



The China Culture Kit





Paper Cutting

中国剪纸

The art of paper cutting emerged in China's Han Dynasty and was ceremonial in purpose. Although in modern times paper cutting is considered a decorative art, it still plays an integral role in defining Chinese culture. Paper cutting typically involves layering several pieces of paper and using scissors to cut symmetrical designs. However, it is also possible to create asymmetrical paper cuts using a knife.

One of the most well-known subjects of paper cuts is the story of the Chinese Zodiac. There are many different versions of the Zodiac story; the most common legend is that the gods wanted animals to represent the months so they held a race amongst the animals to determine the twelve winners. The mouse and the cat, both contenders in the race, agreed to help each other. However, the mouse abandoned the cat and went on to win the race. The unfortunate result was that whenever a cat saw a mouse, it became so angry that it wanted to eat it. The mouse represents the first month of the lunar calendar, while the cat did not make the cut.



Included in this kit is a large book of Zodiac Paper Cuts, a smaller pamphlet also containing paper cuts of the twelve Zodiac animals, and a paper cutting guidebook for children.





Fast Food

中国快餐

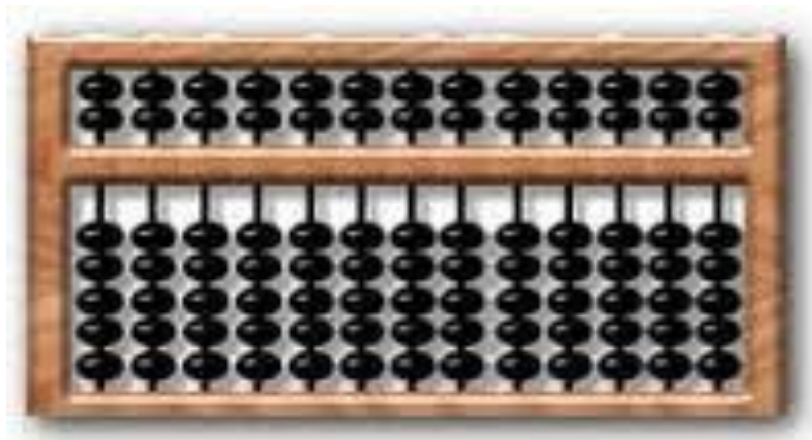
Western influence on China's food culture has been considerable; the result of this influence has been an influx of Western fast food chains into China, in particular Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's. In fact, these restaurants, along with other Western chains, can be found on almost every street corner in large Chinese cities.



McDonald's Takeout Bag



Kentucky Fried Chicken Placemat



Abacus

算盘

The Chinese abacus was traditionally used for counting and mathematic calculations. It is constructed of two rows of wooden beads that slide along a rod. The upper row contains two beads per rod and is used to represent decimals, while the lower rod has five beads per rod and is used to calculate whole numbers. As one counts, one moves the beads closer to the central horizontal bar. In order to “erase” calculations, one need only shake the abacus to move the beads away from the central horizontal bar.

The Chinese abacus comes in many varieties depending on the difficulty of the calculations to be carried out. This abacus has thirteen columns of wooden beads. Each column is labeled with a different number; the number on the far right, 分 (*fen*), means one tenth, and the number on the far left, 十万 (*shiwan*) means 100,000.

To learn more about how to use an abacus, visit:

<http://www.ee.ryerson.ca/~elf/abacus/intro.html>

Chinese Clothing

中国衣服



Embroidered Shoes

For centuries, embroidery has been a key component of many Chinese fashions. However it was not only articles of clothing that were embroidered, but shoes as well. Embroidered shoes often featured motifs from nature and folklore in auspicious colors such as red and yellow. The baby shoes featured in this Culture Kit are more whimsical in nature, featuring cat faces with ears made out of curled pipe cleaners.



Baby Qipao

孩子的旗袍

The qipao is a tightfitting Chinese dress that became popular in the early twentieth century in Shanghai. The qipao is often heavily embroidered, has a high collar, and has either short or no sleeves. Included in this kit is a baby qipao.



Purse

钱包

The small purse included in this kit resembles purses and wallets used in China at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. It is embellished with embroidery characteristic of many articles of Chinese clothing



Queue Hat

The queue (braid) hat in this culture kit is a costume toy for small children. However, it has its origins in very serious matters that occurred in the mid-1600s. When the Manchus came to power in 1644, they forced Han men to wear their hair in the form of a queue. This style involved shaving the front half of the hair, and tying the rest back in a long braid. Han men who did not comply with this order were executed.

For more information on the queue, visit: <http://history.cultural-china.com/en/34History5603.html>



Manchurian Headdress

The headdress included in this kit is a children's costume representation of a Manchurian headdress from the Qing Dynasty. Originally, Manchurian women would wrap their hair around a frame and decorate it, however, later in the dynasty, the style became to fasten the frame to the head, and leave it unwrapped.

To learn more about Manchurian fashion, including traditional headdresses, visit:

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/china-news/the-manchu-woman-from-head-to-toe-136694.html>

Chinese Toys 中国的玩具



Ribbon Toy

The Chinese ribbon toy consists of a long piece of colored ribbon attached to a dowel. This object can be used in both traditional and modern Chinese dance but is more commonly used as a toy for young children.



Chinese Checkers

中国跳棋

Chinese checkers is a strategy-based game. The board is a six-pointed star with each player beginning at one point. The goal is to get all of one's pieces to the opposite point of the star before their opponent(s). As many as six people or as few as two can play at one time. This culture kit contains a pocket-sized version of the game.



Chinese Kite

中国风筝

Kites first emerged in ancient China during the Spring and Autumn Period (771-476 BCE) in Shandong Province, however more familiar paper kites were not developed until the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE). The paper kite in this kit has a dragonfly painted on it.

For more information about Chinese kites, visit:

<http://www.chinakites.org/htm/fzls---gb.htm>



Chinese Paper Folding

中国折纸

The art of Chinese paper folding first emerged in the Han Dynasty for ceremonial purposes. The most iconic paper folding is of the 元宝 (*yuanbao*), meaning gold ingot. *Yuanbao* were used during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE), the first unified dynasty in Chinese history, as a form of currency (although they were rather unwieldy). Below you can see an actual *yuanbao* and a paper *yuanbao*. This kit includes a children's guidebook for creating traditional Chinese paper folds.



Chinese Calligraphy

中国书法



Traditional Chinese Painting

国画

Traditional Chinese brush painting is called 国画 (*guohua*), and usually features landscapes containing water and mountains. Traditional Chinese painting is known for its minimalistic qualities: when it comes to brush painting, less is more. Large shapes, like mountains, are typically outlined, with very little detail, while color is used sparingly. Emphasis is on nature and its beauty, thus the small scale of humans in artwork is often exaggerated. The artist always marks his work with a red stamp.



This print of a Chinese brush painting is mounted on a paper and silk frame and can be rolled into a scroll for transport and display.



Examples of Brush Painting



Calligraphy Kit

书法用具

The calligraphy kit included in this culture kit contains six calligraphy brushes in different sizes. The hair used in calligraphy brushes is typically horse hair, and is extremely delicate. Be careful not to touch the brush hair with your hands as the oils from your skin could damage it. A brush stand is provided to hold different sized brushes during use. The kit also includes two different ink sticks: one black and one brown. The black ink, which is inscribed with Chinese characters, would be used for writing, while the brown would most likely be used for art. To use the ink, begin by filling the small bowl with water. Using the yellow spoon, deposit a small amount of water in the ink stone. Take the desired ink stick and grind it into the wet ink stone until the desired consistency of ink is produced. The large round container holds red ink, which is used to stamp a name or a seal on a document. A chop, usually inscribed with a name or title, is used to create this stamp.



Children's Calligraphy Practice Book

少儿中国画入门

This beginner's guide to traditional Chinese brush painting includes step-by-step instructions on how to achieve the minimalistic technique. Children are taught to paint by dividing a piece of paper into several squares and painting each square individually. If you try this, remember that ink stains are hard to get out of clothing.



Chinese Knotting

中国結

Chinese knotting, or 中国結 (*zhongguo jie*), is a traditional Chinese craft and art form, used to create lucky charms and decorations. Chinese knots range in size and shape; the preferred color is red with gold accents. These decorations are made from a series of knots, loops, and tassels, often including small pieces of jade.

The art of Chinese knot tying has its origins in ancient China and remained an important cultural activity until the Cultural Revolution; unique aspects of Chinese culture and history were nearly obliterated as part of Mao Zedong's modernization policy. Chinese knot tying was resurrected in Taiwan and has once again become a symbol of Chinese culture.

Of the five knots featured in this culture kit, two contain embroidered butterfly charms, three contain pieces of jade, and all are constructed using variations of the 盤長結 (*panchang jie*).

For tutorials on Chinese knotting, visit: <http://www.chineseknots.net>



Red Envelopes

红包

Red envelopes, 红包 (*hongbao*) are used as a traditional gifting of money during the Chinese Spring Festival, 春节 (*Chunjie*), on Chinese New Year's Eve, 除夕 (*chuxi*).

Red envelopes are often given to young children and teenagers, as a reward for spreading good wishes and as encouragement for future success. Red envelopes vary in size and sometimes are adorned with lucky images and characters in gold paint. Two of the red envelopes featured here are decorated with the image of a boat.

Other Chinese New Year's traditions include making dumplings, 饺子 (*jiaozi*), and eating fish. However, as per tradition, the fish cannot be completely eaten; some must be saved. This is because the phrase 年年有余, to save money every year, and 年年有鱼, to eat fish every year, are pronounced the same (*niannian you yu*).

For more information about the traditions of the Chinese Spring Festival, visit:

<http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/Festivals/78322.htm>



Chinese Chopsticks and Spoons

中国筷子和汤匙

Chinese eating utensils include chopsticks, 筷子 (*kuaizi*) and spoons, 汤匙 (*tangchi*), although recently Western utensils, such as forks and knives, have become more popular. Chopsticks, which can be made out of wood, plastic, or metal, are used both to cook and eat. As a result, most Chinese dishes contain small pieces of vegetable and meat; rarely are portions of meat big enough to require a knife consumed; even fish, which is traditionally cooked whole, is eaten with chopsticks. Chinese spoons are generally used for soups, but can be used with chopsticks for foods that contain liquid, such as 小笼包 (*xiaolong bao*), a pork- and soup-filled dumpling found in Shanghai.

Included in this culture kit are three sets of twenty plastic practice chopsticks, one set of decorative chopsticks, and two Chinese spoons (one plastic, one ceramic).

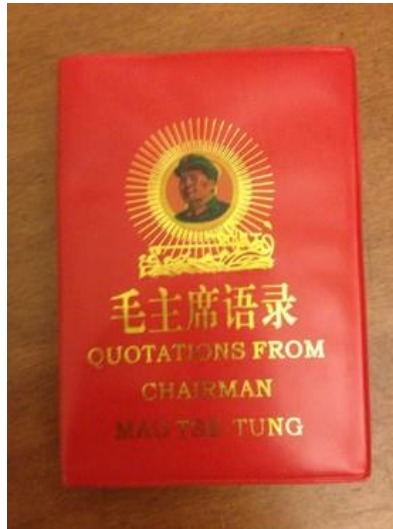


Chinese Fans

中国扇

Hand fans are an important aspect of East Asian culture, used in ancient Korea, Japan, and China. Chinese fans, 扇 (shan), typically have a wooden handle with a painted screen. While traditionally, the screens were made of silk, modern fans are often made of paper. The scenes printed on fans are generally landscapes featuring mountains and bodies of water, however these usually only serve as a backdrop for more detailed images, such as animals, insects, flowers, and women.

There are two fans included in this culture kit: a round, painted fan, and a paper fan with calligraphy and wood boning.



Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung

毛主席语录

Chairman Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung 毛泽东) the founding father of the People's Republic of China. *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* was first published in 1964 and was widely distributed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In the West, *Quotations* became known as the “Little Red Book,” and it was featured prominently in many of the Communist Party's propaganda campaigns.

To learn more about the “Little Red Book” visit:

<http://www.bibsocamer.org/bibsite/han/>



Yanggui Fei Doll

杨贵妃

Yanggui Fei was an imperial consort in the Tang Dynasty, revered as one of the Four Beauties of Ancient China. Yanggui Fei is known for her relationship with Tang emperor Xuanzong and for her integral role in the fall of his rule. This Yanggui Fei doll not only captures the image of this important historical figure, but also displays traditional imperial garb, including the intricate hairstyles worn by Tang Dynasty Royalty. Embellishments such as are found on her dress and the use of auspicious colors like red and yellow were reserved only for the most distinguished members of the imperial court.

For more information about Yanggui Fei, visit:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yang-Guifei>

Chinese Musical Instruments

乐器



Chinese Rattle Drum

鼗鼓

The Chinese rattle drum emerged as an instrument in the Warring States Period. It consists of two faces attached to a barrel. The barrel is connected to a stick by which the instrument is held. Two small beads are attached to strings on either side of the drum. When the drum is twisted, the beads strike the faces of the barrel rhythmically. Although the rattle drum was used for rituals and worship in ancient China, today it is used as a toy for small children and also helps peddlers attract the attention of tourists.



Small Drum

小鼓

This is a toy version of a typical Chinese drum used in theater, festival and chamber music. The drum is suspended on a frame by the metal circles on the sides and is played with thick drumsticks. Drums with animal hide tacked onto red wooden barrel-shaped bases are common in China.



Clappers (*paiban*)

Clappers are used in many genres of Chinese music as percussive accents and time keepers. The player drapes them over a finger of one hand and then strikes them with the fingers of the other hand so that they hit each other.



Toy Tambourine (lingu)

铃鼓



Hand Painted Guidebooks

手绘的旅行指南

The Great Wall at Badaling

长城在八达岭

This hand-painted guidebook contains information about one of Beijing's most famous sites, the Great Wall at Badaling. During the Spring and Autumn period (771-467 BCE) and the Warring States period (476-221 BCE), different factions built separate sections of a wall to prevent Mongolian warlords from raiding farms. However, these portions of wall were not unified until the time of the first emperor Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇) during the Qin Dynasty (220-206 BCE). The most iconic portions of the Great Wall were built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE). This hand-painted guidebook includes a map of the Badaling section of the wall.



The Temple of Heaven

天坛

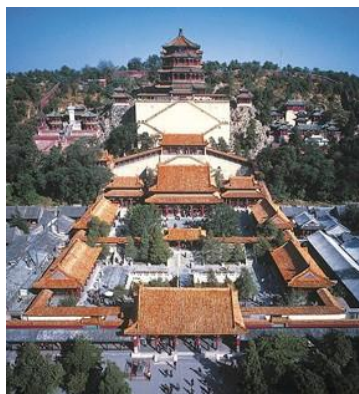
The Temple of Heaven is a Daoist Temple in Southeastern Beijing. It was constructed in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) by the emperor Yongle between 1406 and 1420 to serve as a place of worship for the elite. Yongle simultaneously built the Temple of Heaven, the Temple of the Sun, the Temple of the Earth, and the Temple of the Moon. This hand-painted guidebook contains a map of the Temple of Heaven as well as historical information about the site.



The Summer Palace

颐和园

The Summer Palace is in Beijing and includes the manmade Kunming Lake and Longevity Hill. Empress Dowager Cixi used it as a resort, using money originally delegated for the Chinese navy to restore and expand the palace. This hand-painted guidebook contains a map of the Summer Palace as well as historical information about the site.



[Type here]

Peking (Beijing) Opera

京剧

To see an example of a performance of Peking Opera, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN9iXlfpxI>



Peking Opera Masks

京剧面罩

Peking Opera is a regional style of Chinese theatre production that emerged in the late eighteenth century with a performance for the Qianlong emperor (1711-1799) during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). Peking Opera emphasizes body movement and mimicry, and very few props are used. Peking Opera is visually stimulating, with elaborate costumes and detailed face painting. The colors of the costumes and face paint have different meanings and implications for the character that wears them. For example, emperors and high-ranking officials wear heavily-embroidered yellow and purple costumes, while less important members of the cast wear black. The masks in these kits represent the painted faces of Peking Opera actors. To learn more about the significance of color in Beijing Opera makeup, visit:

<http://www.paulnoll.com/China/Opera/China---opera--- colors.html>

[Type here]



Chinese Paper Cut: Peking Opera Makeup

中国剪纸：京剧脸谱

The book *Paper Cut in China: Facial Makeup of Peking Opera* describes the meanings behind the vibrant colors in Peking Opera makeup and costumes in the context of actual characters in different plays.

