Chapter 4
Chinese Things for Interculturality

Abstract This chapter represents the focal point of the book. Five 'Chinese' things (calligraphy, chopsticks, jade, mahjong, Resident Identity Card) are introduced one by one and problematised with and for interculturality. The chapter is meant to serve as support for reader reflexivity and is written as such. Questions are proposed to reflect further on what the more-than-human can teach us about the ways we engage with interculturality as both as phenomenon and a subject of research and education. A useful framework for examing things for interculturality is also proposed.

Keywords Chinese things · Framework · Interculturality · Language · Guidelines · Reflection

4.1 Guidelines for Reflecting on the More-than-Human

The following five things were decided upon amongst us (in alphabetical order):

1. Calligraphy
2. Chopsticks
3. Jade
4. Mahjong
5. Resident Identity Card (居民身份证)

These five things allow us to cover what could be considered as some of the most essential aspects of daily life: *be/become, identify, think, eat, communicate, play*, *name,* and *enjoy*. These all represent acts and processes that we all have to deal with globally.

How to analyse a thing? How to use it to reflect on interculturality? Scholars like Baudrillard (2020: 46) have proposed to focus on the following aspects of things and especially "the processes whereby people relate to them and with the systems of human behaviour and relationships that result there from":

> the size of the object; its degree of functionality (i.e. the object's relationship to its own objective function); the gestures associated with it (are they rich or impoverished? traditional or not?); its form; its duration; the time of day at which it appears (more or less intermittent

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2022

F. Dervin and M. Yuan, *Reflecting on and with the 'More-than-Human' in Education*, SpringerBriefs in Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7811-1_4

> presence, and how conscious one is of it); the material that it transforms (obvious in the case of a coffee grinder, less so in those of a mirror, a radio, or a car—though every object transforms something); the degree of exclusiveness or sociability attendant upon its use (is it for private, family, public or general use?); and so on. (Baudrillard, 2020: 33).

In the following chapters, we start from four aspects for each thing: (1) Biography, (2) Its relation to other agents, (3) Its symbolic and imaginary values, (4) How it fares with and for interculturality. We propose the following (open) questions as guidelines:

1. **Thing biography**

- What is the thing about? What is it meant to do? What does it look like and what is it made of? Is it used for different purposes by different people?
- What does the Chinese character referring to the thing mean? What is its etymology? How does the word compare to the word for the same thing in other languages?
- Are there Chinese sayings or idioms from the past and today that relate to the thing? What do they tell us?
- When was the thing invented, why and how? How has it changed over the century?
- Does the thing relate to specific Chinese 'philosophical' concepts and ideas? What aspects of life do they reveal?

2. **The thing in relation to other agents (humans and other non-humans)**

- How does the thing influence people today, for example, what does it do to people's identity (for those who use it, how would people perceive them)? How does it relate to relations between people? Where does it fit in these categories (and/or other categories): *be/become, think, identify, eat, communicate, play*, and *enjoy*?
- Does the thing trigger specific emotions in people, alone and together with other people?
- Is the thing related to other *things* in China and other countries? Which ones and what is their connections?

3. **The symbolic and imaginary values of the thing**

- What would the thing symbolise to different people in China? What does the thing tell us about 'Chineseness' and the place of China in the world?
- Does the thing make people associate their user with specific stereotypes (about e.g. nationality, gender, age, etc.)?
- What is the expected future of this thing in China and in the world?

4. **The thing and interculturality**

- Does the thing reveal aspects of interculturality in itself, in the way it was created, its 'philosophy', in the changes that it has experienced?
- Does the thing have equivalents in other parts of the world?
- How well-known/popular is the thing outside China? How has it adapted transnationally?
- How could the reader use this Chinese thing to reflect on how they 'do' and think about interculturality?

Each discussion of the things is preceded by general questions about topics related to the thing and short personal narratives that Fred has written about them in relation

to his experiences of China [the latter should be taken for what they are: short reflexive pieces that do not aim to generalize about China, the Chinese and the rest]. Following each discussion of the things, more questions are asked to the reader for them to reflect further on. These questions concern interculturality both as a phenomenon and as a subject of research and education.

4.2 Chinese Thing for Interculturality I: Calligraphy[1]

Reflect on the following questions before you start reading about calligraphy:

- How often do you handwrite? What things do you use to do it? Do you enjoy handwriting, why (not)?
- Do you have a favourite thing for writing? What is it and why? What is special about it? In a similar vein, what is it that you don't like to write with and why (mention material, colour, etc.)?
- Have you ever used any of the four 'basic' components of Chinese calligraphy: a brush, an ink stick, an ink stone and paper for Chinese calligraphy (made of a combination of e.g. paper mulberry and rice)? If you have had them in your hands or on your desk, how did they feel/smell/sound like? How reminiscent were they of other such items that you have used before? How do they compare in terms of aesthetics, function and influence on your writing?
- What do you think of your own handwriting? Is it always the same? How much do things influence how you write (in terms of aesthetics but also content, e.g. a pencil versus a stylus)? Have you changed handwritings in your lifetime, when, how and why?
- How was the writing of your language(s) invented? Are there any legends about how the language(s) you know were created? How has the use of things to write evolved in your context(s)?
- Do you know different types of writing available around the world and how they are 'done'? How many different kinds of writing do you know (read and write)? Which ones do you find interesting and why?
- How often have you seen some form of writing exhibited at e.g. an art museum? What kind of writing was it and how had it been 'inscribed'?
- How important is 'good' handwriting in your context? What representations/stereotypes are associated with it? What does someone's handwriting usually tell you about different aspects of their identity?
- Are you aware of any idiom or saying that has to do with ways of writing (e.g. in English 'to have handwriting like chicken scratch')? What do they imply?
- Is calligraphy 'big' in your context? Who does it and why? What do they do with it after completing a piece?

[1] Note that calligraphy is also practiced in some East Asian countries, with many having used or still using Chinese characters: e.g. Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

[**Personal narrative:**

Writing is part of my life. For the past twenty years I have written nearly on a daily basis. I tend to navigate between handwriting, my computer and my phone. I love beautiful pens that feel comfortable in my hand. A great pen and a beautiful notebook are my essential accessories as a scholar and a writer; they make me feel joyful and somewhat 'safe'. Although my handwriting is appaling, I do believe that certain things should be handwritten first rather than typed on a computer.

I don't remember the first time I saw a piece of calligraphy. However, I remember my first reactions when I saw Chinese calligraphy at an art museum in China. I was somewhat surprised, looked at some the pieces and left the section to go to what I considered at the time as 'real' art (painting, sculpture…). I had also noticed earlier on that some calligraphic text appeared on some art scrolls but I did not really pay attention to them. It took a very long time for me to get an interest in calligraphy. A trip to the Fujian province, in the Southwest of China, where someone took me to an art exhibition where there were all kinds of Chinese calligraphies, changed my perceptions. I was speechless. So many beautiful pieces, with some looking like art by Paul Klee. I was particularly impressed by a piece, which was a patchwork of headlines from newspapers in different calligraphic forms. The person who accompanied me happened to know the calligrapher, told him how much I admired his piece—and the next day he gifted it to me. This was the first piece of calligraphy that I put on my wall at home in Finland. A few years later, I saw an exhibition of Xu Bing's work (see below), which also impressed me, especially his 'invented' calligraphic art. Today, the boundary between 'art' (as I had been taught to see it) and Chinese calligraphy has disappeared from my mind and I do spend as much time admiring pieces of calligraphy in art museums as I would do for paintings. I am somehow envious, as an artist myself, that I cannot really include some writing in my pieces since I find it hard to appreciate the 'beauty' of handwriting with the Roman alphabet. However, in some of my pieces I do include my Chinese stamp as my own signature.]

Let us begin with two quotes:

> The worst is that they possess neither letters nor an alphabet. They express everything by means of symbols or pictograms, which at times have two or three different meanings or even make up entire parts of a sentence.… To acquire the terms and phrases paramount for the propagation of faith, and the most commonly used ones, necessary for everyday conversation, a knowledge of merely 9,000 symbols should suffice. (Höllmann, 2017: 10).
>
> Had I been born Chinese, I would have been a calligrapher, not a painter. (Picasso quoted in Barrass, 2002: 54).
>
> 一字值千金 (yī zì zhí qiānjīn) (A single written character is worth a thousand pieces of gold), proverb.

The first quote shows how German Jesuit missionary Johannes Grueber (1623–1665) described Chinese calligraphy, the stylized artistic writing of Chinese with centuries of diverse practice: No letters, no alphabet, use of polysemous symbols or pictograms, knowledge of 9000 symbols necessary to be able to communicate on a daily basis—and, in his case, to spread his faith to the Chinese… The second quote

from Pablo Picasso introduces one of the topics that the thing called calligraphy will urge us to discuss: the (potential)(artificial) boundaries between art and writing.

Over the centuries different languages have co-existed in China, and although we focus here on just one of them called generically *Chinese*—which represents in fact an array of different 'dialects' sharing the same script (with many incomprehensible for speakers of other dialects)—we need to bear in mind that many Chinese Minzu 'ethnic' groups also speak languages such as Kazakh, Korean, Uyghur, Mongolian or Tibetan (Dervin & Yuan, 2021; Höllmann, 2017). The 'inventor' of Chinese calligraphy, Cangjie (仓颉), a 'mythical' four-eyed historian of the Yellow Emperor (黄帝, Huangdi), is said to have created characters based on his observations of animal footprints and bird claw marks (amongst others). This was meant to keep records and to spread information throughout the kingdom.

In general, Chinese calligraphy connects nicely different aspects of Chineseness: aesthetics, history, language, and philosophy. Figure 4.1 presents an example of Chinese calligraphy that says *love country* (to be read from top down).

Today more than 50,000 Chinese characters are available. A 'well-educated' person is usually familiar with about 5000 characters. Each character is polysemous and can represent silmutaneously different kinds of grammar categories (e.g. verbs, adverbs, nouns) and sounds—meaning that one given character can be pronounced differently depending on the semantic context. Although in traditional Chinese texts words were read vertically from right to left (NB: no punctuation), today Chinese is read horizontally from left to right.

These characters are seen everywhere in the Chinese-speaking worlds in print, calligraphy and other forms. Calligraphy of famous persons are very valuable in China and are used at times as official logos for e.g. universities, restaurants, hotels… Höllmann (2017: 217) notes for example that the calligraphies of Mao Zedong (1893–1976) are still visible today in e.g. the logo of the newspaper *The People's Daily* (人民日报, Renmin ribao). Calligraphy is also used in e.g. ancestral worship tablets and brush-written couplets with good fortune/blessings (福, fú) and longevity (壽 shòu) inscribed on them and placed on e.g. housedoors.

Before exploring Chinese calligraphy further, let us look into etymologies. In English calligraphy comes from Greek *kalligraphia* (*kallos* = beauty; *graphein* = to write, the idea of drawing is implied in the Greek word). Defined as the ability to write neatly, or the activity of learning to do this (usually following predetermined patterns), calligraphy used to be taught in schools in Europe and beyond in the past and is now more or less phased out. Penmanship can be used as a synonym in English. In Chinese 书法 (shū fǎ) translates as *calligraphy, handwriting, penmanship* or *'way of writing'*. 书 stands for *book, letter, document* and has an ideographic of a mark made by a pen. 法 can be translated as *law, method, way*, and *to emulate* (amongst others). Its ideographic is the course followed by a stream (hinting at water flowing in the idea of calligraphy in Chinese).

We have collected some stimulating expressions and sayings in Chinese to share with our readers before we look at calligraphy in more depth:

Fig. 4.1 An example of a calligraphy in Chinese: Love country (爱国)

- 琴棋书画 (qín qí shū huà) refers to the ‘four arts’: *zither* (a musical instrument), *Go, calligraphy* and *painting*. The phrase also describes the accomplishments of a well-educated person;
- 书画 (shū huà) can translate as both painting *and* calligraphy;
- 字画 (zì huà) is the process of inscribing a poem on e.g. a painting, fan or ceramic bowl as a work of calligraphy;
- One can find different terms to refer to styles and appreciation of calligraphy: 飘洒 (piāo sǎ), *graceful, fluent and elegant*; 隽拔 (juàn bá), *graceful, handsome* (of people); 出水芙蓉 (chū shuǐ fú róng) (idiom) *as a lotus flower breaking the surface* or *surpassingly beautiful* (of a young lady’s face or an old gentleman’s calligraphy); 怒猊渴骥 (nù ní kě jì), *forceful and vigorous*; 一笔不苟 (yī bǐ bù gǒu), (idiom) *not even one stroke is negligent*, *to write characters in which every stroke is placed perfectly*; 涂鸦 (tú yā), *graffiti, poor calligraphy, to scribble.*

Through etymologies one finds that the ideas of *beauty* and *pleasure* seem to apply to both English and Chinese calligraphies. In Chinese there often seems to be a link between beautiful writing and grace, elegance, referring both to calligraphy as (physical) style as well as writing expression. The three aspects of line, rhythm and structure are central in Chinese calligraphy. The arts and calligraphy are in fact interrelated in China since they share the same instruments (brush, ink), and it is common to see calligraphic works in art museums and to be sold at art auctions in the Middle Kingdom. In their edited volume entitled *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting* Murck and Fong (2013) remind us that Chinese poetry, calligraphy and painting are known as the 'three perfections' (see Fig. 4.2). They also quote Su Shi (苏轼, 1037–1101), who asserted about the poet Wang Wei (王維, 701–761) that his work represented "poetry in painting and painting in poetry" (诗中有画, 画中有诗, shī zhōng yǒu huà, huà zhōng yǒu shī). Often Chinese artists inscribe poems onto their paintings, creating in the process what has been referred to as 'visual thinking' (Murck & Fong, 2013).

Now let us discuss the basics of Chinese calligraphy. We note first that each character builds up in a 'square' and should reflect a living movement in the way their strokes are represented with the brush. Written characters emerged over five thousand years ago in China and have been discovered among Neolithic societies such as the Shantung Lung-Shan, on e.g. bones and shells (so-called oracle-bone characters). Five or six different scripts of calligraphy have been identified (see below) and they all seem to follow these principles: *characters with a visual form to sounds and characters that borrowed sounds.* The strokes of Chinese calligraphy are said to

Fig. 4.2 A street sign showing the 'Four Treasures of the Study' (文房四宝)

suggest the form of natural objects and are 'fluid', including moments of impetus, momentum, momentary self-control and forming a balanced whole. The expression of emotions while doing Chinese calligraphy is common and the coordination of body and mind represents an important aspect of it. All in all, Chinese calligraphy renders characters dynamic, inspired by the dynamism of nature and the energies of the human body and, unlike 'Western' calligraphy, it aims to express the calligrapher's emotions, level of education, self-discipline and character rather than e.g. creating uniformity as is the case with 'Western' calligraphy where one tends to 'copy' certain designs and patterns. What is more, ink stains or dry brush strokes are not considered as 'errors' should they occur, but as part of the process of creating calligraphy.

The following tools are used for Chinese calligraphy: *a brush* (with a handle made of e.g. hardwood, porcelain, bamboo and bristles from wools, horsehair…), *an ink stick* (a block of dried ink dye), *an ink stone or slab* made from stone or pottery, and *paper*. These are often referred to as the 'Four Treasures of the Study' (文房四宝, wenfang sibao). Many of these elements have also turned into their own forms of art (e.g. seal carvings, see Fig. 4.3.).

Fig. 4.3 One of the authors' seal carved with his name (文德, Wén dé)

Usually a piece of calligraphy is not signed in hand but contains the calligrapher's seal representing his name. Several seals can be applied to one piece of calligraphy.

We note that calligraphies can be framed or installed on e.g. a hanging scroll or a banner. Höllmann (2017: 15) also notes (see Fig. 4.4.):

> You'll see them in parks in the big cities: small groups of men and women carrying buckets of water, into which they dip giant brushes—in a pinch, mops—with which they proceed to write characters on the pavement, large enough so that they can be read even from a distance. This is often followed by passionate discussions about the calligraphies' aesthetic qualities. But the discussions never last long, for neither do their subjects; the water dries quickly, and from the moment of its creation, every piece carries within it the seed of impermanence. In other contexts too, script is a popular topic of conversation in China.

The brush differs immensely from a mere pen or a stylus. Flexible, it can create different kinds of wide or narrow strokes, by applying its tip or sides to paper. Speed and pressure always influence the effects on paper. Finally, these effects can be two- or three-dimensional. For the connoisseur, just looking at brush strokes, they might be able to determine e.g. the elegance, restraint, spontaneity and even non-conformativity of the calligrapher. Chinese calligraphy—like so many aspects

Fig. 4.4 'Water' calligraphy: 心平只为折磨多 气傲皆因经验少 (Trans.: *Peace of mind is only for torment, pride is due to a lack of experience*)

of Chineseness—requires creating a balance and experiencing with stability and vitality, i.e. there are rules to follow but one may break away from some of them to express and show individuality.

It was during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) that more individual styles of writing Chinese characters were developed. Some of the most famous calligraphers of the time include e.g. Zhang Ruitu (張瑞圖, 1570–1641) and Zhu Yunming (祝允明, 1460–1527). As a skill that any educated person needed to have in China, calligraphy used to be included in important administrative examinations such as the imperial civil service examinations until the early twentieth century.

A few words about the different categories of Chinese calligraphy are needed here. The oldest script is known as 专属 (zhuan shu) and is called in English seal script. Meant to be engraved, 专属 contains ancient characters, with some still readable today. Clerical script (隶属, li shu), established during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), represents a simplification of brushstrokes and is still comprehensible today. Said to be the easiest script to read, the so-called 'regular script' (楷书, kai shu) appeared at the end of the same dynasty and supported yet another simplification of writing. Running/semi-cursive script (行书, xing shu) is also popular for calligraphy today. In this script, the strokes are connected and simplified to ensure that writing is faster. Finally, in the cursive script (草书, cao shu, cao means *grass, straw* as in the word for *grassland*), the strokes are shortened and linked together and all the characters run into each other. What's interesting about this last script is that it appeared as a counter-reaction to the strict rules established by the authorities concerning writing.

What all these different kinds of scripts have in common is that every single character should serve both as a model of morality and symbolize the energy of the human and of nature itself. For Höllmann (2017: 214):

> Art in China was not least a medium of distinction, be it for the self-assertion of the educated elite, who fought to preserve their cultural legacy, or to articulate dissatisfaction, as in the case of critical intellectuals who saw tradition as a burden. Hence, calligraphy was used not only as a medium of creative self-fulfillment but equally as an instrument to position oneself and one's views—in some cases even to demonstrate power.

Today calligraphy is also practiced by contemporary Chinese artists. For example, Wang Dongling (王冬龄) produces experimental ink movements, which he calls 'calligraphic paintings' (see examples at the Art Institute of Chicago: https://www.artic.edu/artists/77969/wang-dongling). Xu Bing is another fascinating artist who has come back again and again to Chinese characters, mixing strokes from Chinese with the Roman alphabet to reproduce English words, which he calls 'Square Script Calligraphy' (see xubing.com). Höllmann (2017: 206) describes some of his art as follows:

> Xu Bing writes not only on paper but also on rather unusual materials, including pigs, among other things. One performance held in Beijing in 1994, for which he had a pigpen erected and filled with straw and books, was especially provocative. He positioned a sow made from papier-mâché and covered in pseudo-Chinese characters in the pen, then had a live boar, whose body was decorated with real and supposed English words, mount it.

Finally, it is important to remind our readers that the Chinese use Pinyin (拼音, the dominant romanization system of Chinese characters) to e.g. type in characters on their phones or computers in order to access Chinese characters. Pinyin is used to represent the sounds of Chinese. This means that those who know Chinese can navigate at least two writing systems.

[Quid pro quo]

The first thing considered here was calligraphy and we have discussed the elements associated with it such as the brush and ink. Chinese calligraphy is the same for all kinds of different Chinese dialects and topolects (related to places). If one speaks any kind of Chinese, one should be able to read any calligraphy. Chinese calligraphy is thus a symbol of togetherness, some sort of a written lingua franca for billions of people. At school calligraphy is studied in art class but students learn to handwrite Chinese everyday (with a pencil or pen). Calligraphy has more layers to itself than mere 'writing'… it is about people expressing their emotions, showing their character but also demonstrating that they can balance between order and dynamism, rules and individuality somehow. Doing calligraphy should be pleasurable, aesthetically and semantically meaningful and rewarding. Writing characters with a brush is about movement, fluidity, being in harmony with nature and oneself. Usually, someone who is 'good' at calligraphy might be considered as (stereotypically) knowledgeable, educated, unique, with plenty of time to practise but also wealthy and from a 'good' family. In other words, an individual with a personality of their own.

Now reflect on this new set of questions before moving on to the next thing:

- After reading this chapter about Chinese calligraphy, do you now see more *fluidity* in the act of writing?
- What do you make of the aesthetic pleasure of writing? How much does it matter to you? On what occasions? Have you been taught to appreciate this aspect of writing?
- Think back about how people judge others' handwriting in your context(s), what does it say about them—rather than about the one being judged?
- Do you see more connections between writing and art (painting) after reading this section?
- How tolerant are you of (what appears to be) blots or stains on a piece of art or writing? Why is that?
- We have seen that calligraphies are not usually signed in China but a seal is applied to them. What do you think of this practice? Would you buy a work of art that is 'stamped' instead of signed? Do you yourself use seals, for what purposes?
- Have you ever seen your own name written in another writing system? How did it feel? Look at the following Chinese versions of famous 'Western' people and brands and reflect on your feelings while reading them (the pinyin between brackets gives you an indication of how they are pronounced):
  - Einstein 爱因斯坦 (Ài yīn sītǎn)
  - Macdonald's 麦当劳 (Màidāngláo)

– Marilyn Monroe 玛丽莲梦露 (Mǎlì lián mèng lù)
– Prada 普拉达 (Pǔlādá)

- Check Xu Bing's works of art (xubing.com), especially in relation to the use of characters. What do you think the artist wanted to say by e.g. removing the boundaries between Chinese and English writing or by reinventing Chinese writing? What could be the messages for interculturality?
- Observe this piece of calligraphy (Fig. 4.5). Follow each stroke of the characters (from left to right for the big letters and top to down for the smaller ones) and write down how you feel while following these movements. Although you may not be able to understand what these words mean, why do you think that there are different kinds of characters and what the different shapes might be doing to the one observing the calligraphy?

Finally, let's reflect on interculturality as a subject of research and education, based on what was discussed about this first thing.

- What is it from what you have read about calligraphy here that could inspire us to think about interculturality under a different lens (think for example of the character for *water flowing* being included in the character for calligraphy in Chinese)? Do you see connections between aspects of Chinese calligraphy and what we claim people do when they experience interculturality?
- How *intercultural* is Chinese calligraphy and Chinese writing in general? Remember that intercultural here does not necessarily refer to the 'international'.
- How could reflecting on our relations to writing and e.g. the links between the arts and writing enrich our thoughts on interculturality as a notion?

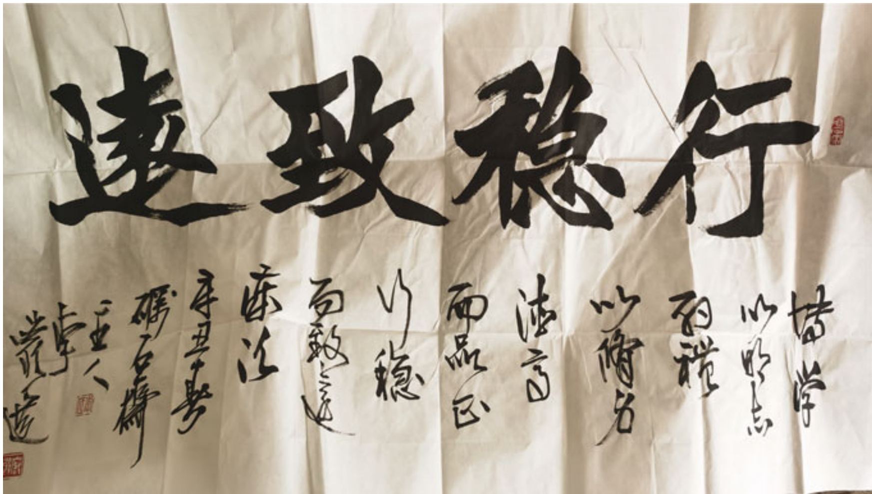

Fig. 4.5 Calligraphy (遠致稳行, trans. steady for far-reaching)

- How could the idea of 'visual thinking' related to applying a brush to paper to create calligraphy inspire us to think further about the idea of interculturality?

4.3 Chinese Thing for Interculturality II: Chopsticks

Let us start with general questions around chopsticks:

- What utensils have you used to eat food in your own context(s) and elsewhere? What is your favourite thing for eating? The one(s) you don't like using? Do you ever use your hands for eating?
- Do you have a very special item of cutlery that you have been using for years? Why do you consider it to be 'unique'?
- When did you learn to use cutleries? How and who taught you?
- Would you eat/drink after someone, for example, share the same spoon, fork or chopsticks? Do you often serve others? Who, how and when? Have you ever felt uncomfortable being served?
- Think of chopsticks: what kinds of activities one can use them for when eating?
- Try to recall your first experience of eating with chopsticks. How was it?
- What do you consider as 'un-/civilised' when eating in public, with family and friends? How much do things play a role in this?
- Do people give cutlery as presents in your context(s)? What, when and why?
- Share some beliefs/taboos/superstitions related to the use of cutlery.

[**Personal narrative:**

For me food has never really mattered. I am a vegetarian and I tend to be very picky. So, I eat because my body asks for food but I am not a 'foodie'. At home in Finland I own many plates and cups and all kinds of cutlery but I rarely use them. I also own many pairs of chopsticks that I have bought in different parts of the world—but I don't dare to use them for fear of breaking them. I like bamboo chopsticks for the way they feel in my right hand.

I don't remember the first time I used chopsticks but I do remember the first time I used disposable ones. That was in Hong Kong when I was probably 16 or 17. I had gone to a restaurant and was given what looked like a 'lump' of wood with two 'bits' of 'sticks' slightly separated from the rest of the piece of wood. I tried to place my index between the two halves of the chopstick pair but it was impossible to eat with that. I then tried to shuffle food from the plate with the 'lump' of wood until someone came to me, grabbed the chopsticks and snapped them apart—accompanied by the laughters of other guests. I had never used this kind of disposable chopsticks before, having only used two separate chopsticks.

I don't know if I really know how to use chopsticks. Many Chinese people I have met always compliment me on my use of the instrument but I often feel that they are just being polite. Using chopsticks for me is often like typing on a computer, I can do it (quickly) but my typist skills are somewhat 'funny'. However, I do like using them

for the precision that they offer and the way they feel in my hands. I often use them at home, even for food that is not always chopstick-friendly.

When we decided on the Chinese things to include in this book, I insisted on chopsticks. I have so many questions about them: Why do they always look the same—I mean each chopstick of a pair? How come there does not seem to be a trend for chopsticks that look different? For example, in China, there are clear signs that people wish to individualise by wearing clothes that they know others won't own, by using very special accessories… Why is it that I have not identified this wish to 'individualise' chopsticks too? Finally, as a metaphor—and as we shall see in what follows—chopsticks can be very inspiring to unthink and rething interculturality.]

We first listen to a Chinese-born American Nobel Prize Laureate and to the *Book of Rites* compiled by Dai Sheng (戴圣) in the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–24 C.E.), about food etiquette and the use of chopsticks:

> Tsung-dao Lee, a Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics, made an interesting comparison between chopsticks and fingers: "As early as the Warring States period Chinese invented chopsticks. Although simple, the two sticks perfectly use the physics of leverage. Chopsticks are an extension of human fingers. Whatever fingers can do, chopsticks can do, too. Moreover, their great talent is not even affected by high temperatures or freezing cold". (Wang, 2015: 16)
>
> 曲礼上: 毋抟饭,毋放饭,毋流歠,毋咤食,毋啮骨,毋反鱼肉,毋投与狗骨◦毋固获, 毋扬饭◦饭黍毋以箸◦毋\羹, 毋絮羹, 毋刺齿, 毋歠醢◦客絮羹, 主人辞不能亨◦客歠醢, 主人辞以窭◦濡肉齿决, 乾肉不齿决◦毋嘬炙◦卒食, 客自前跪, 彻饭齐以授相者, 主人兴辞于客, 然后客坐
>
> (Trans.: Qu Li: Do not roll the rice into a ball; do not bolt down the various dishes; do not swill down (the soup). Do not make a noise in eating; do not crunch the bones with the teeth; do not put back fish you have been eating; do not throw the bones to the dogs; do not snatch (at what you want). Do not spread out the rice (to cool); do not use chopsticks in eating millet. (*Liji, The* Classic of Rites, 1885, https://ctext.org/liji)

Knives and forks were discovered by archeologists from neolithic China (10000 B.C.E. to 2000 B.C.E.), however, fewer were found in periods closer to us. Research has showed that Chinese people started to use chopsticks as a preferred dining custom from the fourth century B.C.E. (Wang, 2015). Most of the readers will have seen or used chopsticks which have dominated Chinese cultural landscapes for centuries—these two identifical 'sticks', square on top and round at the bottom (to reflect *squared earth* and *round heaven*), with an average of 25 cm and 30 g in China, made of wood and/or other materials (e.g. bones, ebony, deer antlers, wood, bamboo, metal, rhinoceros horn, jade,[2] plastic…), that one holds between the tip of the fourth finger and the hollow gap between the thumb and index finger[3] to eat (on the impact of the ergonomy of chopsticks on eating habits; see Chen, 1998). Chopstiks are polyvalent: they can be used to *load, convey, transport, clasp, carry, pinch, separate, remove*… (on manipulation of chopsticks, see Chen et al., 2009)—but not dig for or spear food (see Fig. 4.6). In his book on Japan, Barthes explains (1982: 16):

---

[2] Jade chopsticks are very fragile and are often compared to a woman's tears. This is why they are not used on a daily basis but serve mostly decorative purposes.

[3] NB: The Index finger is refered to as the food finger in Chinese. 食指 (shízhǐ); 食 means food.

Fig. 4.6 Different types of chopsticks sold in a store

> Another function of the two chopsticks together, that of pinching the fragment of food; to pinch, moreover, is too strong a word, too aggressive; for the foodstuff never undergoes a pressure greater than is precisely necessary to raise and carry it; in the gesture of chopsticks, further softened by their substance—wood or lacquer—there is something maternal, the same precisely measured care taken in moving a child: a force no longer a pulsion; here we have a whole demeanor with regard to food … the instrument never pierces, cuts, or slits, never wounds but only selects, turns, shifts.

Also used in many parts of Asia (Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Tibet, etc.), e.g. August 4th marks chopsticks festival in Japan when people might throw chopsticks into fire at shrines to pray to the Gods for health.

Originally the word for chopsticks was similar to that of bamboo and/or wood in Chinese. Today the word is 筷子 (Kuàizi), literally *fast ones, quick little boys, nimble boys*. 筷 (kuài) is composed of the characters for bamboo/flute and speedy/rapid/quick. 子 refers to a little one.[4] As a homophone (meaning a word that has the same sound as another) the word for chopstick appears to be auspicious with (hidden) meanings of (amongst others) happiness, prosperity and the quick birth of a precious child.

The root of the English word for chopstick comes from pidgin English *chop* from Cantonese (a dialect of Chinese) *kap* for *urgent*. [In English we note that the word chopsticks also refers to a two-fingered piano exercise]. There are variations in other languages in the equivalents to 筷子. Some languages have opted for ‘eating sticks’ (German: *Eßstäbchen*, Finnish: *syömäpuikot*), ‘sticks for food’ (Russian: *палочками*, Italian: *bacchette per il cibo*). ‘Hashi’ is Portuguese for chopsticks, a word borrowed from Japanese.

[4] In Japanese, the word for chopsticks is a homophone for *a bridge*.

Disposable wooden chopsticks are popular in China (and around the world!) and are called 日本竹筷 (with the first characters referring to Japan/ese (Rìběn) since they were invented and used in Japan first) or 卫生筷 (weisheng kuai), 'sanitary chopsticks'. Although they are very useful and sanitarily effective, they represent an environmental problem contributing to e.g. deforestation.

Chopsticks seem to have already been used during the Shang Dynasty (1760/1520 B.C.E. to 1122/1030 B.C.E.) for both cooking and eating. The Sui (581–618 C.E.), Tang (618–907 C.E.) and Five Dynasties (907–960 C.E.) marked a huge increase in the use of chopsticks through the development of banquets. Today chopsticks are used for eating most foods. Children learn to use them around the age of 3. Forks and knives can often be seen in certain types of ('Western') restaurants in China but they are rarely used in other contexts. Chopsticks can be accompanied with a spoon for eating e.g. soup and desserts. The 'Chinese' spoon has a flat bottom with a pointed front end and a short handle and is used to e.g. sip liquid and assist chopsticks with noodles (Fig. 4.7). Chinese people might use hands to eat e.g. snacks (peanuts might be eaten with chopsticks), fruit (if not cut up), meat with bones, bread, pizza, burgers… Chopsticks are usually placed vertically on the table in China.

Chopsticks are often associated with communal eating. Due to the 2020-…Covid-19 pandemic, a 'dinner table revolution' took place in China. With the pandemic, the

Fig. 4.7 The Chinese spoon being used for eating yogurt

Fig. 4.8 Street sign encouraging people to adopt communal serving chopsticks

use of communal serving chopsticks and spoons (公筷公勺, Gōng kuài gōng sháo, see Fig. 4.8) is highly recommended instead of using one's own cutlery to serve others and oneself in order to avoid spreading infectious diseases—with serving chopsticks usually longer than personal ones and of different colours. The tradition of serving others with one's chopsticks (e.g. by placing food on their plates) has been considered as a sign of warmth and friendliness in China.

Some of the benefits of chopstick use have been put forward such as strengthening hands and motor skills, promoting hand–eye coordination, serving as a pre-handwriting task. The use of chopsticks could also promote independence in eating (Wang, 2015). Foodwise, Barber (2009) argues that chopsticks slow down eating and the amount of food one ingurgitates.

For centuries different etiquettes, beliefs and folk customs have developed around chopsticks. They symbolize, amongst others, someone with a straight, moral character; the diligent selfless worker; a hard-working and unselfish government worker. Beyond the mere act of eating, chopsticks have been part of behaviors and habits related to family and sociality (mutual care, inseparableness, age hierarchy, festivals…). Several taboos have also spread traditionally: *hitting the tableware with chopsticks; putting them in one's mouth; crossing them on the table; placing them on the table carelessly; 'planting' them in a bowl of rice* (which looks like incense-burning to 'feed' the dead); *using them to pick food from the plates over and over again.* They go with the ideas of cherishing food, respecting others, politeness and traditional values. Chinese writers have also used chopsticks as a metaphor for describing their feelings of angst, shock, and sorrow (amongst others).

Finally, chopsticks can also stand for good omens for festivals. Chopsticks are in fact symbols of inseparateness and lasting love. Many customs across the different regions and provinces of China and Chinese Minzu groups exist:

- In Shanxi (North China), at a wedding reception, chopsticks given to the couple by the bride's family are first used by a male member of the bride's family, after giving the dowry to the groom's family.
- In parts of Nortwest China, the bride tosses chopsticks on the floor of her parents' home before moving into her new home.
- The Yao people (Southern China) have a wedding tradition whereby the host feeds the newlyweds with pairs of chopsticks in both hands.
- The Zhuang people (second largest Minzu 'ethnic' group in China) give a one-year-old child chopsticks on their birthday. They are used to feed them with noodles—a symbol of longetivity and thus good fortune.

Often, in these examples, chopsticks symbolize cooperation, togetherness and harmony.

[Quid pro quo]
As 'simple' things, chopsticks show complexity, adaptability and long-term engagement with humans. What chopsticks 'do' to people, as individuals and groups, as well as the symbols that they stand for are multifaceted. The following topics—which also relate to interculturality—have emerged in our discussions: representations, social conventions (politeness), emotions, beliefs and superstitions, togetherness, historical development.

Consider the following questions:

- What surprised you about the history of chopsticks, their use and what they can represent and symbolize? How 'intercultural' are chopsticks after all?
- Summarize the symbolic and ideological aspects of chopsticks.
- Compare the use of chopsticks and the Chinese spoon to the fork, knife and spoon. What similarities and differences? What do you use each of them for yourself?
- In the Chinese language, many characters and spoken words might differ in meanings and connotations although they might sound the same, often adding a positive identity to a given character. These are called homophones. We provide two examples in what follows:
  - 团圆 (tuányuán) translates as *reunion* in English and refers to a sweet dumpling eaten on the last day of the Chinese New year celebrations. Shaped spherically, they are usually served in round bowls, symbolizing unity and the reunion of family members.
  - 福到了 (fú dàole) means *fortune has arrived*. The character 福 (blessing) is usually placed on doors and walls upside down during Chinese New Year since *arrive* is a homophone of 到 (dào) for 'turned upside down'.

  Most languages have homophones. Can you think of such words in the language(s) that you know? Do some pairs of homophones create 'auspicious' and/or positive connotations and are thus used together?

- We have seen that chopsticks seem to have anthropomorphic characteristics for many Chinese people (e.g. they represent a hardworking, professional government worker). What 'human' representations of cutlery are you aware of, from e.g. fiction?

  Now let's open up our discussions to reflect further on interculturality:
- Start by picturing chopsticks and knives and forks that are of different colours, shapes and textures. How would you feel eating with them? Try to understand why and the kind of intellectual work you would need to do to go beyond your potential (mis-)representations of these 'odd' things.
- Beyond the concrete thing called *chopsticks*, what did this section teach you about interculturality as a subject of research and education? What new insights did you get?
- Do you find chopsticks to be somehow good metaphors for what interculturality is about? Why (not)? Take chopsticks, a knife, a fork and a spoon in your hands and try to imagine what they could be telling us about the notion, about what people do when they meet interculturally.

4.4 Chinese Thing for Interculturality III: Jade

A few questions for you to read through and answer first about jade (you can come back to them after reading the section):

- What comes to your mind when you hear the word *jade* in English and the other languages that you know? How is jade considered in your context(s)?
- What (gem-)stones and/or precious metals (gold, silver) do you (not) like and why? What (gem-)stones and/or precious metals do you own or would wish to own? When do you use/wear them and for what purposes?
- What importance do people attach to them? What are they used for? What do they denote about people (e.g. in terms of personality)?
- What colours are preferred for such things in your context(s)? What is the meaning of these colours?
- List the kinds of superstitions and beliefs that are linked to different (gem-)stones and precious metals in your context(s).

[**Personal narrative:**

In the process of writing this book I found out that jade has a somewhere 'bizarre' etymology in the English language. When I hear the word jade*, I think of green, something translucent, tombs and… China. I also think of someone called Jade. When I lived in Hong Kong in my youth, I was always admirative of ladies' jade bracelets and was often shocked at how expensive some were. I find Chinese people's passion for jade fascinating because I don't think that in my corner of the world people are so fond of the mineral. I am also puzzled by how expensive it can be and by how it is used in art and jewelry-making in China. Like calligraphy, it took a long time for me to learn to look at jade items and to see 'beauty' in them—my eyes having*

been trained to see beauty in e.g. silver or bronze in Finland, two metals that are not necessarily liked in China. I own a couple of jade items which I wear from time to time but they look so precious and fragile that I am too careful when they are on me. I do like touching them and feeling their 'oiliness'.

Having learnt more about the beliefs, meanings and connotations of jade in China over the past few years, I find it to be a stimulating element to reflect on interculturality. How jade relates to Chinese history and philosophy also deserves exploring since I do believe that the latter can add up to our reflections on interculturality.]

Like the other things discussed in previous sections, let's consider two introductory fragments:

> 君子無故,玉不去身,君子於玉比德焉 (Jūnzǐ wúgù, yù bù qù shēn, jūnzǐ yú yù bǐ dé yān)—trans. "A man of rank was never without this pendant, excepting for some sufficient reason; he regarded the pieces of jade as emblematic of the virtues (which he should cultivate)" (Confucius in *Liji*, *The Classic of Rites*, Yu Zao, 1885, https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=en&id=60235)
>
> A saying: 玉不琢不成器 人不学不知道 (Yù bù zuó bùchéngqì rén bù xué bù zhīdào)—Trans. *If you don't cut jade, you can't make a weapon. If you don't learn it, you don't know.*

A metamorphic rock, jade can be green, red, yellow, or white—with green jade being the most popular kind in China. Like the previous things, jade is enmeshed in and reminiscent of the long and rich history of China. In the important 说文解字 (Shuō wén jiě zì, known as *The Shuowen*), the oldest character dictionaries of Chinese compiled during the Later Han Period (25–220 C.E.), jade is defined as follows: "A stone that is beautiful, it has five virtues. There is warmth in its lustre and brilliance; this is its quality of kindness; its soft interior may be viewed from the outside revealing [the goodness] within; this is its quality of rectitude; its tone is tranquil and high and carries far and wide; this is its quality of wisdom; it may be broken but cannot be twisted; this is its quality of bravery; its sharp edges are not intended for violence; this is its quality of purity" (Cited in Sullivan, 1999: 31).

Jade is 玉 (yù) in Chinese, with an ideographic of a necklace, adorned with three pieces of jade (NB: the same character is also found in the word for e.g. corn/maize, 玉米, yù mǐ).[5] As the aforementioned definition from *The Shuowen* shows, jade has many different layers of connotations for the Chinese and we have collected phrases and idioms here to give a taste of some of these layers:

- 珷 (wǔ): inferior gem, a kind of jade
- 珺 (jùn): beautiful jade
- 白玉 (bái yù): white jade but also a word used to refer to tofu
- 葬玉埋香 (zàng yù mái xiāng): (lit.) burying jade and interring incense, refers to a funeral for a beautiful person
- 琢磨 (zhuó mó): to carve and polish jade; also: to polish and refine a literary work
- 玉骨冰肌 (yù gǔ bīng jī): elegant demeanor and lofty personality
- 如花似玉 (rú huā sì yù): delicate as a flower, refined as a precious jade, (of a woman) exquisite

[5] The Chinese word can also be used as a firstname.

- 金玉 (jīn yù): gold and jade, precious
- 金玉满堂 (jīn yù mǎn tang): (lit.) gold and jade fill the hall, i.e. abundant wealth but also abundance of knowledge
- 他山之石可以攻玉 (tā shān zhī shí kě yǐ gong yù): (lit.) the other mountain's stone can polish jade, i.e. to borrow talent from abroad to develop the nation effectively.

One notices many references to other elements and characteristics in this selection of terms, phrases and idioms: positive adjectives such as *precious, beautiful, elegant*; references to *wealth, knowledge, personality, (fine) literary work*; comparison/companion to *gold* and *tofu*.[6] As a whole, jade as a thing is considered in an extremely positive light. Yang (2011: 83) also notes that:

> The concept of jade has vastly appeared in various contexts of Chinese poetry and idioms, referring to luxury (象箸玉杯), beauty (香温玉軟), talent (握瑜懷玉), virtue (懷瑾握瑜), fortune (瑞雪兆豐年), peace (化干戈為玉帛), uniqueness (瑰意 琦行), etc.

We note that many of these elements are still used indirectly in e.g. politicians' language today in China.

In the English language, the apparent connotation of jade differs from Chinese. The word itself comes from Latin *ileus* for *severe colic*, an intestinal condition which jade was thought to cure (a turning/squeezing sensation in the belly). We note that in New Zealand English, jade is referred to as *greenstone*. Jade is not necessarily a popular gem in the 'West', or at least, it does not compare to gold or diamonds as seems to be the case in China. There is a saying in Chinese that, while gold has a price, jade is invaluable. And, unlike gold, the (high) price of jade is not set but negotiated between sellers and customers. Its value resides in its size, texture ('oily feel'), shape, colour, place of origin, resonance and lack of cracks.

Some of the first examples of jade being used for ceremonial functions include the perforated bi disk (璧) to celebrate the Sun and Heaven, bringing happy life and health to their owners, and the hollowed jade tube called cong (琮)—whose function is unknown today. Jade bracelets, necklaces, and pendants are common today.

In the 聘义 (Pin Yi, 'The meaning of the interchange of missions between different courts') section of the 礼记 (Liji, *the Classic of Rites*) (Warring States, 475 B.C.E.–221 B.C.E.) (1885, https://ctext.org/liji), a conversation with the philosopher Confucius (c. 551–c. 479 B.C.E.) reveals the following virtues of jade:

> 子贡问于孔子曰:"敢问君子贵玉而贱玟者何也?为玉之寡而玟之多与" 孔子曰:"非为玟之多故贱之也、玉之寡故贵之也。夫昔者君子比德于玉焉:温润而泽,仁也;缜密以栗,知也;廉而不刿,义也;垂之如队,礼也;叩之其声清越以 长,其终诎然,乐也;瑕不掩瑜、瑜不掩瑕,忠也;孚尹旁达,信也;气如白 虹,天也;精神见于山川,地也;圭璋特达,德也.天下莫不贵者,道也".
>
> (Trans.) Zi-gong asked Confucius, saying, 'Allow me to ask the reason why the superior man sets a high value on jade, and but little on soapstone? Is it because jade is rare, and the soapstone plentiful?' Confucius replied, 'It is not because the soapstone is plentiful that

[6] In the previous section on chopsticks, we noted that jade chopsticks are often compared to the tears of a 'beautiful lady'.

> he thinks but little of it, and because jade is rare that he sets a high value on it. Anciently superior men found the likeness of all excellent qualities in jade. Soft, smooth, and glossy, it appeared to them like benevolence; fine, compact, and strong—like intelligence; angular, but not sharp and cutting—like righteousness; hanging down (in beads) as if it would fall to the ground—like (the humility of) propriety; when struck, yielding a note, clear and prolonged, yet terminating abruptly—like music; its flaws not concealing its beauty, nor its beauty concealing its flaws—like loyalty; with an internal radiance issuing from it on every side—like good faith; bright as a brilliant rainbow—like heaven; exquisite and mysterious, appearing in the hills and streams—like the earth; standing out conspicuous in the symbols of rank—like virtue; esteemed by all under the sky,—like the path of truth and duty. (1885, https://ctext.org/liji)

These virtues include: *benevolence, credibility, earth, heaven, intelligence, justice, propriety, loyalty, morality, music* and *truth.*

One of the values of jade is also *indestructibility*—and thus *eternity*. As such it has been found amongst objects in tombs to protect the dead, been used for creating ritual objects (e.g. sacrificial vessels and many others the function of which is unknown today) and as jewelry to protect its wearer. In the past it was also used as material for making music instruments such as chimes. Figure 4.9 shows a burial suit made of 1200 triangular and rectangular pieces of jade linked up by threads of gold, found in Hebei Province (North China Plain). It was made for King Liu Xiu (刘胜, also known as Wenshu, 5 B.C.E.–57 C.E.) and measures 182 cm (49 cm at shoulders). It is in the permanent collection of the National Museum of China in Beijing.

Many beliefs concerning the power and energy of jade for afterlife were also common in Ancient China. Jade occupied an important place in funeral rites. For example, small pieces of jade were placed inside the mouths of the dead to ensure rebirth and to slow down the process of decomposition; pieces of jade were also placed on different parts of the body. In general, the use of jade in ancient China had to do with the cosmology of traditional Chinese philosophical thoughts such as *the unity between Man and Nature, unity in diversity* and *yin yang*. Even today, jade relates somehow to health. The belief that jade changes colours and shades with the health of its wearer is widespread.

Jade also had political and religious meanings. For instance, jade pendants worn by monarchs and ministers indicated their status. Jade was also believed to be the medium to convey messages from the gods.

For individuals, jade can have aesthetic, monetary, solid and 'protection' (auspicious) values today. Jade can be considered as an investment and a strong symbol of friendship and love—*it connects people*. For example, one of us remembers a friend giving them a beautiful piece of jade jewelry, having returned another piece from Tiffany's instead, which she had found to be not special or valuable enough to express her friendship. A piece of jade jewelry can also be given as a birthday present to a child who turns the important age of 12 in China. A jade wedding pillow

Fig. 4.9 Burial suit of King Liu Xiu

or jade mandarin ducks and flowers can be gifted to newlyweds. As a decorative home element, jade is said to contribute to Fengshui by creating positive energy.

[Quid pro quo]

Jade as a thing is connoted richly within the Chinese context. It has monetary value and represents many desirable virtues. As a fragile mineral (carving or cutting it requires drilling or sawing with an abrasive paste and rotational machinery), it has always been a treasured commodity in the Middle Kingdom. Jade is about purity, elegance, beauty, wealth and hardness.

Here are another two sets of questions to help us reflect more on jade and its potential links to interculturality:

- Was there anything surprising in the section? Had you ever considered jade as an interesting thing for reflecting on certain aspects interculturality?
- Here is a short list of (gem-)stones and precious metals. Which ones do you know? What meanings and connotations do they have for you? What qualities do they have? Are there any legends or stories around these stones and metals in your context(s)? If you don't know what they look like, try to find some pictures or go to a store and touch some of them to see how they feel. Would you consider any of

these (gem-)stones or precious metals to be good metaphors for interculturality? Explain why.

- Amber
- Copper
- Coral
- Gold
- Lapis Lazuli
- Pearl
- Platinum
- Rose quartz
- Silver
- Topaz
- Turquoise.

- Is the use of (gem-)stones and precious metals 'gendered' in your context(s)? For example, is it considered suitable for a man to wear an amber pendant?
- How would you feel losing/breaking your favourite piece of (gem-)stone or precious metal? Why?

About interculturality per se:

- Read through the section again and reflect on what the different pieces of information about jade could suggest for thinking further about interculturality as a subject of research and education.
- What do you make of this saying? Do you know any similar idiom in other languages (with a reference to a gem, mineral or any other thing)? 他山之石可以攻玉 (tā shān zhī shí kě yǐ gong yù): (lit.) the other mountain's stone can polish jade, i.e. to borrow talent from abroad to develop the nation effectively. What could the idiom say about openness to others and interculturality in general?
- How many of the 'virtues' identified by Confucius about jade do you find relevant to unthink and rethink interculturality? *Benevolence, credibility, earth, heaven, intelligence, justice, propriety, loyalty, morality, music* and *truth.* Try to evaluate the meanings and connotations of these terms in English while reviewing them for interculturality.
- In a similar vein, find more information about these elements of Chinese philosophy related to jade: *the unity between Man and Nature, unity in diversity* and *yin yang.* What new ideas could these inspire us to reflect on interculturality?

4.5 Chinese Thing for Interculturality IV: Mahjong

- What does the word *play* mean to you? When do you use it and who does it apply to (e.g. children versus adults)? Are there specific stereotypes about 'playing' when one is an adult in your context(s)?
- Which (board) games are currently popular in your context(s)? What is their appeal? What do they 'do' to people?

- What values seem to apply to some of these games (e.g. togetherness)?
- Think about some of the games you have played as a child or as an adult: why did you get interested in them? How did you learn to play them? What memories do they bring to mind (about who)? What senses (touch, smell…) are brought to the front when you recall some of your experiences of playing games?
- What do you know about mahjong? Have you ever seen mahjong tiles?
- What do you expect to learn about interculturality from a game like mahjong?

[**Personal narrative:**

When I try to dig out my first memories of mahjong from my mind, I can see (stereotypical) scenes from films: people playing in a dark place, wearing felt hats, with a smoky background, shouting at each other in Cantonese or Mandarin.

I probably came across mahjong for the first time in Hong Kong. I never really had an interest in 'games' since they were forbidden when I was a child. 'Playing' was considered a waste of time. I have tried boardgames a few times in Finland, France and the UK but I lose interest very quickly. My strategic skills and patience are too limited. I have played mahjong only a few times and the last time was some years ago at the time of Chinese New Year in Beijing. The friends who were playing with me spent some time at the beginning to renegotiate the rules since they were arguing that their views on the rules were quite different—they did renegotiate them again halfway through the game. The game was exciting. The challenges that I faced was reading the tiles—especially the ones in Chinese since I did not know some of the characters, but after a few turns I got used to them. I did sense some competitive spirit amongst my friends but it was 'friendly'. Many people comment on the chunkiness of the tiles and on the pleasure of manipulating them and hearing them 'click'. I must admit that this appealed to me too. The feeling is very different from e.g. cards which are too light to make any noise—some readers will probably disagree with me.

In recent years I noticed that luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton have designed mahjong sets with e.g. the LV logo on some of the tiles that cost over 3000e.]

Heinz (2021: x) allows us to introduce mahjong, and especially its core interculturality, when she writes: "All over the world, there are different ways of playing mahjong, some of which have branched quite far from the original form".

Chinese Mahjong is a tile-based game of strategy with global popularity. The game is often said to be very popular in e.g. the U.S.A. In 2021, an American company which produces (expensive) customized mahjong sets was accused of cultural appropriation ('stealing' cultural elements from another 'culture') for 'redesigning' the rectangular tiles of the game (with rounded edges)—removing the Chinese characters, circles, lines, numbers, flowers…

Like the previous Chinese things, mahjong has specific and complex meanings and connotations in China. Known across (and at times beyond) social classes, 'tradition', 'family' and 'closeness' often appear to be the basic values attached to the game.

A note on the idea of *play* in Chinese before we get into details about this thing. The verb *to play* is 玩 (wán) in Chinese and can also mean *to enjoy, to have fun, to amuse, to take things lightly* and even *to joke*. It is often used to refer to any activity beyond work or study (e.g. going to a museum, a shopping centre, doing a Karaoke,

Fig. 4.10 Play together

eating together, etc.). When speaking English, some Chinese might use the word *play* in the same way as they use it in Chinese as in: "Do you want to play with me at the mall this weekend?" (i.e. go shopping). Figure 4.10. shows a poster found in a shopping centre with the words *play together* in English accompanied by the Chinese 让生活更有趣 (ràng shēnghuó gèng yǒuqù) for *make life more interesting*.

Mahjong translates as 麻将 (Májiàng) and, interestingly, we have identified different phrases for saying 'to play mahjong' in Chinese:

- 摸八圈 (mō bā quān): word-for-word *to touch eight laps*
- 搓麻将 (cuō má jiàng): 搓 means *to twist, to rub with the hands*
- 搬砖 (bān zhuān) also means *to do hard physical labor* (as a job); word-for-word: moving bricks, 砖 is a brick
- 玩牌 (wán pái) stands for *playing cards*; 牌 is the character for cards and mahjong tiles—NB: 1. 和牌 (hú pái) means *to win in mahjong* and includes the same character; 2. *To play a tile*, 出牌 (chūpái), means word-for-word *a tile/card out* (出 = out).

The character 和 (hé)—which is also found in the characters for e.g. *peace* and *harmony*—can mean *to win a game of mahjong*.

Mahjong dates back to the latter half of the nineteenth century (Qing Dynasty, 1644–1911—the last dynasty of China[7]). A previous game entitled 马吊 (mădiào; lit. *horse tune, melody*) from the Tang Dynasty (618–907 C.E.) shared some similarities with mahjong (Heinz, 2021).

---

[7] Interestingly, Heinz (2021) notes that mahjong was advertised in the US as dating back to Confucius.

Fig. 4.11 Shuffling the tiles

Mahjong is played on a square table by four people, who might have to start the game by renegotiating the rules since some people might not follow the same ones, considering the diverse local practices around China. The tiles are placed face down in the centre of the table. The duration of the game, which requires 'strategy' and 'luck', averages 4 h and aims to create winning hands by discarding and drawing the 'thick' mahjong tiles—which makes what Heinz (2021: 24) refers to as 'a satisfying noise' when manipulated. The game is played e.g. at home, in parks or in game parlours. The basic principle of mahjong is equality: anyone can talk, there is no hierarchy, no one has any 'superior' authority while playing the game (see Fig. 4.11). In some mahjong games, people might be required to change seats for every turn, reflecting the fact that someone becomes a 'temporary leader' and that no one occupies a seat that could be considered as e.g. 'lucky' during the entire game.

The tiles amount to 144, comprising four copies of each main tile and eight flower tiles (see Fig. 4.12). The symbols appear on one side of the tiles while the other side is usually green. The tiles can be made of acrylic, bamboo, ivory or plastic, with symbols engraved or recessed into them (Heinz, 2021). Actions with these rectangular tiles include shuffling and piling up, separating into three different suits, lining up and rearranging, drawing, snatching up and discarding. Every player starts with 13 tiles, drawing a new one and removing one for each turn. The tiles include: [suits, which all represent money from Ancient China:] 條 (tiáo) *bamboo*; 筒 (tǒng) *circle/dot*; 万萬 (wàn) *characters/numbers* (10,000); [honours tiles:] 东风 (dōngfēng) *east wind*; 南风 (nánfēng) *south wind*; 西风 (xīfēng) *west wind*; 北風 (běifēng) *north wind* (北 is found in the Chinese word for *Beijing* too); 紅中 (hóngzhōng) *red 'dragon'/centre* (中 means *centre* and is found in the Chinese name for China—i.e. the Middle/Centre Kingdom); 發財 (fācái) *green 'dragon'* (meaning: wealth); 白板 (báibǎn) *white 'dragon'*; [bonus tiles to award points after the hand:] 花牌 (huā pái) *flower tiles* (four representing the four seasons and four different types of flowers/plants). Any player can complete the followings: *pèng* (碰), set of three tiles; *gāng* (杠), set of four; chī (吃), sequence of three, and *hé* (和 win).

Fig. 4.12 Mahjong tiles used as wall decoration at a restaurant

Interestingly Mahjong has had an international appeal since the early twentieth century. Heinz (2021: 5) asserts that “The game itself allows for adaptability that meant a wide range of people could use the game both for entertainment, and for cultural purposes”. In the U.S.A. it has had to do with Chinese American heritage but also e.g. Jewish American women’s culture. This is how Heinz (2021: 4) describes how mahjong was ‘exoticised’ in the country:

> During the 1920s mahjong fad, for example, white women in elaborate Chinese costumes experimented with exotic personae and newly accessible forms of sexuality, Chinese American mahjong instructors capitalized on the fad as an economic and cultural opportunity, and critics of the game recoiled from the social mobility of both white women and Chinese Americans.

Mahjong also has many followers playing online with games such as Mahjong Classic, Dragon Mahjong, Mahjong Solitaire, or Goldfish Mahjong being popular. Finally, many films have had mahjong included as a central component of their plots:

Mahjong (1996), *House of Mahjong* (2007), *King of Mahjong* (2015), *The Mahjong Box* (2017). Netflix released a series called *Mahjong Heroes* in 2018.

Critiques of mahjong have included digs at its combativeness and lack of encouragement for teamwork (Greene, 2015). However, as a whole, the game could be seen as 'Dionysian playing' too (in reference to Dionysus, the Greek god of fruitfulness and vegetation, wine and ecstasy), by promoting shared social experiences (Greene, 2015). Some people might play mahjong for money.

[Quid pro quo]

Mahjong represents another fascinating thing to unthink and rethink interculturality. In itself it is a very diverse object that has been used throughout Chinese worlds and beyond, creating emotions, memories and bonds between millions of people. Although mahjong might appear 'different', 'exotic', 'special' to many of our readers, through reading about how it is played and what it 'does' to people, you will have noticed similarities with other (board-)games that you might be familiar with.

Questions to reflect on:

- One of the expressions for *winning a game of mahjong* contains a character that is found in other Chinese words such as peace and harmony. Do you see any connections between these?
- The clinking of tiles when one plays mahjong is somewhat special and can trigger e.g. feelings of nostalgia. Think about the games that you have played in the past and about the sounds that are associated with them. What feelings do they trigger in you?
- Each mahjong tile has a specific symbol. Try to find pictures of each tile and reflect on their meanings. For example, some of the honours tiles contain references to the wind or dragons. What do these symbols mean to you? In a similar vein, review the symbols used on cards, tiles, dice, playing pieces, boards, tokens, etc. in other (board-)games. What do these bring to mind?
- Here is a short list of (board-)games. Try to find more information about their origins, how they are and the values they might add to people's lives, encounters and identities. Try also to find some information about their potential interculturality.

  – Azul
  – Chess
  – Clue
  – Draughts
  – Dungeons and Dragons
  – Go
  – Hive
  – Monopoly
  – Ouija
  – Santorini
  – Scrabble
  – Shobu

  - Tak.

- If you have played (board-)games with others, how often have you had to renegotiate the rules before starting? What did this negotiation tell you about others?
- We have presented some drawbacks and advantages of playing mahjong, which seem to oscillate between weighing individualism and collectivism. What are your views on these critiques?
- Take your favourite (board-)game and try to identify different ways of playing it in different parts of your context(s) and in other parts of the world. Do you notice anything interesting?
- After re-reading the section a couple of times, what could playing mahjong teach us about interculturality? What aspects of the game seem to be beneficial for making us unthink and rethink the notion?

4.6 Chinese Thing for Interculturality V: Resident Identity Card (居民身份证)

This last section on a thing for interculturality focuses on an intriguing and yet rich element: the ID card. Before exploring what we want to share with you about this thing, have a look at these questions:

- Do you own an ID card and/or a passport? What pieces of information are found on these documents? In what language(s) are they provided?
- How often are you required to present an ID document and for what reasons? What do (local) laws say about this?
- We are going to discuss names and naming in this section. Take some time to reflect on these questions:
  - Who gave you your names and how were they chosen?
  - Do the different components of your full names (e.g. firstname) mean anything or have special connotations?
  - Are there any special beliefs or superstitions about naming someone in your context(s)?
  - Do you have a nickname (or several nickames)? Who gave them to you and why?
  - Do you have a 'foreign' name that was given to you when you e.g. started learning another language? How do you feel about using it?
  - Has anyone ever made a mistake with your name 'interculturally' and made you feel embarrassed (e.g. call you by your family name solely)? How did you deal with this situation?
- What do you know about the Chinese Lunar Calendar? Are you familiar with other types of calendars? Are you able to navigate between different calendars without much trouble?

- What things do you usually associate with dates and calendars?
- How many 'rites of passage' have you experienced since childhood, i.e. important moments of change and transition that matter for your communities?

[Personal narrative:

In Finland I never carry any ID with me since one is rarely required to 'prove' who one is. It has happened, however, that I have not been able to buy something in a store or to get a particular service because I could not prove who I was. When I travel, holding my passport(s) in my hands when crossing borders reassures me—I have always found that there is something 'scary' about that moment of transit. In China identity is checked from time to time when e.g. checking in a hotel, entering a museum and taking the train. Since my passport(s) are important to me, I always worry when it is taken away for a while or if someone takes pictures of it with their phones. I remember once being asked to share a picture of my passport(s) on a group on Wechat, refusing to do so, sending it to a coordinator personally instead. My ID documents are probably the most precious things I own.

At the beginning of my cooperation with Chinese colleagues and friends, I struggled with their names. Although I knew that their firstname was 'second' and that the first character of their names was their family name, sometimes I was confused by the fact that some of them used these 'pieces' of identity the 'Western way', changing the order of names. I still catch myself call Mei, Mei Yuan*, although* Yuan Mei *would be more appropriate. I believe that many Chinese colleagues and friends also face the same issues with my name. Often, they refer to me as Prof. Fred, Dervin Fred or Dervin—while I tend to say Prof. Dervin, Fred* or *Fred Dervin. Using wrong formulations or names can create 'useless' tensions that can be easily solved by being explicit.*

I have always found the Chinese calendar to be fascinating by the confusion it often creates in me. It is about change and constant movement. Time changes. One must accept instability. My birthday is always in October in Finland but in China it could also be in September. I think that subconsciously before my 'encounters' with China, I had imagined that time is time—'Eurocentric' time!

I have seen the Chinese Resident ID card on many occasions and I have always found it intriguing that it can be used for so many different activities. All in one document. I think that this is the case in many different countries but because I don't have any ID card so I have never had the pleasure of holding one to e.g. have access to a train—ticketless!].

This section concerns a thing that is not specifically so Chinese: An identity card—or to be more specific a Resident Identity Card. 居民 is resident in Chinese and contains the characters for *home* + *civil*. The word *resident* in English is from Latin *residentem* for *sitting down* and *settling*. What is special about this card is that it gives us information about how identity is 'done' on official papers in the Middle Kingdom. This card is provided to all Chinese citizens who reside in a particular place in the country—a hometown, a residence of 'internal' migration (e.g. from one Chinese city to another). It is a 'vital' document that is requested at all times for obtaining all kinds of services, for security checks and e.g. having access to trains.

If there is a thing that is important for Chinese, this small piece of plastic is—like millions of people in other countries.

We shall focus on names and dates in this section. About the other aspects we can say that *gender* is indicated as either *female* or *male*; the *Minzu category* has to do with a person's Chinese Minzu 'ethnic' group (56 groups, e.g. Han, Hui, Kazakh, Mongolian, Uyghur, see Dervin & Yuan, 2021). The identification number is composed of the code for hometown (the village, town or city of origins), the date of birth as well as a personal number attributed randomly.

As can be seen on Figs. 4.13 and 4.14 (which is a copy of one of the authors' ID card) the card is double-sided. One side shows the Great Wall of China in the background with the words 居民身份证 (jūmín shēnfèn zhèng), *People's Republic of China Resident Identity Card* and an indication that this resident card is from someone who lives in the capital Beijing.

The other side contains the following pieces of information (Fig. 4.14):

- 姓名 (Name)
- 性别 (Gender)
- 民族 (Minzu)
- 出生 (Date of birth) (year month day)
- 住址 (Address)
- 公民身份号码 (Identification number).

To start with let us spend a bit of time observing and reflecting on names in China. According to Xu and Nicolson (1992: 499):

> Westerners have thousands of different family names but only a few hundred common given names. Thus, in a western personal name, the family name is discriminative and abbreviating the undiscriminative given name(s) makes sense. Chinese have only a few hundred common family names but thousands of given names.

Fig. 4.13 Chinese resident ID card

Fig. 4.14 Basic information on a Chinese resident ID card

Names usually follow this order on the ID card: *family name + firstname*. This is the usual way in Chinese to use one's name. We repeat: *Family name first and firstname second!* This can cause confusion for people from outside China and in academia for example when citing a Chinese scholar. Let's take Mei's name as an example. She is Yuan (family name) Mei (firstname). In the 'West' she is often referred to as Mei Yuan (following the 'Western' convention of firstname + family name). When her work is included in an international paper, most likely, she will find herself as Mei, Y. if she follows the Chinese trend of *family name + firstname*—which would equal to Fred's references being under Fred, D. And it can get even more complicated. Some Chinese of certain Minzu groups don't have firstnames—or even family names—but use just one name. The 'Western' conventions require somewhat both a family name and a firstname. But what to do when one only has one 'piece' of name?

Names can consist of two to four characters in Chinese. The rule is that a child takes on the father's family name but some people combine this name with their mother's or even (in some cases) follow the mother's family name—with sometimes different family names for children from the same household, which means that two brothers may not have the same family name. When people get married, they do not usually take the husband's or wife's family name but retain their own. One can change one's name in China but the process is complicated. We note that many people in China will have a nickname (e.g. their firstname is doubled as in Meimei for Mei, Pangpang, with, sometimes, *Xiao, little*, added before) and an English name, given to them by e.g. their English teachers or borrowed from their favourite foreign artists. A nickname in Chinese is 外号 (wài hào), containing 外 for *outside, foreign*, or *in addition* (ideographic: night-time divinations; the supernatural)—the word for foreigner in Chinese contains the same character: 外国. Let us share an example of an interesting tradition for 'nicknaming' babies: in some parts of the Chinese countryside babies are given a so-called 'ugly' nickname as an auspicious move to

counterbalance a potentially too positive nickname that could bring *back luck*. An auspicious baby's name might also be suggested by a 大师 (dàshī)—a grandmaster—or a name consulting company such as 起名通 (Qimingtong, see https://www.qimingtong.com/). Fortune telling can be used to make predictions and to learn how to 'avoid bad luck' based on personal information. It often relies on the 5000-year-old 易经 (Yì jīng), *the Book of Changes,* which was about determining the place of the human in the universe. [By e.g. analyzing the date and hour a person was born, fortune-tellers might help with telling someone's future, making decisions, career, finance, wellbeing, future relationships, name changes.]

Firstnames are often chosen to express parents' aspirations for their children (e.g. fame, intellectual qualities, longetivity…)—Mei (美) means *beautiful*; Fred's Chinese name for instance contains the character 德 (dé) for *morality, virtue*; a friend's name is 玉 (Yù), *jade,* which has to do with money and wealth. Popular firstnames include 依诺 (Yī nuò), *according to/follow promise*; 梦瑶 (Mèng yáo), *dream jade*; 佳丽 (jiā lì), *good and beautiful* ('Belle'); 晴怡 (qíng yí), *sunny happy*; 明哲 (Míngzhé), *bright philosophy*. Some names are also gender-neutral in Chinese. Xu and Nicolson (1992: 501) explain that "Unlike western parents, Chinese do not name their children after relatives or acquaintances".

In a paper by Bin and Millward (1987: 10–11) the origins of Chinese names are categorized into: locality (e.g. city), relationships, professions, nicknames, and phonetic transliterations of non-Chinese names. The authors also list the most common surnames in 1987: *Zhang, Zhao, Li, Wang, Zhu, Lin, Ma [horse], Kong [Confucius's surname], Hu, Jin [gold], Chen, Shi [stone]*… Most of these names find their origins in royal families, Emperors' names, favours, states. Bin and Millward (1987: 20) argue that "Chinese names normally convey more genealogical information than do Western names". Today the five most common surnames include: 李 (Lǐ), 王 (Wáng), 张 (Zhāng), 刘 (Liú) and 陈 (Chén). Finally, we note that some foreign names have been given equivalents in Chinese (e.g. the Italian Jesuit missionary to China Matteo Ricci is 利玛窦 (Lìmǎdòu); Obama 欧巴马 (Ōubāmǎ)). Famous 'Western' stars have also been given nicknames in Chinese, e.g. Kim Kardashian, 金大妈 (jīn dàmā): *Aunty Gold*.

To finish about names, let us remind our readers that in Chinese it is common to use words such as *sister, brother, uncle* and *auntie* to refer to family members—even when they are not 'real' brothers or uncles—and friends, but also to strangers on the streets (as a kind way of 'naming' the other). On university campuses all staff members (from full professors to administrative staff) are referred to and addressed as 'teachers' (老师, lǎoshī).

Let's now discuss aspects of the ID card that relate to time and dates. First, we note that the date appears in this order in China: *Year* + *month* + *day* [Starts with the 'largest' element down to the 'smallest', like addresses in China]. Interestingly a date of birth indicated on an ID card in China may correspond to different 'realities'. Since many Chinese still follow the Lunar Calendar (we shall come back to this in a moment), the 'official' date on an ID document might correspond to either a date from the Lunar Calendar (often referred to as the 'Chinese' calendar) or to a 'translation' of that date into the international Gregorian calendar—that the Chinese

adopted only a century ago. Let's take an example. Fred's official date of birth is October 8th 1974. His Lunar date of birth corresponds to the 8th Lunar month, 23rd Lunar Day, 1974. Had he been Chinese, it could have been that his parents would have registered his date of birth as October 8th 1974 or (maybe) 23rd August 1974. This means that for some Chinese a date of birth may not correspond to a date from the international calendar. Furthermore, if one follows the Chinese calendar, one's birthday never falls on the same day of the year (Fred's birthday would be September 13th in 2022 according to the Lunar calendar). Festivals such as 七夕 (qīxì; 'Chinese Valentine's Day') never fall on the same day of the year either.

Another interesting aspect of dates is the fact that, in some Chinese regions, people seem to count their age in a way that gives them one or two years older than their actual birth. This is referred to as 虚岁 (xūsuì)—'nominal age'. This derives from the belief that when a person comes to life, they are already one year old. There are generation variations in this phenomenon too, with a tendency for younger people not to follow such trends and/or the Lunar calendar.

The word 曆 (lì) in Chinese translates basically as *calendar* in English but encompasses other meanings such as astronomical procedures. It is calculated by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (see http://english.pmo.cas.cn/). The calendar was developed some hundred centuries before our Common Era. Although the Gregorian calendar dominates in China, the Lunar calendar determines most holidays and festivals such as 'Chinese' New year, which never falls on the same day in the Gregorian calendar (see Fig. 4.15.). The calendar is lunisolar—it follows the movements of the moon and the sun, and observes the relationship between the moon, the sun and the earth to determine changes to facilitate production, living, agriculture, etc.—and is about a month later than the international calendar (one month = the time from a new moon to the next). The movement of the sun is reflected by 24 solar terms, distributed in 12 months, which include e.g. *Start of Spring, Grain Ear, Light Snow, Great Cold*.

Most readers will be aware of another dimension related to the Lunar calendar, which is that of the 'Chinese Zodiac year'. The Zodiac year starts on the first day of a lunar year (from e.g. 1st February 2022 to 21st January 2023 in the Gregorian calendar). The 12-year cycle of the Chinese Zodiac is represented by animals: *Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake*… This same 12-year cycle is also important as one grows up. Age 12 is considered as an important turning point in the life of a child in China and is often celebrated with elaborate parties (see Fig. 4.16).

[Quid pro quo]

A simple thing such as a Chinese resident ID card can open up so many different kinds of conversations about multiple topics central for interculturality—and for interculturality as a subject of research and education itself! We noted interesting differences and similarities between Chinese 'elements' and what some of you might be used to. Our discussions have also revealed specific beliefs and potential superstitions that are worth exploring further. The topic of date is very much of interest here for the necessity of unthinking and rethinking how we see it interculturally speaking. This is somewhat destabilizing but it represents an important 'brain shift' to us all.

Fig. 4.15 Couplets celebrating the arrival of the New Lunar Year placed outside someone's home

This is the final set of questions for us to go further before we move on to the conclusions.

- Names might have special meanings, connotations and origins. We have seen that Mei's name refers to beauty in English. But what about Fred? Fred's full first-name is Frederic. Here is what we found about its origins and meanings (etymonline.com): "from Proto-Germanic *frithu-rik, literally "peace-rule," from *rik- "rule" (from PIE root "reg- "move in a straight line," with derivatives meaning "to direct in a straight line," thus "to lead, rule") + *frithu- "peace" (source also of Old English friðu "peace, truce"), from suffixed form of PIE root *pri- "to be friendly, to love." While reading this, Fred cannot but think about the Swedish word for *peace* which is in fact *fred*… Do you know anything about the origins of your names? Were the ones who give you these names aware of these elements?

Fig. 4.16 Picture from a 12-year old birthday party in the North of China. This is considered as an important rite of passage in the life of a child

- In the language(s) that you know, what happens to foreign names when they are used? Are they pronounced as they are in the original language or modified to fit the other language(s)? Why and what happens if one does otherwise (e.g. pronounce the name of Brad Pitt in a more 'American' way)?
- How easy and accepted/acceptable is it to change names (officially) in your context(s)? Is this a complicated process? Why do people change names?
- How 'gendered' are names in your context(s)? Are there many gender-neutral names? Do you think that people from outside your context(s) can guess people's gender by seeing e.g. their firstnames?
- We have spoken about the Chinese rite of passage related to the 12-year cycle. In Mexico, quinceañera, the 15th birthday is also an important moment for young people. Try to find out more about this tradition in Mexico: why 15? What are its meanings and traditions?
- How much do seasons matter for you? Do you usually look forward to certain seasons or festivals, celebrations/holidays? Why (not)?
- How tolerant would you say you are of superstitious practices in general? Explain why.

About interculturality as a topic:

- What could the resident ID card teach us about interculturality as a subject of research and education?

- What element(s) from the discussions about the resident ID card could serve as e.g. metaphors for problematizing interculturality?

References

Barber, K. (2009). *The chopsticks diet*. Kyle Books.
Barrass, G. S. (2002). *The art of calligraphy in modern China.* University of California Press.
Barthes, R. (1982). *Empire of signs.* Hill and Wang.
Bin, Z., & Millward, C. (1987). Personal names in Chinese. *Names, 35*(1), 8–21. https://doi.org/10.1179/nam.1987.35.1.8
Baudrillard, J. (2020). *The System of Objects.* Verso.
Chen, S. W., Liang, J. I., Lai, K. Y., Ting, Y. T., Peng, Y. C., Hsu, H. Y., Lai, K. H., & Su, F. C. (2009). Kinematics analysis of chopsticks manipulation. In O. Dössel, W. C. Schlegel (Eds.) *World congress on medical physics and biomedical engineering*, September 7–12, 2009, Munich, Germany. IFMBE Proceedings, (Vol. 25/9, pp. 410–413). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-03889-1_110
Chen, Y.-L. (1998). Effects of shape and operation of chopsticks on food-serving performance. *Applied Ergonomics, 29*(4), 233–238.
Classic of Rites (The), Liji (1885). *Sacred books of the east,* (Vol.28, Part 4. (trans.: James Legge). https://ctext.org/liji
Dervin, F., & Yuan, M. (2021). *Revitalizing interculturality in education: Chinese Minzu as a companion.* Routledge.
Greene, M. (2015). The game people played: Mahjong in modern Chinese culture and society. *Cross-currents: East Asian history and culture review 17*. http://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-17
Heinz, A. (2021). *Mahjong: A Chinese game and the making of modern American culture.* Oxford University Press.
Höllmann, T. O. (2017). *Chinese script: History, characters.* Columbia University Press.
Murck, A., & Fong, W. C. (Eds.) (2013). *Words and images: Chinese poetry, calligraphy, and painting.* Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Sullivan, M. (1999). *The arts of China.* University of California Press.
Wang, E. Q. (2015). *Chopsticks.* Cambridge University Press.
Xu, ZhaoRan, & Nicolson, D. H. (1992). Don't abbreviate Chinese names. *Taxon, 41*, 499–504.
Yang, T. R. (2011). Non-Literal Use of "Jade": A Study on "玉" (Yu) in Chinese Idioms. In Z. Jing-Schmidt (Ed.) *Proceedings of the 23rd North American conference on Chinese linguistics (NACCL-23), 2011.* (Vol. 2, pp. 82–92). University of Oregon, Eugene.