

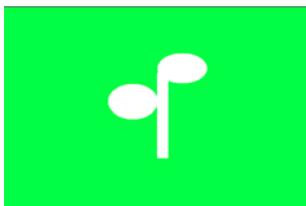
## RENREN CHINESE 人人中文

## A MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR CHINESE LEARNERS



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## The Fun Facts About Chinese Language

**Chinese** or the **Sinitic language(s)** (汉语/漢語, *Hànyǔ*; 华语/華語, *Huáyǔ*; or 中文, *Zhōngwén*) can be considered a **language** or **language family**.<sup>[3]</sup> Originally the indigenous languages spoken by the **Han Chinese** in **China**, it forms one of the two branches of **Sino-Tibetan family** of languages. About one-fifth of the world's population, or over one **billion** people, speak some form of Chinese as their native language. The **identification of the varieties of Chinese** as "languages" or "dialects" is controversial.<sup>[4]</sup>

**Spoken Chinese** is distinguished by its high level of internal diversity, though all spoken varieties of Chinese are **tonal** and **analytic**. There are between six and twelve main regional groups of Chinese (depending on classification scheme), of which the most spoken, by far, is **Mandarin** (about 850 million), followed by **Wu** (90 million), **Min** (70 million) and **Cantonese** (70 million). Most of these groups are **mutually unintelligible**, though some, like **Xiang** and the Southwest Mandarin dialects, may share common terms and some degree of intelligibility. Chinese is classified as a **macrolanguage** with 13 sub-languages in **ISO 639-3**, though the **identification of the varieties of Chinese** as multiple "languages" or as "dialects" of a single language is a contentious issue.

The standardized form of spoken Chinese is **Standard Mandarin** (*Putonghua*), based on the **Beijing dialect**, which is part of a larger group of North-Eastern and South-Western dialects, often taken as a separate language, this language can be referred to as 官话 *Guānhuà* or 北方话 *Běifānghuà* in Chinese. Standard Mandarin is the official language of the **People's Republic of China** and the **Republic of China** (commonly known as **Taiwan**), as well as one of four official languages of **Singapore**. Chinese—*de facto*, Standard Mandarin—is one of the six official languages of the **United Nations**. Of the other varieties, **Standard Cantonese** is common and influential in Cantonese-speaking overseas communities, and remains one of the official languages of **Hong Kong** (together with **English**) and of **Macau** (together with **Portuguese**). **Min Nan**, part of the Min language group, is widely spoken in southern **Fujian**, in neighbouring **Taiwan** (where it is known as **Taiwanese** or Hoklo) and in **Southeast Asia** (where it dominates in **Singapore** and **Malaysia** and is known as Hokkien).

According to news reports in March 2007, 86 percent of people in the People's Republic of China speak a variant of **spoken Chinese**.<sup>[5]</sup> As a language family, the number of Chinese speakers is 1.136 billion. The same news report indicates 53 percent of the population, or 700 million speakers, can effectively communicate in Putonghua.

每月一字

Word of the Month

What's in a Chinese Character  
What's in a Chinese Character

子

3 strokes

Infant, child, son

子女: children

孩子: child

This character for child originated from a representation of an infant with outstretched arms and legs. Eventually it was modified to one with legs swaddled in cloth bands. Evidently, to the Chinese parent, the secret of infant care lies in keeping one end wet and the other end dry.



practice Chinese Characters (s) here:

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Riddle Along

- xīngqīyī hóuzizàijiāchuānxīnyī  
星期一，猴子在家穿新衣。
- xīngqīèr hóuzijiàozhedùziè  
星期二，猴子叫着肚子饿。
- xīngqīsān hóuziyìqǐqùpáshān  
星期三，猴子一起去爬山。
- xīngqīsì hóuzizuòzhékàndiànshì  
星期四，猴子坐着看电视。
- xīngqīwǔ hóuzichàngēyòutiàowǔ  
星期五，猴子唱歌又跳舞。
- xīngqīliù hóuzishēnghuǒláikǎoròu  
星期六，猴子生火来烤肉。
- xīngqīrì hóuzipāishǒuguòshēngri  
星期日，猴子拍手过生日。

## Lichun - the Beginning of the New Year



For the 3,000 years leading up to 1912, Chinese life was ordered solely according to the lunar calendar.

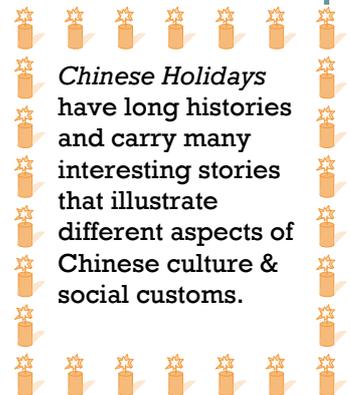
In ancient times, agriculture was the economic mainstay of China and its people, and the purpose of establishing a calendar was to regulate agricultural production. Chinese ancients discovered, through astronomical observation, that during the earth's 12-month orbit around the sun, its changing position gave rise to periodical changes in climate and thus distinctive farming seasons. They subsequently designated 24 positions within the earth's orbit, calling them the 24 Jieqi (24 solar terms). Each Jieqi was given a name that signified the related meteorological and phenological changes on the earth. For example, Lichun means "the beginning of spring," Jingzhe means "the awakening of insects," and Guyu means "the time to sow wheat." Each of the 12 lunar months encompassed two Jieqi, which were regarded by both the imperial court and farmers as the chronological yardstick through which to plan agricultural production.

Some traditional Chinese folk customs and festivals also relate to the 24 jieqi, such as Spring Festival. During Han Dynasty (206 BC- AD 220), people first decided that Lichun should be the time to celebrate Spring Festival. Later, after several rounds of reform, it was finally agreed that the first day of the first lunar month, which generally occurs around Lichun, should be Spring Festival.

In ancient China, Spring Festival and New Year's Day referred to the same day -- the first day of the first lunar month. After the 1911 Revolution, however, China formally adopted the Gregorian calendar and made January 1 New Year's Day, as distinct from the traditional lunar calendar Spring Festival, but Chinese people have always regarded Spring Festival as more significant, and as being the true beginning to a new year.

We are going to write more about Chinese New Year—Spring Festival or Chun Jie on next issue.

节日大观



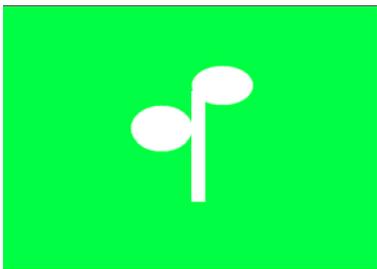
*Chinese Holidays* have long histories and carry many interesting stories that illustrate different aspects of Chinese culture & social customs.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

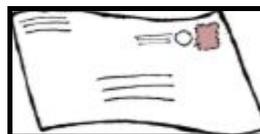
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Dear Reader,



This is the 12th issue of RenRen Chinese, which is a special newsletter for families of CFL students. Our editors would like to have your help in keeping this little tree growing. The Chinese cultural and linguistic learning experience is unique to everyone, and we would greatly welcome any stories or anecdotes you'd like to share and to publish in this newsletter.

Please send any contributions or questions to:

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**From the Editor**

JOINT EFFORTS  
 OF  
 SHAOPING ZHANG \*\*  
 JEAN CHEN



CHIEF EDITOR  
 LEE LU  
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**December 2008**

S	F	SAT / SUN
		12/19 will be the last Chinese Class for this semester.
		If you already registered for two semesters, your position will be carried over.
		From now on, Ray starts accepting new registration for next semester.
		On Dec. 12, there will be an AP Chinese info. seminar. Ray parents are free to attend.
		Address: 6501 N. Mannheim Rd. Rosemont, 60018 Sheraton Getaway Suit

**January 2009**

S	F	SAT / SUN
		1/10/2009 will be the first day of Chinese class for the new semester.
		Merry Christmas and Happy New Years
		1/26/2009 will be Chinese New Year: Spring Festival or Chun Jie



