



13 December 2010

With the holidays approaching, we offer this non-traditional book list of gift ideas for those interested in China.

Highlighted books are not on current American best seller or business reading lists, but offer alternate perspectives by those who are generally not U.S. journalists or business people—valuable and also different from the norm. These books shed light on Chinese culture, tradition and mindset—a key component to lasting insight and success in the Middle Kingdom.

1. ***Sino-Sudoku: The fun, playful way to learn Chinese.*** By Paolo Padoan and Dorothee Dauber. Also available in German and Spanish, these volumes teach Chinese characters in a Sudoku game format. Published in Germany, they are available through www.sino-sudoku.com.
2. Full-length works of fiction by Ha Jin, including ***Waiting***, ***Crazed***, and ***War Trash***. Jin is currently an English professor at Boston University. His writing is very accessible and portrays life and thought in China from the perspective of someone who is actually FROM China.
3. ***400 Million Customers.*** Written by Carl Crow, a journalist and businessman who moved to Shanghai in 1911, this book was first published in 1937. One of the earliest “business books” about modern China, many of Crow’s observations remain very relevant and undated, allowing readers to see what constants remain part of Chinese interactions.
4. ***A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought.*** By Wolfram Eberhard and first published in German in 1983, this is an entertaining and easy-to-read reference book on Chinese symbolism and culture. Learn why there are so many Chinese paintings of fish, and why bats symbolize good luck and happiness.
5. ***Pocket Timeline of China.*** Jessica Harrison-Hall’s 2007 book, published by The British Museum is a streamlined, visual guide to Chinese history and includes a 12-page pull-out timeline. For much more comprehensive histories, look for works by John K. Fairbank (academic) and Jonathan Fenby (journalist).
6. ***Shenzhen. A Travelogue From China.*** Produced in 2003 by French-Canadian animator Guy Delisle, this graphic novel stands out from many China travel books because of its comic book format, and the fact that it is not written by a journalist who had been stationed in China. Coincidentally, Delisle also produced the equally accessible work ***Pyongyang*** on North Korea.
7. ***Spitting on Ghosts: Fables and Fairy Tales from Early China.*** Another comic book format volume, and part of the Traditional Chinese Thought series by Tsai Chih Chung. Books are in English, with Chinese text on the side. The series includes similar books on Daoism, Confucius, Zen Masters and others. An easy introduction to Chinese philosophy, some of the series is out of print, but available on Amazon and in



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the Xin Hua Foreign Language bookstores in China (without the benefit copyright protection? Definitely the low cost option if you happen to be there!).

8. **Dragon Seed.** See the 1944 film starring Katharine Hepburn, based on Pearl S. Buck's novel of wartime occupation of a Chinese village by the Japanese. The novel is recommended for giving an accurate depiction of China of that time, though often in the shadow of ***The Good Earth***. The movie is a sign of the times, with American stars in key Chinese roles. Still, fun to watch and does provide good cultural insight to that period in history.

See future Blue Heron newsletters for more suggestions. We are also interested in hearing your ideas and comments.

In the meantime, best wishes for success.

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