the fact that in China, there have lived many ethnic groups with a variety of histories, cultures and living habits, under different climatic, topographic and other natural conditions. The following is a brief introduction.

### ***Gan-lan***

Popular in southern China, where there are high-temperature climates with abundant rainfall and humid air, *Gan-lan* were built with a view to ventilate the living space and protect the residents against moisture as well as wild animals, for people live upstairs with the ground floor used for storage and livestock. In China, the bamboo houses of the Dai, and the stilted houses of the Miao, the Tujia and the Yao are of such a style.

### **Cave dwelling**

Cave dwelling originated from the primitive custom of living in caves. People in the northwest and north of China have built wind-proof and warm-keeping cave dwellings, which were warm in the winter and cool in the summer, by digging into the loess sides. Such dwellings were easy to build, constructed with this simple and material-saving method without the occupation of arable land. They are not very conducive to ventilation and lighting, but this defect is balanced by their advantages: feeling comfortable under the different climate conditions in areas where it is dry and the temperature drastically changes between day and night, and in different seasons.

### **Yurt**

Yurts, the traditional housing of nomadic ethnic groups such as the Mongols, could be dismantled and moved frequently as mobile living rooms. They are usually circular, consisting of a framework of poles covered with felt and fastened with rope. Large yurts can accommodate hundreds of people. To meet the needs of nomadic production activities, there are two kinds of yurts: fixed and mobile.

## **IV Costume**

Clothes are not only used to cover the body, for decoration and to protect against the cold, they are also used to show something that has social implications. The gorgeous ancient Chinese costume also embodied the ritual system of the society, with its strict hierarchy and strong spirit of unification. In past dynasties, definite and strict regulations were provided for the costume of people ranging from emperors and officials to ordinary



people. Everyone should be dressed in accordance to his own status and so it would be easy to distinguish, from the costume alone, monarch and subject, the male and the female, master and servant, and officials and common people. Therefore, to Chinese people, clothing could also be taken as a ritual expression rather than the mere embodiment of freedom and comfort. Generally speaking, the distinction between common people and the aristocracy was manifested by the length of clothes. Laborers wore shorter clothes with simple colors and decorative patterns, while nobles were in richly ornamented long clothing, graceful and poised. It was forbidden to wear clothes unsuitable for one's own sex.

The Chinese costume system experienced a clear evolution and appeared differently in each period of history.

As early as the times of the Yellow Emperor, the clothing system was established. The combination of the dark upper garment and the yellow lower one was an emblem of heaven and earth, for the heavens were dark before dawn and the earth was yellow. Rooted in nature-worship, this concept had a profound impact on the clothing systems of subsequent periods. Ever since the class society began, with the formation and establishment of the Patriarchal System, costume, with its ever-strengthening link with the ritual system, became an important symbol of the social hierarchy, which for a large part established the costume system that prevailed in China for thousands of years.

Archaeological findings and historical documents have revealed that the basic form of costume was a combination of upper and lower garments in the Shang Dynasty (approximately 16<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century BC). Slaveholders wore caps, tight-sleeved upper garments with buttons on the right side, skirts or trousers, belts around the waist and shoes with warped points. This way of dressing was characterized by the combination of upper and lower garments and buttons on the right side, and also featured the chief costume forms of ancient China.

In the Zhou Dynasty (1046-221 BC), clothes of the emperor, princes and officials were graded according to a completed Patriarchal System. *Mian-fu*, the most distinguished type of formal dress with a complex structure and various decorations of symbolic significance, was designed for emperors and princes at worship or memorial ceremonies, and for conferring titles or feuds at court. *Bian-fu*, second only to *Mian-fu*, was worn by emperors when they met with officials or worked on official business. *Yuan-duan* was suitable for emperors who were not at court, princes on sacrificial occasions and scholars paying respects to their parents in the morning. All of the above dresses consisted of two separate

parts, upper and lower garments. Another type of formal dress, *Shen-yi*, was a loose gown with big sleeves, popular for its practical use on a wide range of occasions. The late Warring States Period saw the prevalence of *Hu-fu*, the clothes of ethnic minorities in northern China facilitating riding and shooting, which consisted of a short upper garment with tube-shaped sleeves, trousers, and a belt.

In the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC), Qin Shi Huang abolished the *Mian-fu* system of the Zhou Dynasty and adopted the *Shen-yi* system, which specified that officials of the third rank and above should wear green silk *Shen-yi* while common people must wear white gowns. This laid the foundations of the ancient Chinese costume system in the later generations.

The Han people used *Shen-yi* as formal dress starting about two thousand years ago. *Shen-yi* together with a *Guan* hat and shoes were appropriate for formal occasions, while in ordinary times, men wore *Ru* and trousers, and women were supposed to wear *Ru* with skirts. A *Ru* was a short top garment cut to the waist, which, together with a long skirt and high rolled hair, made women look slender and beautiful. To distinguish people of different grades, one of the distinctive characteristics of the Han costume system was the use of *Guan*, which was a small covering of the upper part instead of the entire head. The ancient males would be allowed to wear *Guan* after the Adulthood Ceremony. However, in the Han Dynasty, only the distinguished could wear *Guan*, while people of low status just wore a headdress on the head. There were various kinds of *Guan*. For instance, emperors wore *Tong-tian Guan* when they met with subjects; dukes and princes wore *Yuan-you Guan*, civil officials wore *Jin-xian Guan* and military officials wore *Wu Guan*. Due to the indistinct differences of the various kinds, ribbons attached to official seals were also applied in order to tell official ranks, along with the color, the weaving and material of the fabric. The ribbons hung down outside the leather bags of the seals at the waist. The Han court dresses were similar in style but different in material and color. For instance, red was for the highest rank and turquoise the next.

The Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern dynasties (220-589 AD) saw the exchange and integration of cultures between the Han people and other ethnic groups. The Southern Han people liked the northern minorities' driving dress consisting of trousers and *Xi*, a close-fitting short gown with a round neck and tight sleeves, which was a little longer than *Ru*, while the Northern nobles enjoyed the Hans' court dress, which later distinguished the formal and informal dresses. Formal dress referred to the set of loose, large-sleeved clothes, high hats and wide belts worn at court or at

memorial ceremonies, which could be further divided into official dress for less formal occasions and court dress for the most formal occasions. Informal dress was made for easier movements and worn in daily life.

Chinese costume was in full flourish in the Sui and Tang dynasties (581-907 AD), when there appeared various types of garments which had assimilated the features of the types of dress from all over the world. Then, definite regulations were laid down for the official costume system. Men were expected to wear round-necked, tight-sleeved gowns, *Fu-tou* (a kind of scarf) and boots, while women would wear loose-sleeved upper garments, skirts and shawls, with the chest exposed. Many dressing customs evolved under the influence of the ethnic groups' costumes, and the Tang costume became obviously different from the previous ones. Firstly, the *Guan* was replaced with *Fu-tou*, made of soft gauze to secure one's bun. Secondly, a costume system was formed to distinguish officials' ranks by color. The Tang system stipulated that yellow should be used in the dress for emperors; purple for princes, the third-rank officials and above; red for fifth-rank officials and above; green and cyan for officials lower than the fifth rank; black for soldiers; and white for the common people. The third change was about belts. The belts were fastened by buckles and decorated with *Kua*, a square ornament made of gold, jade, silver, iron or rhinoceros horn. The more *Kua* one wore, the higher one's status was indicated. The fourth was the creation of the fish-shaped tally system. The Tang officials wore small bags attached to their belts with tallies, on which their names and positions were engraved. They always had to have the tallies with them, which were regarded as the proof of identity and had to be presented at the entrance to the imperial palace.

During the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the costume was in line with the Tang's, on the whole, except for the less vivid color. *Fu-tou* became rich in style to match official dress. Emperors often bestowed upon officials the right to wear the colors of gold, purple, silver and red for some parts of their dress; that is, purple garments with tally-containing bags decorated with gold, and red garments with bags decorated with silver, which were symbols of great honor. Noblewomen wore ornaments consisting of flower-shaped hairpins, and queens wore crowns with nine dragons and four phoenixes. Females had to wear small triangular shoes owing to the prevailing foot-binding custom.

The Yuan costume, in the reign of the Mongols (1271-1368), integrated the ethnic characteristics into the Chinese Han system. The so-called *Zhi-sun* dress, also known as dress of uniform color to the Han people, was a one-piece garment, cut tight in the upper part and loose in the lower short

part for easier movement. Marten caps were worn in winter and large beaded hats with a conical crown and broad brim were worn in summer. Noblewomen would wear a hat of a wooden or bamboo framework called “The Auntie’s Hat”, which was two to five feet high, covered with pile-loop brocade and decorated with flowers or feathers on the top.

The costume system was re-enacted again in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Crowns (pronounced *guan* in Chinese) were only suitable for emperors and other royal family members on formal occasions. Usually, emperors wore yellow satin gowns with designs of dragons, *Yi-shan Guan* and jade belts. Officials would wear loose robes of different colors and patterns and gauze hats. To differentiate rank, patches, on which designs of animals were embroidered, were displayed over officials’ robes. Dominoes made of ivory and wrought bone took the place of tally-containing bags as identity cards. Queens wore crowns with dragons and phoenixes, and red large-sleeved upper garments decorated with dragons and phoenixes, along with embroidered and tasseled capes and long red silk skirts. As for ordinary people, men were usually in cloth garments of plain colors and women in upper garments and skirts of light colors. Red, yellow and the color of crow’s feathers were forbidden.

The Qing Dynasty government compelled subjects to wear the Manchu costume. The Han people were forced to cut off their hair on the front part of the head and keep long braids at the back, otherwise they would be decollated. Officials wore robes with golden designs of pythons, covered with short-sleeve gowns with buttons down the front, of which the central parts (on both the front and back) were embroidered with patches symbolizing their ranks. This costume consisted of horsehoof-shaped cuffs on the gown, peacock feathers on the hat and a long string of coral or agate beads around the neck. Long robes and mandarin jackets were popular among the common people. In the late Qing Dynasty, piped edges were usually seen on women’s clothes.

In addition to formal and informal dresses, there were specially designed uniforms for the military and for people who were bereft of their elders, as well as for prisoners, all specified in color, quality, style and decoration.

## **V Family Rituals**

The traditional feudal economy made family – the basic economic and societal unit – extremely important to Chinese people. And so, family rituals naturally took form and developed, which occupied a prominent position in traditional Chinese propriety, for they were considered as the embodiment of ethical norms that have helped maintain family harmony and social stability by instilling into the common people a concept of kindness and friendliness.

The feudal family rituals were stated in the rules, precept, norms of the family and the clan. Guided by Confucianism, they bore the distinctive features of feudal ethical code and encouraged humility, courtliness, filial piety and appropriate conduct.

### **The grandparent-grandchild ritual**

Partly due to the custom of early marriage in China, it was commonplace to find generations living together. Along with the patriarchal system, the principle of respecting seniors was passed down to later generations, which naturally formed the basis of the traditional Chinese virtue of filial piety.

Family rituals, with filial piety as an essential part, were aimed at cultivating the ethics of respecting the elderly, strengthening affection and relationships in a family through the young generation's caring for their grandparents, and ultimately stabilizing society and maintaining social order based on the family system.

According to the rituals, one should always be in close attendance on the grandparents. In addition to paying them a salute in the morning and evening, one is also expected to serve them dinner and help them to bed every day. One must do as follows with the elderly: avoid making any unpleasant enquiries, speaking impolitely or looking around when facing them; do not show listlessness or swagger; never expose the chest, no matter how hot it is; give priority to the elderly for drinks; submissively obey the elderly when reproached, even if they are mistaken. Beating and scolding grandparents was considered a felony. When away from home, one must write to the family constantly, sending regards to the elderly and reporting their own conditions.

Grandparents are also expected to be kind to their grandchildren, who, if at fault, should be given patient guidance instead of arbitrary

punishment or abusive remarks. Corporal punishment was only the last resort and all the grandchildren must be treated equally.

### **The father-son ritual**

It was a matter of prime importance to carry on the family line according to Chinese tradition, in which a thriving population was regarded as a sign of national prosperity. Confucianism held that the father-son ritual, which emphasized filial piety, was of primary importance among the norms of interpersonal relations and one of the prerequisites of national governance.

First of all, one must respect parents and take care of them on a daily basis. The son or daughter-in-law must get dressed early in the day, go to the parents' bedroom in a humble stance, wait upon parents who are washing their faces, and meet their requirements for food. For the convenience of the parents, he or she should also make preparations to get all the things in the house ready for their use, like setting the table, making the bed, and heating up water for them to take a bath. Parents' demands must be met at short notice. When they are alive, one should not have savings or exert oneself for any friend. Never walk or stand in the middle of the road, report to parents when going out or coming back, and never wear clothes with plain edges, which resembled mourning apparel. When parents were in the wrong, the practice was to advise them in a gentle manner, and try to move them with more obedient behavior if the advice was not accepted. Resentment was never taken as a proper reaction, not even if he or she was beaten by them. On the other hand, one was expected to enjoy everything his or her parents were fond of.

Secondly, one must take care of sick parents. During their sickness, he or she was not supposed to do the following: comb his or her hair, chat, play musical instruments, eat meat or drink wine, laugh or scold loudly. Sometimes he or she should even try out the taste of medicine for them and repose with his or her clothes on before they are recovered. For this reason, there were many stories which were told about filially dutiful sons whose deeds were set as examples. Some people even went to such extremes as to cut themselves for their parents' treatment.

Thirdly, one must avenge the murder of one's parents and not accept living in the same world as the enemy who killed his or her parents. For this reason, many revenge stories were spread in Chinese literature.

It was the parents' responsibility to educate their children. Beginning