

Lesson 3

Zǐ yuē: Xué ér shí xí zhī, bú yì yuè hū?

Master said: study and timely review it, not also pleasing Q

The Master said, 'To learn and in due time rehearse it: is this not also pleasurable?'

Opening lines of the *Analects* of Confucius.
(Brooks and Brooks translation)
Classical Chinese

I. Nationality

1. Country names

Zhōngguó	Rìběn	Yīnní	Yīndù	Hánguó
Àodàliyà	Jiānándà	Měiguó	Mòxīgē	Éguó
Fǎguó	Yīngguó	Déguó	Yìdàlì	Xībānyá

Some country names – mostly those with a history of independence and political power – are composed of a single syllable plus guó ‘country; nation’, on the model of Zhōngguó ‘China (middle-country)’. For these countries the first syllable is chosen for its sound as well as meaning: Měiguó ‘(beautiful-country) the USA’; Yīngguó ‘(hero-country) England; Britain’; Fǎguó ‘(law-country) France’; Déguó ‘(virtue-country) Germany’; Tàiguó ‘(peace-country) Thailand’. Countries with close historical ties to China retain their old names. Nippon, a name that is cognate with the English name Japan, is the source of the Chinese name, Rìběn, literally ‘sun-root’, ie from the Chinese perspective, the direction of the sunrise. Most other countries are simply transliterated: Jiānádà, Yìdàlì, Fēilùbīn, Yīndù. City names, except for those in Japan and Korea, are almost all transliterated: Zhījiāgē, Bèi’érfāsītè, Tèlāwéifū. A few are translated rather than transliterated, eg Salt Lake City, Yánhúchéng ‘salt-lake-city’. A more extensive list of country and city names, with English equivalents, is provided in the appendix to this lesson.

2. Asking about nationality

a) First some vocabulary

rén ‘person’	-guó ‘country’	dìfang ‘place’
Zhōngguó rén ‘a Chinese’	Zhōngguó ‘China’	shénme dìfang ‘what place’

b) Ways of asking about nationality and place

There are several ways of asking about nationality – all of them involving the categorial verb shì. Recall that nǎ and něi (as well as nà and nèi) represent the same word; the former tends to be the free form, the latter tends to be the bound.

i) Nǐ shì něiguó [~ nǎguó] rén? (‘you be which-country person’)

- ii) Nǐ shì nǎr de rén? ('you be where DE person')
- iii) Nǐ shì shénme dìfang rén? ('you be what place person')
- iv) Nǐ shì shénme dìfang lái de? ('you be what place come one')

Options (ii- iv) do not, strictly speaking, ask about nationality, but about place, and can be answered with a city or town, as well as a country name. The responses to these questions usually take the same form as the question, ie:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Nǐ shì shénme dìfang lái de?
<i>Wǒ shì Rìběn lái de.</i> | Where are you from?
<i>I'm from Japan.</i> |
| Nǐ shì něiguó rén?
<i>Wǒ shì Hánguó rén.</i> | Which country are you from?
<i>I'm from Korea.</i> |

Occasionally, in conversation, people will ask about nationality using the more formal word, guójí 'nationality':

- | | |
|--|--|
| Nǐ de guójí shì shénme?
<i>Wǒ shì Měiguó guójí, búguò
wǒ shēng zai Yīngguó.</i> | What's your nationality?
<i>I'm an American citizen, but I was
born in England.</i> |
|--|--|

3. The cardinal directions: NSEW

Most of the cardinal directions are already familiar from place names: Běijīng, with běi, is the 'northern capital'; Nánjīng is the 'southern capital'; the Japanese capital, Tokyo, is actually the Japanese pronunciation of Mandarin Dōngjīng 'eastern capital'; that leaves xī 'west', which is represented in the Chinese city of Xī'ān, a name that translates as 'western-peace'. The four directions are conventionally ordered dōngnán-xīběi 'ESWB', or dōngxī-nánběi 'EWSN'.

The ordering of the directions in Chinese reflects the primacy of the east-west axis, a primacy that is reflected in the names of the diagonal quadrants: dōngběi 'north-east', dōngnán 'south-east', xīběi 'north-west' and xīnán 'south-west'. Dōngběi (capitalized) is also the name of the northeast region of China that includes the provinces of Hēilóngjiāng ('black-dragon-river'), Jílín, and Liáoníng. This is roughly the area that was colonized by Japan before and during World War II and referred to (in English) as 'Manchuria'. The northwest region that includes Xīnjiāng and Qīnghǎi, is also referred to as the Dàxīběi 'The Great Northwest'.

On the whole, the cardinal directions require two syllables to function as nouns. So the diagonals may stand alone: Běijīng zài dōngběi; Kūnmíng zài xīnán. But otherwise, the direction words combine with either biān<r> 'side; bank', bù 'part', or fāng 'side; region'.

Běijīng zài běibù.	Beijing's in the north.
Tiānjīn zài běibiānr;	Tianjin's in the north.
Dàtóng zài běifāng.	Datong's in the north.

The three options differ slightly. Fāng, in particular, refers not just to relative direction, but to a quadrant of the country: běifāng 'the north', nánfāng 'the south'. Xīfāng and dōngfāng not only mean 'in the west' and 'in the east' respectively, but also (capitalized) the West (ie the Occident) and the East (the Orient). Combinations with bù (a combining version of bùfen 'part') refer to position within a whole; combinations with biānr are the least restricted, simply indicating a direction. So the southern province of Guǎngdōng is zài nánbù (since it is within China) as well zài nánbiānr. But Yuènnán 'Vietnam', since it is a separate country, it is only zài nánbiānr, not zài nánbù (at least, with reference to China).

Central regions can be referred to as zhōngbù (zhōng as in Zhōngguó and Zhōngwén).

Wūhàn zài zhōngbù.	Wuhan is in the central part.
Chóngqìng yě zài zhōngbù ma?	Is Chongqing in the middle as well?

Location with reference to the country is expressed with the larger unit first -- unlike the English order: zài Zōngguó běibù 'in the north of China'. There is usually the option of inserting a possessive de between the country of reference and the direction (zài Zōngguó de běibù, zài Zōngguó de běibiānr). De adds a nuance of difference, and reveals the source of the Chinese word order as a possessive (or rather, an attributive) construction: 'in China's north'.

Běijīng zài Zōngguó běibù.	Beijing's in the north of China.
Niū Yuē zài Měiguó dōngběi.	New York's in the northeast of the US.
Yuènnán zài Zhōngguó de nánbiānr.	Vietnam is south of China.

Exercise 1. State or write down the following geographic facts:

Tiānjīn's in the northeast of China, not far from Běijīng. Shěnyáng is also in the northeast, not far from Běijīng either. Shěnyáng is in Liáoníng. Chéngdū is in the middle of Sìchuān, Chóngqìng is south of Chéngdū, but it's not in the southern part of Sìchuān – it's a zhíxiáshì [ie under central administration].

4. Dialogues

a) At a reception, Jiǎ, a student in London, finds himself next to Yǐ, a Chinese graduate student, and initiates a conversation in Chinese:

Jiǎ	Qǐngwèn, nín guìxìng?	May I ask what your name is?
Yǐ	Wǒ xìng Chén, jiào Chén Yuē.	My name's Chen, Chen Yue.
Jiǎ	Chén Yuē, nǐ shì nēiguó rén?	Chen Yue, from which country?
Yǐ	Wǒ shì Zhōngguó rén.	I'm Chinese.
Jiǎ	Zhōngguó shénme dìfang rén?	[From] whereabouts in China?
Yǐ	Chángchūn.	Changchun.
Jiǎ	O Chángchūn. Nà, Chángchūn zài Dōngběi, shì bu shì?	O, Changchun. Now, Changchun's in the NE, isn't it?
Yǐ	Shì, zài Jílín.	Yes, in Jilin.
Jiǎ	Lí Běijīng bǐjiǎo yuǎn ba.	Quite far from Beijing, right?
Yǐ,	Ng, lí Běijīng hěn yuǎn.	Yes, quite far from Beijing.

b) Jiǎ, an overseas student, thinks she recognizes Yǐ from an encounter earlier in the week:

Jiǎ	Nín shì bu shì Zhāng Yīng?	Are you Zhang Ying?
Yǐ	Wǒ shì Zhāng Yīng.	Yes, I'm Zhang Ying.
Jiǎ	Zhāng Yīng, wǒ shì Léi Hànbó, Wèi lǎoshī de xuéshēng.	Zhang Ying, I'm Lei Hanbo, Prof. Wei's student.
Yǐ	O, Léi Hànbó, nǐ hǎo. Nǐ shì Měiguó rén ba.	O, Lei Hanbo, how are you. You're American, right?
Jiǎ	Shì, wǒ shì Měiguó Bōshìdùn rén.	Yes, I'm an American from Boston.
Yǐ	O, Bōshìdùn. Bōshìdùn hěn yǒumíng!	O, Boston. Boston's quite well known.
Jiǎ.	Shì ma?	Really?

Notes

- a) Notice how the possessive pattern, seen in wǒ de 'my; mine', applies to a personal noun as well: Wèi lǎoshī de xuéshēng 'Prof. Wei's student'.
b) Hěn yǒumíng, literally 'very have name', ie 'famous' or 'well known'.

c) Jiǎ, a foreigner, and Yǐ, a Chinese, are looking at a series of numbered illustrations of political leaders in an old copy of *China Reconstructs*; Jiǎ is asking questions about who's who:

Jiǎ	Nà, dì-yī shì Máo Zédōng ba.	Well, #1 is Mao Zedong, I take it.
Yǐ	Shì, dì-yī shì Máo Zédōng.	Yes, #1 is Mao Zedong.
Jiǎ	Máo Zédōng shì Húnán rén ba.	Mao Zedong's from Hunan, right?
Yǐ	Shì, shì Húnnán rén.	Yes, [he']s from Hunan.
Jiǎ	Nà, dì-èr ne?	And #2?
Yǐ	Dì-èr shì Zhōu Ēnlái.	#2 is Zhou Enlai.
Jiǎ	O, Zhōu Ēnlái. Tā shì shénme dìfāng rén?	Oh, Zhou Enlai. Where was he from?
Yǐ	Zhōu Ēnlái ne, tā shì Shàoxīng rén.	Zhou Enlai, he's from Shaoxing.
Jiǎ	Shàoxīng ne, zài Zhèjiāng, shì bu shì?	Shaoxing ... in Zhejiang, isn't it?
Yǐ	Shì, zài Zhèjiāng, lí Shànghǎi bù yuǎn.	Yes, in Zhejiang, not far from Shanghai.
Jiǎ	Dì-sān ne?	#3?
Yǐ	Dì-sān ne, nà shì Péng Déhuái.	#3, that's Peng Dehuai.
Jiǎ	Péng Déhuái a, shénme dìfāng lái de?	Peng Dehuai, where's [he] from?
Jiǎ	Péng Déhuái yě shì Húnán rén.	Peng Dehuai's also from Hunan.

5. When in doubt

As noted earlier, Chinese differs from English in not requiring the presence of a form of the verb 'to be' to make adjectives into full predicates. Thus the meaning of lèi is 'be+tired' not just 'tired':

Nǐ lèi ma? ~ Nǐ lèi bu lei?	Are you tired?
Wǒ hěn lèi.	I am.

a) Tag-questions

Sometimes, it is appropriate to indicate doubt, or seek confirmation by the use of *tag-questions*. The addition of shì bu shì at the foot of the sentence serves such a function (as shown in several of the dialogues above), as do expressions involving duì ‘be correct; right’: Duì ma? Duì bu duì?

Sūzhōu zài Jiāngsū, duì ma?
Shì, Sūzhōu zài Jiāngsū.

Suzhou’s in Jiangsu, correct?
[That’s] the case, Suzhou’s in Jiangsu.

Tā shì Yīngguó rén, shì bu shì?
Bú shì, tā shì Jiānnádà rén.

He’s English, isn’t he?
No, he’s Canadian.

Nǐ de sǎn, shì bu shì?
Shì, xièxie.

[This] is you’re umbrella, isn’t it?
[It] is, thanks.

Nà shì Dài Sīyí, duì bu duì?
Duì, shì Dài Sīyí.

That’s Dai Siyi, right?
Right, Dai Siyi.

b) *Is it the case that...?*

Shì bu shì can also be inserted before sentence elements to seek confirmation; and responses can be re-asserted by inserting a (fully stressed) shì ‘it is the case that’, as the following examples show:

Zhènjiāng shì bu shì zài Ānhuī?
*Bù, Zhènjiāng zài Jiāngsū, lí
Nánjīng bù yuǎn.*

Is Zhenjiang really in Anhui?
*No, Zhenjiang’s in Jiangsu, not
far from Nanjing.*

Nà shì bu shì nǐ de sǎn?
Shì, shì wǒ de.

Is that really your umbrella.
Yes, it’s mine.

Shì bu shì in such sentences questions an underlying assumption: Zhenjiang’s in Anhui; that’s your umbrella. Shì in the response confirms it. These shì’s are particularly common as a way of questioning adverbs:

Tā de lǎoshī shì bu shì hěn yán?
Shì, tā shì hěn yán.

Is it the case that his teacher is strict?
Yes, she [really] is.

Zhèr de lǎoshī shì bu shì zǒngshì
hěn lèi?
*Tāmen shì hěn lèi, kěshì xuéshēng
gèng lèi ba.*

Is it the case that the teachers here are
always tired?
*They are tired, but the students are even
more tired, no?*

II. Thanks and sorry.

1. Responses to thanking

Thanking is not quite as perfunctory in Chinese as in English. In English, thanks are often given after making a purchase, or when a waiter serves a dish or brings a drink. In Chinese, such transactions are more likely to be acknowledged with just hǎo ‘fine’ – if anything. Where an action is worthy of thanks, then xièxie suffices; there are several possible responses:

Xièxie.

Thanks.

Bú xiè.

You're welcome. (not thanks)

Bú yòng xiè.

You're welcome. (not use thanks)

Bié kèqi!

You're welcome. (don't be+polite)

Notes

Kèqi is composed of roots for ‘guest’ and ‘air; spirit’, so the literal meaning is, roughly, ‘adopt the airs of a guest’. Kè appears in expressions such as qǐngkè ‘entertain guests; to treat [by paying] (invite-guests)’ and words like kèrén ‘guest (guest-person)’ and kètīng ‘living room; parlor (guest-hall)’. Qì appears in words such as tiānqì ‘weather’ and qìfēn ‘atmosphere’.

Tā hěn kèqi

(S)he's very polite.

Nǐ bié kèqi, wǒ qǐngkè.

Don't worry, I'm treating.

There are a number of alternatives to the response bié kèqi, including: bú kèqi; bú yòng kèqi (with yòng meaning ‘use’); and béng kèqi (with béng, a conflation of bú and yòng).

2. Sorry

While the formal expression of regret is a complex subject that will get some treatment in a later lesson, regret for minor infractions or potential shortcomings is most commonly expressed as duìbuqǐ, an expression built on the root duì ‘to face squarely’ (and hence ‘to be correct’), plus the suffix bùqǐ ‘not-worthy’. The typical response makes use of the culturally very significant noun, guānxi ‘connections’.

Duìbuqǐ!

Sorry! [I didn't hear, understand, etc.]

Méi guānxi.

Never mind. ('not+have connections')

Duìbùqǐ, lǎoshī, wǒ lái wǎn le.

Sorry, sir, I'm late. (come late LE_{new} sit'n)

Méi guānxi.

Never mind.

3. Negation

The several responses to thanking and apologizing actually provide examples of the three main means of negation, bù, méi, and a third found in imperatives [orders], bié ‘don't’. The last can be combined with the verb wàng ‘forget; leave behind’, as follows:

Nǐ de sǎn, bié wàng le. <i>O, duì, xièxie.</i> Bú xiè.	Your umbrella, don't forget [it]! <i>O, right, thanks!</i> You're welcome.
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Nǐ de hùzhào, bié wàng le. <i>O, tiān a, wǒ de hùzhào! Xièxie!</i> Bié kèqi.	Your passport, don't forget [it]. <i>O, 'heavens', my passport, thanks.</i> You're welcome!
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Nǐ de shūbāo, bié wàng le. <i>Aiya, xièxie!</i> Bú xiè.	Your bag, don't forget [it]. <i>Yikes, thanks!</i> You're welcome.
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III. Cause and effect

1. Zěnmeyàng 'how is it; how are things'

Most of the major question words have appeared in the first few lessons: shénme 'what' (which forms the basis for several others, such as 'why' and 'when', soon to be introduced), shéi ~ shuí 'who', něi ~ nǎ 'which' and nǎr ~ nǎlǐ 'where'. To this can be added zěnmeyàng 'how'. Zěnmeyàng occurs in the common expression zěnmeyàng 'how's it going; what's it like (how-way)', which can be used in informal speech as a greeting, and more generally, to seek evaluation.

Responses to zěnmeyàng as an informal greeting include the following:

Zěnmeyàng?	Hái hǎo.	[I']m fine.
	Hái xíng.	[I']m okay. (still alright)
	Hái kěyǐ.	Passable. (still be+possible)
	Bú cuò.	Not bad. (not be+erroneous)
	Mǎma-hūhū.	So-so.
	Lǎo yàngzi.	The usual. (old way)

Notes

- Xíng is a verb with meanings that range from 'go' to 'be all right'.
- Kěyǐ is a verb meaning 'can; may; be acceptable'.
- Cuò is a SV meaning 'be wrong; be mistaken'.
- Mǎma-hūhū is a complex SV that is formed by repetition of the parts of the SV mǎhu 'casual; careless'.

Zěnmeyàng may also be used to question the situation:

<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
Zěnmeyàng?	Hěn lěng, bù shūfu!
Kǎoshì ne? Kǎoshì zěnmeyàng?	Hěn nán!

Jīntiān zěnmeyàng?

Jīntiān hěn máng.
Jīntiān hěn rè.

Lǎoshī zěnmeyàng?

Lǎoshī hěn yán.

MIT zěnmeyàng?

Hái kěyǐ.

Or zěnmeyàng may be combined with, or may elicit the verb juéde ‘feel’ to form a more specific question about internal states:

Xiànzài nǐ juéde zěnmeyàng?

How do you feel now?

*Wǒ juéde bù shūfu.
Wǒ hěn jǐnzhāng.
Wǒ juéde hěn lèi.*

*I’m not feeling well.
I’m nervous.
I feel quite tired.*

2. Why? Because.

If you find out someone is tired or anxious, you will want to find out why. ‘Why’, wèishénme, is made up of wèi ‘for [the sake of]’ and shénme ‘what’. The response will often be with yīnwèi ‘because’.

Question

Jīntiān zěnmeyàng?
Wèishénme?

Response

Wǒ juéde hěn jǐnzhāng.
Yīnwèi lǎoshī hěn yán!

IV. Existence

1. Locations

a) Things and places that might need locating

shǒujī	cèsuǒ	xǐshǒujiān	túshūguǎn	cānguǎn	bàngōngshì
cellphone	toilet	lavatory	library	restaurant	office

Notes

a) Diànhuà ‘electric-speech’ is the word for an ordinary telephone, but in China people are more likely to talk about their shǒujī ‘mobile-phone (hand-machine)’. A variation on the shǒujī is the xiǎolíngtōng ‘small-lively-communicator’, a cheap mobile phone that can be used in only in a single locale.

b) Cèsuǒ is the standard word for ‘toilet’, and is often found on signs; but perhaps taking a cue from English, urban middle class speakers seem to prefer xǐshǒujiān ‘wash-hands-room’, the term commonly used in public buildings and hotels. Another name, more written than spoken, is guànxǐshì ‘wash+up-room’.

c) Cānguǎn is just one of a number of words for ‘restaurant’; others include fànguǎn and cāntīng – the latter closer to English ‘cafeteria’.

b) *New location words*

wàitōu	lóushàng	lóuxià	gébi	lǐtōu
outside	upstairs	downstairs	next door	inside

The general meaning of lóu is ‘building’, as in dàlóu ‘multi-storied building (big-building)’; lóushàng is literally ‘the building’s upper’, ie upstairs. Wàitōu and lǐtōu both contain a suffix -tōu whose etymological meaning is ‘head’, but which has become conventionalized as the second element in many location nouns (including shàngtōu ‘above; on’ and xiàtōu ‘below; under’).

c) *Existence versus location*

Existence can be conveyed by a sentence pattern built around the verb yǒu:

<i>location</i>	<i>yǒu</i>	<i>item</i>	
Zhèr	yǒu	diànhuà	ma?
Zhèr	méiyǒu	diànhuà.	

In many cases, a question about existence will elicit a response about location. Location is conveyed by a pattern built around zài, with the thing to be located mentioned first:

Diànhuà	zài	nǎr?	
Diànhuà	zài	lóushàng.	

Here are some other examples:

Zhèr yǒu xǐshǒujiān ma? Is there a ‘lavatory’ here?
 Yǒu, xǐshǒujiān zài lóushàng. Yes [there is], the lavatory is upstairs.

Qǐngwèn, yǒu méiyǒu cāntīng? Is there a cafeteria?
 Yǒu, zài gébi. There is, [it’s] next door.

Qǐngwèn, bàngōngshì zài shénme difang? Excuse me, where’s the office?
 Bàngōngshì ne, bàngōngshì zài lǐtōu. The office...[it’s] inside.

2. Tests, reports and other school things

A university or school setting often elicits questions about tests and assignments. Here is some relevant vocabulary:

kǎoshì	gōngkè	zuòyè	bàogào	shíyàn
tests	assignments	homework	reports	experiments

Kǎoshì and shíyàn are also verbs, meaning ‘to do a test’ and ‘do an experiment’. ‘To test someone’s ability in a subject’ is simply kǎo: Yīnggāi kǎo tāmen de Zhōngwén ‘[We] should test their Chinese’. For now, concentrate on the use of these words as nouns.

A question about ‘reasons for being so tired’ might easily elicit a response about ‘having a test’ or ‘having homework’; but more than likely, the reason involves ‘having lots of tests’ or ‘a lot of homework’. Duō (a word to be carefully distinguished from dōu ‘all’) is a SV meaning ‘many; much’. Its opposite, shǎo, can mean ‘few; not many’ but is much more common as an adverb meaning ‘seldom; rarely’. Duō may modify a noun directly, but to do so, duō requires the presence of an adverb, such as hěn:

hěn duō gōngkè	lots of assignments
hěn duō kǎoshì	lots of tests
hěn duō zuòyè	lots of homework

Instead of hěn, the two more or less synonymous adverbs zhème ‘in this way; so; such’ and nàme ‘in that way; so; such’, are often used in conjunction with duō (and shǎo):

zhème duō gōngkè	such a lot of assignments
nàme duō bàogào	so many reports

Duō and shǎo, still retaining an associated adverb (such as hěn or bù), can also be used as predicates – that is, main verbs. English finds the literal translation of the construction awkward (ie ‘exams are numerous’), preferring instead an existential ‘there is/are’ or a possessive ‘we have’:

Shíyàn duō bu duō?	Are there lots of experiments?
Gōngkè hěn duō.	There are many assignments.
Bàogào yě hěn duō.	[We] have lots of reports.
Zuòyè gèng duō.	There is even more homework.
Kǎoshì bù shǎo.	[I] have quite a number of tests.

Reference can be made to the course by simply presenting it at the head of the sentence as a topic:

Zhōngwén, gōngkè hěn duō.	Chinese [class] has a lot of assignments.
Rìwén, gōngkè duō dànshì	Japanese [class] has a lot of homework, but
kǎoshì shǎo.	few tests.

Notice that in the last example, the parallelism between duō and shǎo seems to preclude the need for hěn, or some other supporting adverb.

In addition, it is also possible in Chinese to re-form sentences of the above type with yǒu, ‘have’:

Zhōngwén yǒu hěnduō gōngkè. Chinese has lots of homework.
Rìwén méiyǒu nàmeduō kǎoshì. Japanese does have so many tests.

Zhōngwén, zuótiān yǒu kǎoshì, [We] has a test in Chinese yesterday,
jīntiān yǒu bàogào. [and] today we have a report.

3. Question words as indefinites

Question words in Chinese have two faces: they can function in questions (corresponding to the *wh-words* of English – ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’ etc.), and they can function as indefinites (corresponding to ‘anyone’, ‘anything’, ‘anywhere’ etc.) So shénme, in addition to its interrogative use, can also mean ‘anything’ in a non-interrogative context. The sense is often ‘anything in particular’:

Méi shénme wèntí. [I] don’t have any questions [in particular].

Méi shénme gōngkè. [We] don’t have any homework
[in particular].

Méi shénme. [It]’s nothing; there’s nothing [in particular].

Exercise 2

1. Ask where the office is.
2. Explain that there’s an office upstairs and one downstairs.
3. Explain that the library isn’t ‘here’, that it’s next door.
4. Explain that your Chinese teacher is quite strict, and that you have lots of tests.
5. Explain that you didn’t have any homework [in particular] yesterday.
6. Ask why they have so many reports.
7. Explain that you feel quite nervous today because you have a test.
8. Explain that you have lots of tests, and even more assignments.

V. Amounts

1. Numbers above 10

a) Numbers in Chinese are well behaved: 11 is 10-1, 12 is 10-2; 20 is 2-10 and 30, 3-10; 41 is 4-10-1 etc.

shíyī	shí’èr ...	èrshí	11	12	20
èrshíyī	èrshí’èr ...	sānshí	21	22	30
jiǔshí	jiǔshíjiǔ ...	yìbǎi	90	99	100
yìqiān	yíwàn	yìbǎiwàn	1000	10,000	1 m.

Notes

- a) Notice the use of the apostrophe to clarify syllable boundaries in those cases where a final vowel of one syllable meets an initial vowel of another: shí'èr. In large numbers, pinyin conventions write spaces between numbers build around a particular multiple of ten, eg: yībǎi bāshíbā '188'.
- b) You will have more need to use large numbers when the subject is population, in later lessons. In Chinese, there is a root for 10,000 (wàn), but not for a million; the latter is based on wàn (bǎiwàn).

2. Measure words

Recall that nouns in Chinese are counted through the intermediary of a measure word. Thus, if we count students: èrshíbā ge, sānshí ge, yībǎi ge.

Money, qián, is counted with the following measure words:

<i>informal, spoken</i>		<i>formal, usually only written</i>	
kuài	'lump; piece'	yuán	'round' RMB1.00
máo	'hair; small amount'	jiǎo	RMB 0.10
fēn	'part'	fēn	RMB 0.01

Note that qián is the noun, kuài, máo, fēn etc. are Ms by which qián is counted. Money expressions are presented in these initial lessons to give you a chance to become familiar with them before you encounter dialogues containing prices and purchases.

yí kuài qián	liǎng kuài qián	sān kuài qián	wǔ kuài qián	shí kuài qián
yí kuài	liǎng kuài	sān kuài	wǔ kuài	shí kuài
Y1	Y2	Y3	Y5	Y10
liǎng yuán	bā máo	sì jiǎo	sān fēn	jiǔ fēn qián
Y2	Y0.8	Y0.4	3 'cents'	9 'cents'

Notes

Kuài and máo are the normal spoken forms. However, yuán, and sometimes jiǎo, while primarily written forms that appear on currency, on menus, and bills, are, at least in certain formal settings like hotels and banks, sometimes spoken as well, eg: sì yuán wǔ 'Y4.50'.

3. How many

a) Duōshao

The opposites duō 'many' and shǎo 'few' combine to form the question word duōshao 'how many' (with qīngshēng on the second syllable!)

Jìntiān yǒu duōshao xuéshēng?	How many students today?
Yǒu èrshísān ge.	23.

Zuótiān ne? <i>Zuótiān yǒu èrshísì ge!</i>	And yesterday? 24
Xiànzài ne? <i>Yǒu èrshíwǔ ge.</i>	And now? 25.
Duōshao qián? <i>Liǎng kuài.</i>	How much? Y2.00.

b) Jǐ ge?

When the expected number is low, the question word is not duōshao, but jǐ + M. Smaller than expected numbers and amounts may attract the adverb zhǐ ‘only’.

Yǒu duōshao xuéshēng? <i>Yǒu èrshísì ge.</i>	How many students are there? 24.
Yǒu jǐ ge lǎoshī? <i>Zhǐ yǒu yí ge.</i>	How many teachers are there? <i>Only one.</i>
Nǐ yǒu jǐ kuài? <i>Wǒ zhǐ yǒu yí kuài.</i>	How much [money] do you have? <i>I only have a dollar.</i>

4. Telephone numbers

Requests for telephone numbers make use of both duōshao and jǐ. The word for telephone is diànhuà ‘electric-speech’, and for ‘phone number’, diànhuà hàomǎ. The Mainland and Taiwan differ in the expression typically used for asking for a phone number. Taiwan prefers the expression jǐ hào ‘what number’ – also used for asking the date (‘what day’.) The Mainland generally uses duōshao.

Mainland?	<Nǐ de> diànhuà <hàomǎ> shì duōshao?	What’s your phone number?
Taiwan?	<Nǐ de> diànhuà <hàomǎ> shì jǐ hào?	What’s your phone number?

Local phone numbers in major Mainland cities generally have 7 or 8 digits, divided into 3 + 4 or 4 + 4. (Area codes now have 0 + 2 or 3 digits.) To state phone numbers, you need to know that ‘zero’ is líng; and that on the Mainland (but not Taiwan), the number ‘one’ (in strings of numbers, such as telephone numbers) is yāo rather than yī.

Mainland	Wǔ líng qī sì, yāo yāo jiǔ liù.	[It’s] 5074-1196.
Taiwan	Wǔ líng qī sì, yī yī jiǔ liù.	[It’s] 5074-1196.

5. Days of the week

The traditional Chinese lunar month was divided into three periods (xún) of ten days each. But when the western calendar was adopted, a term lǐbài, itself a compound of lǐ ‘ceremony; reverence’ and bài ‘pay respects’, which had been adapted by Christians to mean ‘worship’, was used to form days of the week. Nowadays, the word xīngqī ‘star-period’ is preferred on the Mainland:

Monday	xīngqīyī	<u>lǐbàiyī</u>
Tuesday	xīngqī’èr	<u>lǐbài’èr</u>
Wednesday	xīngqīsān	<u>lǐbàisān</u>
Thursday	xīngqīsì	<u>lǐbàisì</u>
Friday	xīngqīwǔ	<u>lǐbàiwǔ</u>
Saturday	xīngqīliù	<u>lǐbàiliù</u>
Sunday	xīngqīrì ~ xīngqītiān	<u>lǐbàirì</u> ~ <u>lǐbàitiān</u>

Since the variable for days of the week is a number, the question is formed with jǐ ‘how many’: xīngqījǐ ~ lǐbàijǐ ‘what day of the week’. Notice that there is no *xīngqīqī or *lǐbàiqī to confuse with xīngqījǐ and lǐbàijǐ. ‘Daily’ can be expressed as měitiān ‘everyday’. And a period of time covering several consecutive days can be expressed with dào ‘to’: lǐbàiyī dào <lǐbài>sì ‘from Monday to Thursday’.

Jīntiān xīngqījǐ?
Jīntiān xīngqīyī.

What’s the day today?
It’s Monday.

Míngtiān lǐbài’èr, shì bu shì?
Shì, zuótiān lǐbàitiān.

Tomorrow’s Tuesday, isn’t it?
Yes, yesterday was Sunday.

Lǐbài’èr yǒu kǎoshì ma?
Yǒu, dànshì lǐbàisān méiyǒu kè.

Is/was there an exam on Tuesday?
Yes, but there are no classes on Wednesday.

Xīngqīsì hěn máng .
Xīngqīwǔ xíng ma?

[I’] busy on Thursday.
Will Friday work?

Měitiān dōu yǒu kè ma?
Bù, xīngqīyī dào <xīngqī>sì dōu yǒu, dànshì xīngqīwǔ méiyǒu.

Do you have class everyday?
No, from Monday to Thursday I do, but not on Friday.

Notes

In giving dates, eg jīntiān xīngqīyī, shì is often omitted if no adverbs are present. In the negative, shì would appear as support for the adverb, bù: Jīntiān bù shì xīngqīyī.

6. Days of the month

Days of the month are formed, quite regularly, with -hào which in this context means ‘number’:

Jīntiān jǐ hào?
Èrshísān hào.

What's the date today?
The 23rd.

Èrshíwǔ hào hěn máng – yǒu
Zhōngwén kǎoshì.

[We']re busy on the 25th – there's
a Chinese test.

a) Names of the months

The names of the month are quite simple and regular, formed with the word yuè 'moon; month' and a number: sānyuè 'March,' shíyīyuè 'November.' As with the other date elements, the question is formed with jǐ 'how many':

Jīntiān jǐyuè jǐhào?
Jīntiān liùyuè èrshí'èr hào.
Shíyuè sānhào yǒu kǎoshì.
Wǔyuè yíhào méiyǒu kè.

What's the date today?
Today's June 22st.
There's a test on October 3rd.
There are no classes on May 1st.

Notice that expressions that designate 'time when' precede their associated verbs!

7. Siblings

The collective for brothers and sisters is xiōngdì-jǐemèi. Older brother is now gēge; xiōng is an archaic equivalent. The other syllables are all partial reflections of the independent words for siblings: dìdì 'younger brother', jiějie 'older sister' and mèimei 'younger sister'.

Nǐ yǒu xiōngdì-jǐemèi ma?
Yǒu <yí> ge dìdì, yí ge mèimei.

Do you have any brothers or sisters?
[I] have a younger brother, and a y. sis.

Yǒu méiyǒu xiōngdì-jǐemèi?
Wǒ zhǐ yǒu <yí> ge jiějie.

Do [you] have any brothers or sisters?
I only have an older sister.

Hǎoxiàng nǐ yǒu (yí) ge gēge,
duì ma?
Méiyǒu, zhǐ yǒu <yí> ge jiějie.

Seems you have an older brother, right?
No, only an older sister.

Note

In object position, the yí of yí ge is often elided, as indicated by <yí> ge.

8. Yígòng

Yígòng is an adverb meaning 'all together; in all', but because it is more versatile than prototypical adverbs such as yě and dōu, it turns out to be one of special class of adverbs designated 'moveable adverbs'. Moveable adverbs, unlike regular ones, can sometimes appear *without* a following verb.

Exercise 3.

1. Tell them what your phone number is.
2. Let them know today's date.
2. Ask how many students there are all together?
3. Explain that you have a younger brother and an older sister.
4. Explain that there's an exam on October 30th.
5. Explain that you only have a dollar.
6. Explain that you have been anxious everyday! Because you have so many exams.
7. Explain that you have an exam everyday from Monday to Thursday.

VI. Courses and classes

1. Subjects of study

Subjects of study – courses -- frequently end in xué ‘to study; learning’ (cf. xuéshēng); however, when a subject consists of two or more syllables, the xué is optional. Here are some examples:

<u>shùxué</u>	(numbers-study)	mathematics
<u>lìshǐ</u> < <u>xué</u> >		history
<u>wùlǐ</u> < <u>xué</u> >	(things-principles)	physics
<u>jīngjì</u> < <u>xué</u> >		economics
<u>wénxué</u>	(language-study)	literature
<u>gōngchéng</u> < <u>xué</u> >		engineering
<u>kēxué</u>	(categories-study)	science

Tǐyù ‘physical education’, however, is more ‘sports’ than a subject of study, so it does not usually occur with xué.

2. Talking about classes

Many words function as both nouns and measure words. Kè, for example, as a noun means ‘subject; course, but as a M, it means ‘lesson’. Ms, recall, only appear after numbers (or demonstratives), and are optionally followed by nouns: yí ge xuéshēng; yí kuài qián. But where there is no number (or demonstrative), then only nouns can appear. Contrast the following:

Jīntiān méiyǒu kè.	[I] don't have class today.	N
Zhè shì dì-sān kè.	This is the 3rd lesson.	M

Some nouns are associated with two or more measures, each conveying slightly different nuances. Kè as a noun meaning ‘subject’ or ‘class’, for example, can be counted with the M mén (whose root-meaning is ‘door’) when the sense is a *course*; with jié (root-meaning ‘segment’), when the sense is a *class session*; with táng (root-meaning ‘hall’), when the class is viewed as a *meeting place*; and with bān (root-meaning ‘group or shift’) when class is viewed as a *group of students that meet at regularly scheduled times*. To summarize:

<i>word</i>	kè	bān	mén	jié	táng
<i>as NOUN</i>	subject	class/session	door	segment	hall
as M.	lesson	class	course/subj	class	class

Examples

M: mén N: kè	Zhèi ge xuéqī, nǐ yǒu jǐ mén kè? Wǒ yǒu sì mén kè.	May I ask how many courses you have this term? / I have four.
M: jié N: kè M: jié	Jīntiān yǒu jǐ jié? Jīntiān méiyǒu kè. Nà, míngtiān ne, míngtiān yǒu jǐ jié? Míngtiān zhǐ yǒu yì jié: shùxué.	How many classes today? I don't have any classes today. Well, what about tomorrow, how many classes tomorrow? / Tomorrow I just have one – mathematics.
N: kè	Jīntiān yǒu kè, kěshì míngtiān méiyǒu!	There's class today, but not tomorrow.
N: kè	Zhōngwénkè hěn nán ba!	[I] guess Chinese is quite difficult!
M: kè	Zhè shì dì-yī kè	This is the first lesson.
N: kè	Nǐ hái yǒu shénme biéde kè?	What other classes do you have?
M: kè	Yígòng yǒu sānshí kè.	There are 30 lessons altogether.
N: bān	Yígòng yǒu wǔ ge bān liǎng ge dàbān, sān ge xiǎobān.	[There are] five sessions altogether. 2 lectures and 3 sections.

Notes

- Biéde 'other'; with nouns, eg biéde kè, biéde kǎoshì.
- Shénme biéde kè 'any other classes'.
- Dàbān 'big class; lecture'; (dà 'big').
- Xiǎobān 'small class; section' (xiǎo 'small').

3. Moveable adverbs

a) Dāngrán 'of course'

Dāngrán, like yígòng, is classed as a moveable adverb, because some of the positional requirements of typical adverbs are relaxed (such as the requirement of a following verb):

Lǐbàiwǔ yǒu kè ma? Dāngrán, měitiān dōu yǒu kè.	Are there classes on Friday? Of course, there are classes everyday.
Yǒu zuòyè ma?	Any homework?

Dāngrán yǒu zuòyè, měitiān
dōu yǒu zuòyè.

*Of course there's homework,
there's homework everyday!*

b) Yídìng 'for certain; for sure'

Xīngqīliù yídìng méi kè ma?
*Xīngqīliù, xīngqītiān yídìng
méiyǒu kè.*

Is [it] certain that there's no class on Sat.?
*For certain there are no classes on Saturday
and Sunday.*

Yídìng is especially common in the negative, bù yídìng 'not necessarily', when it often stands alone. Frequently, bù yídìng can be followed by a comment beginning with yǒude 'some', literally 'there are some of them [which]':

Kǎoshì dōu hěn nán ma?
*Bù yídìng. Yǒude hěn nán,
yǒude bù nán!*

Are the tests all difficult?
*Not necessarily. Some are difficult,
some aren't.*

Xuéshēng yídìng hěn lèi ma?
*Bù, lǎoshī hěn lèi, xuéshēng
bù yídìng.*

Are students necessarily always tired?
*No, teachers are tired, students aren't
necessarily.*

Exercise 4. Express the following:

1. In all, you're taking 5 courses this semester, and they're all hard.
2. In Beijing, November isn't necessary cold but July is certain to be hot.
3. You have lots of classes on Tuesday and Thursday, but only one on Wednesday.
4. The lecture has 120 students, but the sections only have 12.
5. The mathematics teacher isn't too strict, but the tests are hard.
6. You don't have any more classes today.
7. You were nervous yesterday, but you're okay today.

VII. Dialogue

Jiǎ and Yǐ are classmates at school, chatting over breakfast before going to class.

Jiǎ Èi, nǐ hǎo, jīntiān zěnmeyàng? Hi, how are you? How's it going today?

Yǐ Hái hǎo, hái hǎo. Fine, fine.

Jiǎ Nǐ jīntiān máng bu máng? You busy today?

Yǐ. Hěn máng. I am!

Jiǎ. Wèishénme? How come?

Yī.	<i>Yīnwèi yǒu kǎoshì.</i>	<i>Because I have a test.</i>
Jiǎ.	Shénme kǎoshì?	What test?
Yī.	<i>Zhōngwén kǎoshì.</i>	<i>A Chinese [language] test.</i>
Jiǎ	Nà míngtiān ne?	Well how about tomorrow?
Yī	<i>Míngtiān méiyǒu. Míngtiān hái hǎo.</i>	<i>None tomorrow, tomorrow's fine.</i>
Jiǎ	Yǒu gōngkè ma?	Do [you] have any homework?
Yī	<i>Yǒu, dāngrán yǒu.</i>	<i>Sure, of course [we] do.</i>
Jiǎ	Zhōngwén, gōngkè hěn duō ma?	Is there a lot of homework in Chinese?
Yī	<i>Hěn duō, kěshì hěn yǒuyìsi!</i>	<i>There's a lot, but it's interesting.</i>
Jiǎ	Hěn nán ba!	It must be difficult.
Yī	<i>Bú tài nán, hái hǎo.</i>	<i>It's not so bad, it's fine.</i>
Jiǎ	Nǐ hái yǒu shénme biéde kè?	What other classes do you have? (you still have what other classes?)
Yī	<i>Jīntiān, hái yǒu wùlǐ, shùxué, míngtiān yǒu lìshǐ.</i>	<i>I still have physics and maths today, tomorrow I have history.</i>
Jiǎ	Zhōngwén měitiān dōu yǒu ma?	Do you have Chinese everyday? (Chinese daily all have Q?)
Yī	<i>Xīngqiyī dào sì dōu yǒu, xīngqiwú méiyǒu.</i>	<i>Everyday [from] Monday to Thursday, not on Friday. (Monday to Thurs all have, Friday not-have.)</i>
Jiǎ	Yígòng yǒu sì mén kè ma?	Four classes altogether?
Yī	<i>Yígòng yǒu wǔ mén, hái yǒu tǐyù. Kěshì tǐyù méi shénme gōngkè.</i>	<i>Five altogether; there's PE as well. But PE doesn't have any homework.</i>
Jiǎ	Wǔ mén kè, yídìng hěn lèi.	Five courses, [you] must be tired!
Yī	<i>Hái kěyǐ.</i>	<i>[I] manage.</i>

Variations:

Instead of: *Nǐ jīntiān máng bu máng?*

Jīntiān nǐ jǐn<zhāng> bù jǐnzhāng?	Are you nervous today?
Jīntiān nǐ lèi bu lèi?	Are you tired today?
Jīntiān hǎo ma?	Are things okay today?
Nǐ shū<fu> bù shūfu?	Are you comfortable?

Instead of: *Yǒu kǎoshì.*

Yǒu gōngkè.	There's/[we] have homework
Yǒu zuòyè.	There's/[we] have an assignment.
Yǒu bàogào.	There's/[we] have a report.
Yǒu shíyàn.	There's/[we] have a lab.

‘This semester’: zhèi ge xuéqī; ‘this semester (study-period)’.

Exercise 5

Here are some sentences written by students learning Chinese; identify the likely mistakes and explain; then correct them.

1. *Wǒmen hái méi chī le.
2. *Méiyǒu kǎoshì míngtiān.
3. *Zhōu, nǐ è bu è?
4. *Míngtiān yǒu shénme kǎoshì? / Míngtiān méiyǒu.
5. *Chī fàn le ma? / Hái méi ne? / Wǒ yě. (‘Me neither!’)
6. *Tā hěn hǎochī.
7. *Míngtiān shénme kǎoshì nǐ yǒu?

VIII. Sounds and Pinyin

1. Initials:

Recall your initials chart, and the complementary distribution of initial and rhymes for rows 3 and 4 on the one hand, and 5 on the other:

-i is never ‘ee’

zi	zhi
ci	chi
si	shi
	ri

-u is ‘oo’, never ‘yu’

zu (zun...)	zhu (zhun...)
cu (cun...)	chu (chun...)
su (sun...)	shu (shun...)
	ru (run...)

-i is ‘ee only’

ji (jie, jian...)
qi (qie, qian...)
xi (xie, xian...)

-u is ‘yu’ never ‘oo’

ju (jue, juan...)
qu (que, quan...)
xu (xue, xuan...)

Exercise 6

a) Write lines 3, 4, and 5 of your initial chart (z, c, s etc.) on a small sheet of paper, one for every three students. Then, as your teacher recites the list of words twice, determine by consensus which initial is involved:

[Samples: xie, chu, xi, qu, su, shu, zhun, jun, xian, ci, shuai, xu, cai, shi, xi, shun etc.]

b) Now, by column, read aloud the following sets

yī	èr	sān	sì	wǔ	liù	qī	bā	jiǔ	shí
dou	zhuo	gou	tuo	lou	po	zou	shuo	rou	mo
duo	zhou	guo	tou	luo	pou	zuo	shou	ruo	mou

Notice that row-5 initials do not appear in this exercise; why is that?

c) Practice reading the following sets aloud:

- 1) rē > lè > hé > è > kě.
- 2) rén > bèn > hěn > gēn > mén.
- 3) mèng > lěng > pèng > gèng > fēng.
- 4) zhāng > cháng > pàng > tàng > ràng.
- 5) hǎo > zhào > pǎo > mǎo > zǎo.
- 6) xiè > bié > jiè > tiē > liè.
- 7) lèi > bēi > méi > fēi > zéi.
- 8) lái > tài > mǎi > pái > zài.

IX. Highlights

1. Topics for class practice

Greetings and goodbyes; thanks and sorry;
dates;
location of cities and proximity;
existence of items (telephones etc.) and their location;
subjects of study, classes and courses; this semester

welcome and praise;
names and nationalities;
possession;
phone numbers;
siblings;

states and feelings;
numbers – one and first
time when;
who;
adverbs (for sure; of course; always; only etc.)

really the case;
how many;
reminders (don't forget...);
new situations;
daily actions.

2. Distinguishing words.

Read each row, and provide a distinguishing phrase, eg, for the first set: wǒ bù shūfu; Gāo shīfu, hǎo; shùxué hěn nán ba.

- | | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| 1. | shūfu | shīfu | shùxué | shūbāo |
| 2. | lǎoshī | kǎoshì | lishǐ | kěshì |
| 3. | gōngkè | kèqi | yígòng | gébì |
| 4. | xīngqīyī | xīngqījǐ | xínglǐ | xìng Lǐ |
| 5. | jīntiān | míngtiān | měitiān | tiānqì |
| 6. | zài jiàn | zuì jìn | jǐnzhāng | zài zhèr |
| 7. | qián | xiānshēng | hǎoxiàng | xuéshēng |
| 8. | xìng | xíng | xínglǐ | qǐng |
| 9. | xiànzài | xǐzǎo | zǒngshì | hǎochī |
| 10. | búguò | bú guì | bù gāo | bàogào |

X. Rhymes

Two simple rhymes, one about using your head, and the other of a type that has numerous variants, all of them ending with the line ‘do you regard that as strange?’

1

Dà tóu, dà tóu,
xià yǔ, bù chóu.
Biérén yǒu sǎn,
wǒ yǒu dà tóu.

Big head, big head,
falls rain, not worry;
other-people have umbrella,
I have big head.

2

Sānlúnchē, pǎo+de kuài,
shàngmiàn zuò ge lǎo tàitai;
yào wǔ máo, gěi yí kuài,
nǐ shuō qíguài bù qíguài?

3-wheel-vehicle, runs+DE fast,
top-side sits old woman;
wants 5 dimes, give one dollar,
you say strange or not?

Appendix: Countries and nationalities

Addition of rén to the country name regularly gives the name of the person from that country.

Countries (Guójiā)

China	Zhōngguó	Taiwan	Táiwān
Singapore	Xīnjiāpō	Japan	Rìběn
Indonesia	Yinní	Vietnam	Yuènnán
Thailand	Tàiguó	Burma=Myanmar	Miǎndiàn
India	Yindù	Pakistan	Bājisītǎn
Bangladesh	Mèngjiālā	(S) Korea	Hánguó
(N.) Korea	Cháoxiǎn	Philippines	Fēilùbīn
Ireland	Ài'èrlán	USA	Měiguó
Canada	Jiānádà	Mexico	Mòxīgē
Brazil	Bāxī	Argentina	Āgēntíng
Australia	Àodàliyà	New Zealand	Xīn Xīlán
South Africa	Nánfēi	Nigeria	Nírìliyà
Egypt	Ājǐ	Iran	Yīlǎng
Afghanistan	Āfùhàn	England/UK	Yīngguó
Spain	Xībānyá	Germany	Déguó
Italy	Yìdàlì	France	Fǎguó (<i>some: Fàguó</i>)
Russia	Éguó (<i>some: Èguó</i>)	Greece	Xīlǎ
Israel	Yīsèliè	Iraq	Yīlǎkè

Cities (chéngshì)

Shanghai	Shànghǎi	Hong Kong	Xiānggǎng
Běijīng	Běijīng	Shenyang	Shěnyáng
Canton	Guǎngzhōu	Shenzhen	Shēnzhèn
Beidaihe	Běidàihé (<i>a resort on the coast near Beijing</i>)		
Qingdao	Qīngdǎo	Tianjin	Tiānjīn(g)
Chungking	Chóngqìng	Hsi-an	Xī'ān
Nanking	Nánjīng	Kunming	Kūnmíng
Gweilin	Guīlín	Lhasa	Lāsà
Tokyo	Dōngjīng	Osaka	Dàbǎn
Seoul	Hánchéng	Jakarta	Yǎjiādá
Kuala Lumpur	Jílóngpō	Bangkok	Màngǔ
Hanoi	Hénèi	Saigon	Xīgòng
Delhi	Délǐ	Calcutta	Jiā'èrgēdá
Manila	Mǎnilā	Dacca	Dákǎ
Mumbai/Bombay	Mèngmǎi	Baghdad	Bāgédá
Boston	Bōshìdùn	Chicago	Zhījiāgē
New York	Niǔ Yuē	Philadelphia	Fèichéng
Washington	Huáshèngdùn	San Francisco	Jiùjīnshān
Los Angeles	Luòshānjī	Salt Lake City	Yánhúchéng

Houston	Xiū~Háosīdùn	Dallas	Dálāsī
London	Lúndūn	Manchester	Mànchèsītè
Glasgow	Gèlāsēgē	Belfast	Bèi'érfāsītè
Dublin	Dūbólin	Paris	Bālí
Rome	Luómǎ	Athens	Yádiǎn
Cairo	Kāiluó	Tel Aviv	Tèlāwéifū
Sydney	Xīní	Perth	Bōsī

Notes on country and city names:

Korea. The PRC calls (North) Korea Cháoxiǎn, while Taiwan and overseas communities call (South) Korea Hánguó. Cháoxiǎn is a Chinese version of what is usually rendered Choson in English, the name of the dynasty that came to an end in 1910. Hán (distinct from falling toned Hàn of Hàn rén ‘Chinese’) is also a traditional name, historically applied to ‘states’ on the south and western parts of the Korean peninsula. In the past, the name Gāoli was also applied, based on the same root that gave us the name Korea; cf. the Koryo dynasty. Paradoxically, the capital of S. Korea is Hànchéng ‘Seoul’ - *Hàn* not *Hán*.

San Francisco. The Cantonese name, pronounced Sānfānshì (shì ‘city’) in Mandarin, is obviously a transliteration of the English. The name commonly used in Mandarin, Jiùjīnshān means literally ‘old gold mountain’, a reference to Gold Rush days, when numerous Chinese migrated to California from the coast of Canton province.

Huáshèngdùn. Also referred to in the US Chinese newspapers as Huáfū ‘national capital’.

Paris and Bali. If Paris is Bālí, you may wonder what the Chinese name for the island of Bali [Indonesia] is. It’s also Bālí. The distinction is made by adding dǎo ‘island’ to the latter: Bālídǎo. Cf. Hǎinándǎo ‘Hainan Island’ (off the southern coast of China).

Philadelphia. Fèichéng. Chéng is ‘city’ (originally ‘wall,’ a feature characteristic of cities). Fèi is a rendering of the first syllable of Philadelphia.

Tokyo. Dōngjīng, literally ‘eastern capital’; cf. Běijīng ‘northern capital’ and Nánjīng ‘southern capital’.

Russia. Éluósī or Éguó on the Mainland, but often Èguó in Taiwan. The USSR was called Sūlián - Sū from Sūwéi’āi ‘Soviet’ + lián meaning ‘unite’.

Canton, Chungking, Nanking, Peking etc. English spellings of Chinese names are not as irrational as they may at first seem. In an earlier transcription system, ‘ki’ was regularly used for what pinyin represents as ‘ji’. In other transcriptions, the distinction between (pinyin) b, d, g and p, t, k etc. was represented as p, t, k and p’, t’, k’ etc. In common practice, the apostrophes were omitted, hence Peking, Taipei, the Tao Te Ching (the Taoist classic) rather than pinyin Beijing, Taibei, Dao De Jing (the Daoist classic). The name ‘Canton’ is based on the name of the province, Guǎngdōng, rather than the city, Guǎngzhōu.

