

Chinese Society

Written Language

- Highly complex written language;
- Evolved continuously over 4,000 years; never entirely abandoned original format; almost unique in world;
- Different pronunciation from region to region; mutually unintelligible; ex. Beijing and Shanghai
- Chinese answer: all the various spoken versions of the Chinese language use the same writing system; any character might be pronounced differently in different regions of China, but that character is written same way everywhere;
- Created and maintained sense of unity and common identity;

Family (chia)

- The basic economic and social unit
- Almost sacred quality – symbol of entire social order;
- Loyalty to family more important than loyalty to state;
- Filial piety-duty of son or daughter; all members subordinate their needs and desires to the male head; each has role;
- Why is the family so important? Cultivation of rice
- Male supremacy

- Taxation, ownership of property, maintenance of law and order tended to be **family rather than individual** responsibilities;
- Profound awareness of presence of ancestral spirits;
- Younger sons leave family and become agricultural laborers
- One son continued to live with parents after marriage;
- Surname comes before the given name
- Children of several brothers numbered in accordance with ages , regardless of father's seniority;

- Children and relatives addressed by number

Ex. Third brother

Importance of family as compared with the individual;

Traditional design of large Chinese house – walls screening it from outside world;

Much less privacy

In criminal matters, mutual responsibility;

Family Relationships

- Always marked by distinction between inferior and superior;

Ex. Not a single word for brother, but separate terms for older and younger;

- Obedience and devotion of filial piety an eternal principle
- Crimes against parent treated much more seriously than those committed against non-parent;
- Stern disciplinarians- character for father a hand holding a stick;
- Father to be a moral example;
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Marriages

- Arranged
- Marriage made a person complete;
- Girls not much use to families;
- Boy born facing in; girl born facing out.
- Wife had three subordinations: father, husband, eldest son;
- 4 virtues: fidelity, cautious speech, industriousness and gracious manners
- Red bridal chair
- Under supervision of mother-in-law;
- Barrenness grounds for divorce; priority to give birth to son;