The China Culture Kit
Table of Contents

Chinese Paper Cutting.................................................3
Chinese Fast Food.........................................................6
Chinese Abacus.............................................................8
Chinese Clothing............................................................10
Chinese Toys...............................................................16
Chinese Calligraphy......................................................21
Chinese Knotting..........................................................26
Red Envelopes..............................................................28
Chinese Chopsticks and Spoons..........................31
Chinese Fans.................................................................33
Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung..35
Yanggui Fei Doll.............................................................37
Chinese Musical Instruments.................................39
Hand Painted Guidebooks.................................43
Beijing Opera.................................................................47
Chinese Paper Cutting

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.
Chinese Fast Food

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 McDonalds. In fact, these restaurants, along with other Western chains, can be found on almost every street corner in large Chinese cities. The food served at these restaurants is inspired by the food served at the original chains, however in China the food is spicier and has other unique cultural influences.
McDonalds Takeout Bag:

Kentucky Fried Chicken Placemat:
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 mathematic 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 20th century in Shanghai. The Qipao is often heavily embroidered, has a high collar, and either has short sleeves or is worn sleeveless. The 1920s Qipao is derived from the older, more loose-fitting Qipao.
Included in this kit is a baby’s Qipao, which displays the intricate embroidery found on adult Qipaos.

Purse
钱包

The small purse included in this kit resembles purses and wallets used in China towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It is embellished with embroidery characteristic of many articles of Chinese clothing.
Queue Hat

The queue 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.
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.

For more information regarding the Queue Order, visit:

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

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 that involves moving all of the player’s marble pieces to the other side of the board. 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 in Shandong Province, however more familiar paper kites were not developed until the Tang Dynasty. The kite included in this kit is constructed almost entirely from paper and is painted with a dragonfly.

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. Although similar to Japanese origami, Chinese paper folding focuses on manmade objects while origami focuses on nature related themes.

The most iconic paper folding is of the 元宝 (yuanbao), meaning gold ingot. Yuanbao were used during the Qin Dynasty, the first unified dynasty in Chinese history, as a form of currency (although they were rather unwieldy). Below you can see an actual yuanbao in comparison to a paper yuanbao.
This kit includes a children’s guidebook for creating traditional Chinese paper folds.
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. In traditional Chinese painting, emphasis is put 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.

Calligraphy Kit
书法用具

The calligraphy kit included in this culture kit contains six calligraphy brushes in different sizes. The hair on calligraphy
brushes is typically made up of horse hair, and is extremely
delicate; be careful not to touch the brush hair with your hands,
the oils from your skin could cause damage. 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. The 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 each tutorial into several squares and painting each square individually. If using this book, remember that ink stains are particularly hard to get out of clothing.
Examples of Brush Painting from Tianjin:
Chinese Knotting

Chinese knotting, or 中国结 (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 gained a foot hold. 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 in
conjunction 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).
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 with 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 fan with a silk screen on which is painted a woman, and a paper fan with wooden boning on which is painted a rose and Chinese calligraphy.

**The round fan:**

![Round Fan Image]

**The paper fan:**

![Paper Fan Image]
Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (Little Red Book)
毛主席语录

Chairman Maozi Dong (Mao Tse-Tung, 毛泽东) is a well known historical figure, responsible for the establishment of Communist China and initiating the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Mao’s achievements are controversial; although he helped modernize China, many critics believe that he did so in unethical and foolish ways; for example, during the Great Leap Forward, Mao’s agricultural policy reforms led to
one of the worst famines in human history, resulting in tens of millions of deaths by starvation.

“Quotations from Chairman Tse-Tung” was first published in 1964 and was widely distributed during the Cultural Revolution. In the West, “Quotations” quickly became known as the “Little Red Book,” as it was featured prominently in many of the Communist Party of China’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. Yanggui Fei’s dress would have consisted of many gowns with high
waistbands, long skirts, and billowing sleeves. The embellishment on her dress, as well as the use of auspicious colors like red and yellow, was reserved only for the most distinguished members of the imperial court.

For more information about Yanggui Fei, visit:

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/651767/Yang-Guifei
Chinese Musical Instruments
乐器

Chinese Pellet Drum
鼗鼓
The Chinese Pellet 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 rod by which the instrument is held. Two small beads, or pellets, are attached to strings on either side of the drum. When the drum is twisted, the pellets strike the faces of the barrel rhythmically. Although the pellet drum was used for rituals and worship in ancient China, its modern function is aesthetic. The pellet drum is currently used as a toy for small children and also helps peddlers attract the attention of tourists.

**Toy Drum**

小鼓
Included in the musical section is a small toy drum. The drum comes with a pair of drumsticks to play it with. The drum is made of wood with animal hide stretched over both barrels. The drum is red with gold studs, both auspicious colors in Chinese tradition.

**Wooden Clapping Instrument**

These instruments are made from bamboo and act as toys for young children. To use, hit the bamboo slabs against each other repeatedly. The effect is similar to a drum. Included in the box is a large set of two and a smaller set of five. Each set is tied together with a ribbon.
Chinese Tambourine

The Chinese tambourine is similar to the modern Western tambourine: it consists of a round plastic or wooden frame, with small metal zils inserted around its circumference. The traditional Chinese tambourine has an animal hide drum stretched across the frame, allowing the tambourine to be played in different ways. The drum is painted decoratively.
Hand Painted Guidebooks
手绘的旅行指南

The Great Wall at Bada Ling
长城在八达岭

This hand-painted guidebook contains information about one of Beijing’s most famous sites, the Great Wall at Bada Ling. During the Spring and Autumn period (771-467 BC) and the Warring States period (476-221 BC), different factions built separate sections of wall to prevent Mongolian warlords from raiding farms. However, these portions of wall were not unified until between 220-206 BC by the first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇), also the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty.
The wall has been continually maintained and restored since the Qin Dynasty although the most iconic portions of the Great Wall were built in the Ming Dynasty. This hand-painted guidebook displays a map of the Bada Ling region of the wall and also includes history about the different areas of the wall.

The Temple of Heaven

The Temple of Heaven is a Daoist Temple in Southeastern Beijing. It was constructed in the Ming Dynasty by the third 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 Sun, the Temple of Earth, and the Temple of Moon. This hand-painted guidebook contains a map of the Temple of Heaven, as well as historical background on different locations within the temple.

The Summer Palace
颐和园

The Summer Palace is a palace in the city of Beijing most recognized for its Qing Dynasty influences. The summer palace consists largely of the manmade Kunming Lake and Longevity Hill. Empress Dowager Cixi used it as a resort site, 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 background on different locations within the palace.
Beijing Opera
京剧

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

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN9iXlfpxpI

Opera Masks
京剧面罩

Beijing Opera is a form of Chinese theatre production that emerged in the late seventeen hundreds with a performance for the Qianlong emperor of the Qing Dynasty. Beijing Opera is different from Western forms of opera because it emphasizes
body movement and mimicry, relying very little on props.

Beijing Opera is visually stimulating, with complex costumes and detailed face paint. 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 wore yellow and purple with heavily embroidered costumes, while less important members of the cast wore black. Included in the Chinese culture kit are several representations of traditional Beijing Opera makeup.
To learn more about the significance of color in Beijing Opera makeup, visit:


**Chinese Paper Cut: Beijing 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, discussing these in the context of actual characters in different Operas. This book also displays Chinese paper cuts, a delicate art form with a great deal of cultural significance.