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JERRY NORMAN

Department of Asian Languages and Literature  
University of Washington



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1988

First published 1988  
Reprinted 1988, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication data*

Norman, Jerry  
Chinese. – (Cambridge language surveys).

I. Title  
1. Chinese language  
495.1 PL1071

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Norman, Jerry, 1936–  
Chinese.  
(Cambridge language surveys)

Bibliography.  
Includes index.  
1. Chinese language – History.  
2. Chinese language – Dialects.  
3. Chinese language – Writing.  
I. Title. II. Series  
PL1075.N67 1987 495.1'09 87-6570

ISBN 0 521 22809 3 hard covers  
ISBN 0 521 29653 6 paperback

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## PREFACE

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Chinese is only one of a very few contemporary languages whose history is documented in an unbroken tradition extending back to the second millennium BC. At the same time, in its numerous dialectal forms, it has more speakers than any language spoken in the modern world. This vast extension in time and space has imparted to the study of Chinese a complexity hardly equaled elsewhere. In the present book, I have attempted to sketch a general picture of this language in both its synchronic and its diachronic aspects. Due to the limits of space and my own personal background, some areas have been treated in more detail than others; but it is my hope that, despite whatever deficiencies the book may have in this regard, it will serve as a relatively safe introduction to the study of the Chinese language. In writing the book, I have tried to keep in mind both the general linguist as well as the specialist in Chinese studies; I can only hope that both groups will be able to glean some profit from perusing its pages.

I began to work on this book in 1979; the bulk of the writing was done in 1980 and 1981, when I had the good fortune to receive two fellowships, one from the Committee on Chinese Civilization of the American Council of Learned Societies, and the second from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. I am profoundly grateful to both of the organizations for their timely support.

During the course of writing the present book, a number of professional colleagues and friends have read parts of the manuscript and provided me with valuable suggestions. I would like to express especial thanks to Professors Tsulin Mei, of Cornell University, Qiú Xīgūi, of Peking University, and William S.-Y. Wang, of the University of California at Berkeley, for their comments and assistance. In addition, I would like to thank Ms Zhāng Huiyīng of the Institute of Linguistics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who provided me with a number of extremely useful comments on chapters 3–5. My student, Mr Li Míng-kuang, gave me valuable assistance in compiling the bibliography. Finally, I owe a great deal to Professor Eugénie Henderson, who read through the entire



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*Preface*

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manuscript and offered countless excellent suggestions; her frequent words of encouragement were no small help in bringing the book to successful completion. I scarcely need add, I think, that final responsibility for all views expressed, as well as any errors or shortcomings, rests entirely with the author.

## MAJOR CHRONOLOGICAL DIVISIONS OF CHINESE HISTORY

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Xià dynasty	Twenty-first to sixteenth centuries BC
Shāng dynasty	Sixteenth to eleventh centuries BC
Western Zhōu dynasty	Eleventh century to 771 BC
Spring and Autumn period (Chūnqiū)	770 to 476 BC
Warring States period (Zhànguó)	475 to 221 BC
Qín dynasty	221 to 207 BC
Western Hàn dynasty	206 BC to AD 24
Eastern Hàn dynasty	AD 25 to 220
Three Kingdoms period (Sānguó)	AD 220 to 265
Western Jìn dynasty	AD 265 to 316
Eastern Jìn dynasty	AD 317 to 420
Nánběicháo (Northern and Southern dynasties)	AD 420 to 589
Súi dynasty	AD 581 to 618
Táng dynasty	AD 618 to 907
Five Dynasties period	AD 907 to 960
Northern Sòng dynasty	AD 960 to 1127
Southern Sòng dynasty	AD 1127 to 1279
Liáo dynasty	AD 916 to 1125
Jīn dynasty	AD 1115 to 1234
Yuán dynasty	AD 1271 to 1368
Míng dynasty	AD 1368 to 1644
Qīng dynasty	AD 1644 to 1911

*Note:* Although tone marks are given in this table, they are not used for familiar dynasty names in the text.

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*To the memory of Yuen Ren Chao, 1892–1982*