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Chinese: A Linguistic Introduction

Chinese is spoken by more people than any other language in the world, and has a rich social, cultural and historical background. This is a comprehensive guide to the linguistic structure of Chinese, providing an accessible introduction to each of the key areas. It describes the fundamentals of its writing system, its pronunciation and tonal sound system, its morphology (how words are structured), and its syntax (how sentences are formed) – as well as its historical development, and the diverse ways in which it interacts with other languages. Setting the discussion of all aspects of Chinese firmly within the context of the language in use, *Chinese: A Linguistic Introduction* will be of great benefit to learners wishing to extend their knowledge and competence in the language, and their teachers. It will also be a useful starting point for students of linguistics beginning work on the structure of this major world language.

CHAOFEN SUN is Associate Professor of Chinese in the Department of Asian Languages, Stanford University, and Adjunct Professor at East China Normal University, Shanghai. He is editor of *Chinese Historical Syntax and Morphology* (1999), *Proceedings of the North American Conference of Chinese Linguistics* (1999), and *Studies on the History of Chinese Syntax* (1997); and author of *Word Order Change and Grammaticalization in the History of Chinese* (1996).

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Preface

Over the past decade, with more and more students thinking of a China-related career, interest in Chinese culture and China's languages has grown rapidly. In the meantime, at Stanford University where I teach Chinese linguistics, the Chinese as a foreign language program has become the second-largest one in terms of the number of students enrolled in different levels of instruction. In writing this book, I hope to systematically introduce English-speaking students to some basic linguistic knowledge, in addition to different socio-cultural aspects of the Chinese languages to meet their diverse interests. I first recognized the need for such an elementary book when I was preparing to teach a new course on Chinese language, culture and society in 1998 and could not find any published work in English specifically dealing with the topic. It so happened that in the summer of 2001 Ms. Kate Brett of Cambridge University Press visited me and, upon hearing of my search for such a book, encouraged me to write one myself. The following year, I submitted a book proposal and was very glad that Cambridge University Press quickly decided to move forward with it.

In the course of writing the manuscript, I have received generous support from my colleagues and friends. In particular I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Dean's office of the School of Humanities and Sciences at Stanford University and Stanford Humanities Center for providing me with a Stanford Humanities Fellowship that has given me a year's time to write up this manuscript. I also want to thank the Stanford Center for East Asian Studies that provided me with an undergraduate research assistantship in the 2004 summer allowing me to work with Andrea Snavelly, who has corrected my English errors and offered many valuable suggestions to make the manuscript more readable to a general audience. In addition, I want to acknowledge my gratitude toward the anonymous Cambridge University Press reviewer for valuable comments and suggestions making me clarify my thinking and correcting many mistakes. I am also grateful to Cambridge

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University Press editor, Ms. Helen Barton, for her patience. Finally, I must mention my many students over the years as they are really the reason for me to write this book. In the course of this effort, my knowledge of the field was greatly extended either through our discussion and debate in and out of class or through the research I did on various topics of our common interest.

Of course, all the errors in this book are completely mine.

Major chronological divisions of Chinese history

夏	Xia dynasty – twenty-first to sixteenth centuries BCE
商	Shang dynasty – sixteenth to eleventh centuries BCE
西周	Western Zhou dynasty – eleventh century to 770 BCE
春秋	Spring and Autumn period – 770 to 403 BCE
战国	Warring States period – 403 to 221 BCE
秦	Qin dynasty – 221 to 207 BCE
汉	Han dynasty – 206 BCE to 220 CE
三国	Three Kingdoms period – 220 CE to 265
晋	Jin dynasty – 265 to 420
南北朝	Northern and Southern dynasty – 420 to 589
隋	Sui dynasty – 589 to 618
唐	Tang dynasty – 618 to 907
五代	Five Dynasties period – 907 to 960
北宋	Northern Song dynasty – 960 to 1127
南宋	Southern Song dynasty – 1127 to 1279
辽	Liao dynasty – 916 to 1126
金	Jin dynasty – 1115 to 1234
元	Yuan dynasty – 1279 to 1368
明	Ming dynasty – 1368 to 1644
清	Qing dynasty – 1644 to 1911

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Major periods of the Chinese language

Oracle and Bronze inscriptions	sixteenth century to 771 BCE
Old Chinese	771 BCE to 220 CE
Middle Chinese	220 CE to 960
Early Modern Chinese	960 to 1900
Modern Chinese	1900 to present