

A Chinese Kaleidoscope; An American Mosaic

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There are many tennis and golf players in China, but they are relatively unaccomplished. Of course, Michael Te Pei Chang represented American Chinese people in world tennis competitions, making many breakthroughs and winning many Grand Slam competitions. Basically no other Chinese have entered such competitions, yet there are many Japanese and Koreans in the top one hundred players.

But why is that? The reason is that golf is not a sport that is only available to the upper classes in North America and Europe. However in China it is an emerging sport that is considered aristocratic. Those who can afford to play golf are too busy to excel in it, and the common people cannot afford to play. Therefore while China is advancing in many sports, Chinese still do not rank among the best in tennis and golf. The relevant authorities should promote these sports in the future by getting more people to play it and by giving special training to players with talent.

In China before the eighties, fifty percent of the world's cyclists were Chinese. In those times people were healthy because of the exercise, and there were no traffic jams. Now that bicycles have been supplanted by cars, there are often traffic jams and people's level of physical fitness has suffered. The odd thing though is that although there are many cyclists in China, there are few if any Chinese cycling champions. The reason for this is that while other people consider cycling mainly as a form of exercise, to Chinese people it is mainly seen as a form of transportation. Cycling nowadays is very dangerous nowadays due to the number of cars on the roads. Fewer and fewer people are cycling as a result, and people are getting fatter.

The investment required for playing ping pong or badminton is much smaller. Neither sport requires much space to play, and both can be played no matter whether you are in the city or the countryside. Both these sports are very popular in China for these reasons. Chinese athletes rank among the best in ping pong and badminton. In the early seventies, ping pong played an important role in Chinese-American diplomatic relations when the two countries broke the ice with a ping pong tournament between a visiting American team and a Chinese team. This was later termed "ping pong diplomacy".

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China also has the bold and powerful sport of Shaolin boxing, and Shaolin Kung Fu, which was created by Shaolin monks. These are popular not only within China, but also abroad. However T'ai Chi is more useful in promoting health and increasing life expectancy. Also during the seventies, the martial arts superstar Bruce Lee enthralled American audiences and caused a surge of interest in Chinese Kung Fu.

Thirty-three: China is the best place for cultivating talent in acrobatics and stunts.

In China no matter whether it is in the city or the countryside, there are very few places with parks or greenery. There are few places for people to relax and rest. After the economic reforms, although every town and city had new buildings and factories, developers were required to reserve a definite amount of space for greenery and planting trees. Generally developers were required to reserve thirty-five percent of the area under development for greenery. Not only does this add to the elegant scenery, but it also keeps the air clean.

Some cities that are being transformed even replace residential areas with parks and greenery. The parks are open to the citizens for free as a place to relax and rest. Therefore there is an important connection between the place you live and the air quality. Elderly people get up early and go to public parks for morning exercise. The fresh air and beautiful environment are very beneficial to your health. Currently many cities in China are replacing old houses and factories with communal spaces that have been beautified and sanitized. Now these cities are on par with Hong Kong and other major cities around the world.

Ever since China underwent economic forms, the arts have enjoyed free expression. All areas of art have been completely developed. Not only is the standard of visiting Western artists high, but all forms of local art, such as Guangdong opera, Beijing opera, pingtan, and Yueh opera from Shaoxing, have flourished. China's acrobats are especially brilliant. Acrobats are actively trained in every province and city in China. Acrobatic talent must be cultivated from a young age. If you want to learn contortionism and somersaulting, you must begin strict training from an early age. Why is it that the West lacks acrobatic talent like China's? The reason is that in the West children go to school as soon as they reach the appropriate age.

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There are a broad range of climates in China. In the south of China the weather is hot; in the north it is cold, and there is even ice and snow during the winter. Skiing is popular in the West, but it is not common for people in China to ski because of the lack of ski resorts. The reason there are not many ski resorts in China is that ski resorts require a large investment, and trees and rocks must be removed to make a mountain fit for skiing. The endeavor requires a great deal of manpower and resources. If there is not enough snowfall, then snow must be made. On top of this, the charges for skiing cannot be too high in China, so the costs are too high to make a successful business out of it. Then you must also provide ski equipment such as boots, poles, skis, and ski lifts. There is a lot of potential for a loss because the necessary startup capital is large and there are many unpredictable factors. Therefore few people choose to invest in the construction of ski resorts. Surely in the future when the China's common citizens have satisfied all their basic needs and are relatively well off, skiing will become popular in China.

Basketball and soccer are both very popular in China. Whenever there are international competitions in these sports, Chinese people love to watch. If any such competition happens within China, the ticket prices will be inflated by ticket scalpers because of the popularity.

Although there are many soccer teams in China and Chinese people love to watch soccer, Chinese soccer teams have accomplished very little and have failed to win even a bronze medal. This situation is different from the one with golf and tennis. Golf and tennis are individual sports, while soccer is a team sport relying on cooperation to win. The members of the Chinese teams perform well individually, but perhaps they need more teamwork. Chinese soccer teams need to develop a team mentality before they can be successful.

Chinese people have been very successful in water sports such as swimming and diving. Success in these sports can only be obtained with good coaching and a lot of hard work. Chinese athletes have won many gold and silver medals in water sports for these reasons, and so many Chinese people have developed an interest in watching them. China has become a nation that produces swimming and gymnastics kings and queens because all it takes is hard work on the part of the athlete.

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China has expended a great deal of effort in fighting for the opportunity to host international sports competitions. For example, in addition to the Olympics, China has also hosted international single-event competitions in sports such as basketball and volleyball. A country generally only wins the right to host international sporting events like that when its economy is doing relatively well because after the right to host the competitions has been won, the country must make large investments, such as training personnel and building stadiums, airports, highways, and luxury hotels. These things can only be accomplished if the country's finances are in order. However, despite all of the necessary investments and potential losses, hosting international sporting events raises the profile of the host country. Larger salaries abroad cause many famous Chinese athletes and coaches to emigrate from China and take up positions in foreign teams. There are many talented athletes in China, but they are often tempted to move to foreign countries to play. Nevertheless, they are promptly replaced by new talent.

Thirty-four: From rickshaws to air transportation, improvements in speed.

Since the beginning of China's history to the eighties, walking has been the main mode of transportation for Chinese people. In the past there were no cars, and goods were carried on and in backs, handcarts, oxcarts, horse carriages, rickshaws, and bicycles. Over the course of many generations, these tools of transportation, however crude, contributed greatly to the advancement of the nation's material and cultural advancement. The notable aspects of these modes of transportation are that they could access difficult to reach areas, did not cause traffic jams, did not use up natural resources, and did not pollute the environment.

In the present transportation situation, broad roads are used, everyone drives a car, and there are many traffic accidents. Driving instead of walking causes a lack of exercise, which in turn creates health problems. Although driving makes transportation more convenient, people's physical capabilities are in decline.

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The Yangtze and Qiantang bridges made before the economic reforms were not constructed in adherence with international standards. After the economic reforms, the first major bridge built was the South Pu Bridge built in Pudong. This bridge was constructed to be similar to San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and Brooklyn's Brooklyn Bridge. After the bridges construction, China's economy grew rapidly, and a number of other bridges were built in the area, including some underground tunnels. One of these tunnels is particularly impressive, covering a greater distance than the tunnel connecting New Jersey and New York. Currently China's largest bridge is a bridge in Hangzhou that is thirty-six kilometers in length and can accommodate the crossings by ten thousand ton ships. This bridge has been called the largest sea bridge in the world. Not only did the project stay within budget, but the bridge was opened to traffic after just two and a half years of construction, six months ahead of schedule. The speed of construction was faster than anything in Europe or the United States. The brilliance and speed with which transportation infrastructure is being built in China is apparent from this example.

The most popular methods of transportation in China fifty years ago were rickshaws, bicycles, and three-wheeled vehicles. Rickshaws and three-wheeled vehicles could be used to transport passengers, but bicycles are only for one person. A rickshaw carries one passenger, and is pulled by a driver in the front. This type of man-powered vehicle is unreasonable. Three-wheeled vehicles are very basic and require no fuel, but the driver must expend a lot of energy. Bicycles are more rarely used to transport passengers. In the past these three types of vehicles were used the most due to a lack of cars.

Rickshaws are no longer in use, and three-wheeled vehicles are very few in number. They are used only in rare situations, such as when going to Beijing's hutongs, which are too narrow to accommodate cars. Cycling is the best means of transportation for your health, and conserves energy. However since there are so many cars on the road today, cycling is dangerous and few people choose it as a means of transportation.

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There are very few roads from China's coast to Xinjiang and Tibet in the northwest. Traveling there has always been difficult and so few people go there. The legend *Journey to the West* describes the many hardships in travelling there.

Today China's transportation infrastructure has developed very quickly. Even Xinjiang and Tibet are accessible by train and public highway. Major cities in the northwest are serviced by domestic airlines as well. For example, Urumqi can be reached from Shanghai in five hours by flight. Transportation in ancient times relied on horses and even small distances took lengthy times to cover. In the past, the inhabitants of the northwest were nomadic, people with no permanent homes who supported themselves by raising cattle and sheep. Nowadays transportation there is convenient. When drivers encounter cattle or sheep herders on the road, they must stop and let them pass. The common people no longer live in Mongolian style yurts, but instead live in houses. Taxes are more lenient in the northwest, with some locations paying no taxes at all. Standards of living are higher even than the general population in some areas of inland China

The extent of the city of Shanghai continues to grow larger and larger. In the past, the Pudong district was just a suburb of Shanghai that few people visited. Now Pudong has become the Manhattan of the East, and is even more developed than Manhattan. In Pudong there is the massive Jinmao Building, and directly across from it was built the even taller International Financial Center. Each building in the area has its own style and function since they are all designed by different architects from around the world, rather than a single local architect.

Shanghai's plan for Pudong's city center is that it be accessible in one hour by car from any direction within the city. Besides the subway and public buses, you can also take taxis in Shanghai to the suburbs. Not only are the city streets in Shanghai getting broader, but there are more and more tree-lined avenues throughout the suburbs. Because of the newfound economic prosperity, everyone drives their own car. New streets are not being built quickly enough to accommodate all of the new vehicles. Shanghai is now on par with any other international city.

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In the West, increase in car travel has resulted in a decrease in train travel, but in China, train travel is increasing even as car travel is too. Newer trains are being used for faster speeds. Because the economy in China is developing so much, traveling business has increased. Bus, train, and plane business are all very prosperous. Currently new roads are being built all over China, both highways and regular roads. However, many are not national roads at all, but are owned by private industry. For these reasons, the tolls are very high. Tolls for driving on such roads are higher even than in Europe and the United States.

Several decades in the past, shipping along the Yangtze River and the Southeast coast of China was very developed. The shipping business from Shanghai to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Ningbo was very prosperous. The shipping business in these areas was put to a halt in 1949 by the end of the Chinese Civil War. It recovered during the fifties and grew prosperous once again. But in the eighties after the economic reforms, the structure of the shipping business changed. Much of the shipping business was replaced by trucks, long distance buses, and air freight. Hong Kong however has maintained an important role in the shipping industry because of its modern facilities.

In modern people's lives, many old modes of transportation have already become obsolete. One example is sedan chairs, which used to be used exclusively by the nobility. To ride a sedan chair was very impressive, but it was very hard work for those who were carrying it. Nevertheless, there are still some special areas that still have sedan chairs. For example people who use marriage sedans chairs in Zhejiang and Ningbo provinces. Now after the reforms, using a sedan chair in a wedding gives a feeling of antiquity. In the past, the sedan bearers were treated harshly and made very little money. However, now when there is a marriage sedan for a wedding, the bearers are treated well because the employers are celebrating a happy occasion. On some mountains there are sedan chairs that elderly people can rent if they cannot hike any further. The bearers are very fit, and can bring a sedan chair up and down the mountain quite quickly. They are able to sell their labor, and elderly people are able to enjoy the mountain scenery.