



Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts: Festivals of China

Written by Carol Stepanchuk

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This introductory resource to some major Chinese festivals was published in the early 1990s and is now quite dated. It refers to changes since the establishment of the People's Republic, and differences with Taiwan, and while it is important to emphasize that festivals aren't static, being 20 years out of date is kind of significant. I'm sure there are more recent books. I read this one because it was sitting around and I wanted to read something on break.

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However, even if it weren't so out of date, I wouldn't recommend it. I didn't appreciate the chapter on Chinese national minorities; it read too much like a propaganda brochure: While there will always be hurdles to integrating minorities into mainstream society, the People's Republic is doing the best job it can of improving the standard of living of minorities while allowing them to celebrate their own festivals and speak their own languages! How nice.

Most of the book read like a travel brochure - visit such-and-such a place at this time of the year and watch the people engaging in such-and-such quaint and colorful custom. The best I can say about it is that it covered a lot of ground and gave a sense of the history of certain festivals so maybe once upon a time it would have been a good book for grade school students doing some poster project. ...more