

Customs Surrounding
Marriage, Birth, and Death: Unit 1

PART I

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| 1. Zhōngguó <u>zhèngfǔ</u> shì bu shì <u>tíchàng niánqīng rén wǎn jiéhūn</u> ? | Does the Chinese government advocate that young people marry late? |
| 2. Zhèngfǔ <u>tíchàng wǎnliàn wǎnhūn</u> . | The government advocates late involvement and late marriage. |
| 3. Nèige <u>qīngnián</u> , gōngzuò hěn <u>nǚlì</u> . | That young person is very hardworking. |
| 4. <u>Nóngcūn</u> niánqīng rén yě <u>shíxíng wǎnhūn</u> ma? | Do the young people in the countryside also practice late marriage? |
| 5. Wǎnhūn yǐjīng <u>chénglè</u> yìzhǒng <u>fēngqì</u> . | Late marriage has already become a common practice for young people. |
| 6. Xiǎo Lǐ <u>hé</u> tā <u>liàn'ài</u> hěn jiǔ le, kěshì <u>yìzhí</u> bù yào jiéhūn. | Xiǎo Lǐ has been in love with her for a long time, but he's never wanted to get married. |
| 7. Zhège xiǎo <u>chéngshì</u> <u>kě</u> piàoliang le! | Boy, is this little town pretty! |

NOTES ON PART I

Notes on No. 1

tíchàng: 'to advocate, to promote, to initiate, to recommend, to encourage'

Zhè shì shéi tíchàngde?

Who advocates this?

niánqīng: 'to be young' (literally, 'years-light' or 'years-green'. There are two different characters with the same sound used for the second syllable.)

Tā zhènme niánqīng, zhènme piàoliang!

She's so young and so beautiful!

Wǒ niánqīngde shíhou, bù xǐhuan kàn shū.

When I was young, I didn't like to read.

Zhèixiē niánqīng rén dōu ài
kàn diànyǐng.

These young people all love to go
to the movies.

Nèige niánqīngde Zhōngguó
rén, Yǐngwén shuōde bú cuò.

That young Chinese person speaks
pretty good English.

jiéhūn: 'to get married', also pronounced jiēhūn. Notice that in Chinese you talk of 'getting married', while in English we talk of 'being married'. And it follows grammatically that jiéhūn is a process verb, not a state verb. Jiéhūn will always be seen with an aspect marker such as le or will be negated with méi.

Tāmen jiéhūnle méiyóu?

Have they gotten married yet? (This
is the equivalent of 'Are they
married?')

Nǐ jiéhūn duō jiǔ le?

How long have you been married?

Jiéhūn is a verb-object compound, literally meaning 'to knot marriage'. Jié and hūn can be separated by aspect markers, such as de or guo.

Nǐ shì shénme shíhóu jiéde hūn?
or Nǐ shì shénme shíhóu
jiéhūnde?

When did you get married?

Wáng Xiānsheng jiéguo sāncì
hūn.

Mr. Wang has been married three
times.

To say 'get married to someone' use the pattern gēn ... jiéhūn.

Tā gēn shéi jiéhūn le?

To whom did he get married?

Note on No. 2

wǎnliàn wǎnhūn: 'late involvement and late marriage'. Wǎnliàn is an abbreviation for wǎn liàn'ài, 'mature love', (liàn'ài means 'romantic love, courtship'), and wǎnhūn is an abbreviation for wǎn jiéhūn, 'late marriage'. This policy has been promoted since the 1960s, but only actively enforced since the 1970s. It is difficult to generalize about the required minimum marriage ages, as they differ from city to city and might be nonexistent in certain rural and national minority areas, where the government is trying to increase the population. The minimum age has been progressively raised over the years, until 1978 when the rules were eased a bit. In general, if the combined ages of the couple exceeds fifty years (or the female's age exceeds the male's), then the marriage is allowable.

Note on No. 3

qīngnián: 'youth, young person'. Do not confuse this noun with the adjectival verb niánqīng, 'to be young'. (See Notes on No. 1)

Zhèiwèi qīngnián lǎoshī yīnggāi dào dàxué qù jiāo shū.	This young teacher should go to a university to teach.
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In this sentence, the noun qīngnián is used to modify the noun lǎoshī, 'teacher'.

A: Wǒ jìde sānshinián yǐqián nǐ tèbié ài chī táng.	I remember that thirty years ago you especially loved to eat candy.
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B: Shì a, nèi shíhou wǒmen dōu háishi qīngnián. Xiànzài lǎo le, yá bù xíng le.	Yes. Back then we were all young people. Now I'm old, and my teeth aren't good any more.
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nǔlì: 'to be hardworking, to be diligent', or as an adverb, 'diligently, hard'.

Tā suīrán hěn nǔlì, kěshi tāde Yīngwen háishi bù xíng.	Although he's very hardworking, his English is still not good enough.
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Wǒ děi nǔlì xué Zhōngwén.	I have to study Chinese very hard.
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Notes on No. 4

nóngcūn: 'rural areas, countryside, village'.

Nóngcūnde kōngqì bǐ chéngli hǎoduō le.	The air in the country is much better than in the city.
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Tāmen jiā zài nóngcūn zhù.	Their family lives in the country.
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shíxíng: 'to practice, to carry out (a method, policy, plan, reform)'.

Nǐ zhèige jìhua hěn hǎo, kěshi wǒ xiǎng bù néng shíxíng.	This plan of yours is very good, but I don't think it can be carried out.
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Zhèige bànfā yǐjīng shíxíngle sānge xīngqīle, kěshi jiéguǒ bù hǎo.	This method has been in practice for three weeks, but the results aren't good.
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Notes on No. 5

chéng: 'to constitute, to make, to become'.

Tāde xuéxí yìzhí hěn hǎo, bìyè
yǐhòu ānpai gōngzuò bù chéng
wèntí.

His studies have been good all along,
so after he graduates, setting up
a job for him won't constitute a
problem.

Wǒde nǚér xiànzài chéngle
jiějie, tā zhēn xǐhuan tāde
xiǎo mèimei.

My daughter has become an older
sister. She really likes her
little sister.

fēngqì: 'established practice, custom; general mood'.

Xiànzài yǒu bù shǎo qīngnián
bú yào zài shāngdiànli mài
dōngxì, zhèizhōng fēngqì
zhēn bù hǎo.

There are a lot of young people now
who don't want to sell things in
shops. This practice is really
bad.

Xiànzài zài Zhōngguó, yòu yǒule
niàn shūde fēngqì.

Now in China there is again a general
atmosphere of study.

Notes on No. 6

hé: 'with'. You have seen hé used between two nouns or pronouns as a conjunction meaning 'and'. Here you see it used as a prepositional verb meaning 'with'. The word gēn, which you have seen, also has both meanings, 'and' and 'with'.

Formerly, gēn was the most frequently used word for 'with' or 'and' in the Mandarin spoken in North China, and hé was more often written. But hé has come into wide conversational use in pǔtōnghuà. In addition to this variation, school children in Taiwan are sometimes taught to say hàn instead of hé, which is the same character with another pronunciation.

Generally speaking, if you use hé or gēn you should not have any problem being understood by any speaker of Standard Chinese.

liàn'ài: 'to fall in love, to be in love; romantic love, courtship'. This is the socially acceptable way to describe a romantic relationship between two people. Notice that liàn'ài can be used both as noun and as a verb. (Liàn'ài is written with an apostrophe to show where the syllable division is: liàn ài, not lià nài.)

Tāmen liàn'àile hǎojinián le.

They've been in love for quite a few
years now.

Tāmen xiànzài kāishǐ liàn'ài le.

They've just started to fall in love.

Wǒmen de liàn'ài zhǐ yǒu sāntiān,
jiù bù xíng le.

Our love is only three days old and
already it's over.

The noun liàn'ài is often used in the phrase tán liàn'ài, 'to be romantically involved' or more literally 'to talk of love'.

Tāmen liǎngge tán liàn'ài yǐjīng	The two of them have been in love for
tánle hěn jiǔ le.	quite a while now.

Wǒ méiyǒu hé tā tán liàn'ài.	I'm not in love with her.
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In China young people tend to go out in groups. When two people are seen going out alone, then it is assumed that they have serious intentions for the future.

Notes on No. 7

kě: 'really, certainly'. This is an adverb which intensifies state verbs. Kě can be used before a negative.

Tāmen liǎngge kě hǎo le!	The two of them are very good friends.
Kě bú shì ma!	Isn't that so! (Really! <u>or</u> No kidding!)
Nà kě bù xíng!	That really won't do!
Nà kě bú shì yíjiàn hǎo shì.	That's really not a good thing.
Nǐ kě yào xiǎoxīn!	You've got to be careful!

Although some Chinese are fond of using the word kě, to other Chinese it may sound too full of local color with which they do not identify.

Peking:

An American exchange student talks with her language teacher. They are both in their late twenties.

- A: Wǒ jìde shàngcì nǐ shuō nǐ èrshíbásuǐ le, hái méiyǒu jiéhūn. I remember last time you told me that you're twenty-eight years old and you're not married yet.
- B: Duì. Right.
- A: Wǒ yìzhí xiǎng wènwèn nǐ, Zhōngguó niánqīng rén hǎoxiàng sānshísuǐ zuǒyòu cái jiéhūn, shì bu shì? I've been meaning to ask you all along, it seems as if young people in China don't get married until they're about thirty, is that so?
- B: Duì le. Wǒmen qīngnián yǒu hěn duō shì yào zuò. Yào nǚlì gōngzuò, nǚlì xuéxí, bú yào zǎo jiéhūn! Zhèngfǔ yě tíchāng wǎnliàn wǎnhūn. Zài chéngshì-lǐ niánqīng rén dōu zài èrshí-wǔliùsuǐ yǐhòu cái jiéhūn. Right. We young people have a lot of things we have to do. We have to work hard and study hard; we shouldn't get married early! The government also promotes late involvement and late marriage. In the city, young people don't get married before the age of twenty-five or twenty-six.
- A: Nóngcūnlǐde niánqīng rén yě shíxíng wǎnhūn ma? Do the young people in the rural areas practice late marriage too?
- B: Duì, tāmen yě shíxíng wǎnhūn. Zài nóngcūn, wǎn liàn'ài wǎn jiéhūn yǐjīng chéngle yìzhǒng xīn fēngqì. Wǒ yǒu yíge zài Běijīng jiāoqū gōngzuòde péngyou xià lǐbài jiéhūn, nǐ yào bu yào hé wo yìqǐ qù kàn-kan? Wǒ gěi nǐ ānpai yíxiar. Yes, they do too. In the rural areas, late involvement and late marriage have already become a new common practice. I have a friend who works in the suburbs of Peking who's getting married next week. Do you want to go see it with me? I'll arrange it for you.
- A: Hǎojíle. Nà kě zhēn yǒu yìsi, gāng dào zhèr jiù yǒu zhènme yíge hǎo jīhui. Great. That would really be interesting. And such a good opportunity so soon after getting here.

NOTE ON THE DIALOGUE

...zài èrshíwǔliùsuǐ yǐhòu cái jiéhūn: This is quite a change from Imperial times, when females might be married off at age thirteen and males at age six so as to insure the family fortunes or fend off economic difficulties later. Nonetheless, regulations are less strict in the countryside today, where one can marry perhaps at age twenty.

PART II

8. Xiànzài Zhōngguó rén jiēhūn
yǒu shénme yíshì? What kind of ceremony do the Chinese
have when they get married now?
9. A: Nǐ jiēhūn de shíhòu nǐde
qīnqī sònggei nǐ shénme
lǐwù? What gifts did your relatives give
you when you got married?
- B: Tāmen sònggei wǒ yìxiē xiǎo
lǐwù zuò jìniàn. They gave me a few small presents as
mementos.
10. A: Xūduō nán qīngnián jiēhūn
yǐhòu zhùdao nǚjiā qu. Many young men now go and live with
the wife's family after they get
married.
- A: Zhè gēn yǐqián de fēngsú yǒu
hěn dàde qūbié. This is very different from the
customs of the past.
- B: Kě bú shì ma! Zhēnshì gǎi-
biànle bù shǎo. I'll say! It's really changed a
lot.
11. Èrqiě zài nóngcūn yě shíxíng
wǎnhūn. Furthermore, late marriage is also
practiced in rural areas.

NOTES ON PART II

Notes on No. 8

yíshì: 'ceremony, function' This can be used to refer to a range of different ceremonies, from the signing of a treaty or agreement to the taking of marital vows.

In old China, marriages were celebrated extravagantly. It was not uncommon to find families going into debt because of the joyous occasion, which marked a new generation added to the family line. This elaborate ritual served to strengthen familial bonds and the newlyweds' feeling of obligation owed to the family.

In PRC cities of today, lack of extra money and coupons to purchase food for guests, celebration space, and free time for preparation limit the celebration often to procedural formality alone--registration with the local police bureau. Wedding dinners may still be enjoyed in the countryside, where there are fewer restrictions on time and food.

Notes on No. 9

qīnqī: 'relatives' Qīnqī is slightly different from the English word 'relatives' in that it does not include one's immediate family, that is

parents or children, but is used to refer to all other relatives. (One's immediate family are called jiāli rén.)

Nǐmen jiā qīnqi duō ma?

Do you have a lot of relatives
in your family?

Wǒmen jiā qīnqi kě duō le!

We have lots of relatives in
our family.

sònggei: 'give (a gift) to ...' The verb sòng has several meanings. One is 'to send', as in Wǒ bǎ nǐde xíngli sòngshàngqu le, 'I sent your luggage upstairs.' Another is to give someone something as a present.

Here you see sòng with the prepositional verb gěi 'for, to' after it. You have also seen jiāogei, 'to hand over to ..., to submit to...'. When gěi is used after the main verb as a prepositional verb, it must be followed by the indirect object, that is, the person or thing to whom something is given. Gěi can also be used this way with jì 'to send', and mài 'to sell'.

Wǒ bǎ zhèijiàn yīfu jìgei wǒ
mèimei le.

I sent this piece of clothing to my
younger sister.

Tā bǎ fángzi màigei wǒ le.

He sold his house to me.

In these examples the direct object, clothing or house, is up front in the sentence, making it necessary to use gěi to put the indirect object after the main verb. This usually happens in sentences where the object is specific and the bǎ construction is preferred. When sòng is followed by an indirect object, however, the gěi is usually optional.

Wǒ yào sòng ta yíge xiǎo lǐwù.

I am going to give him a small present.

Wǒ yào sònggei ta yíge xiǎo
lǐwù.

I am going to give him a small present.

...sònggei ni shénme lǐwù?: Wedding gifts for friends and relatives in the PRC are generally "useful" items. Common among these are nuǎnpíng, hot water jugs; huāpíng, vases; táidēng, table lamps; bǐ, pens; liǎnpǎn, wash basins; or cānjù, kitchen items.

zuò: 'to act as, to serve as'. Tāmen sònggei wo yìxiē xiǎo lǐwù zuò jìniàn. is literally 'They gave me a few small presents to serve as mementos.'

Zhèige xuéxiào bìyède xuésheng,
hěn duō dōu zuò lǎoshī le.

A lot of students who graduated from
this school have become teachers.

Yòng zhèiběn xīn shū zuò lǐwù,
hǎo bu hǎo?

Would it be okay to use this new
book as a present?

Zuò, 'to act as, to serve as' is often seen used with yòng, 'to use' as in the example above, yòng ... zuò ..., 'to use (something) as (something) else'.

jìniàn: 'memento, remembrance; to commemorate'.

Wǒ gěi tā yìzhāng zhàopiàn zuò jìniàn. I'll give him a photo as a memento.

Notes on No. 10

xǔduō: 'many; a great deal (of), lots (of)'. Xǔduō is used as a number (it can be followed by a counter) to modify other nouns.

A: Hái yǒu duōshao qián? How much money is there left?
B: Hái yǒu xǔduō. There's still a lot left. or
There's a lot more.

Tā mǎile xǔduō (zhāng) huà. He bought a lot of paintings.

Xǔduō has several things in common with hěn duō, in addition to similarity of meaning. Used as modifiers in front of nouns, both xǔduō and hěn duō can (1) be used alone, (2) be used with de, and (3) be followed by a counter, but not usually -ge.

Tā rènshi xǔduō rén. He knows a lot of people.
Tā rènshi hěn duō rén.

Tā jiànle xǔduō(de) rén. He saw (met with) a lot of people.
Tā jiànle hěn duō(de) rén.

Bìchúli yǒu hěn duō (jiàn) dàyī. There are a lot of overcoats in the closet.

Tā xiěle xǔduō (běn) shū. He wrote a lot of books.

Hěn duō is probably more common than xǔduō. Some speakers feel that they do not use xǔduō in conversation; many speakers, however, do not feel any restriction about using it in conversation.

...zhùdao nǚjiār qu: 'to go live with the wife's family' You've seen the prepositional verb dào used after main verbs, as in nádao lóushàng qu, 'take it upstairs'. Following verbs expressing some kind of motion, the use of dào is fairly straightforward. But in the above example from the Reference List, dào is used with a verb which is not usually thought of as expressing motion, zhù, 'to live, to inhabit'. Here is another example of zhù used in a phrase expressing motion:

Tā shì zuótiān zhùjinlaide. He moved in yesterday.

The verbs zhàn 'to stand' and zuò 'to sit' can also be used in phrases expressing motion.

Qǐng ni zhàndao nèibianr qu,
hǎo bu hǎo?

Would you please go stand over
there.

Qǐng ni zuòdao qiánbianr qu,
hǎo bu hǎo?

Would you please go sit up
front.

Due to the lack of housing, which might involve a wait of from one to three years for newlyweds, it is not infrequent now to find the groom join the household of his new bride. This is in contrast to former tradition, which stated that the woman became part of the man's family, and of course, moved into his family's house.

In the past, for the groom to join the household of his new bride carried special significance. It was called rù zhuī and might take place when a family had only female children and the father wanted his daughter's husband to take his last name in order to carry on the family line.

qūbié: 'difference' When expressing the difference between two things, use ... gēn ... yǒu qūbié.

Zhèiběn zìdiǎn gēn nèiběn
yǒu hěn dàde qūbié.

There is a big difference between
this dictionary and that one.

Zhèige xuéxiào gēn nèige
xuéxiào yǒu shénme qūbié?

What is the difference between
this school and that one?

Zhèiliǎngge bànfǎde qūbié
zài nǎr?

What is the difference between
these two methods?

Kě bú shì ma!: 'Yes, indeed!', 'I'll say!', or more literally, 'Isn't it so!' Kě bú shì ma! is often used in northern China to indicate hearty agreement, or to indicate that something makes perfect sense to the speaker, something like English 'Well, of course!' or 'Really!'.

bù shǎo: Literally 'not a little', in other words, 'quite a lot'.

Tā yǒu bù shǎo huà yào gēn
nǐ shuō.

He has a lot he wants to say to
you.

Zài Měiguó bù shǎo rén yǒu
qìchē.

In America a lot of people have
cars.

érqiě: 'furthermore, moreover'

Jīntiān tiānqì bù hǎo, érqiě
hǎoxiàng yào xià xuě.

The weather is bad today, and
furthermore it looks as if it's
going to snow.

Érqiě is often used in the pattern bú dàn...érqiě..., 'not only... but also...' or 'not only...moreover...':

Zhèizhǒng huā bú dàn hǎo kàn,
érqiě fēichāng xiāng.

This kind of flower is not only
pretty, but it's also very fragrant.

Wǒ bú dàn ài chī táng, érqiě
shénme tián dōngxi dōu ài
chī.

I not only like to eat candy,
(moreover) I like to eat anything
sweet.

Tā bú dàn xuéguo Zhōngwén,
érqiě xuéde bú cuò.

Not only has he studied Chinese,
but moreover he has learned it
quite well.

Wǒ bu dàn méiyǒu hé tā tán
liàn'ài, érqiě wǒ yě bú dà
xǐhuan tā.

Not only am I not in love with her,
moreover I don't like her very
much.

Peking:

The American exchange student and her language teacher continue their conversation:

- A: Zhōngguó rén jiéhūnde shíhou yǒu shénmeyàngde yíshì? What kind of ceremony is there when the Chinese get married?
- B: Méiyǒu shénme yíshì, jiù shì qīng qīng péngyou lái hē diǎnr chá, chī diǎnr táng, diǎnxīn, shénmede. There is no ceremony, we just invite friends and relatives to come and have some tea, candy, snacks, and so on.
- A: Qīng péngyou sòng bu sòng lǐwù? Do the friends and relatives give gifts?
- B: Yǒude rén sòng yìdiǎnr xiǎo lǐwù zuò jìniàn. Some people give small gifts as a memento.
- A: Wǒ tīngshuō yǐqián nóngcūnli nǚháizi jiéhūnde shíhou, nánjiā yào sòng xǔduō lǐwù. Zhèige fēngsú shì bu shì yě gǎibiàn le? I've heard that it used to be that in the country, when a girl got married, the man's family would have to give a lot of gifts. Has this custom changed too?
- B: Shì a! Zhèizhōng shìqing zài bù shǎo dìqū dōu méiyǒu le. Èrqiě xiànzài yě yǒude nán qīngnián jiéhūn yǐhòu zhùdao nǚjiār qu. Zhèi gēn yǐqiánde fēngsú yě yǒu hěn dàde qūbié. Yes! In many regions, this kind of thing doesn't exist any more. Furthermore, now there are also young men who go to live with the wife's family after they get married. This is also very different from the customs of the past.
- A: Kě bú shì ma! Zhēn shì gǎibiànle bù shǎo. I'll say! It has really changed a lot.

PART III

12. Nǐmen jiéhūn yǐqián shuāngfāng
dōu hěn liǎojiě ma? Before you were married, did you both
know each other very well?
13. Xiànzài Zhōngguó lǐhūnde bú
tài duō. There aren't many people getting
divorced in China now.
14. Nèiduì fūfù bú zài yíge dìqū
gōngzuò. That married couple doesn't work in
the same region.
15. Tā měinián yǒu duōshǎo tiānde
tānqīnjià? How many days of leave does he get
every year to visit family?
16. Fūfù zǒngshì nénggòu zài yìqǐ
bǐjiào hǎo. It's always better if married couples
can be together.
17. A: Tāmen shì jīngguo xiāngdāng-
de kǎolǔ yǐhòu cái jié- They gave it quite a bit of consi-
hūnde. deration before they got married.
- A: Dànshì bù zhīdào wèishénme, But for some reason or other they
tāmen háishi yǒu hěn duō still had a lot of problems.
wèntí.
18. Nánnǚ yīngdāng bǐcǐ liǎojiě A man and woman should know each
yǐhòu zài jiéhūn. other well before they get
married.
19. Nǐ xiǎng tā huì bu huì bāng wǒ Do you think he will help me solve
jiějué zhèige wèntí? this problem?

NOTES ON PART III

Notes on No. 12

shuāngfāng: 'both sides, both parties'

Zhèijiàn shìqíng shì Zhōngguó
hé Měiguó shuāngfāng dōu
zhīdaode.

This matter is known to both
America and China.

bǐcǐ: 'the one and the other; each other, mutually'

Suīrán wǒmen méiyǒu shuō huà,
kěshì bǐcǐ dōu zhīdao,
tāde bìng méiyǒu bànfa le.

Although we didn't say anything, we
both knew. There was nothing
that could be done for his illness.

Yǒude dàxuéshēng xǐhuan zài
bìyède shíhòu bǐcǐ sòng
lǐwù.

Some college students like to
give each other gifts when
graduating.

A: Zhōumò hǎo!

Have a nice weekend!

B: Bǐcǐ, bǐcǐ!

You too!

liǎojiě: 'to understand; to acquaint oneself with, to try to understand'.

Zhèijiàn shì, wǒ bù dǒng, hái
děi qù liǎojiě yíxià.

I don't understand this, I have to
go back and try to understand it
again.

Wǒ liǎojiě tā.

I understand her.

Tā juéde tā méiyǒu yíge
péngyou zhēnde liǎojiě tā.

He feels that he doesn't have a
single friend who really knows him.

Notice that when you want to say 'to know someone' meaning 'to understand someone', the Chinese word to use is liǎojiě, not rènshi (which simply means to have made someone's acquaintance).

Note on No. 13

... línhūnde bú tài duō: 'There aren't many people getting divorced ...'
Línhūnde, 'those (people) who get divorced', is a noun phrase in which línhūn
is nominalized by -de.

Notes on No. 14

fūfù: 'husband and wife, married couple'.

Tāmen fūfù liǎngge dōu fēicháng
hǎo.

Those two (that couple) are both
very nice.

bú zài yíge dìqū gōngzuò: 'do not work in the same region'. Yíge,
'one', is frequently used to mean 'one and the same'. Here are some more
examples:

Wǒmen dōu zài yíge xuéxiào
niàn shū.

All of us go to the same school.

Tāmen liǎngge dōu shì yíge
lǎoshī jiāochulaide.

They are both the product of the
same teacher.

Note on No. 15

tàngīnjiā: 'leave for visiting family'. Tàn qīn means to visit one's

closest relatives, usually parents, a spouse, or children.

Míngtiān tā jiù qù Shànghǎi
tān qīn le.

Tomorrow he's going to Shanghai to
visit his family.

Note on No. 16

zǒngshí: 'always, all the time'. This adverb may also occur as zǒng.

Tā zǒngshí ài qù Huáměi
kāfēitīng.

He always loves to go to the
Huáměi Coffeehouse.

nénggòu: 'can, to be able to'. This is a synonym of néng.

Notes on No. 17

jīngguo: 'to pass by or through, to go through'. Jīngguo can mean
1) to pass by or through something physically, or 2) to go through an
experience.

Jīngguo zhèicì xuéxí yǐhòu
wǒ kě qīngchu duō le.

As a result of this study, I
see things a lot more clearly.

Wǒ měitiān xià bān huí jiāde
shíhou, dōu jīngguo Bǎihuò
Dàlóu ...dōu
jīngguo Bǎihuò Dàlóu.)

Every day on my way home from work
I pass by the Bǎihuò Dàlóu.

Nǐ jīngguo zhège wūzide
shíhou, nǐ méiyǒu kànjian
wǒmen zài lǐtōu gōngzuò ma?

When you passed by this room,
didn't you see us working inside?

xiāngdāng: 'quite, pretty (good, etc.); considerable, a considerable
degree of'.

Tāde shēntǐ xiāngdāng hǎo.

His health is quite good.

kǎolǚ: 'to consider; consideration'.

Wǒ yǐjīng kǎolǚguò le, tā
háishi yīnggāi shàng dàxué.

I have already given it consideration,
he should still go to college.

dànshi: 'but', a synonym of kěshi.

Wǒ yǐjīng qùguo le, dànshi
wǒ méiyǒu kàndào tā.

I already went there, but I didn't
see her.

nánnǚ: 'male and female'.

Nánnǚde shìqíng zuì nán shuō. Matters between men and women are
the hardest to judge.

yīngdāng: 'should, ought to'. Yīngdāng is a less-frequently heard word for yīnggāi. These two words share in common the following meanings:

- (1) 'should' in the sense of obligation or duty.

Zánmen shì tóngzhì, yīngdāng We two are comrades, we should help
(or yīnggāi) bǐcǐ bāngmáng. each other.

- (2) 'ought to' in the sense of 'it would be suitable to'.

Wàitou lěng, nǐ yīnggāi (or It's cold out, you should put on
yīngdāng) duō chuān yìdiǎnr. some more clothing.

- (3) 'should' in the sense of 'it would be desirable to'.

Nǐ yīnggāi (or yīngdāng) You should try this, it's fun.
shìyìshi, zhēn hǎo wánr.

- (4) 'should' in the sense of 'it is expected'.

Shídiǎn zhōng le, tā yīnggāi It's ten o'clock, he should be here
(or yīngdāng) kuài dào le. soon.

Tā xué Zhōngwén xuéle sānnián He's been studying Chinese for three
le, yīnggāi xuéde bú cuò le. years, he should be pretty good
by now.

bǐjiào: 'relatively, comparatively, by comparison'. Also pronounced bǐjiào.

Jīntiān bǐjiào rè. It's hotter today.

Zhèijiàn yīfu gǎile yǐhòu, After this article of clothing is
bǐjiào hǎo yìdiǎnr. altered, it will be better.

Zhèi liǎngtiān tā bǐjiào shūfu The past couple of days he's been
yìdiǎnr, bù zěnme fā shāo le. feeling better, he doesn't have
such a high fever any more.

You may sometimes hear Chinese speakers use bǐjiào before other adverbial expressions like bú tài 'not too', bù zěnme 'not so', bú nàme 'not so' or hěn 'very'. Careful speakers, however, feel that bǐjiào should not be used in such cases.

Notes on No. 19

huì: 'will; might; be likely to'. The auxiliary verb huì is used to express likelihood here.

Míngtiān tā huì bu huì lái?

Will he come tomorrow?

Wǒ qù bǎ mén guānhǎo, nǐ huì
bu huì juéde tài rè?

If I go close the door, will you
feel too hot?

jiějué: 'to solve, to settle (a problem), to overcome (a difficulty)'.
.

Nǐ bú yào jí, qiándě wèntí
yǐjīng jiějué le.

Don't get anxious, the problem of
money has already been solved.

Washington, D. C.

A graduate student in Chinese studies talks with an exchange student from Peking.

- A: Wǒmen rènshi zhǐ yǒu liǎngge duō xīngqī, kěshì yǐjīng shì lǎo péngyou le. We've only known each other for two weeks or so, but we're old friends already.
- B: Duì. Wǒmen tiāntiān zài yíkuàir, zhēn hǎoxiàng shì lǎo péngyou le. Yes. We're together every day; it really is as if we're old friends.
- A: Wǒ yìzhí xiǎng wènwen nǐ nǐ shì shénme shíhour jiéhūnde ne? I've been meaning to ask you all along when you were married.
- B: Ò! Wǒ shì qiánnián jiéhūnde. Oh. I was married the year before last.
- A: Nǐ èrshibāsui le. Nǐ àiren ne? You're twenty-eight years old. How about your spouse?
- B: Tā sānshìèr le. He's thirty-two.
- A: Nǐmen jiéhūnde shíhou kě bù xiǎo le! Zhōngguó niánqīng rén dōu shì zhèige yàngzi ma? You certainly weren't young when you were married! Is it this way for all Chinese young people?
- B: Duì le. Zhèngfǔ tíchàng wǎn-liàn wǎnhūn. Niánqīng rén yě dōu yào nǔlì xuéxí, nǔlì gōngzuò, bú yào zǎo jiéhūn. Yes. The government promotes late involvement and late marriage. Also, all young people should study hard and work hard, and shouldn't get married early.
- A: Chéngshìlǐ nǚde duō dà jiéhūn? At what age do most women get married in the cities?
- B: Chàbuduō èrshiwūsui zuǒyòu. After about twenty-five.
- A: Nǎnde ne? And men?
- B: Dàgài èrshibāsui zuǒyòu. After about twenty-eight.
- A: Jiéhūnde shíhour yǒu shénmeyàngde yíshì? What kind of ceremony is there when someone gets married?
- B: Méiyǒu shénme yíshì. Búguò jiéhūn nàitiān qīng qīngqī péngyou lái hēhe chá, chī diǎnr táng, diǎnxīn shenmede. Yě yǒu rén sòng diǎnr xiǎo lǐwù zuò There is no ceremony. But on the day of the marriage relatives and friends are invited to come and drink tea, eat a little candy, snacks and so forth. Some people also give a

jìniàn.

small gift as a memento.

A: Nóngcūnlǐde niánqīng rén yě shíxíng wǎnhūn ma?

Do the young people in rural areas also practice late marriage?

B: Duì. Zài nóngcūnli wǎn liàn'ài wǎn jiéhūn yě yǐjīng chénglē yìzhǒng fēngqì.

Yes. Late involvement and late marriage have already become a common practice in the rural areas.

A: Nóngcūnli nǚháizi jiéhūnde shíhou nánjia hái yào sòng xǔduō lǐwù ma?

In the farm villages does the family of the husband still have to give a lot of presents when a girl gets married?

B: Bú yào le. Èrqiě xiànzài yǒu xiē nán qīngnián jiéhūn yǐhòu hái zhūdao nǚjiār qu. Zhè gēn yìqiándē fēngsú yǒu hěn dàde qūbié.

Not any more. Furthermore now there are even young men who live with the wife's family after they get married. This is very different from the customs of the past.

A: Kě bú shì ma! Zhēn shì gǎibiànle bù shǎo.

I'll say! It's really changed a lot.

Xiànzài Zhōngguó líhūnde duō bu duō?

Are there many people who get divorced in China now?

B: Yǒu, kěshì bǐjiào shǎo. Yīnwei jiéhūn yǐqián nánǚ shuāngfāng bǐcǐ bǐjiào liǎojiě, yòu jīngguo xiāngdāngde kǎolǚ, suǒyǐ líhūnde bú tài duō.

Yes, there are, but relatively few. The man and the woman know each other rather well before they get married, and they give the matter quite a bit of consideration, so not too many people get divorced.

A: Wǒ tīngshuō Zhōngguó yǒu yìxiē fūfù bú zài yíge dìqū gōngzuò, bú zhùzài yíge dìfang, zhè huì bu huì yǒu wèntí ne?

I hear there are some couples in China who don't work in the same place. Do problems ever come about because of this?

B: Fūfù bú zài yíge dìfang gōngzuò, suīrán měinián yǒu bàngē yuède tànqīnjià, dànshi hái yǒu hěn duō bù fāngbiàn. Suǒyǐ wèile ràng tamen gèng hǎode gōngzuò hé xuéxí, yīngdāng bāng tamen jiějué zhèige wèntí.

If the husband and wife don't work in the same place, even though they get half a month's leave every year to visit family members, it's still very inconvenient. So in order to let them work and study even better, we should help them solve this problem.

A: Duìjǐle. Fūfù zǒngshì nénggòu zài yìqǐ bǐjiào hǎo.

You're so right. It's always better if the husband and wife can be together.

...nánjia hái yào sòng xǔduō lǐwù ma?: In traditional China, the groom's family gave gifts to the bride's family to compensate for the loss of their daughter. (For the loss of the daughter might also entail a substantial loss of property and servants.) In Taiwan, it is still the man's family who in most cases pays for the wedding arrangements. In the PRC today, these customs no longer exist.

Xiànzài Zhōngguó líhūnde duō bu duō?: Although allowed by law with the mutual consent of both parties, it is not easy to obtain a divorce in the PRC. With the exceptions of one party being either politically questionable or terminally ill, the majority of couples are asked to resolve their differences via study and group criticism.

...yǒu yìxiē fūfù bú zài yíge dìfang gōngzuò: Many couples still have to be split up in order for each to have work. (Jobs are arranged for and assigned by the local government.) This is, of course, a great hardship since it is improbable that either will be able to arrange a transfer of job to the other's work-place. The splits are arranged in order to increase rural population and provide labor for rural jobs. The partner left in the city, usually the woman, can go to the countryside to join her spouse, but rural life is so difficult that this is not likely.

...suīrán měinián yǒu bànge yuède tànqīnjià: There are two types of leave for visiting one's family in the PRC. One is for unmarried children to return home to see their parents, the other is for couples who are assigned to different places for work. These trips are paid for by one's work unit (but communes have no family leave provisions). If the person on leave is working relatively near his home, he is allowed a fifteen day visit once per year and a worker who is located relatively far from home can take a thirty day visit once every two years.

Vocabulary

bǐcǐ	each other, mutually; you too, the same to you
bǐjiào (bǐjiǎo)	relatively, comparatively; fairly, rather
bú dàn	not only
bù shǎo	quite a lot, quite a few
chéng chéngshì	to become, to constitute, to make city
dànshi	but
érqiě	furthermore
fēngqì fēngsú fūfù	common practice; general mood custom married couple, husband and wife
gǎibiàn	to change
hé huì	with; and might, to be likely to, will
jiéhūn (jiēhūn) jiějué jīngguò jìniàn	to get married to solve to go through, to pass by or through memento, memorial
kǎolǔ kě kě bú shì ma!	to consider; consideration indeed, really I'll say, yes indeed, that's for sure
liàn'ài	to be romantically involved with; love
liǎojiě (liǎojiě) lǐhūn lǐwù (lǐwù)	to understand; understanding to get divorced gift, present
nánjiā(r) nǎnnǚ nénggòu niánqīng nòngcūn nǚjiā(r) nǚlì	the husband's family male and female can, to be able to to be young rural area, countryside the wife's family to be hardworking, to be diligent; diligently, hard

qīngnián	youth, young person
qīnqi	relatives
qūbié	difference, distinction
shíxíng	to practice, to carry out (a method, policy, plan, reform, etc.)
shuāngfāng	both sides, both parties
sòng	to give (something as a gift)
tàn qīn	to visit family
tànqīn	to visit relatives (usually means immediate family)
tànqīnjià	leave for visiting family
tíchàng	to advocate, to promote, to initiate
wǎnliàn wǎnhūn	late involvement and late marriage
xiāngdāng	quite, pretty, very
xǔduō	many; a great deal (of), a lot (of)
yīngdāng	should, ought to
yíshì	ceremony
yìzhí	all along, all the time (up until a certain point)
zhèngfǔ	government
zhùdao	to move to, to go live at
zǒngshi	always
zuò	to serve as, to act as; as