

CHINA BOX 1 KEY STAGE 1 & 2 - ARTEFACTS

Chinese Fan

The fan has been used for many years in China.

The ancient Chinese loved fans and the earliest fans were made of feathers.

Over the years the Chinese have made fans from all kinds of materials including straw and wood. During the Ming dynasty the Chinese discovered the art of paper fan folding, this came originally from Japan and was adopted by the Chinese. Fans were often embroidered and hung as decoration.



Chopsticks

Chopsticks are traditional eating utensils in China. They are usually made from wood, bamboo, metal, bone, ivory or plastic.

There are many rules involved when using chopsticks. They must be held in the right hand, even by left-handed people. They must not be used to make noise, and must never be used as drumsticks! They must not be used to move bowls or plates and should not be used to pierce food - this is considered to be bad mannered.

In China food is prepared in small pieces to make it easier to pick up with chopsticks and rice is prepared with less water leading to the rice clumping together although it is normal in China for a person to hold the rice bowl up to their mouth and use the chopsticks to push the rice in.



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Chinese Tea

Tea drinking was invented by the Chinese around the time of the Han dynasty - 220BC - 280AD.

Tea is usually brewed in a cup or a pot. Connoisseurs of tea will often make a first, brief steeping which is then discarded. This is seen as cleaning the leaves and preparing them for a second and, considered best, steeping.



Hell Bank Notes

One of the most widespread religions in China is Ancestor Worship. Small shrines are often set up in people's homes to honour their ancestors. They will burn incense and sometimes offer fruit, wine or tea.

If it is one of the ancestor's birthdays or the anniversary of a death people usually burn paper money. This money used are Hell Bank Notes. Hell Bank Notes are made from Joss Paper (joss paper was traditionally made from bamboo, although rice paper is now commonly used). The notes are treated as real money. They are not casually tossed into the fire but are placed respectfully in a loose bundle. Ancestor Worship means that when people die they continue to live on doing the same things in the afterlife. In order that they can afford good things relatives send them the bank notes. To the Chinese the term 'Hell' just means the place where the dead go and does not have the same meaning as the Christian Hell.



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Incense Sticks

Incense is made from an aromatic material that releases a fragrant smoke when burned.

Many years ago incense sticks were used as clocks in China. It is also believed that China created and perfected the incense stick

Many of the Chinese use incense in religious rituals and from early times it has been used for medicinal Purposes.



Abacus

The earliest known written documentation of the Chinese abacus dates to the 14th century AD. The top of the abacus is called the heaven and the bottom is called the earth. The Chinese abacus, known as the *suàn pán*, is typically 20 cm tall and comes in various widths depending on the operator. It usually has more than seven rods. There are two beads on each rod in the upper deck and five beads each in the bottom for both decimal and hexadecimal computation. Modern abacuses have one bead on the top deck and four beads on the bottom deck. The beads are usually rounded and made of a hardwood. The beads are counted by moving them up or down towards the beam. If you move them toward the beam, you count their value. If you move away, you don't count their value. The suanpan can be reset to the starting position instantly by a quick jerk along the horizontal axis to spin all the beads away from the horizontal beam at the centre.



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Temple Wind Chimes

Wind chimes were used by Buddhists in Tibet and Asia on the Temples and Shrines to encompass the structure in the pleasing sound from the wind. In the 19th and 20th Centuries the wind chime became more popular in the West.

The tones of a wind chime have a healing effect on the body, mind and spirit. The Vibrations of chimes release emotional stresses and calm us. Chimes bring about a sense of well being and peace.



Chinese Bowl set

As a visitor or guest in either a Chinese home or restaurant you will find that table manners are essential and the distinctive courtesies displayed will invariably add to the enjoyment of your meals and keep you in high spirits!

Although the hosts in China are all friendly and hospitable, you should also show them respect. Before starting to eat dinner, the host may offer some words of greeting. Guests should not start to eat until the host says, 'Please enjoy yourself' or something like that, otherwise it suggests disrespect and causes displeasure.

When hosts place dishes on the table, they will arrange the main courses at the centre with the supporting dishes evenly placed around them. When the main dishes are prepared in a decorative form either by cut or other means they will be placed facing the major guests and elder people at the table. This also embodies virtue.



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Chinese Opera Mask

Gold and silver colours are usually used for the Gods and Spirits. The main colour in a facial make up symbolises the disposition of the character. The facial make ups date a long time back to the Song (960 - 1279) and Yuan (1271 - 1368) Dynasties at least. Simple patterns of painted faces are found in tomb murals of that age.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644) improvements were made in the skills of drawing and in preparing the paints leading to the whole set of colourful facial patterns that we see in today's Jingju (Beijing Opera).

The Chinese Opera has gained fascination by various people worldwide. It is a grand performance casted by several performers in vibrantly coloured costumes moving along to swift and dramatic music. Most noticeable though are the performers or actors wearing masks, which are frequently changed throughout the entire performance.



Chinese Dress or 'Qipao'

The modernised Chinese dress commonly worn by women in the early decades of the twentieth century is called the Qipao. It is a one piece dress characterised by an upright ("Mandarin") collar, an opening from the neck to under the right arm and a fairly narrow cut often with a slit, especially if the skirt reaches below mid calf.



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Chiming Balls

Chinese healthy balls date back to the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644). Chill and let these roll around the palms of your hands. “very addictive and pleasantly relaxing”.

In addition to their use as meditation aids, Yin Yang chime balls offer a multitude of health benefits such as prevention of arthritis and rheumatism. The balls are hollow and have chiming sounding plates inside.

The chiming creates vibrations that help to activate acupressure points and reduce stress. Use of chime balls also enhances co-ordination and blood circulation and can be used in some physical therapy.



Chinese Zodiac Poster

Legends and mythology are a big part of Chinese culture, especially in relation to the Chinese Zodiac. The 12 animals that appear on the Chinese Zodiac calendar include a rat, buffalo (ox), tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. Its an unusual combination of animals, and their appearance on the Chinese Zodiac is the topic of countless legends and is deeply embedded in Chinese mythology. Most stories do seem to agree on one thing: the animals that make up the signs or the 12 equal parts of the Chinese Zodiac, were the animals that appeared in response to an invitation. As a reward for appearing these animals were included on the Chinese Zodiac. The depiction on a circular chart of 12 different animals representing the 12 year cycle of the Chinese Lunar calendar was built on the foundation of astronomy and Chinese astrology which has itself been in existence for over 5,000 years.



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Chinese Flag

China's national flag was adopted in September, 1949. This flag was first flown in Tiananmen Square on October 1, 1949 - the day of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The rectangular flag has a red field with five golden-yellow stars (each with five points) in the upper left corner. The star on the left is larger than the other four.

The red colour of the flag symbolizes revolution. The large star symbolizes the Communist Party (which rules China) and the smaller stars represent the people of China.



Beijing Olympic caps 2008

These caps were produced and sold to commemorate the 2008 Beijing Olympic games.



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Chinese Wedding Figures

On the day of the Wedding the couple need to serve tea to both parents and family and guests, in return they will receive jewellery and money placed in red envelopes.

There will be three different dresses for the bride to wear for Chinese wedding traditions. The White dress with veil is worn during the wedding ceremony. The second wedding dress, a traditional Chinese wedding dress is used at the banquet. The last dress is called the brides 'going away dress'. This dress is worn before the bride leaves the banquet.

The colour red plays a vital role in the wedding festivities of the Chinese people, red is considered by them as a bold and lucky colour.



Chinese Tiger Picture

The South China tiger is considered to be the "stem" tiger, the sub species from which all other tigers descended.

The tiger is also one of the signs of the Chinese zodiac, the tiger is said to be lucky, vivid, lively and engaging.

The South China tiger has been recently listed as one of the world's 10 most endangered species.



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