



Chinese Last Names: Chinese Surnames

Xue Bai

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We all know that China is the world's most populous country now. So, there is a wide variety of family names for the largest population. According to the data that there are close to 12,000 surnames recorded (including those from non-Han Chinese ethnic groups), but only about 3,100 are in use currently [1. (Economist 1995)]. Of the 3,100 of surnames, the 100 most common surnames are shared by about 85% of the population in China. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_surname) The 100 most common surnames are called “The Hundred Surnames”.

Usually Chinese last names have only one character, but there are some double-character last names in China. For example: s? m? (??), ?u yang (??), zh? gé (??), etc. These double-character last names are very rare. There are also some Chinese last names with three or more characters, but those last names are not ethnically Han Chinese.

Chinese surnames are patrilinear. They are passed from father to children. Nowadays, in Mainland China, Chinese women rarely take their husbands surname after marriage. But in Hong Kong, some women may adopt their husband's last name.

In this book, 300 Chinese last names are listed with pinyin and the last name meanings. These last names are listed in order of popularity.

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