

## II. China and the World We Live In

### A. “Made in China”

1. In most people’s houses, there are products from around the world, but more from China than any other place.
2. The “Made in China” label is on smartphones, computers, coffee cups, plush toys, pens, eyeglasses, and just about everything else.
3. It is easy to take for granted, but it actually represents a very important historical fact.
4. Just two generations ago, China was such a poor and isolated country that almost *nothing* was made there. Then a huge change occurred. China is now the second largest economy in the world. (This is a complicated idea, but a simple way to think of it is that amount of “stuff” the Chinese make every year is now the second biggest amount of any country.) What happened?

### B. 1978: *The Cardinal Anchor Fact of Chinese History Today*

1. The reason why China, previously a poor and isolated country, became so important is that in **1978**, the leader of China, Deng Xiaoping, announced “*To get rich is glorious!*”
2. This meant that the government of China was going to allow its people to trade with the world, even though it had not allowed it before.
3. China did not have freedom of trade because before this change its form of government, known as “communism,” did not allow it. (“Communism” is a form of government where the government controls all property, which causes the people to remain poor.)
4. In **1978**, despite being a communist country, China did something completely anti-communist. It encouraged its people to trade and to profit (make money). To be more precise, it stopped preventing the Chinese people from doing these things.
5. This is what explains China’s amazing success over the past forty years and the spread of all things “Made in China” around the world.



This “before and “after” picture of Shanghai, an important city in China, shows how much has changed since 1978.

### C. c.2200 BC: The Founding of the Xia Dynasty

1. The Chinese government created the *Xia Shang Zhou Chronology Project* to study the three most ancient dynasties (families of rulers) of China's history, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou.
2. The project resulted in the creation of an official Chinese history stretching back to **c. 2200 BC**. (When a “c.” is in front of a year given in history, it means “circa” or “around”. It means that we don’t know exactly.)
3. The beginning of the Xia dynasty occurred when King Shun passed on power *not* to his son but to one of his ministers named Yu (who was *not* a member of his family).
4. Yu was chosen by Shun because he had proven his desire and ability to serve the needs of China's people by building dams and canals to deal with the flooding of the Yellow river.
5. The story of King Yu has always been considered important to the Chinese. It shows how they believe in *benevolent despotism*. (A “despot” is a person who has absolute power. A “benevolent” ruler is one who wishes his people well, and strives to serve them.)
6. In **1978**, when Deng Xiaoping granted permission to his people to trade with the world, he was acting as a *benevolent despot*. He did it because *of a tradition stretching back to c.2200 BC*.