

Language and Life in China

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Introduction

- Basic facts about China:
 - Geography
 - Ethnic groups
 - Standard language and dialects
 - Writing system
 - A brief history of China

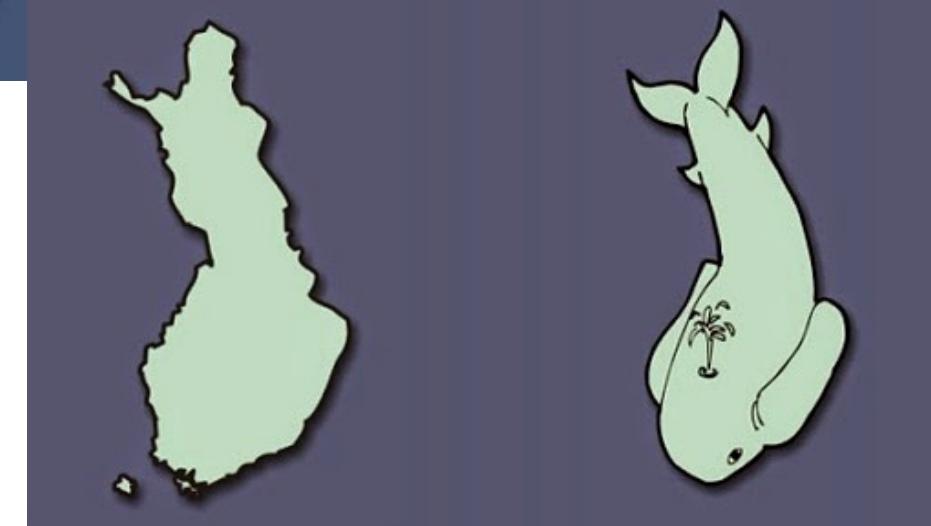
China



- Geography

- 3,600,000 square miles
- Vary in temperature:
 - Canton—tropical belt
 - Manchuria: -40F in winter
- Comparatively isolated:
 - East: the Pacific ocean; Burma border with cleft too narrow to pass
 - South & West: inhospitable Tibetan plateau
 - Northwest and Inner Mongolia: dry lands, hardly populated

Shape?



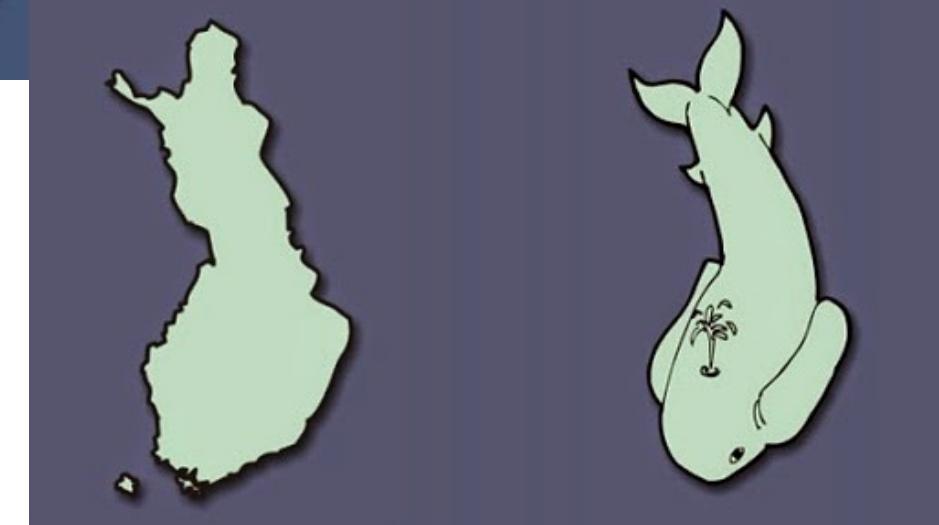
Shape?



Bulgaria



Italy



Finland

China?



China



The Land

- Rivers
 - The Yellow River (Huang River) [Link](#)
 - The Yangzi River
- Mountains
 - Qinling range – divides China into north and south



North and South

- North

- Dry, cold, desert winds
- Farmers of the northern plains produce millet and wheat



- South

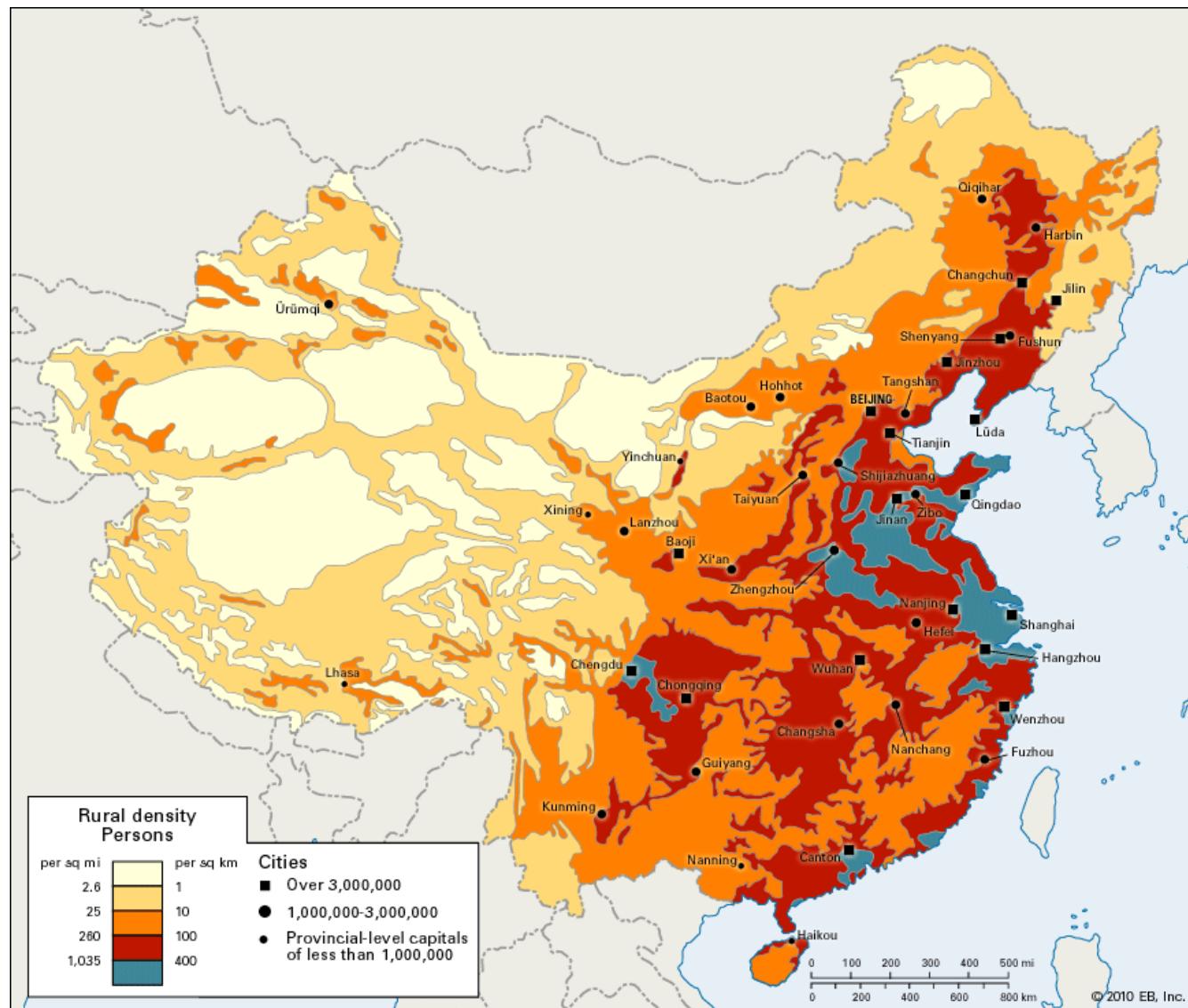
- Moist climate
- Southerners in hills and valleys grow rice, tea, mulberry trees, and bamboo



The People

- The society is largely rural (44% vs 18% in the U.S.)
- 1.375 billion population (2015 estimation)
- 55 minority ethnic groups + Han
 - Han, Zhuang, Uygurs, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, etc.
 - Han: 92%
 - Other: 8%

China population density: 370/sq.m, rank 84
vs. the U.S. (85/sq.m, rank 182) vs. the world (127/sq.m)





Traditional Han Wedding



Zhuang Wedding



Miao Wedding



Bai Wedding



Hui Wedding



Mongolian Wedding



Tibetan Wedding



Ethnic Minorities

- All groups have spoken languages
- 23 have written languages
- South
 - Tai: Zhuang
- Southwest
 - Tibeto-Burman: Tibetans, Yi...
- Northwest
 - Turkic branch Altaic: Uygurs, Kazakhs...
- North
 - Altaic: Mongols, Koreans...

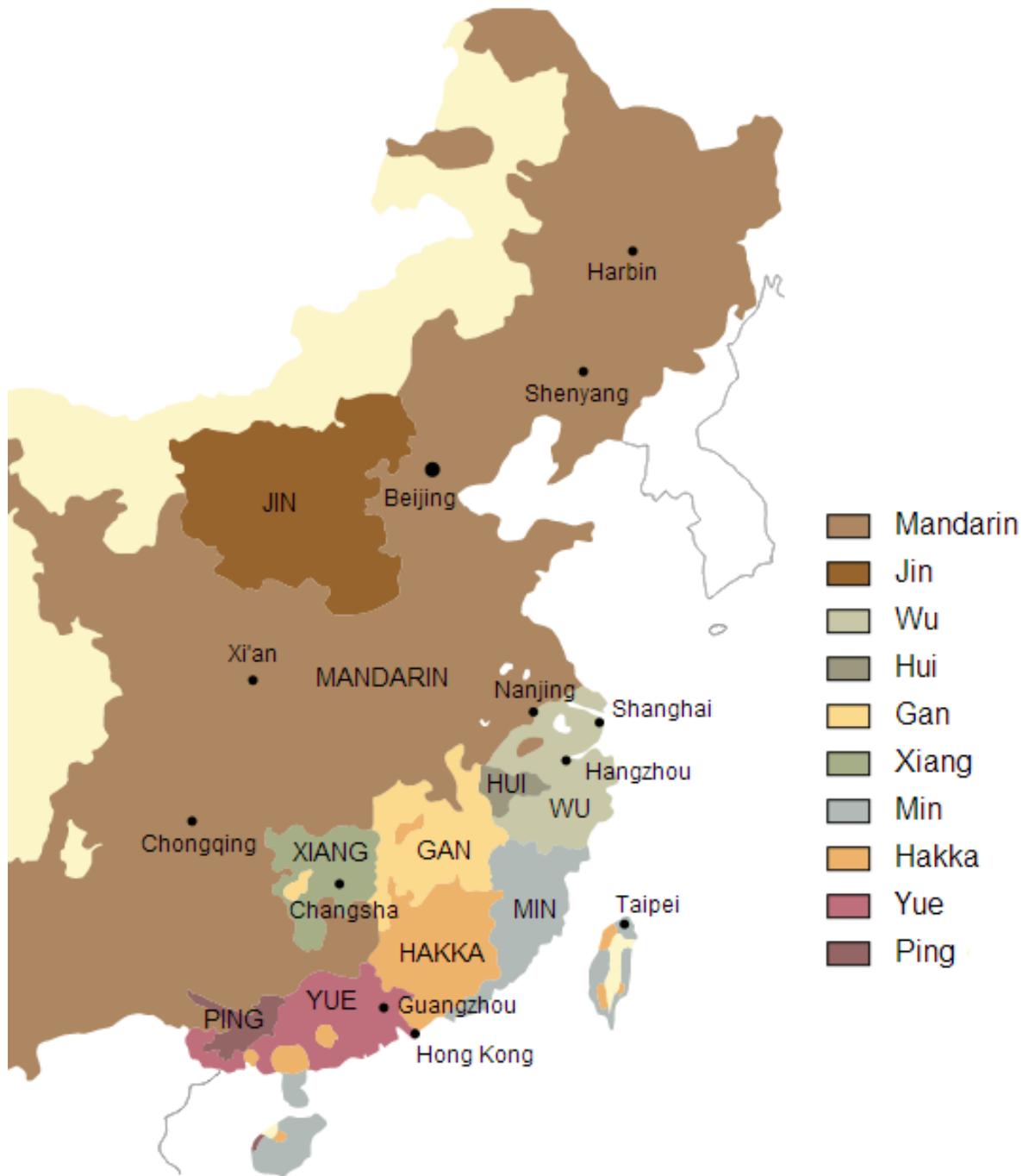
[Link](#)

The Languages

- Chinese
 - *Hanyu* ‘Han language’
 - Sino-Tibetan, Sinitic branch
 - 7 major ‘dialects’
- Standard Chinese (Mandarin)
 - *Putonghua* ‘common language’
 - The official language
 - Based on the Northern dialect (Beijing)

Chinese ‘Dialects’

- ‘Dialects’ can be mutually unintelligible
- North
 - Mandarin: Beijing 70% (840 million)
- South
 - Wu: Suzhou 8.5% (102 million)
 - Yue: Guangzhou 5.5% (66 million)
 - Xiang: Changsha 5% (60 million)
 - Min: Xiamen 4.5% (54 million)
 - Kejia: Meixian 4% (48 million)
 - Gan: Nanchang 2.5% (30 million)



Dialect	City	Tones (with tonal values)
Mandarin	Beijing	four tones: 55, 35, 214, 51
Wu	Suzhou	seven tones: 44, 24, 52, 412, 31, 4, 23
Xiang	Changsha	six tones: 33, 13, 41, 55, 21, 24
Gan	Nanchang	seven tones: 42, 24, 213, 45, 21, 5, 21
Kejia	Meixian	six tones: 44, 11, 31, 52, 1, 5
Yue	Guangzhou	nine tones: 55, 21, 35, 23, 33, 22, 5, 22, 2
Min	Xiamen	seven tones: 55, 24, 51, 11, 33, 32, 5

City	口 “mouth”	金 “gold”	男 “male”	省 “province”
Beijing	kou	jin	nan	sheng
Suzhou	k'y	tçin	nø	*sən/saŋ
Changsha	kəu	tçin	lan	sən
Nanchang	k'iəu	tçin	lan	*sən/saŋ
Meixian	*k'εu/həu	kim	nam	*sən/saŋ
Guangzhou	həu	kəm	nam	saŋ
Xiamen	*k'ɔ/k'au	kim	lam	sɪŋ

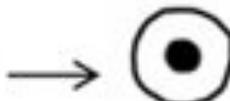
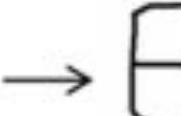
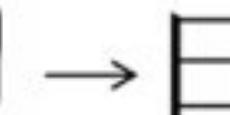
- The nation holds despite mutually unintelligible dialects

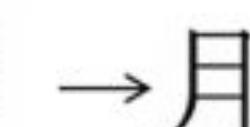
“The explanation is to be found in the profound unity of Chinese culture that has been transmitted in an unbroken line beginning from the third millennium BC and continuing down to the present day. Even in periods of political disunity at various times in the past, the ideal of a single, culturally unified Chinese empire has never been forgotten. The Chinese language, especially in its written form, has always been one of the most powerful symbols of this cultural unity.” (Norman 1988)

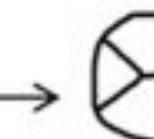
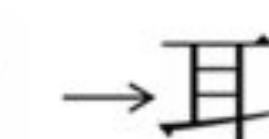
Chinese Writing

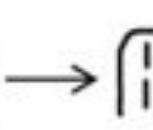
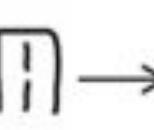
- European: alphabetical writing
- Chinese: Logographic (a logograph is a written character that represents a word or a phrase)
 - Morphemic (Chinese, Egyptian, Sumerian, Maya) vs. Phonemic (Old English, Ancient Greek) vs. Morpho-phonemic (Modern English, German)
 - All Han-Chinese children must learn to write in the grammar of Standard Chinese
 - Chinese speakers speaking different dialects can communicate in writing

Examples of Pictograph

 →  →  →  → 

 →  →  →  → 

 →  →  →  → 

 →  →  →  → 

Bonus [Link](#): One thousand hands Guanyin