

## UNIT 3 TOPIC 3 CHINESE RITUALS AND MANNERS

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### Pre-knowledge

Before class, students should read Unit 3 Topic 3 and read up some information on Chinese rituals to understand the unique features of Chinese rituals, as well as Chinese social norms and the behaviours expected of the Chinese.

### Aim and Objectives

Topic 3 aims to provide students with some knowledge of the origin and concept of Chinese rituals and their significance in the Chinese society. It also introduces Chinese manners and highlights some basic business etiquette in particular. Understanding this set of business etiquette is crucial to students who may want or need to do business with the Chinese in future.

### Teaching and Learning Activities

#### Activity 1

Ask your students to read the textbook and other resources from the Internet on ancient rituals from China. Have them take down notes for a class discussion.

#### Activity 2

Watch some videos on Chinese rituals on YouTube. Divide your class into a few groups and have each group discuss the rituals shown in these videos, and the roles and functions these rituals have played in the lives of the Chinese.

#### Activity 3

Watch the video clip *Traditional Chinese Wedding Ceremony* on YouTube. Have them write down the key rituals of a Chinese wedding and their significance.

#### Activity 4

Ask your students to attend Chinese New Year Celebrations in their community or watch a video on these celebrations. They then have to report to the class the rituals they have observed being carried out during the celebrations.

#### Activity 5

Have your students research rituals in China and in the West. They then have to write a 300-word summary in English on the differences in the concepts of rituals of the Chinese and Westerners.

#### Activity 6

Have a class discussion on the roles and functions of rituals in our daily lives.

#### Activity 7

Print out and give your students the article *Traditional Etiquette and Taboos* (available at: <https://www.chinatravel.com/facts/traditional-etiquette-and-taboos.htm>). Explain to them the three main kinds of etiquette in China.

#### Activity 8

Explain to your class the various ways of greetings and forms of address the Chinese use, and the reasons they use them.

#### Activity 9

Arrange a field trip to a local Chinese company for your class. Have them find out the etiquette and taboos the company observes.

#### Activity 10

Pair your students up and have each pair prepare a dialogue between two Chinese, one senior and the other junior. They then have to role-play and read out the dialogue.

#### Activity 11

Divide your class into a few groups. Have each group discuss and list the different ways of phatic communications of the Chinese and Westerners.

#### Activity 12

Share with your class Kerry Brown's book *Contemporary China* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013). Talk briefly about how China has changed politically, economically and culturally over its long history.

Brief introduction to the book:

China has created its own distinctive pathway to becoming one of the world's largest economies. Its economic and political development over the next decade will have profound implications for the rest of the world. Knowledge of contemporary China is therefore essential for anyone seeking to understand politics, business and international affairs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This book presents an accessible and engaging introduction to all aspects of China. It examines the country's political and economic structures, its society and culture, and its changing place in the world. The book also considers the demographic and political challenges China now faces. Kerry Brown shows that there is a vibrant debate within the country about what China is, in what direction it might go and what sort of power it should become.

#### Activity 13

Prepare and show your class a PowerPoint presentation on the cultural implications of Chinese forms of address and ways of phatic communications.

#### Activity 14

Organise a *Yumcha* session or lunch for your class. Show them the various Chinese table manners during the session.

#### Activity 15

Watch some videos on Chinese protocol related to visiting someone at his home, dress codes and gift giving in China on YouTube. Have your class share their thoughts on this topic.

#### Activity 16

Divide your class into a few groups and have each group prepare one of two scenarios: visiting a Chinese family at their home and the Chinese way of gift giving. They then have to role-play and act out the scenario.

#### Activity 17

Have each student write a 600-word account in English of his reflections on Chinese rituals and manners.

#### Activity 18

Have your students do Exercise 3 of the Workbook according to your teaching needs and progress.

## Resources/Materials

Apart from those listed in the activities, you may also consult these resources/materials:

1. Croucher, M. S. (ed.) (2017), *Global Perspectives on Intercultural Communication*. London: Routledge.
2. Ebrey, P. B. (1991), *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China: A Social History of Writing about Rites*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
3. Feng, Ge & Du, Zhengming (2015), *Traditional Chinese Rites and Rituals*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
4. Macgowan, J. (2005), *Men and Manners of Modern China (Classic Reprint)*. Cambridge: Harvard University.
5. Shen, Q.G, Zou, S. X. & Chen, X. (2012), *Modern Communication Network (2nd Edition)*. Beijing: China Post University.
6. Haymond, B. (2009), "Temple Worship by Elder John A. Widtsoe". *Temple Study* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.templestudy.com/2009/11/09/temple-worship-elder-john-widtsoe/>
7. Victoria and Albert Museum (year unknown), "Traditional Life in China: Temple and Worship". Available at: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/temple-and-worship-in-china/>

## Assessment

1. Collect the notes taken by your students during all group and class discussions.
2. Prepare some questions and assess your students when they answer them verbally.
3. Each student is required to write a report of 300-400 words on his experience and reflection on attending a traditional Chinese celebration.
4. Students are required to prepare a PowerPoint presentation of 4-5 minutes in length to show their understanding of the relationship between etiquette and manners and *guanxi* (connections).
5. Students are required to write a 300-word essay on how traditional Chinese etiquette and manners developed.
6. Each student is required to write a report of 500 words comparing the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures in terms of etiquette and manners.

## Workbook Answer Key

1. What is Li (礼)? How has it shaped Chinese rituals and manners?

Refer to pages 136-137 of the Textbook.

Suggested video: *Origin of Li and Yue – Zhou Dynasty (1046 -256 BC)* 周朝  
Published by Bronze Goblet on March 1, 2015

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqppiHdirc0>

The Bronze culture of ancient China was said to centre around religious activities. The rulers of the Western Jin Dynasty devised rigid rules on the use of bronze objects for rituals. Two concepts emerged, *Li* and *Yue*. *Li* is usually translated to English as behaviour code and social etiquette, but it covers much more than these. *Yue*, which is translated as music, also covers a wider range of subjects than its name suggests. A strong belief in *Li* and *Yue* distinguished ancient Chinese civilisation from any other in the world. The social norms and protocol that were born out of them were passed down through history and are still observed today.

## 2. Group Discussion

In a group of three or four, write down the key differences between traditional Chinese rites and rituals. Explain briefly the reasons for their existence.

To understand the differences between rites and rituals, we should look at the Chinese word 礼仪. 礼, or rites, refers to the customary behaviour that people observe in their self-cultivation and treatment of others. 仪, or rituals, is the prescribed set of rules or code of conduct that determine how people behave and interact with one another.

## 3. What were some of the key Chinese rituals of ancient times? What were they used for? Which of these rituals have survived and continue to be practised today?

Refer to pages 137-142 of the Textbook.

Suggested video: *8 Things That Happen in Every Chinese Wedding*

Published by The Chen Dynasty on January 27, 2016

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAXHq4VlxiE>

As an example, we look at Chinese wedding traditions:

- To mark the start of the procession from the groom's home to the bride's home, firecrackers will be lit and music played by a band of musicians. The groom leads the procession with a child (who symbolises sons the newlyweds would have in the future), accompanied by attendants holding lanterns and banners and a dancing lion.
- When the groom and his entourage arrive at the bride's house, they will be met by the bride's friends and relatives who will then make him perform stunts or tricks before asking him for red packets containing a satisfactory amount of money. Until then, they would not "surrender" their friend, the bride.
- The couple will then return to the groom's house, where firecrackers will be lit just as they arrive. A red mat will be placed before the sedan chair so that the bride's feet would not touch the bare earth. The entire household will be waiting to receive her. The bride has to step over a saddle or a lit stove to cross the threshold as fire is thought to cast out evil influences. This ensures that she joins her new family on a clean slate.
- During the ceremonial rites, the newlyweds will stand at the family altar to pay homage to Heaven and Earth, the Kitchen God and the groom's ancestors. They will then offer tea to the groom's parents. They end the ceremony by bowing to each other.
- Immediately after the ceremony, the couple will be led into the bridal chamber, where they will sit on the bed. In some areas of China, honey and wine will be poured into two goblets linked by a red thread. The couple then take a few sips, exchange cups and drink the rest of the wine from each other's cup.
- After the wedding ceremony, the newlyweds will serve tea to the groom's family, starting from his parents, then proceeding from the eldest to the youngest members. Each member will take a sip and give the couple a red packet containing money or jewellery. This is considered a formal introduction between the family and the bride.

4. Why do you think the Chinese worshipped ancient sages and masters? Do you think it is similar to the idolisation of celebrities in modern era? Why?

Read Unit 2 Topics 1 and 2 to know who the sages and masters of ancient China were.

Today, Guan Yu is worshipped by different groups of people in Chinese communities in various countries and for many reasons. As the symbol of honesty and integrity, a statue of him is often displayed by businesses as a sign of their trustworthiness and good name. As he also signifies brotherhood and loyalty, he is worshipped by many Chinese immigrants, as well as the police force and even underground triad organisations.

The Chinese also venerate Confucius and have built many Confucian temples throughout the centuries. Rituals conducted at these temples can vary from region to region and have changed over time. Contemporary rituals often involve the burning of incense and kneeling and bowing before images of Confucius. Offerings such as tea are made. Sometimes, donations are also made to the temple. Those worshiping at the temple will often make wishes for themselves and others during such rituals. Confucius was worshipped because he was regarded as the model for all people because of his virtues, teaching and writing.

5. Is there a relationship between rituals and manners in China? What does it entail?

Manner is the way of doing things. It is also a mode of action. Collectively, manners are the prevailing customs, ways of life and habits of a people.

6. Watch the video clip *Chinese Etiquette & Cultural Awareness Training* on YouTube. Write down the types of etiquette shared in the clip. Which type of etiquette struck you the most? Why?

Suggested video: *Chinese Business Etiquette – Major Do's and Don'ts*

Published by BRiN® – Growing Your Business™ January 3, 2017

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXID2leISzs>

General Do's and Don'ts:

- The Chinese are just as proud of their country as any foreigner is of his. They can get a little irritated with criticism on China. They know that things are not perfect, but they are working hard to deal with their social problems.
- Do not overreact when asked personal questions about your family, age, marital status, job or income, because the Chinese do this to seek common ground.
- Keep calm if tense situations arise when you are dealing with government officials; Raising your voice or getting angry will not help in any way.
- Never write in red ink as it signifies protest or severe criticism.
- Punctuality is a virtue in China. Being on time shows respect for others. Most Chinese usually show up earlier to show their earnestness. Being on time for your tour programmes shows respect for the guide and fellow travellers.
- Public displays of affection are frowned upon. Do not hug or put your arm around someone's shoulder, as this will make him feel uncomfortable, since the Chinese dislike being touched by strangers.

7. Group Discussion

In a group of three or four, role-play on Chinese greetings. Take turns to practise introducing one another with the appropriate ways of addressing and greetings, as well as shaking hands with one another. You may use a wrong form of addressing and greeting or

do a handshake that is unacceptable and observe if your group mates are able to point it out.

Go around the class to listen to and assess each group's role-play.

8. Watch the video clips *EP 07 Cultrural Shocks with Chinese Manners*, *Top 5 Chinese Table Manners Decoded* and *Chinese Table Manners and Food* on YouTube. Write down the table manners featured in the clips.

Assess points as presented by your students.

9. Class Discussion What are the key similarities and differences between Chinese and Western dress codes? Write them down in the table below.

The Chinese attach much importance to etiquette. Their dressing is no exception. Dressing properly is also how they show respect to others. Chinese women are rarely seen in public in low-cut dresses or short skirts. One is also unlikely to find women clad in bikinis at the seaside of coastal cities in China. The Chinese are more conservative. Westerners are often advised to wear swimwear that is not so revealing to avoid attracting overt attention.

During traditional festivals like the Chinese New Year, the Chinese like dressing up formally. Middle-aged women like to wear cheongsams or dresses while men like to put on a suit. This is the norm for banquet attire. The young will dress in smart casual attire instead. The Chinese like the colour red very much as it symbolises luck and fortune and thus prefer to wear red clothing during festivals or at ceremonies. They may also wear other bright colours as they think only such colours can enhance the atmosphere of the festival. Travellers would do well to bring along brightly-coloured clothes if they happen to visit China during a period when there is a festival. However, if you are visiting a Chinese family at their home, you do not have to overly worry about your dressing. The Chinese value etiquette but are not very fussy about the clothes their guests wear. Just take care not to wear anything too weird or revealing.

10. Internet Search + Pair Work

With a partner, find out more about the etiquette involved in Western gift giving. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western gift giving. You may include taboos in gift giving and the reasons. Your presentation should last about 4-5 minutes.

Assess points as presented by your students.

11. Internet Search + Pair Work With a partner, read some articles and watch some video clips on YouTube about the etiquette of visiting a Chinese family. Then, role-play on the topic "Being a guest to a Chinese family".

Go around the class to listen to and assess each pair's role-play.

12. What are some of the manners in the Chinese culture that do not exist in your culture? Which of these manners would you like to introduce to your culture, if given a chance? Why?

Assess points as presented by your students.

Note: All URLs listed herein were ascertained to be accessible on 9 September, 2020.