

"A seamless and lucid essay on Chinese geography, prehistory, history, and culture. Teachers everywhere will welcome it as a classroom aid and a virtuoso contribution to the genre of short books on China." —Gregor Benton, Cardiff University

这就是中国
一个五千年

This Is China

The First 5,000 Years



EDITED BY HAIWANG YUAN 袁海旺 WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Ronald G. Knapp, State University of New York, New Paltz, Margot E. Landman, National Committee on United States–China Relations, Gregory Veeck, Western Michigan University

Praise for *This Is China*

It is hard to imagine that such a short book can cover such a vast span of time and space. This Is China: The First 5,000 Years will help teachers, students, and general readers alike, as they seek for a preliminary guide to the contexts and complexities of Chinese culture.

Jonathan Spence, professor of history, Yale University;
author of *The Search for Modern China*

In this slim volume, tiny by comparison with its regiments of oversize competitors in the crowded field of general histories of China, a team of experts has performed the miracle of distilling their collective knowledge into a seamless and lucid essay on Chinese geography, prehistory, history, and culture. One must marvel at the skill with which the editors have reconciled and synthesized the wide range of contributors' ideas and opinions and combined them into such a coherent, convincing, elegant, and engaging whole. The study draws its material from the five volumes of the Berkshire Encyclopedia of China, launched last year to critical acclaim and now on its way toward becoming a major reference book on Chinese history, society, and thought. Students will enjoy the sparse but richly supported narrative. Teachers everywhere will welcome it as a classroom aid and a virtuoso contribution to the genre of short books on China.

Gregor Benton, professor of Chinese history,
Cardiff University

I only wish I had had This Is China: The First 5,000 Years available during my fifteen years of teaching Chinese at the college level. It provides a superb historically based foundation for the beginning language student to understand the importance of those "first 5,000 years" in shaping the modern language. The inclusion of the Chinese characters and pinyin for each of the section headings is an added bonus. Together with web-based supplementary material made available by the publisher, This Is China is a tremendous resource for both Chinese language students and teachers, and I recommend it highly.

Scott McGinnis, academic advisor and professor,
Defense Language Institute, Washington DC

This is a gem. It is a reference that everyone who teaches, writes, or thinks about China should have close at hand. Each section is concise, literate, and well written. The information presented is very up-to-date, including descriptions of China's scientific accomplishments, the contributions of women to the development of Chinese culture, the ways in which China has always been linked by trade and by intellectual interaction to the global development of human civilization, and how new archaeological discoveries are changing the ways we define China's past. This stimulating and rewarding approach is carried through to discussions of the economic, intellectual, and values debates our colleagues in China are currently engaged in. At a time when Chinese is rapidly becoming the most important second-language for millions worldwide, the inclusion of Chinese characters at many points in the text

(continued)

is both welcome and necessary. What's more, the characters are accompanied by pinyin transliteration with tone marks, meaning that even beginning students will rapidly increase their ability to read and speak Chinese. Don't be caught without this book.

Ronald Suleski, professor and director, Rosenberg
Institute for East Asian Studies, Suffolk University

China today is an economic superpower, competing in every arena of human endeavor. From trade, business and finance to diplomacy, defense and security; from science, technology and innovation to culture, media and sports—China's growing strengths have global implications. Foreigners need to understand the deep history of China, because in China the past profoundly affects the present. It is hard to imagine a more accessible, accurate book than This Is China: The First 5,000 Years.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn, international investment
banker, corporate strategist; author of *How China's
Leaders Think*

Ambitious, sweeping, and of necessity efficiently economical and compressed, This Is China: The First 5,000 Years packs about as much of the panorama of the Chinese experience into a single volume as is physically possible. For those of us who still enjoy the pleasures of physical reference books, this one is a must, as it is for the expanding universe of those who know that understanding China will be increasingly important in their lives.

Dan Burstein, managing partner, Millennium
Technology Ventures; author of *Big Dragon*

This little book should quickly become the first port of call for teachers seeking information on the vast range of topics and issues that arise while teaching a language and culture more than 5,000 years in existence. It is authoritative, easily accessed and directs the seeker to deeper information if required. It is a reference book which fills the gap constantly experienced by teachers of Chinese between too much information on some topics and nothing at all on many others of interest to their students.

Jane Orton, director, Australian Chinese Teacher
Training Centre, University of Melbourne

It is a remarkable achievement to tell China's millennia of recorded history and analyze the country's rich culture and current events in a beautifully illustrated book of 130 pages. The narrative is lucid, engaging, and insightful. This Is China: The First 5,000 Years is a much-needed handbook for anyone who is interested in acquainting themselves with China and the Chinese in a few hours of reading.

Hanchao Lu, Georgia Institute of Technology

This Is China

The First 5,000 Years



This Is China



The First 5,000 Years

Haiwang Yuan 袁海旺

General Editor

Ronald G. Knapp, Margot E. Landman, and Gregory Veeck

Editors

BERKSHIRE PUBLISHING GROUP
Great Barrington, Massachusetts

Copyright © 2010 by Berkshire Publishing Group LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by:

Berkshire Publishing Group LLC
120-122 Castle Street
Great Barrington, Massachusetts 01230
www.berkshirepublishing.com

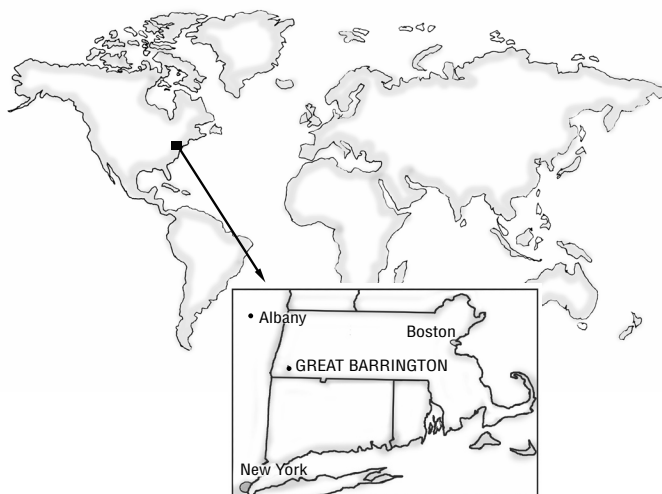
宝库山 互联世界参照点

Berkshire Publishing specializes in international relations, cross-cultural communications, global business and economic information, and environmental sustainability.

This Is China, along with *This Fleeting World*, is part of Berkshire's "This World of Ours" series. Further books in the series include *This Is Islam* and *This Good Earth*.

Illustration credits: Cover photo by Wang Ying. Interior photos come from the U.S. Library of Congress and from Joan Lebold Cohen, whose photos illustrate the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China*.

Printed in the United States of America



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Yuan, Haiwang.

This is China : the first 5,000 years / Haiwang Yuan.—1st ed.

p. cm.—(This world of ours ; 2)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-933782-20-1 -- ISBN 978-1-933782-76-8 (ELECTRONIC)

1. China—History. 2. China—Civilization. I. Title.

DS735.Y78 2010

951—dc22

2010007974



Editorial Board

GENERAL EDITOR

Haiwang Yuan, *Western Kentucky University Libraries*

EDITORS

Ronald G. Knapp, *State University of New York, New Paltz*

Margot E. Landman, *National Committee on United States–China Relations*

Gregory Veeck, *Western Michigan University*

CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas Bartlett, *La Trobe University*; **Daniel A. Bell**, *Tsinghua University*; **Charles D. Benn**, *University of Hawaii*; **Kerry Brown**, *Chatham House, London*; **David D. Buck**, *University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee*; **Paul D. Buell**, *Western Washington University*; **Winberg Chai**, *University of Wyoming*; **Timothy Wai Keung Chan**, *Hong Kong Baptist University*; **Anne Shen Chao**, *Rice University*; **Shiwei Chen**, *Lake Forest College*; **Stephanie Po-Yin Chung**, *Hong Kong Baptist University*; **Yingcong Dai**, *William Paterson University*; **Nirmal Dass**, *Ryerson University*; **Kent G. Deng**, *London School of Economics*; **Peter M. Ditmanson**, *Colby College*; **Charles Dobbs**, *Iowa State University*; **Thomas P. Dolan**, *Columbus State University*; **Dru Gladney**, *Pomona College*; **Paul L. Goldin**, *University of Pennsylvania*; **Shelley Drake Hawks**, *Boston University*; **Ruth Hayhoe**, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto*; **Thomas Heberer**, *Gerhard-Mercator University, Duisberg*; **Ding-hwa Evelyn Hsieh**, *Truman State University*; **Jennifer W. Jay**, *University of Alberta*; **Charles C. Kolb**, *Independent Scholar and National Endowment for the Humanities*; **André Laliberté**, *University of Ottawa*; **Colin Mackerras**, *Griffith University*; **Dorothea A. L. Martin**, *Appalachian State University*; **Timothy May**, *North Georgia College and State University*; **Dallas L. McCurley**, *City University of New York*; **Bent Nielsen**, *University of Copenhagen*; **Catherine Pagani**, *University of Alabama*; **Gerard Postiglione**, *University of Hong Kong*; **Jan Romgard**, *University of Nottingham*; **James D. Sellmann**, *University of Guam*; **Eric Todd Shepherd**, *University of South Florida*; **Cathy Spagnoli**, *Vashon, Washington*; **Yan Sun**, *Gettysburg College*; **Amy Zader**, *University of Colorado at Boulder*; **Qiang Zha**, *York University*; **Jinghao Zhou**, *Hobart and William Smith Colleges*.

ADVISORS

Winberg Chai, *University of Wyoming*; **David Hegarty**, *Belmont Hill School*; **Richard Kagan**, *Hamline University*; **Richard Miller**, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*.

FURTHER THANKS TO:

Mike Burns, *International School, Guangzhou*; **Charles Desnoyers**, *La Salle University*; **Lynn Dole**, *Mohawk Trail Regional School District*; **Wenshan Jia**, *Chapman University*; **Kan Liang**, *Seattle University*; **Chan Lu**, *Loyola Marymount University at Los Angeles*; **David Millians**, *Paideia School*; **Kathryn Turner**, *American International School of Guangzhou*; **Tongtao Zheng**, *Xiamen University*.



Publisher's Note 出版人寄语

This Is China—probably the shortest survey of Chinese history, geography, and culture that exists—was made possible by a much longer work, the 2,754-page *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China: Modern and Historic Views of the World's Newest and Oldest Global Power*. In Chinese terms, even that is a short work: the *Yongle dadian*, or *Great Compendium of the Yongle Reign* (1408) had 22,877 chapters in 11,095 volumes. It was our longer encyclopedic work that made this brief history possible.

Chinese people, of course, understand the importance of brevity. And their society, as readers new to Chinese history will learn, has been one of many “firsts.” The *Laozi* 老子, one of China’s most renowned philosophical works, famously declared that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. *This Is China*, for those of us who are learning about the country, provides an easy way to take that first, single step through thousands of years of history and across the vast territory that is China today.

This history opens a window on contemporary China—with balanced, nonpolitical coverage—by providing our readers with details about Chinese governance, society, and culture through the ages. Even our cover design reflects the modern and the ancient. By choosing a scene cropped from a 2008 photograph of the Wuyang River in Zhenyuan, Guizhou Province, where a fisherman casts his line into the water, we evoke images depicted in thousands of traditional Chinese paintings. The cover also shows lines from a sacred Buddhist scroll called the Diamond Sutra. A copy dated 868 CE was discovered in western China’s Dunhuang caves in 1907, which makes it the oldest extant printed book (and a natural fascination for a publisher). The caves, located in an oasis along the old Silk Roads, are among the most magical of sites to visit in China today. Both Zhenyuan and Dunhuang remind us that historic China lives on.

The Chinese title of this book is not an exact translation of the English, but instead is based on the advice of LE La (乐拉), a young Beijing-based friend. When we explained the concept of the book to her one summer morning in Easthampton, New York, she suggested we take a more colloquial approach—“Look! This is China” (瞧! 这是中国). For our readers who are studying the Chinese language we include pinyin transliterations and characters for many Chinese words and terms. Perhaps even general readers will make use of Chinese words with nuanced meanings that are impossible to translate in a single English word—like *guanxi*, a fluctuating network of relationships.

We hope that our Chinese friends will enjoy how we have presented their country to the world. We urge them, as well as all our readers, to share the book, to discuss the “thought experiments,” and to send us corrections and ideas for future editions and for other China-focused publications.

《这就是中国：头一个五千年》也许是美国目前概述中国历史、地理和文化篇幅最小的书籍，其背后却以2754页的《宝库山中华全书：跨越历史和现代审视最新和最古老的全球大国》作为依托。当然，《宝库山中华全书》与11095卷，22877册的《永乐大典》这部鸿篇巨制相比，不可同日而语。

但是中国人深知言简意赅的好处，也深谙老子“千里之行，始于足下”的重要意义。对于我们这些有志于了解中国的西方人来说，这本小书在纵横幅员辽阔的中国来审视其几千年历史的征途中，只是跬步而已。

《这就是中国：头一个五千年》这一书名并非英文的确切翻译。英语原文比较口语化，是北京一位叫乐拉的年轻朋友建议的：“瞧！这是中国”。我们有意为西方读者打开一扇了解今日中国的窗户。书的封面是中国一个小镇的渔民正在撒网捕鱼。此情此景见于万卷中国国画，如此设计旨在把古老和现代的中国串联起来。

希望中国的朋友们能够欣赏我们为把他们的祖国介绍给全世界所作出的努力。我们呼吁中国朋友和读者把这本书推介给更多的人，并充分讨论书中“思想实验室”中提出的问题。书中如有谬误，敬请转告，也请及时把新的想法反馈给我们，这对我们今后再版该书或出版其他关注中国的书籍是十分有益的。

Karen Christensen 沈凯伦

Founder and CEO, Berkshire Publishing Group 宝库山, Great Barrington, Massachusetts



Contents

Introduction by Haiwang Yuan	<i>xi</i>
---	------------------

CHAPTER ONE

Background—The Land and the People	1
---	----------

CHAPTER TWO

From Prehistory to the End of the Empire	15
---	-----------

CHAPTER THREE

A Century of Change—From 1912 to Today	73
---	-----------

CHAPTER FOUR

China Today	111
--------------------------	------------

RESOURCES	127
------------------------	------------

INDEX	129
--------------------	------------

Introduction by Haiwang Yuan	<i>xi</i>
---	------------------

CHAPTER ONE

Background—The Land and the People	1
---	----------

Physical Geography	2
--------------------------	---

Human Geography	9
-----------------------	---

CHAPTER TWO

From Prehistory to the End of the Empire	15
---	-----------

Xia Dynasty: Real or Legendary? (2100?–1766? BCE)	17
---	----

Shang Dynasty: Ancestor Worship and Oracle Bones (1766–1045 BCE)	20
Zhou Dynasty: Bronze, Jade and Confucius (1045–256 BCE)	22
Qin Dynasty: Terracotta Soldiers (221–206 BCE)	28
Han Dynasty: Paper, Porcelain, and the Silk Roads (206 BCE–220 CE)	32
Southern and Northern Dynasties (220–589 CE)	37
Sui Dynasty: China United (581–618 CE)	40
Tang Dynasty: Poetry and Literature (618–907 CE)	43
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–960 CE)	49
Song Dynasty: Northern Song and Southern Song (960–1279)	50
Jurchen Jin Dynasty (1125–1234)	54
Yuan Dynasty: Mongol Rule (1279–1368)	55
Ming Dynasty: Building the Great Wall (1368–1644)	58
Qing Dynasty: Manchu Rule (1644–1911/12)	64

CHAPTER THREE

A Century of Change—From 1912 to Today	73
China as a Republic (1911/12–1949)	74
The War with Japan and the Chinese Civil War (1937–1949)	85
Communists in Power: The Early Years (1949–1966)	91
The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976)	95
China after Mao (1976–present)	103

CHAPTER FOUR

China Today	111
The Pace of Change	112
China's Inner Life	117
Concepts: Uniquely Chinese	119
Challenges	125

RESOURCES	127
------------------------	-----

INDEX	129
--------------------	-----



Introduction

During President Barack Obama's first visit to China in November 2009, he addressed a group of Shanghai students and proclaimed that no big issues in the world today could be resolved without cooperation between the United States and China. His trip coincided with the debut of *2012*, a disaster film in which world leaders band together in the midst of impending calamity. The movie, which makes China the manufacturer of the gigantic arks that salvage the last of the humanity from global cataclysm, served as a fitting footnote to the president's speech.

Major changes have been taking place in China since it opened to the world and began epoch-making economic reforms in the late 1970s. The president's speech and the movie both envisage, in different ways, what might lie ahead, and what role China might need to play in our common future.

Indeed, China is poised to be the world's second largest economy, with its gross domestic product (GDP) having increased to 4.91 trillion U.S. dollars in 2009 from 53 billion U.S. dollars in 1978. As 2010 begins, China is the world's largest Internet user and has the world's largest mobile phone network. It has built a total of 50,000 kilometers (31,250 miles) of superhighway (second only to the United States) since 1988, when it had none at all. It boasts the world's first commercial maglev system (magnetic levitation system, used to guide and propel vehicles) and the fastest high-speed train system with trains that run from 200 to 350 kilometers (124 to 218 miles) per hour.

At the same time, China continues to face enormous challenges: a huge population in a developing country with limited natural resources; an uneven regional development; a gap between rich and poor as great as anywhere in the world (a disparity that could lead to social and political unrest); disputes over territory; and ethnic and religious tensions. Many people debate whether a nation with a one-party government system can effectively address such domestic issues (never mind international ones).

On one side are those who believe that a two-or-more-party system is essential to success and stability in the twenty-first century. Others, in China and the West, argue that China's system, though in need of reform, is actually the most effective way to manage a huge territory and meet the needs of a huge population. Can China fix what needs fixing within its current system/structure and become a constructive force to help build a better future for the world? *This Is China* does not attempt to provide that answer, but instead gives the big picture in a short space, providing background you can use to judge China-related events as they develop.

Understanding China depends on knowing China better. There's long been an idea in the West that China and the Chinese are inscrutable—that is, hard to understand. Significant differences can make communication a problem, but we are all human, and we face the same challenges and have the same basic needs. China has its own rich history and long-established values and customs, and when Westerners get confused it's usually because they unwittingly make assumptions and judgments based on their own cultures. Karen Christensen, the publisher of *This Is China*, says that when she and her family first began traveling in China, and would comment on an aspect of Chinese life or government policy that seemed puzzling or surprising, they repeatedly heard the phrase, "Well, this is China," and "But this is China." That became the inspiration for the title of our book.

By choosing the subtitle, *The First 5,000 Years*, we intended to be amusing, to make you wonder about the "next 5,000 years." Such telescoping vision comes naturally to fans of science fiction who love to imagine the future, although perhaps not as it plays out in 2012. *This Is China* focuses on the distant and more recent past, but it is intended to equip students, teachers, and professionals to face the challenges of the present and the great questions that lie ahead. We realize that some scholars think "five thousand years" exaggerates the length of Chinese civilization. Please read the book to see where the different measures come from—and what different people mean by civilization, too.

This Is China includes four major sections. Chapter 1 provides background about China's physical and human geographies. Chapter 2 offers an overview of China from prehistory to the end of the last dynasty in 1911/12. Chapter 3 introduces a century of change since 1912. Finally, chapter 4 deals with cultural concepts and ideas that have shaped the way Chinese in the twenty-first century interact with themselves and others. Just as importantly, it addresses concerns and challenges the Chinese and their leaders face today.

With information on every aspect of China selected from the five-volume *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* and other sources, and checked by experts inside and outside China, *This Is China* makes every effort to provide authentic, accurate, and timely

information about China's history—as much as that is possible when dealing with a complex, continuous culture over millennia—and to do so without a political agenda. Nonetheless, we encourage you to approach the book, as you do any other, with critical thinking and an open mind.

This concise 120-page volume is designed to be read straight through, as a short, eye-opening course in contemporary and historic China, or to be dipped into for facts and intriguing sidebars, as well as maps and illustrations. It can be used in curriculum development and as an adjunct to courses—in social studies, international relations, international business, world history, political science, or Chinese language. (We include Chinese characters, as well as pinyin transliterations, since many young people and adults are learning Chinese and because communication—becoming familiar and comfortable with different forms of expressing ideas and information—is the foundation of human culture.)

To supplement and enhance classroom use of the book, we will make two Web-based resources available free of charge: a questionnaire and a selection of Chinese proverbs related to the book's specific contents. We'll also provide links to the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* and other online sites that address the following topics:

- Migration and urbanization
- Foreign relations—and not just with the United States
- Religion
- Regional conflicts
- Ethnicity
- Political development
- Women's rights and roles in China
- Press freedom and censorship
- And much, much more

Finally, we provide a list of sources (including books, articles, and movies) and organizations we consider most valuable—and balanced—and urge readers to send us their own discoveries as they continue to learn about China.

Many people have been involved in making this book possible. Besides the contributors to the articles we have selected, I'm particularly grateful to Karen and Rachel Christensen, along with their Berkshire Publishing team, for helping me assemble this material. Berkshire's senior editor, Mary Bagg, has not only edited the text, but she has excerpted and harmonized the work of a highly varied group of contributing authors, and added many grace notes, too.

It does take a special effort—and the right teachers—to reach a point of understanding and familiarity with China. As a Chinese saying goes: "A master only leads

one into the gate of a temple; it's up to that individual to learn to be a real monk (师父领进门, 修行靠个人 Shīfu lǐng jìn mén, xiūxíng kào gèrén).” If this book can show its readers to China's door and arouse their interest in learning more about the country—the land and the people—then it will serve its purpose.

I sincerely hope that *This Is China* will make a contribution to the understanding of Chinese history, culture, and current events. Facing common global challenges, we need a sense of common purpose based on understanding and respect, so we can share this planet—our ark—and live harmoniously together.

Haiwang Yuan

Western Kentucky University Libraries

About the Editor

Haiwang Yuan, now a U.S. citizen, came from China in 1988 as a Fulbright student and graduated from Indiana University at Bloomington with degrees in history and library science.

Yuan served as an associate editor of the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* (2009); he was a contributor to the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (Routledge, 2004) and *Theories and Practices of American Libraries in the Twenty-First Century* (Beijing Library Press, 2007). He is the author of *Princess Peacock: Tales from the Other Peoples of China* (Libraries Unlimited, 2008), *The Magic Lotus Lantern and Other Tales from the Han Chinese* (Libraries Unlimited, 2006), and co-author of *Celebrate Chinese New*



Year, Holidays around the World Series (National Geographic, 2009).

Yuan has been a professor at Western Kentucky University in the Department of Library Public Services since 1997. He is now Special Assistant to the Dean of Libraries, and serves on the board of the Chinese American Librarians Association.

This Is China

The First 5,000 Years