

COMMUNICATIVE EXCHANGES



FRAME 1

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| 1. A: <u>NĪ</u> <u>shì</u> <u>shéi</u> ? | Who are you? |
| B: <u>Wǒ</u> <u>shì</u> Wáng Dànián. | I am Wáng Dànián |
| 2. A: NĪ shì shéi? | Who are you? |
| B: Wǒ shì Hú Měilíng. | I am Hú Měilíng. |
| 3. A: <u>Tā</u> shì shéi? | Who is he? |
| B: <u>Tā</u> shì Mǎ Mínglǐ. | He is Mǎ Mínglǐ. |
| 4. A: Shéi shì Hú Měilíng? | Who is Hú Měilíng? |
| B: <u>Tā</u> shì Hú Měilíng. | She is Hu Měilíng. |

Notes

§1 The verb shì means "to be" in the sense of "to be someone or something," as in "I am Daniel King." It expresses identity. (Later, you will learn a verb which means "to be" in another sense, "to be somewhere," as in "I am in Běijīng." That verb expresses location.)

Unlike verbs in European languages, Chinese verbs do not distinguish first, second, and third persons. A single form serves for all three persons.

Wǒ	<u>shì</u>	Wáng Dànián.	(I <u>am</u> Wáng Dànián.)
NĪ	<u>shì</u>	Hú Měilíng.	(You <u>are</u> Hú Měilíng.)
Tā	<u>shì</u>	Mǎ Mínglǐ.	(He <u>is</u> Mǎ Mínglǐ.)

Later, you will find that Chinese verbs (and nouns) do not distinguish singular and plural, either, and that they do not distinguish past, present, and future as such. You need to learn only one form for each verb.

§2 The question NĪ shì shéi? is actually too direct for most situations, although it is all right from teacher to student or from student to student. (A more polite question is introduced in Lesson 2.)

§3 The pronoun tā is equivalent to "he," "she," or (in limited use) "it."

§4 Unlike English, changing a question into a statement does not alter word order. Chinese uses the same word order in questions as in statements.

Q1	Tā	shì	<u>shéi</u> ?	(Who is he?)
S1	Tā	shì	<u>Mǎ Mínglǐ</u> .	(He is <u>Mǎ Mínglǐ</u> .)
Q2	<u>Shéi</u>	shì	Hú Měilíng?	(Who is Hú Měilíng?)
S2	<u>Tā</u>	shì	Hú Měilíng.	(She is Hú Měilíng.)

When you answer a question containing a question word like shéi, "who," simply replace the question word with the information it asks for.

FRAME 2

5.	A: Nǐ <u>xìng</u> <u>shénme</u> ?	What is your surname?
	B: Wǒ <u>xìng</u> Wáng.	My surname is Wáng.
6.	A: Tā <u>xìng</u> <u>shénme</u> ?	What is his surname?
	B: Tā <u>xìng</u> Mǎ.	His surname is Mǎ.
7.	A: <u>Shéi</u> <u>xìng</u> Hú?	Whose surname is Hú?
	B: Tā <u>xìng</u> Hú.	Her surname is Hú.

Notes

§5 Xìng is a verb, "to be surnamed." It is in the same position in the sentence as shì, "to be."

Wǒ	<u>shì</u>	Wáng Dànián.
(I	<u>am</u>	Wáng Dànián.)

Wǒ	<u>xìng</u>	Wáng.
(I	<u>am surnamed</u>	Wáng.)

§5 Notice that the question word shénme, "what," takes the same position as the question word shéi, "who."

Nǐ	shì	<u>shéi?</u>
(You	are	<u>who?</u>

Nǐ	xìng	<u>shénme?</u>
(You	are surnamed	<u>what?</u>

Shénme is the official spelling. However, the word is pronounced as if it were spelled shénma, or even shénma (often with a single rise in pitch extending over both syllables).

FRAME 3

8.	A: Tā shì shéi?	Who is he?
	B: Tā shì Mǎ Xiānsheng.	He is Mr. Mǎ.
9.	A: Tā shì shéi?	Who is he?
	B: Tā shì Mǎ Mínglǐ Xiānsheng.	He is Mr. Mǎ Mínglǐ.

Notes

§5 After the verb shì, you may have the full name alone, the surname plus title, or the full name plus title.

Tā	shì	Mǎ	Mínglǐ.	
Tā	shì	Mǎ		Xiānsheng.
Tā	shì	Mǎ	Mínglǐ	Xiānsheng.

§8 Xiānsheng, literally "first-born," has more of a connotation of respectfulness than "Mr." Xiānsheng is usually applied only to people other than oneself. Do not use the title Xiānsheng (or any other respectful title, such as "Professor") when giving your own name. If you want to say "I am Mr. Jones," you should say Wǒ xìng Jones.

When a name and title are said together, logically enough it is the name which gets the heavy stress: Wáng Xiānsheng. You will often hear the title pronounced with no full tones: Wáng Xiāngheng. Sometimes, a westernized Chinese married woman may refer to herself as Wáng Tàitai, "Mrs. Wáng" or Wáng Dànián Tàitai "Mrs. Wáng Dànián."

FRAME 4

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| 10. | A: <u>Wáng Xiānsheng</u> , tā shì shéi? | Mr. Wáng, who is he? |
| | B: Tā shì <u>Mǎ Mínglǐ Xiānsheng</u> . | He is Mr. <u>Mǎ Mínglǐ</u> . |
| 11. | A: <u>Xiānsheng</u> , tā shì shéi? | Sir, who is he? |
| | B: Tā shì <u>Mǎ Xiānsheng</u> . | He is Mr. <u>Mǎ</u> . |
| 12. | A: <u>Xiānsheng</u> , tā shì shéi? | Sir, who is she? |
| | B: Tā shì <u>Mǎ Tàitai</u> . | She is Mrs. <u>Mǎ</u> . |
| 13. | A: <u>Wáng Xiānsheng</u> , tā shì shéi? | Mr. Wáng, who is she? |
| | B: Tā shì <u>Mǎ Mínglǐ Tàitai</u> . | She is Mrs. <u>Mǎ Mínglǐ</u> . |

Notes

§11 When you address someone directly, use either the name plus the title alone. Xiānsheng must be translated as "sir" when it is used alone, since "Mr." would not capture its respectful tone. (Tàitai, however, is less respectful when used alone. You should address Mrs. Mǎ as Mǎ Tàitai.)

FRAME 5

14. A: Wáng Xiānsheng, tā shì shéi? B: Tā shì Mǎ Xiǎojié.	Mr. Wáng, who is she? She is Miss Mǎ.
15. A: Tā shì shéi? B: Tā shì Mǎ Mínglǐ Tóngzhì.	Who is he? He is Comrade Mǎ Mínglǐ.
16. A: Tóngzhì, tā shì shéi? B: Tā shì Fāng Bǎolán.	Comrade, who is she? She is Fāng Bǎolán.
17. A: Tóngzhì, tā shì shéi? B: Tā shì Fāng Bǎolán Tóngzhì.	Comrade, who is she? She is Comrade Fāng Bǎolán.

Note

§15 See the Background Notes on Chinese personal names and titles.