



## CHINA

China is known as having the longest continuous cultural identity in the history of the world. The very size of China lends itself to great variation in landscape and climate, and interactions between different regional cultures result in wide differences in beliefs, customs, and languages.

Within China, the wind-swept regions of the north were the heartland of the ancient states while the south, marked by lakes, tropical river valleys, and delta lands, became the economic engine of the country. Along China's busy network of rivers, lakes, and canals, the development of art and other craft products thrived. Bronzes, lacquers, porcelains, silks, books, calligraphy and paintings, and architecture characterized China to the world while having a tremendous impact on the cultures of Korea and Japan, its close neighbors.

Nearly two thousand years of imperial rule ended in 1912, when China became a republic. The Chinese Communist Party has been in power since 1949, and its economic policies have evolved greatly. Beijing, the Chinese capital, dates to 1420, and today traditional sites such as the Temple of Heaven and the Forbidden City stand side by side with modern high-rises.

