

# China Eye

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SACU: Promoting understanding and friendship between the peoples of China and the UK since 1965

Winter 2018

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## Contents

Welcome.....	2
Can you contribute to SACU? .....	3
SACU's Programme of Events to July 2019 .....	3
The SACU New Silk Road Tour 2018.....	4
Beijing - Lanzhou - Dunhuang - Health Work - Family - Conference .....	7
Cricket from a China Eye .....	9
Chinese Popular Religion in Singapore – Historic Photographs Revealed Online.....	10
The Hanlin Academy – China's top academic institution .....	13
Chinese "Ambassador" at The Great Exhibition: Hee Sing, a strange case of mistaken identity.....	16
Ling Shuhua, the anglophile - Part 3: Settling down in England.....	18
Reading about China .....	21
Imperial Examinations – Civil Officials; "Ladder to the Clouds". Part 1 .....	22
Sino File Winter 2018 .....	24
Sinophile .....	26
China Eye Diary .....	27

## Welcome

### Council changes

Chris Henson, for health reasons, has stepped down from the post of membership secretary; Ros Wong has taken over these duties. Chris will however continue to produce the monthly email Newsletter. SACU treasurer Yuan Gao will be handling renewals. Please next see page for further details.

### China's optimism

The Economist Intelligence Unit has released results of a survey to examine how citizens feel about their country's progress. Only 38% in the US and 12% in Germany and Italy believe that their country is moving towards a better society. At the top, is China where 91.4% of its citizens believe that China will become a better place within the next decade. More details in Sino File at the end.

### Chinese contribution to two World Wars

It is fitting that at last the contribution of the Chinese Labour Corps (CLC) in WW1 is at last being recognised. Frances Wood has made the point that the war in Europe was in real danger of being lost because of a shortage of manpower. The 140,000 men of the CLC played a vital role in logistics, supply lines and maintenance of equipment. War is not won entirely by fighting men. She was speaking in the final report of The Meridian Society's project on commemorating the CLC at the British Library on 17 November.

Maybe in 2045 or before, the Chinese contribution to **WW2** will be fully recognised. Despite having most ports and industrial areas overrun by Japanese troops, surrender was never an option. China tied down well over a million Japanese troops who could otherwise be fighting the Russians in Siberia and the Allies in south-east Asia.

If China fell, the war in Europe would have been much more difficult to win. Russia would have had to fight on two fronts. Yet during the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of the end of WW2 on 2 September 2015, in Beijing, not a single senior Western leader was present. Of course, President Putin was there and also the then President of South Korea. Many developing countries from Latin America, the Middle East and Africa were represented at the senior level and some sent troops to march in the procession.

The Chinese contribution to the victory in the Second World War, in which over 20 million Chinese lives were lost, has been played down because the Chinese Communists took over the mainland in 1949. Rana Mitter's book, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War Two*, (Allen Lane 2013) makes this point very clearly.

The Korean War then ensued and China was then regarded as a potential enemy for over 20 years during the 'cold war'. Time has moved on; China has opened up and become an industrial and commercial power in world trade and is committed to international cooperation, but China is still regarded with much suspicion. In fact, only within the last few months France and Germany have called for a European Army as a safeguard against Russia and ...China!

### British Chinese

There seems to be growing interest amongst the Chinese in Britain. There are a number of current projects, activities and publications which are publicised here.

A team of researchers from the University of Liverpool and the Open University are planning a project entitled, *Chinese Britain: Narrative Perspectives, 1890 to present*. The intent is to create a national narrative of the Chinese in Britain from the perspectives of the Chinese communities across the UK which clearly reflect the regional identities of different Chinese communities and the differences within these communities. The full-day workshop was conducted by Dr Lucienne Loh of Liverpool University and about 18 invited participants of Liverpool-Chinese descent took part.



**Following a full day of presentations and discussion, the Liverpool participants enjoyed a Chinese meal together.**

Earlier this year, 'Bi'an', the British Chinese Writers' Network was launched at the Leeds Library. For more details please see <https://bi-an.org/>

Early next year, look out for the stage production, *From Shore to Shore*. It examines young Chinese lives in the UK and their conflicts and aspirations. Performances will be during March/April in Manchester, Liverpool, Lancaster, Birmingham and Newcastle. <https://www.fromshoretoshore.co.uk>

Two books have recently been written on the subject of British Chinese: *Contesting British Culture* launched on 30 November and *The Chinese in Britain* which is to be published in January 2019. The first is edited by Dr Diana Yeh (SACU member and lecturer at the University of London) and Dr Ashley Thorpe. This book critically interrogates British Chinese cultural politics in terms of national and international debates on the Chinese diaspora, race, multicultural, identity and belonging, and transnational 'Chineseness'.

The second book is written by Barclay Price and is a history of Chinese travellers to Britain from the first recorded visitor in 1687 through to 1987. At a time of increased negativity towards those from dissimilar cultures, this book claims to offer a timely reminder of the beneficial impact Chinese visitors and settlers have had on British cultural life over three centuries. Barclay will, in fact, be speaking at a meeting of the Edinburgh branch of the Scotland China Association at 7.30 pm on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019 in the Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL.

## Can you contribute to SACU?

### SACU's Mission:

**To promote friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of Britain and China.**

**To provide facts and analysis about China – not uncritically but always from a firm basis of friendship.**

**To help the British people understand the meaning of China – past and present.**

SACU Council strives to achieve these aims but needs support of individual members. All SACU Council members are unpaid volunteers. If you can help, please contact **Corinne Attwood, SACU company secretary** on 01273 205899 or email: [secretary@sacu.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sacu.org.uk). In particular we need members who can help arrange events and help establish local branches outside of London.

### Membership rates:

Individual	£18
Retired/unwaged	£13
Students (e-copy PDF)	£8
Institutions and Libraries	£22
Overseas Air Mail	£30
Overseas (e-copy PDF)	£8

**Send membership applications to our Membership Secretary, Ros Wong, 108 Salisbury Street, Bedford MK41 7RQ or [membership@sacu.org.uk](mailto:membership@sacu.org.uk)**

**Send renewals of membership to our Treasurer, Dr Yuan Gao, 8A Westcroft Square, London W6 0TB or [treasurer@sacu.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@sacu.org.uk)**

Note that your email address will be used only for SACU purposes. It will not be passed to anyone without your consent. In circulars such as the monthly **SACU Newsletter** your email details will not be visible to others. Please contact [membership@sacu.org.uk](mailto:membership@sacu.org.uk) to be added to the newsletter. You can unsubscribe at any time.

## SACU's Programme of Events to July 2019

**Essay Competition Awards Ceremonies** were held on Wednesday 28 November 2018 at Harpenden, Hertfordshire and on Tuesday 4 December 2018 at Oundle School, Northamptonshire

**SACU and Peking University** jointly sponsor an annual essay competition on the theme of *friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of the United Kingdom and China*.

This year the competition has been held for Harpenden schools' students (where George Hogg grew up) and students at Oundle School (our founder Joseph Needham's old school) with SACU Vice President Dr Frances Wood as Chair of the Judging Panel.

At the Awards Ceremonies Professor Sun Hua, Peking University, and Zoe Reed, SACU Chair, will present the prizes and certificates to the winners.

### Delegation visit:

The visit by the delegation from Shandan County Government and Shandan Bailie School, expected in November 2018, has been postponed until 2019.

### Friday 15th March 2019: Professor Michael Wood

Professor Michael Wood will talk to us and show some of his film clips of China on Friday 15th March 2019, early evening, in the main auditorium at 25 Churchill Place, EY's prestigious offices in Canary Wharf. We are delighted that EY (Ernst & Young) has confirmed this venue and are supporting SACU for this event. Television presenter and academic,

Professor Michael Wood was a fascinating and engaging speaker at our Manchester 'Belt and Road' Panel Discussion in April 2018 and we expect this to be a popular talk. We will have booking information out to members early in the New Year but please make a note in your diary!

We are still finalising venues and dates for other proposed speakers for our current programme of events as outlined in the last edition of *China Eye*.

SACU's monthly eNewsletter, website and social media channels will carry updates on all SACU events and other events organised by partner organisations. I would welcome any ideas or contributions from members, particularly useful just now would be any help to secure suitable free venues in London.

**Ros Wong, SACU Events [events@sacu.org.uk](mailto:events@sacu.org.uk)**

# The SACU New Silk Road Tour 2018

## Walter Fung

The tour started in Xi'an and proceeded via various locations to Urumqi in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The party of ten was made up of members of SACU, the Scotland China Association and The Meridian Society: Janice Dickson, Robert Colvil, Alison Minns, Dorothy Wilkinson, Thea Sorenson, Jean Leung, Lai Seung, Margarita Morgan and Walter Fung. The trip was arranged by Dickson Travel Services of Edinburgh and their agents in China.

The trip was inspired by the Belt and Road Initiative, but the first proposed first stage to Yiwu via Shanghai was omitted for logistical reasons. We must thank Dickson Travel for patience and flexibility which allowed the trip to take place.



First night dinner together

The area of China covered is inhabited by National Minority peoples, especially Xinjiang which is home to no fewer than 46 different ethnic minorities. It is an area where different cultures have merged and indeed both East and West meet mid-Asia, producing a unique mix of cultures.

All but four members of the party had already seen the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an so whilst these four made the trip to the warriors, the other six had a 'free day'. There was much to see in Xi'an, one of the former capitals of China during several dynasties including Qin, Han and Tang.

I made a trip to the Xi'an Museum, which now incorporates the Little Goose Pagoda. The next morning, I visited the huge city walls and the Beilin Museum, also called the Forest of Steles. It contains over a thousand tablets on which are carved the Confucian classics and other classical Chinese literature. Of particular interest is the Nestorian tablet, which records the arrival of Nestorian Christianity in the year 642.



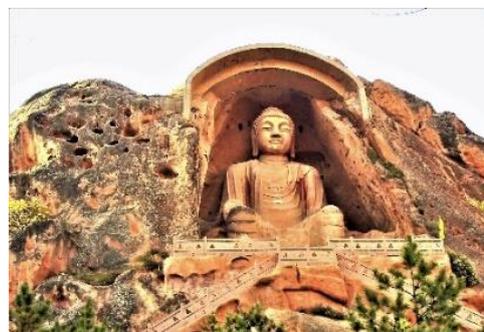
The Beilin museum, Xi'an

In the afternoon we flew north to Guyuan, a city in Ningxia province (the autonomous region of the Hui Muslim Nationality) where we spent the night. The next day, after breakfast we came upon a group of local people beating drums in a square not far from the city walls. We were invited to join in. The group readily posed for photographs and seemed eager to be photographed with us. Were they expecting us?

Later we admired the city walls, briefly viewed a mosque specifically for women and then drove on to a Chinese style mosque, where we chatted to some locals. The mosque design was based on a Chinese pagoda (see below).



After an excellent lunch, in the 'Ten Big Bowls' restaurant, which included lamb and beef dishes (but not pork in this Moslem region), with 'Eight Treasure' tea, we visited the Sumeru Grottoes and the Yuan Guang Temple.



Sumeru Grottos on the Silk Road

The next day we viewed the Guyuan Museum with its extensive display of archaeological items from the Silk Road region. The museum also explained in detail the history, the peoples who lived in the area throughout the ages and the part they played in the exchange of trade and culture along the Silk Route.

During the afternoon we travelled further north by road to Zhongwei, where on arrival we viewed the Gaomiao Baoan Temple before heading to our hotel for the night. This Buddhist temple had much of interest and had fortune tellers conducting their business outside. (see below)



Guidebooks tell us that Ningxia is the poorest province in China, but the three cities we visited in this province seemed reasonably prosperous. The shops were well-stocked and the streets clean. China is moving so fast that any description is soon out of date. The next day, we drove to the Western Xia Dynasty tombs and then on to the Chengtian Temple, which had a tall pagoda within its walls.

After a night in Yinchuan, the capital city of Ningxia, we took a plane to Xining, the capital of Qinghai province, adjacent to Tibet. Qinghai has a population of about six million with two million Tibetans and about two million Moslems. There are over 56 mosques in East Xining.

Our guide, Peter, was a Tibetan and mentioned that Tibet was especially popular with Germans; about 70% of Western tourists are Germans. Much of the province is on the Tibetan plateau where three major rivers have their source within a few miles of each other. The province is about as large as France and England combined.

Here we visited the Golden Pagoda and the Qinghai provincial museum, which was housed in a very impressive building.

On a cold morning we drove to the Kumkum Monastery, one of the most important in Tibetan Buddhism. Peter warned us that some monks do not like tourists and may be quite rude. On arrival, it began snowing steadily and it was quite cold but despite this we took many pictures of the outside of individual buildings, but no photography was allowed inside. Of special interest were the Great Hall with a golden roof and in a separate building, the 'butter carving' images of Buddha, fashioned by monks with pre-cooled hands! The most senior Chinese leaders have been here to see these incredible works of art.



Above: Kumkum Monastery showing the Great Hall with its golden roof



Tibetan monks visit the Qinghai Arts museum

The next day, the weather was more pleasant and after a three-hour coach journey we reached Qinghai Lake. There are a number of resorts around the lake. Here at the lakeside was an 'avenue' of poets from all over the world, see below. There were some British and Irish, but the majority were African, Persian, Russian and Central European who we had never heard of. A revelation of the vastness of human literature and the limits of our horizons?



Back in Xining city, we visited the Dongguan mosque and Southern Chan Buddhist Temple. Dongguan Mosque is the fifth largest in China and can hold up to 3,000 people.



South Chan Buddhist Temple

Early the next day we boarded a bullet train to take us to Turpan in Xinjiang province. Xinjiang is an autonomous region for the Uyghur (pronounced 'Wee-gur') Minority. The next day, we explored the ancient deserted city of Jiaohe, which for me was one of the highlights of the tour. This ancient city site (also referred to as Yar City) covered a large area with the remains of business areas, living quarters, a very large Buddhist temple and cemeteries, including one specifically for children. It was abandoned at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century probably due to lack of water and attacks by hostile forces. Jiaohe was Buddhist until the city was conquered by the Mongols. Our guide told us that the

Mongols were ruthless conquerors. They invited their enemies to surrender but if even one person fought, the whole population was killed.

From here we moved to view the 'Flaming Mountains'. A viewing area had been developed with a reception centre and museum. The central attraction was Monkey and his companions, who in the classic novel, *'Journey to the West'* escorted a Buddhist monk to search for original texts in India.



**The statue to Monkey and companions with the 'flaming mountains' in the background.**

This full day of sightseeing was concluded by a trip to 'Grape Valley' late in the afternoon. A few stores were still open and we had the choice of over 40 types of raisins to taste and buy.

The next morning we left Turpan for the three hours' drive to Urumqi (Wulumqi in pinyin) where security was very tight; we had to show passports and go through airport-like security at virtually every location. Our sightseeing was confined to visiting two museum and two parks.



**Urumqi Park Gymnasium**

The museums were exceptionally interesting. The provincial museum had an extensive feature on the various ethnic minorities in Xinjiang of which there are 46 in total. The Xinjiang museum is well known for its collection of mummies more than a thousand years old. They included the so called, 'Loulan Beauty', a woman who lived over 3, 800 years ago. Researchers have used computers to produce an image of what she looked like in life.

### **General Comments**

The tourist sites we visited were well-laid out with large parking facilities. The museums were invariably newly built and huge; clearly no expense seemed to have been spared and in most case the exhibits were labelled in English.

The investment in infrastructure was really impressive. Power lines across desert, extensive wind farms covering several square miles, railway lines and roads on pillars and numerous tunnels through mountains. The range, size and design of the ubiquitous tall buildings in all the cities was breath-taking. However some were empty, presumably in anticipation of the tens of millions expected to relocate from the countryside every year.

Toilets in China have clearly been made a priority; there were many purpose-built structures and in restaurants they were clean and all had washbasins – but only a tiny minority had toilet paper readily available. This is likely to change for the better as progress continues.

The Chinese diet seemed to be a healthy one and in fact statistics show that, at present, only about 4% of Chinese are obese compared to over 20% in many Western countries. Potatoes are becoming increasingly served in China. Sometimes as small chunks and sometimes in shredded strips; very occasionally as chips. The reason is that potatoes are grown using much less water than rice.

For one meal in Qinghai we dined on home cooked Tibetan dishes in a private house, which was geared up to serving tourists such as us. The home-made yogurt was especially delicious and some of us requested more than one portion. Yak meat was on the menu, which I personally found very tough!

We were urged to wear seat belts in the coach, which was a something we had not been asked to do on previous tours. Possibly this is a feature of the provinces we were in, Ningxia, Qinghai and Xinjiang or is it now nationwide?

All in all, a fascinating trip to a part of China not yet on the popular itinerary. We met friendly interesting people who were pleased to meet us.

## Beijing - Lanzhou - Dunhuang - Health Work - Family - Conference

### Zoë Reed, SACU Chair

The last couple of weeks in September saw me in China again. The trip was built around an invitation from Shandan County Government to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> Silk Road International Conference in Dunhuang. I also spent time with family and had some meetings to do with my work for an NHS mental health trust.

### Beijing 21<sup>st</sup> September

I travelled overnight from London, arriving Beijing early afternoon. The Director of a company, which provides conferences and seminars for psychiatrists, met me. South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, where I work, is developing partnerships in China particularly around its training services. Within a couple of hours of arrival, the Director and I were having a WeChat videoconference with my colleague back in London to discuss some partnership issues!

After our meeting, the Director offered to drive me to my next appointment – Supper with Isabel, Carl and Michael Crook and friends in their home in the NW of the City. Big mistake! If I'd taken public transport as Michael had recommended I suspect the journey would have taken half the 2 hours it did – stuck in Beijing Friday evening traffic jams!

Despite my late arrival, it was lovely to see Isabel again and to participate in an interesting evening of conversation with them and their two Canadian friends who work in the field of conservation. I took a photo of Michael and Carl and then another of Isabel – however below they appear joined together!



### Beijing 22<sup>nd</sup> September

Before travelling to Lanzhou, I had a meeting with the founder and President of a charity called Educating Girls of Rural China. I had been e-introduced to her by people from the British Embassy in Beijing who are engaged with healthcare officials in regional China to link UK experts in mental health to community level organisations in rural China. The 2015-2020 National Mental Health Work Plan for

the PRC has a number of important targets, one of which is “to build a social milieu of understanding, acceptance and caring for individuals with mental illness, raising community awareness of the importance of mental health; promoting the psychological wellbeing of the public; and enhance the harmonious development of society.” We had coffee in a Starbucks and discussed the FCO project and it was fascinating to hear of all her work to help girls from rural settings get an equal start in life, and return to rural settings after University.

Work over, I could now settle into the next part of my trip – Family and SACU!

### Lanzhou, Gansu: 22<sup>nd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> September

It was lovely to see my Chinese family members; I'd last seen them autumn 2017. My niece Juanjuan and her husband Deye met me from the very modern airport. They have a car now – and just as Beijing have to put up with much congestion! We drove to my sister Sun Kun and her husband Xiaohu's home – they had been looking after Juanjuan and Deye's toddler daughter. My arrival coincided with Mid-Autumn Festival so I was treated to dumplings (vegetarian as I don't eat meat) made especially for the occasion – together with some excellent chips, the Western food Sun Kun now has in her cooking repertoire!

We had a relaxing and enjoyable few days together visiting local sites, eating in the covered area in the park and generally enjoying the Mid-Autumn Festival Chinese family time. The meal in the huge covered area also included witnessing a wedding – Chinese style! Much noise, conducted by a young man with a microphone and hundreds of people eating and drinking throughout the proceedings with scant attention to the bride and groom getting married on the catwalk and stage! We had one long trip - which was back to the New Zone close to the airport. This has been developed to accommodate vast population expansion. It includes the “Great Wall West Film and TV City” containing replicas of the Greek Parthenon, Dutch windmills, Egyptian Sphinx and the Beijing Temple of Heavenly Peace to name but a few! The in-hospitable terrain struck me as well as the effort involved to prevent the “film and TV city” returning to desert.

I met with Liu Guozhong & Tim Zachernuk to discuss SACU's George Hogg Cooperative Educational Fund [GHF] and how it might be deployed in support of their work helping rural cooperatives develop the business skills to thrive. Guozhong was en route to Beijing to join the ICCIC visit to UK. He reminded me that he had met my father in the 1980's to discuss cooperative business ideas around pig farming. Guozhong was struck then by how Bailie Cooperative principles and values were still clearly evident in the way my father approached things. He wanted to see that spirit continued with the GHFund.

All too soon it was time to leave Lanzhou and take the final leg of my journey to Dunhuang. I wanted to travel by train – and initially that hadn't seemed possible as the only option was 14 hours overnight - so a plane ticket was booked. However, miraculously Xiaohu received a notification on his

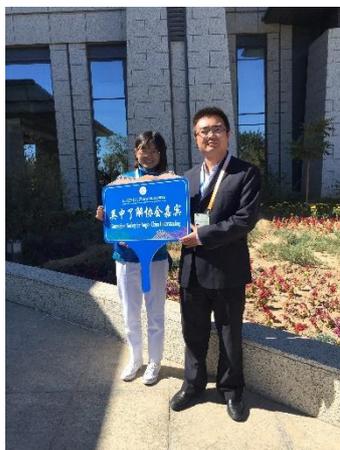
mobile that a new 8-hour daytime service was opening that week! Juanjuan then cancelled my plane ticket and booked the train ticket – all done online via her mobile!



Deye, Xiaohu and Juanjuan saw me off at the airport- like railway station – with of course, I notice, the ubiquitous McDonald’s in the background!

**Dunhuang, Gansu: 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September: 3<sup>rd</sup> International Silk Road Conference and Expo**

The train was full but first class very comfortable – I sat next to a young man on his way to join a 4-day hike in the Gobi Desert! Again a reminder of the terrain we were in. At Dunhuang Station I was met by my interpreter [a volunteer university student] and a government official. They greeted me with a sign welcoming SACU! They, together with our driver, looked after me and accompanied me to all activities.



As with everything in China, the scale of the Conference venue was amazing. Over a 1,000 delegates attended – with all foreign guests each supported with interpreter, official, and driver. In addition to the huge conference opening ceremony, conferences and tour around the Expo, we have entertainment each evening at the theatre in the complex. Coming out after the show and seeing the ranks of minibuses – each delegation had its own - reinforced the sense of scale. I enjoyed the session on Culture and Tourism [separate government departments recently combined], particularly the lecture from the Walt Disney Vice-President responsible for

developing Shanghai Disney in collaboration with a Chinese Company “Authentically Disney/Distinctly Chinese” and am looking forward to visiting it next autumn!



Prof Sun Hua, Peking University and friend of SACU, joined me for the event. After the formalities were over, the organisers arranged trips to the Magao Caves and Crescent Moon Lake. The tourist infrastructure has developed significantly since our SACU *In the footsteps of Joseph Needham* tour in 2013. In the photo above you can see us in our rather fetching canvas over boots - designed to keep the desert sand out of our shoes!

There is so much more I could share but Walter said to keep it brief - so hope this has given you a flavour of another thought provoking, surprising, enjoyable trip to China!

## Cricket from a China Eye

### Sun Hua

On my flight from Beijing to London, I tried to figure out how many times I had been to the UK, but unfortunately failed when falling asleep amid the buzzing noise not long after the take-off. During my stays in London (with my wife Wang Fang and daughter Perry Sun Peiran) I always try to learn more about British culture by having meals, by walking, by travelling by car, by meeting people from different backgrounds. My stay this summer in London brought me a different experience: by watching a cricket match.

Zoë and Richard invited me and my family to watch a cricket match in Richmond on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August between Middlesex and Glamorgan. It was sunny and very hot. After a long time parking the car, we met Zoë and Richard at the entrance to the ground. It was not a large stadium with seats like others we had been to before: no fixed seating, just free-standing chairs on the grass. So many people came very early to find a nice place for a better view.

We found it real fun to join hundreds of people watching a game we had never watched before, either live or on TV. We had googled the history and rules of cricket before we came to the match, but still could not understand the rules and why the game attracted so many people. Richard explained the game, the scoring, the different players, the teams and the ball and the bat in detail. After several hits we were able to cheer with the crowd at the right time, and we figured out the roles of the 11 players of each team. With beer, coffee and Pimms, we more and more enjoyed the game. Although we had put on sunscreen cream we were still left with a suntan on the back of our necks. The suntan was there for the whole summer even after we were back in China, which was a mark that we had watched the very traditional and one of the most popular sports in the UK.

We enjoyed the cricket match very much. It was lovely to have spent a great time with Zoë and Richard, and immersed in a festival atmosphere with local families on a Sunday afternoon. Sportsmanship is a very English trait and many

modern sports are virtually a British invention. Cricket, boxing, football, tennis and table tennis were all first organized and given rules in Britain. We Chinese like badminton very much: but unexpectedly I find that there is a British town named Badminton. Rules are the essence of sports, and sportsmanship is the ability to practise a game within its rules, and at the same time showing generosity to the opponent and good temper in defeat. Moreover, sportsmanship can be seen as an ideal of our daily life. One of the most elementary rules of life is “never hit a man when he’s down”; in other words, never take advantage of another person’s misfortune. I find that British people often show this sense of sportsmanship to a surprisingly high degree in their relations with each other. To them, cricket is not only a game with the ball and bat, but also an explanation of life. Despite the fierce competition in cricket, the tradition of honour and fair play has become a metaphor for life in Britain: in any case, the phrase "It's just not cricket" is used whenever cheating occurs. Cricket's special position in British society is so undeniable - just like the mild weather and light food in England, life in England would be very different without cricket.

The spirit of SACU is to improve understanding. From the cricket match, we tried our best to understand British culture. It is the best way to play an active role in deepening international relations by integrating with other cultures, understanding each other’s stories and overcoming barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding; to inject people-to-people exchanges between young people in China and abroad with new life by enhancing mutual understanding and promoting friendship through activities involving universities and colleges. More and more foreigners are arriving in China all the time, and they view socialist China from their own perspective, which is totally normal.

As long as people-to-people exchanges are carried out in a spirit of inclusiveness, to promote peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for different cultures, to enhance friendships between the peoples of different countries via cultural exchanges, to enhance social progress, and to safeguard the world peace, then relations between different cultures will be harmonious and mutually reinforced.

## Chinese Popular Religion in Singapore – Historic Photographs Revealed Online

**Eona Bell**

*Eona Bell is a member of SACU and teaches social anthropology at the University of Cambridge.*

A remarkable collection of photographs depicting Chinese temples and ritual practices in 1950s Singapore is being made available online by the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. The set of over 1,400 negatives and prints were made by the British photographer and anthropologist Alan J.A. Elliott, who carried out fieldwork on Chinese popular religion in Singapore between 1950 and 1951, as a postgraduate student of the eminent anthropologist Sir Raymond Firth at the London School of Economics and Political Science.



L-R, Unknown person, Alan Elliott, Muriel Elliott, and an unknown woman, possibly Elliott's co-researcher Margaret Lee, at Guan Tong monastery, Singapore in 1950 or 1951.

In addition to his interest in spirit medium temples, Elliott also visited Buddhist monasteries and other religious sites. (MAA N.62113.ELT). When he first arrived in Singapore, then a British colony still recovering from Japanese occupation and in a state of some economic and political turmoil, Elliott had not yet decided to focus his research on spirit mediums or indeed religion: with funding from the Colonial Social Science Research Council, he had originally considered doing research on the education system and political views of Singaporean school teachers. However, perhaps wishing to avoid issues which were highly sensitive in the light of events in mainland China the previous year, and influenced by Raymond Firth who had his own scholarly interest in spirit mediumship, he soon became enthusiastic about this area of study.

In a letter to Firth, Elliott wrote:

“I have established quite a sound relationship with an interesting spirit-medium cult. It is very well organized and quite prosperous, meeting twice on Sundays and on all other evenings of the week. The interesting point is that most of the organizers are very respectable government and

commercial clerks. It is one of the Monkey God cults, and on Sunday mornings the medium (also a clerk) paints his face and rigs himself out most impressively. Since they seem to have objection to flashlight photography I should be able to collect quite an interesting series of pictures.”

Spirit mediumship had been brought to Singapore in the nineteenth century by Chinese migrants from Fujian and Guangdong, where the practices can be traced back many thousands of years to traditions of shamanism. Spirit medium temples are also found in other regions where the Hokkien diaspora have settled including Malaysia and Taiwan. When possessed by a deity, spirit mediums (童乩, tongji or tangki) can speak for the deity, offering fortune-telling and blessings to devotees. They frequently demonstrate their possession by performing acts of self-mortification such as piercing their skin spikes, without feeling pain.



A spirit medium of Ch'i-t'ien Ta-sheng (聖大天齊, 'Great Saint Equal with Heaven', or 'Monkey God') uses his tongue to extinguish burning incense sticks at Soon Tian Keng temple, Bukit Permei, Singapore. (MAA N.53969.ELT)



A spirit medium with pierced cheeks and carrying a sword and flag is carried on a nail chair in procession during the Nine Emperor Gods festival at Henderson Road, Singapore. (MAA N.54230.ELT)

At the time of his research, Elliott estimated there were between 100 and 150 spirit-medium cults in Singapore, each organised by a group of men including religious office holders who would assist the medium, and promoters who took care of the practical and financial organisation. The worshippers were overwhelmingly female, the majority Hokkien or Teochew with a few Cantonese also attending. Some were very poor and illiterate, but others came from more prosperous backgrounds. Elliott recorded some of the reasons why a person might consult a spirit medium: the most frequent involved illness or 'bad luck', while others concerned possession by evil spirits, errant spouses, financial matters or the choice of auspicious dates. The medium would prescribe certain drugs, rituals or specific advice in each case.

Elliott was particularly interested in temples dedicated to Ch'i-t'ien Ta-sheng (聖大天齊, the 'Great Saint' or Monkey God) but spirit mediums in Singapore channelled other deities including Nezha (哪, Nozha, the 'Third Prince') Guanyin (觀音) and Guan Di (關帝). He would go on to photograph spirit medium performances, street processions and other festivals at over twenty different locations, as well as scenes of Singapore's 'death houses' on Sago Street (where dying people were brought by their relatives to spend their final hours), many of the Chinese cemeteries, the annual Ninth Month pilgrimage by boat to Kusu Island, and several of the Buddhist monasteries established in Singapore by missionaries eager to bring the overseas Chinese back to a 'purer' or more orthodox form of religion. The places of worship depicted range from tiny attap (thatched) huts in villages of rubber plantation workers, to ground-floor rooms in the shop-houses of Singapore's Chinatown, and large-scale temples built in traditional Chinese architectural style by various clan associations and religious groups.



A spirit medium accompanied by a Taoist priest performs 'automatic writing' in bowl of sand at a temple dedicated to Guan Di on Jurong Road, Singapore. On his left, an assistant records the words of the deity. (MAA N.62459.ELT)



Soon Tian Keng (Shun Tian Gong) at 19 Bukit Permei. This temple, dedicated to the Monkey God, was the main focus of Elliott's research. The site was redeveloped in the 1980s, and the Monkey God shrine moved to Ban Siew San Kuan Im Tong temple. (MAA N.53885.ELT)



Festival procession outside Poh Jay Sze (Pu Ji Si 普济寺) Buddhist Temple, Singapore. The temple was relocated in the 1980s. (MAA N.62383.ELT)

During the major festivals, temple organisers would hire Chinese opera troupes to perform for the gods. These performances, known as wayang in Singapore, had been a common feature of street life from the 1850s onwards, but by the 1950s their heyday was over, as opera performers competed with cinemas and amusement parks for public attention. Many theatre companies had disbanded during World War Two and the most prominent opera stage of the pre-war period, Lai Chun Yuen, had been destroyed in an air raid. The performances by Hokkien and Teochew companies which Elliott depicts took place on temporary stages erected for the duration of a festival, when market sellers would also set up stalls selling drinks and snacks.



Wayang (Chinese opera) performers at Mohamed Sultan Road temple, Singapore. (MAA N.53951.ELT)

The majority of Elliott's photographs have remained unpublished until now. Twenty-four of them were selected to illustrate the book in which he published his research findings: *Chinese Spirit-Medium Cults in Singapore* (London: Athlone Press, 1955). It remains a classic text for scholars interested in overseas Chinese religion. By the time Elliott's book was published, however, the author had already left academia to take up a post with UNESCO, where he would remain in various roles until his retirement. Alan Elliott donated his archive to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge in 1988. He died in 2006.

Cataloguing the images has proved something of a challenge. The collection was given to the museum with very little documentation. The only accompanying papers were a short typewritten memoir by Elliott, now in the museum archives, and his hand-written indexes which are very brief and do not always give precise locations. In any case, because of the massive redevelopment of Singapore's urban spaces in recent decades, most of the sites which Elliott visited have since been obliterated or transformed.

However, popular religious practices have undergone something of a revival and attracted the attention of a new generation of scholars documenting Chinese spirit mediums in Singapore, where they are as likely to hold consultations within an HDB (Housing Development Board) apartment as in a dedicated temple building.

Local historians are also working hard to preserve Singapore's tangible and intangible cultural heritage through walking tours, museums and conservation of historic buildings. Cemeteries have been a focal point of campaigning, since so many have been exhumed to allow for building work and new infrastructure. Many of the small burial grounds operated by Chinese clan associations and photographed by Elliott in the 1950s, such as the Hylam (Hainanese) cemetery, and the Fung Yun Thai Hakka cemetery, have vanished. There is currently a campaign to save the historic Bukit Brown cemetery, resting place of many pioneering figures from Singapore's past, from the incursion of a new highway.

We have been able to collaborate with Singapore-based academic historians, as well as some of the volunteers and enthusiasts involved in efforts to preserve its cultural heritage, to identify many of the sites which Elliott photographed. Members of a Facebook page, Taoism Singapore, have been particularly helpful in recognizing and naming temples and burial grounds, as well as interpreting many of the activities shown there.

The work of cataloguing and fully researching the collection will continue over the coming months, and we look forward to finding new ways to share the images both in the UK and Singapore.

**All images reproduced courtesy of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. More images from the Elliott Collection can be viewed online at <http://collections.maa.cam.ac.uk/>**

# The Hanlin Academy – China’s top academic institution

**Rob Stallard**

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When you look at the list of the oldest academic institutions in the world you will see that Bologna, Italy (1088) tops the list followed by Oxford, UK (1096) and then Salamanca, Spain (1134) but why isn't China in this list? After all China had an Imperial examination system for two thousand years and it must surely have had a major academic institution to administer the system? Yes, there was indeed such an institution: the Hanlin Academy which was home to the most gifted scholars, philosophers, writers, historians and scientists. It lasted for nearly 1,200 years and so certainly outstrips any other 'university' in longevity.

## Tang Foundation

The academy began, as many great Chinese institutions did, back in the Tang dynasty. In 725CE Emperor Xuanzong founded an academy within the Imperial Palace at Chang'an (present day Xi'an). It was originally open to all kinds of expert, not just scholars, including musicians and acrobats. It prospered and in 738 it moved to a new home: the 翰林学 士 Hànlín Xuéshì or 翰林院 Hànlín Yuàn. I originally assumed 'Han' was a nod to the Han dynasty after which many Chinese institutions are named, but in fact in this case 'Han' is a writing brush so the literal translation should be 'Forest of Brushes Academy' an apt name for an august assembly of skilled writers. Famous academicians from the early period include the great Tang poets Bai Juyi and Su Shi (Su Dongpo).

Only the brightest of students were chosen from the top 进 士 jìn shì 'Doctorate' grade of state examinations. The primary function of the academy was to write the carefully phrased Imperial edicts but it had many other roles. On occasions academicians were called on to advise at times of crisis - such as the An Lushan rebellion (755-763) and much later over the opium problem. The Hanlin academy also provided tutors to both the Imperial family and top court eunuchs. As the top academic institution the scholars set and marked the state examination scripts - sometimes going out to the provinces to adjudicate on examination issues. Academicians were often appointed to leading roles at other academies over the country to spread the love of learning. Perhaps more importantly they recorded a contemporary account of the acts of the Emperor. This was the '实录 Shí lù true (or honest) record'. On the fall of a dynasty these records would form the official history of the preceding dynasty. The academy housed a magnificent library which held a prestigious collection of the finest books.

## Evolution

Over the dynasties the role of the Hanlin academy changed. Early on Tang Emperor Shenzong purged it of diviners, physicians and chess masters. It then became a pool of top advisers (a 'think tank'). An academician was one of very few who had direct access to the Imperial Inner Court. For many aspiring members the academy was just an important

公 愍 忠 劉 講 侍 林 翰



*Liu Qiu (1392-1443), Hanlin academician of the Ming Dynasty.*

stepping stone towards being appointed to a very lucrative role as a minister in the Imperial Secretariat. Academicians also worked on commentaries of the Confucian classics but the academy was not a Confucian institute, there were also scholars of Daoism and Buddhism. However, the key benefit of the appointment was the great respect and honour

that it gave the holder; in this regard it resembled the Royal Society of London (founded

1660).

During the Song dynasty the academy lost some of its direct political influence and concentrated on cultural matters. In the following Yuan (Mongol) dynasty the famous painter of horses Zhao Mengfu became a director. The Mongol overlords created a separate institution on similar lines to deal with all the Mongolian - Chinese translation work and let the Hanlin Academy concentrate on Han Chinese culture.

## The Great Ming encyclopaedia

When the Ming dynasty began in 1368 the academy was located at the capital Nanjing. The new Han Chinese dynasty gave the academy a much wider remit. In 1403 Emperor Yongle set the academy upon its most famous and greatest task. He ordered a great encyclopaedia to be written the 文献大成 Wén xiàn dà chéng but he was disappointed by the scope of the end result - it mainly covered literature and so instigated a much grander project the 永乐大典 Yǒng lè dà diǎn. This was to be an encyclopaedia of all known scholarship on all subjects arranged into categories ordered according to its special system of rhyme of category names. It took 2,180 scholars six years to produce an amazing work totalling 11,095 volumes - the Wikipedia of its day. Its content was considered so vital and significant that no foreigner was allowed to view it. Some say that a copy was buried with Emperor Yongle and may still lie there intact. Two copies of the great Yongle Dadian were made of the original at Wenyuan Ge in the Forbidden City.

The copying started in 1562 and took five years to complete. One copy remained at Nanjing and together with the original was destroyed during the Manchu conquest. The remaining copy came to the Hanlin Academy at Beijing in the 1720s. All this work on great encyclopaedias took scholars away

from their usual studies of the ancient classical texts and some lamented the decline in classical scholarship.

When the Imperial court moved to Beijing in 1421 the academy was initially located within Forbidden City, but in 1442 it was moved outside to a former Mongol Imperial building - the 'Court of State Ceremony'. The academy was spread out over twenty separate halls and was located just to the east of present day Tiananmen Square where it remained until its closure in 1911. It entered a golden age as the Imperial institution of arts and letters.



It was during the Ming (1385) that the top three candidates for jinshi examinations were granted automatic entry as academicians. This was not the end of their studies for members then faced the gruelling internal examination of the Institute of Advanced Studies 庶常馆 Shù cháng guǎn, after three years of study only those who passed could stay on permanently while those who failed generally entered the Imperial Civil Service as local provincial officials. The examination focused on testing their ability in the areas of classical erudition and rhyme prose.

When the Jesuit mission came to Beijing in the late Ming dynasty (1607) Matteo Ricci worked with academician Xu Guangqi on a translation of Euclid's Elements. Xu went on to become a Christian convert – one of the 'Three Pillars of the Christian Catholic church in China'.

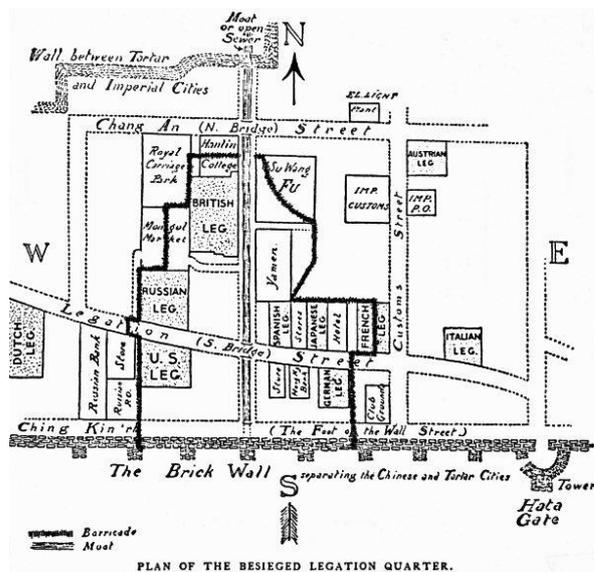
When the Manchus came to power in 1644 they preserved the institution but created special entry for leading Manchu people by quota. It was necessary to train up skilled Chinese - Manchu translators and so some were admitted despite poor examination grades. In the great early phase of the Qing dynasty under Emperors Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong the academy prospered. Emperor Kangxi (1661-1722) became concerned over the quality of

calligraphy and thought only a few of the academicians could write well. Xu Jun who became an academician in 1713 after finishing 8th in the examinations was sent down for being 'careless in his studies' after a few years.

Not to be outdone by their Ming dynasty predecessors Emperor Qianlong set the scholars on an even bigger project than the Yongle Dadian, this was the 四库全书 Sì kù quán shū 'Complete Library of the Four Treasuries' - the world's largest ever paper-based encyclopedia. It began in 1773 and took 361 scholars nine years to produce 36,381 volumes - about 800 million characters in length. Four virtually complete copies of this great work have survived to the present day.

In the last phase of the Qing dynasty the famous 'opium commissioner' Lin Zexu came 7th out of 237 candidates to pass the 'jinshi' examination in 1811 and entered the academy. The scholar/military leader Zeng Guofan also attended. After about 1800 it fell into decline; drinking, chess and gambling became common pursuits and many books from the great library were pilfered. Indolence set in and some posts became mere sinecures. Membership was opened up to all those who came top of the lower grade provincial examinations.

### The Great Fire



The British have had a hand in almost any story about China from the 19th century and in this case by sheer accident were instrumental in the downfall of the academy. The British after the second Opium War (1860) had forced the Emperor to grant them a permanent embassy in Beijing. They were allocated the 梁公府 Liáng gōng fū building just south of the Hanlin Academy. When the Boxers began the 'Siege of the Legations' the academy became a key point on the border of the legation quarter. As the academy and legations contained many wooden buildings the Boxers decided that a fire would breach the defences and so on 23rd June 1900 the academy was deliberately set alight. The besieged foreigners worked frantically to prevent the fire spreading into the legation and chopped down trees and demolished buildings to create a fire break.

They successfully held back the fire but only at the cost of great damage to the academy. The Chinese attackers had moved out many books but the remnants of the great Yongle Dadian had been left (in any case it is estimated only 5% of the encyclopaedia remained in good condition at this time). The academy was then looted. George Ernest Morrison, the Times correspondent, took part in the proceedings. Lancelot Giles, son of Cambridge sinologist Herbert Giles, also present at the siege brought back one volume of the great Yongle encyclopaedia to Cambridge University Library where it still remains. Currently 432 of the 11,095 volumes are known to survive and are spread between universities and libraries over the world. 84 other large volumes comprising the dynastic records of Ming dynasty found their way to Cambridge. Only one hall of the Academy, containing stone tablets, survived the inferno.

As a bastion of the Imperial system it would have needed drastic overhaul to survive the foundation of the Republic of China in 1911. No attempt was made, instead the modern universities of Peking University (1898), Fudan University (1905), Tsinghua University (1911) and the University of Hong Kong (1911), sprang up to take up the reins from their most illustrious forbear.

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### Illustrations

Liu Qiu

[https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liu\\_Qiu.png](https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liu_Qiu.png)

Yong le da dian

<https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jiaxian.jpg>

Siege of legations

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Legation\\_Quarter\\_defenses.tif](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Legation_Quarter_defenses.tif)

## Chinese “Ambassador” at The Great Exhibition: Hee Sing, a strange case of mistaken identity

**Kevin Harrison**

*Kevin Harrison is an Associate Lecturer with the Open University. Describing himself as ‘pickled in history’, Kevin gives talks and writes about a wide range of historical subjects. He has recently joined SACU.*

A splendid ceremony unfolds. The Great Exhibition: 1<sup>st</sup> May 1851. Tens of thousands witnessed the royal progression to the Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton, gardener and architect to the wealthy and powerful, an astonishing building of glass and iron, enclosing full-grown trees. Within the palace, hundreds were present to witness Queen Victoria and Prince Albert preside over the formal opening ceremony. The National Anthem boomed out. The report on the Exhibition brought a suitably gracious reply by the Queen. The Archbishop of Canterbury led prayers, which were followed by a rousing rendition of Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus. As the Chorus filled the Crystal Palace with an uplifting musical theme, a figure stepped forward. Lord Playfair, eminent Scottish scientist and politician, recorded what happened next: ‘... a Chinaman, dressed in magnificent robes, suddenly emerged from the crowd and prostrated himself before the throne. Who he was nobody knew. He might be the Emperor of China himself who had come secretly to the ceremony. It was thought best [after some consultation with officials, including the Queen and Albert] to place him between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Duke of Wellington. In this dignified position he marched through the building to the delight and amazement of all beholders.’

‘The Chinaman in full Mandarin costume, complete with pigtail, had shown due deference and respect to the British sovereign by the *kow tow*, seen at the time as a ‘quintessentially Chinese act’. *Punch Magazine* joked that it was so widespread a greeting to people of rank in China that it was ‘... the cause of the general flatness of feature and particular squareness of nose of that flowery people.’



**The Opening of the Great Exhibition by Queen Victoria on 1st May 1851, by Henry Courtney Selous. Victorian & Albert Museum, London. British Galleries Room 122, Case WN, Museum Number: 329-1889.**

China was perceived in Britain and the West as a land of ‘otherness’, ‘exotic people’, ‘backward’ in modern science

and industry. Anglo-Chinese relations had recently been marked by conflict, the First Opium War (1839-42) and the ensuing Treaty of Nanking (1842). Since that date British trade with China had grown and the number of Chinese and British traders, travellers and diplomats undertaking the long sea journey to each other’s lands had grown enormously. In 1851 there were still relatively few Chinese people in Britain, so the elaborately and impressively dressed person at the Great Exhibition was easily assumed by those present to be someone of great importance.



**Hee Sing (detail from main photo)**

The mysterious Chinese person was not the Chinese emperor, not a senior Chinese diplomat, not even a powerful Chinese businessman visiting London. He was as a Chinese person in London a rare and usual figure at the time. We do, though, know his name: Hee Sing (variously spelt as ‘He-Sing’, ‘Hising’ or ‘Xisheng’). J.A Auerbach, a modern historian of the Great Exhibition, explains much about Hee Sing’s reaction:

The appearance of He-Sing, then, was a truly exceptional event; seeing him might well have been for many a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and it may be for this reason as well that he was accorded such respect at the opening of the Great Exhibition, even though contemporary depictions of Chinese people were generally quite demeaning.

But who was this Hee Sing? Even now much mystery surrounds this striking figure. He appears on the great painting of the Exhibition’s opening by Henry Courtney Selous, the historical subject painter, on the front row just to the right of the royal party. Hee Sing was not one of the 25,000 invited guests. Indeed, no invites were made to any Chinese persons, official or private. Even now the identity of Hee Sing remains something of a mystery.

Variouly described at the time as the ‘captain of a Chinese junk’ or ‘Mandarin of rank’, Hee Sing, capitalising on his fame after the Great Exhibition opening, advertised himself to curious Londoners as the ‘Acting Imperial Representative of China’. What his actual status was remains unclear. His impressive clothes and confident demeanour indicated he was a man of some importance to the dignitaries attending on Her Majesty at the Crystal Palace. Certainly, it was not worth running the risk of offending this impressive looking Chinese man. After all, what if he was an Imperial Chinese diplomat, or a senior Mandarin, or even, heavens forbid, the Chinese

emperor? Think what insult would be given to a country of increasing economic importance to Britain.

Yet Hee Sing remains an enigma. When he was born, when he died, his place of birth or what happened to him after his moment of fame in 1851 remains unclear over a century and a half later. He is recorded as one of the crew of the junk *Keying*, which had arrived in Britain on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1848, the first Chinese ship to enter British waters after a mammoth voyage. It had previously rounded the Cape of Good Hope, crossed the Atlantic, and visited New York and Boston. Its captain and senior officers were, though, British, although most of its crew were Chinese. The ship, soon re-named as the *Museum of Curiosities*, remained a tourist attraction on the Thames, with Chinese martial arts, dancing and a rather thin collection of curiosities bringing in the crowds at 1/- a person. In August 1851 Hee Sing joined the Lord Mayor of London, City Councillors and some thousand guests in Paris who were connected with the Great Exhibition.

In 1853 the ship was sold and taken to Liverpool. We know little of what subsequently happened to the Chinese crewmembers of the *Keying*. Some certainly returned to China, some would have settled among the small but growing Chinese communities of London and Liverpool, where the junk ended up as scrap. After his moment of glory in London and Paris the story of Hee Sing, if the following two events do indeed refer to him, takes a rather dark turn.



The Keying (Qiyong): National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (Image ID: P1F655)

In 1853 at the bankruptcy hearings of a London grocer one Chun Ahmen ('Chinaman?') was listed as a creditor, seeking arrears of wages to the sum of £38. Identified as '... one of the crew who came over in the Chinese junk' the frustrated ex-employee became so agitated that he:

'ultimately rushed out of court, threatening to hang himself if his claim were not at once discharged in full. ... It was stated that the Chinaman is the same who figured at the Exhibition as a Chinese mandarin and who, at the opening, was honoured with a place near her majesty'.

It is not known if Hee Sing was the creditor in the bankruptcy case. It is possible, on circumstantial evidence. There is certainly no record that the creditor was driven to suicide. Indeed, we have a record – two records – that indicate that Hee Sing soon returned to China and settled in a village near Canton.

In 1902 William Blackney, hydrographer on the *HMS Actaeon* published his memoirs of his time in China and east Asia, recalling for our story, an incident that occurred in March 1858. Rigging from a flagstaff on the site of a proposed British consulate at Whampoa, near Canton, was stolen. An investigation followed. Four Chinese were identified as the thieves and transported to Canton to stand trial. One of the men, and elder of the village on Dane Island, was identified as having been a member of the *Keying's* crew:

This man – who could speak English fairly, had been made a sort of 'sea-lion' of in London society, and was careful to tell us that he had spoken with the Duke of Wellington, the Iron Duke – and was very much aggrieved at being made to stand on our quarterdeck as a prisoner.

Was this man Hee Sing? The logbook of Captain Robert Jenkins of Blakeney's ship offers another clue. March 17<sup>th</sup> records that armed Royal Marines forced elders of the village 'to perform the Cow Tow [*sic*] under the Union Jack'. Attached to the log is a crude drawing. It shows an elderly Chinese villager being forced to the ground, his forehead being banged on the floor by a soldier. The old man here is not identified, but one of the village 'elders' is named in the log as 'Hising who has been in England ...'. The man who had walked with the Queen, Prince Albert, the Duke of Wellington and other worthies only a few years earlier, was publicly humiliated in his own village, in his own country by soldiers of the very queen to whom he had once performed the *kow tow*.

A few months later the village near Whampoa was utterly destroyed by British troops as retaliation for an assault on Captain Jenkins and his men which left him and number of his men wounded. We do not know if Hee Sing was still living there ... or even if he was still alive. Sadly, the trail of the self-styled 'Acting Imperial Representative of China' now finally goes cold. Nevertheless, when we study the painting of the opening of the Great Exhibition on that bright day in May 1851, three figures stand out, captured for ever: Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and ... Hee Sing, 'captain' of the junk *Keying*.

### Suggested Further Reading

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Stephen Davies, *East Sails West: The Voyage of the Keying, 1846-1855* Hong Kong University Press, 2013

## Ling Shuhua, the anglophile - Part 3: Settling down in England

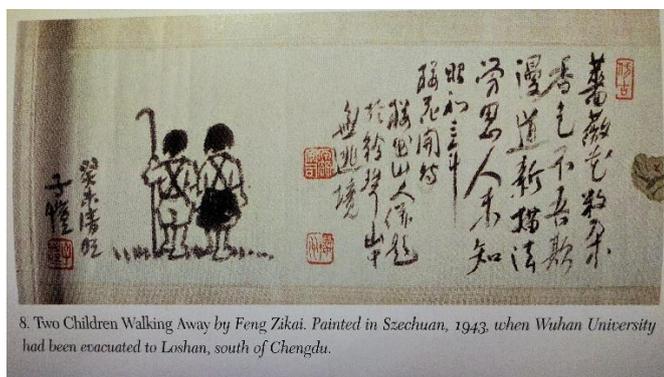
Michael Sheringham

*Two previous parts of this life of Ling Shuhua have appeared in China Eye over the past year. (issue 55, Autumn 2017; issue 57, Spring 2018)*

At the end of my last article, in late 1946 we found Ling Shuhua and her daughter, Xiaoying, joining her husband, Chen Xiying, in London, where he had been posted a couple of years earlier as head of the Sino-British Cultural Association. A few months later he was sent to Paris, appointed as Chinese representative of the newly-formed United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

After a gap of several years in their correspondence, Shuhua now got in touch with Vanessa Bell, who was cautious about disrupting Shuhua's marital life. In January 1947, however, she finally visited Shuhua in London. Their first encounter obviously affected both women. Vanessa described Shuhua as "breaking down" and she herself to have been "in an unreal world where I could hardly tell what I felt." Both of them were most disturbed by memories of Julian who had brought them together.

This meeting was followed by an invitation to Vanessa's country home in Charleston, Sussex, in early Spring 1948. As she would always do, Shuhua brought gifts, on this first occasion an historic scroll which the poet Xu Zhimo had given back to her in Beijing two decades before. Xu had originally taken Shuhua's blank scroll to England, where the Bloomsbury painter Roger Fry decorated it with a monochrome ink-wash. It was later illustrated with calligraphic signatures and sketches by both Bloomsbury and Beijing literati. The scroll was later 'donated' to the art historian Michael Sullivan and is now part of his collection at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. (Shuhua's daughter, Xiaoying, disputes this and claims that she herself only lent it to Sullivan)



8. Two Children Walking Away by Feng Zikai. Painted in Szechuan, 1943, when Wuhan University had been evacuated to Loshan, south of Chengdu.

**Ling Shuhua's Friendship Scroll: painted in Sichuan, 1943 by Feng Zikai**

Vanessa and her Bloomsbury friends helped Shuhua settle down, while (according to Xiaoying), her father's friends helped find a private girls boarding school, Wychwood in Oxford, for Xiaoying. Of course, it must have been difficult for a fifteen-year old with only rudimentary English to adjust to this new environment. Margerie Strachey - writer and sister of biographer and essayist Lytton Strachey - rather grudgingly - agreed to teach Shuhua English, but Arthur Waley (sinologist, translator and Assistant Keeper of Oriental Prints and Manuscripts at the British Museum) found a way to 'escape' from her. Vanessa and her husband were fond of her but regretted that they couldn't "provide a circle of friends, which is what she really wants," and "one can't have her here constantly", as Vanessa wrote to her daughter, Angelica, in September of that year. She sympathised that Shuhua found it hard to restart her literary and artistic career in a strange new land, putting that down also to both of them being overtaken by the passing years: "I know it is desperately difficult for anyone now to sell or get recognition, unless they are young and in fashion."

But Shuhua persisted with her painting and in December 1949 she exhibited her work at the Adams Gallery in New Bond Street, including still-life and landscape paintings. Many of her paintings were of European scenes which she had seen on travels in England, France and Switzerland. Both Vanessa and Quentin Bell wrote positive comments about the paintings, focusing particularly on how interesting it was to "see European landscape through Chinese Eyes." (Quentin Bell's unsigned review in *The New Statesman and Nation* magazine).

Shuhua also followed up on her literary ambitions. As she read English newspapers and magazines, she came across Vita Sackville-West's weekly column in the *Observer*, 'In Your Garden'. It so happened that Sackville-West had been a close friend of Virginia Woolf, and Shuhua wrote to her through the editor of the newspaper. Sackville-West invited her to her country house, Sissinghurst Castle, in Kent, where they enjoyed tea together and Shuhua soon became friends with this garden-lover, poet and novelist, whom she subsequently visited on a number of occasions.



**Recent view of Sissinghurst Gardens, photographed by article author**



18. Scroll of Sissinghurst by Ling Shuhua. By permission of Hsiao-ying Chen Chinnery.

**Scroll picture of Sissinghurst Gardens by Ling Shuhua, reproduced in Lily Briscoe's *Chinese Eyes* with permission of Chen Xiaoying (Chinnery)**

Vita herself was much influenced by orientalism and Chinese imperial dreamlands, as she fantasised in writing about her own dream world where she sees the walls of the room melt away, "giving place to a garden such as the Emperors of China once enjoyed, vast in extent, varied in landscape...". Shuhua inspired this vision in two articles describing idyllic Chinese gardens which she wrote in 1951 and 1952 for *Country Life*, 'Our Old Gardener' and 'Visit to a Royal Gardener', illustrated with her own paintings.

Vita encouraged Shuhua to write, particularly her autobiographical stories, which she had heard about from Virginia, and influenced her presentation of "China as a distant dreamscape." It bore fruit in 1953 as *Ancient Melodies*, edited by Marjorie Strachey and with a foreword by Vita, who suggested the title, based on a Tang poem by Bai Juyi, translated by Arthur Waley, 'The Old Lute'. Vita described her stories as "delightful sketches of a vanished way of life on the other side of the world." In the process of writing and publishing the book with Hogarth Press, Leonard Woolf's publishing company, Shuhua met Leonard many times, both in London and in Monk's House, the Sussex home he had shared with Virginia. She was overawed to see this country house which she had always imagined in her correspondence with Virginia.



**Garden of Monk's House, garden with bust of Virginia Woolf**



**Monk's House, Rodwell, East Sussex (photos from Wikipedia)**

After another exhibition of her paintings in the Musée Cernuschi in Paris, which was displayed for three months in the Spring of 1954, Shuhua communicated with her sister, Amy, about arranging an exhibition in the US. Amy helped her to put on an exhibition in Indianapolis, where she lived, and the exhibition of 69 of her paintings on silk and paper was opened at the John Herron Art Museum in October of that year. Although the paintings were of European scenes, it was the exotic oriental style which impressed the critics. The critic of the *Indianapolis News* commented: "There's a charming other-worldliness, a Shangri-la quality in landscapes..." Shuhua gave a talk at the museum on 'How to Look at a Chinese Picture', and Amy hosted a luncheon for her at the local women's club. Shuhua was well received and sold eight of her paintings, travelling on to exhibit her art at the China Institute in New York and then in a gallery in Boston.

Even with this successful trip behind her, Shuhua was not satisfied about her progress in becoming more established as a painter and writer in London. She complained to Leonard Woolf that her art was not appreciated in its own right, but only when it depicted familiar scenes, such as 'A Bridge on the River Dee', 'Hampstead Heath', 'Winter in Hyde Park' and 'Loch Katrine'. Leonard, however, showed his appreciation by buying one her paintings of bamboo for Monk's House.

Shuhua's long-time plan was to travel to Asia, perhaps China, where she could be nearer her cultural roots and revive her artistic inspiration there. Her wish came true in May 1956 when she was invited to teach Chinese literature at the newly-founded Nanyang University. She was housed in a remote country cottage on a hill near the university, and led what she described as a 'hermit life'. With a relaxed work schedule, she had plenty of time to start planning to write her magnum opus, a novel - "something like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*", as she confided to Leonard Woolf". With all the bluster that she "might write a remarkable book", she seemed to soon give up this grandiose project: "Every day life now is a bore. Talent has been dried by time I suppose."

In spite of these prevaricating moods, Shuhua travelled back and forth between Singapore and England, visiting Japan and Hong Kong and writing about her travels. In 1960, she compiled her travel writings and recent articles on art and literature into a volume titled *Dreams from a Mountain-Lover's Studio*. She also resuscitated her old stories as a collection in Chinese published in Singapore "for those young friends in Singapore and Malaysia keen about modern literature."

When Shuhua's contract at Nanyang University ended in 1960, she travelled to China for the first time since her departure, visiting Beijing, Guangzhou and Wuhan. Apart from writing postcards to Vanessa from Wuhan, she did not inform others, including her own family, of this and later trips to her homeland, telling Leonard that "I have been advised by Chinese friends that I better not to tell people

about my China trip." When her daughter, Xiaoying, found out about her mother's secret travels, she was shocked and afraid that this would endanger her father who was working for the Chinese Nationalist government and planning a visit to Taiwan. On her part, Shuhua was afraid her husband's affiliations with the Guomindang would jeopardise the possession of her property and belongings, "all family treasures such as books and paintings I inherited from my father," back in Beijing.

Back in London, Shuhua soon gave up the idea of writing her great novel, and instead concentrated on writing short essays and presenting painting exhibitions. In 1962, she presented another exhibition at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris, this time part of her father's collection of paintings, calligraphy and stone rubbings which she had managed to bring from Beijing. In 1967, this collection was exhibited in London as 'A Chinese Painter's Choice'.



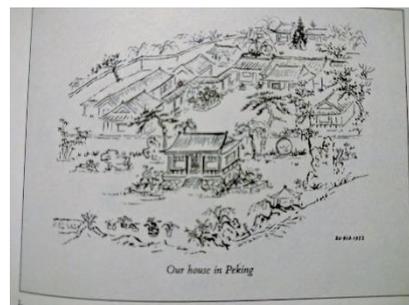
Reproduced in *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, by permission of the Dartington Hall Trust Archive, Totnes, England

Quentin Bell, Julian's brother, wrote the foreword to the catalogue, expressing his sense of cultural confusion at viewing this alien art combined with poetry in calligraphic form: "There is...an enigma, which in the end leaves us baffled."

Ling Shuhua also translated modern Chinese literature into English and produced radio scripts about overseas Chinese for the BBC's Asia broadcast for several years. Patricia Laurence wrote that Shuhua "wrote nine plays for the BBC on overseas Chinese people's lives." Her daughter, Xiaoying, denies those claims: "I was working for the BBC as a permanent member of BBC Chinese service since 1965....My mother never worked for the BBC nor wrote about the overseas Chinese in the UK. She wrote a few short plays for the radio, and I was the one who got the drama [broadcast] in the Chinese language.

In 1966, Xiying began to suffer from high blood pressure and Shuhua travelled to Paris to help him prepare to return to London. When he finally retired and came to London, Shuhua, concerned about making ends meet, signed a contract with the University of Toronto to teach as a visiting professor in East Asian Studies for two years. Meanwhile, her daughter, Xiaoying, looked after her father and grew closer to him, finding out from a book about Julian Bell *Journey to the Frontier* about her mother's love affair with Julian. This must have been a traumatic moment for her. When she asked her father about the saga, his response was "Your mother is a very talented woman." Xiying died soon afterwards, in 1970, and we do not have any evidence of Shuhua's feelings at that time. She was making frequent semi-secret trips to China, where she always hoped to return to live, particularly in Beijing.

Shuhua did eventually return to Beijing - to die! Aged 89, she discovered that she had cancer and she was hospitalised there in December 1989. She wanted to see her old home once again, and her daughter and son-in-law, Professor John Chinnery, took her there, where she lay in the garden on a stretcher. She died in hospital with her family, including her grand-son and grand-daughter beside her. Her sister, Amy, aged 90, did not manage to come to see her for a last time. Shuhua's last words were: "I won't die."



Drawing of her house in Beijing by Ling Shuhua, reproduced from her book *Ancient Melodies*

As in my previous articles, I refer to and quote from Sasha Su-Ling Welland. *A Thousand Miles of Dreams, the Journeys of Two Chinese Sisters*. Rowman & Littlefield Publ. and Patricia Laurence. *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China*. University of South Carolina Press.

## Reading about China

**Dr Haris Livas-Dawes**

**Waiting by Ha Jin, Vintage, Random House, London**

The waiting in question goes on for many years for Lin Kong as he waits to divorce his wife. It is not just the law that causes his waiting, but his wife herself. She agrees to the divorce, but once in court, whether helped by others or completely on her own he is unable to say "yes." Lin does not spend those waiting-years on his own. He has a mistress or partner and they hope to get married. So this is a book about personal relationships, but it is also a book about China. For example, since Lin makes regular visit to his village, Goose Village, we find out about village life, but since he and his love live in a city we find out much about city life also and can compare and contrast the two. And since Lin and his partner work in a hospital we learn much about what kind of work that is.

For example, the hospital has to undergo camp-and-field training. Their orders say "We must carry on the spirit of the Long March and restore the tradition of horses and mules." The idea was to learn to operate without modern vehicles which were unreliable and would soften the participants. So, "for a month, a third of the hospital staff would march four hundred miles through the countryside and camp at villages and small towns. Along the way they would practice treating the wounded and rescuing the dying from the battlefield." For such a march the female nurses had to march the same way as men so here we can learn a bit about the feminist movement in China.

We learn more when we read that Shuyu, his wife, has bound feet. Lin brings her to the city so he can divorce her there, but he is too embarrassed to be with her so she has to walk around alone to the amusement of the nurses at the hospital. And with the two women in his life we see the age-old debate (today also) between the stay-at-home housewife with child vs. the woman with career, Shuyu and Manna.

There are many characters in this novel, both from Goose Village and from the city hospital, but each person's place in

the story advances our knowledge of how people in China feel, I think.

I would usually select another book here from my large library of Chinese books, but thought instead to introduce the reader to two Chinese artists. I subscribe to a magazine which every year puts out an edition about art. This year their subject was old masters and the number of new artists influenced by the old. Or, if it's not a contradiction in terms, these may be called new masters who will become old masters. Five artists, looking world-wide have been featured. One is American, one is Italian, one Pakistani, but two out of five, are Chinese. This is a real honour for China as the art scene there was relatively unknown until recently.

These two artists are Zhang Huan and Liu Dan. Zhang Huan studied at Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts and it was there he decided to use his body to serve art, thus his performance art. But he also paints, photographs and sculpts. He likes to use unusual media; for example he has painted using insects and makes sculptures out of cowhide. I've seen a photo of his "Know the Destiny" composed of cowskin, steel, wood and polystyrene foam. This hulking creature looks nothing like what one imagines sculptures to be. His "Family Tree" is probably his most famous work. This is a one-day performance that is captured in nine photos showing the gradual covering of his face with printed matter whose ink gradually turns his face completely black. His appearance disappeared, or, as he says, "My identification no longer existed, I disappeared." If you travel, keep an eye out for his work as he exhibits worldwide.

And keep an eye out for the work of Liu Dan as well. His work is more recognizable as ART. He directly calls on the Old Masters in his work, combining his huge paintings with traditional Chinese form. These works can take years to finish, done in monochrome on handmade rice paper. His materials and calligraphic technique are the same as used by Chinese artists for centuries. He borrows elements of the European Old Masters in his work so his connection with the Old Masters is direct and recognisable, although he claims he doesn't belong to any particular tradition.

# Imperial Examinations – Civil Officials; “Ladder to the Clouds”. Part 1

**David Rosier**

For any parent of a young boy, in Imperial China, who had displayed reasonable intellectual skills there was only one path to pursue – that of graduation from the Imperial Examinations which would result in the appointment as a Civil Official (*Mandarin*). Successful graduates would join the most important professional, and social, class below that of the nobility. The scholar-officials would form the gentry class within China and as such could wield immense power, and sometimes accumulate vast fortunes. It is no wonder that parents were prepared to submit their sons to what was an extremely demanding and attritional examination process.

This 2-part article will initially consider the educational process that students underwent to achieve their goal of becoming a Civil Official and the second section will focus on the mechanics of graduation and an official’s future career.

Boys could be identified for this process as young as 3 years of age although formal schooling would not commence until around the age of 6 or 7. For many parents the greatest challenge was a financial one. This long and expensive process would require ‘deep pockets’. Consequently, it was not uncommon for a noble family, or a village, to sponsor the child through his studies. This practise was probably the reason that no Civil Official would be posted to his own county or prefecture for fear of him coming under undue pressure to somehow repay the ‘debt’.



Studies would essentially be based upon the teachings of *Confucius* (551-479 BC). The young student would start by learning some basic characters from his writings and then would gradually build on the complexity of the calligraphy. Whilst it was essential to understand the philosophy contained within the literature the process had nothing to do with challenging the interpretations that had

been made by previous scholars.

The writings and thoughts of *Confucius* would form the basis of government, philosophy, practise, morals and infrastructure from the time of the First Emperor, *Qin Shi Huangdi* in 221 BC, until the end of Imperial rule, with the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, in 1911. The system would serve China well for over 2000 years and dictated the skills

and characteristics required of those who would populate the governmental departments. Whilst the process ensured that the graduates had an in-depth understanding of the mechanics and philosophy of government it also demanded acceptance of, and conformity with, the approach adopted previously for administering the Empire.

The syllabus was a defined list of the most important of *Confucius*’s literature and students would be required to not just study these writings but to memorise much of the text and develop the skills to replicate, in as an exact manner as they could achieve, the original calligraphy.

**SCHOOL & CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATIONS  
SCOPE OF THE SYLLABUS**

<p><b>CONTENT:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ <b>Four Books:</b> Analects Great Learning Doctrine of the Mean Mencius</li><li>❖ <b>Five Classics:</b> Classic of Poetry Book of Documents Book of Rites Book of Changes Spring and Autumn Annals</li><li>❖ <b>Imperial Re-script on Education</b> Sheng-lun Liu-yen</li></ul>	<p><b>EXAMINATION ACTIVITIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Memorise and reproduce text 431,000 characters</li><li>❖ Compose Poems</li><li>❖ Write essays interpreting the literature</li></ul>
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On occasions the students would be asked to compose poems or write an essay but essentially these would be exercises to demonstrate that they had understood the interpretation placed upon the writings by great historical scholars. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) Emperors such as Kangxi (1661-1722) and Qianlong (1735-1796) would write in support of the process and these thoughts were then adopted as an integral part of the syllabus (*Imperial Re-script on Education*).

Throughout the process the objective was simply to test the student’s ability to absorb classical literature and replicate the calligraphy. This was all about conformity and had nothing to do with interpretation and free thinking.

Having defined the content, there then had to be an overall structure to the process of qualification and graduation. The importance of producing the most capable and compliant scholar – officials meant that the management of the process could only reside with the most important of the 6 Boards that formed the Imperial Government – *The Board of Rites*.

However, before the Board of Rites could assume responsibility for testing the ability of aspiring Civil Officials the schools were required to reduce the vast numbers who would seek to qualify down to a manageable number of students.

The prime function of the school system was, therefore, to not only start the long and arduous process but to remove those who lacked the talents to succeed. From around age 7, through to about age 16, boys would enter a schooling system that existed essentially to produce an appropriate

number of students who would pass the Qualification Examination, the ONLY route into the Imperial Examinations.

#### THE EDUCATION OF A CIVIL OFFICIAL

##### EARLY EDUCATION

- ❖ Studies commence from age of 3 years
- ❖ Formal Education from age 7 (Temple, Village or Private School)



##### SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS ('YOUTH EXAMINATION')

- ❖ Only entry route for the CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATIONS
- ❖ The majority taking the examinations under 16 years old
- ❖ Successful candidates became 'licentiates' (*Sheng-yuan*)
  - ❖ Examinations held every 3 years
  - ❖ Three levels of examination:
    - District Examinations
    - Prefectural Examinations
    - Qualifying Examination



- ❖ Successful candidates transferred to Colleges to focus on qualifying as a Civil Official

##### ANNUAL COLLEGE EXAMINATIONS

- ❖ Held over one day once every 3 years
- ❖ Students required to sit one exam every 9 years!

As the illustration indicates these examinations were organised into 3 levels held on a 3-yearly cycle, which was an identical structure to the Imperial Examinations themselves. Retakes were possible but generally there was acceptance that failure meant the boy would be best served by seeking an alternative career.

So, at around age 16, the school graduate would transfer into 'higher education' but with the sole objective to graduate as a Civil Official. His life would be dedicated to passing each of the 3 blocks of examinations. These examinations were held on specific dates every 3 years so, as a minimum, it would take 9 years to graduate from the system. Often the process would take longer due to failures and subsequent resits. Some men spent the bulk of their adult life pursuing examination success, but the majority admitted defeat at a young age and pursued an alternative career but with, at least, evidence of some initial academic success.

The initial examinations were held in one of the 18 Provincial Capitals after which successful students would travel to Beijing for the Metropolitan Examinations, having been re-examined on arriving in the capital. If a student made it successfully through the Metropolitan Examinations, they would at least know that no one failed the Palace Examination. This final single examination was overseen by the Emperor and had the sole purpose to grade each of the students which would then determine the nature of the role to be allocated and the Rank that would be assumed.

As mentioned, the control of the Examination process resided with The Board of Rites. Whilst the scheduling of the various examinations was determined by tradition and established cycles, which were felt to be appropriate and auspicious, there would appear to be practical reasons to limit the examinations to 3 yearly cycles.

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The following illustration lays out the mechanics of the Civil Examinations:

#### THE EXAMINATION OF A CIVIL OFFICIAL

##### PROVINCIAL EXAMINATIONS

- ❖ Held every 3 years in the 18 Provincial Capitals
- ❖ Specially constructed Examination Compounds
- ❖ Three separate sessions held during the ninth month
- ❖ Pass Quota set by Board of Rites for each Province

##### METROPOLITAN EXAMINATIONS

- ❖ Held in Beijing in third month of the year following the Provincial Examinations
- ❖ A Re-examination (15<sup>th</sup> day of second month) to reduce student numbers to 10,000
  - ❖ Examinations held over 3 sessions
  - ❖ Target to identify 200-300 successful students
  - ❖ Top 6 automatically entered into Palace Examinations-remainder Re-examined



##### PALACE EXAMINATION

- ❖ Conducted by Emperor in the Forbidden City
  - ❖ 21<sup>st</sup> day of the fourth month
- ❖ All will pass and receive their *Chin-Shih Degree*
- ❖ Top three students are specially honoured



The second part of this article will explore the complex logistics of the examinations themselves and will consider the career that would lay ahead for those who would survive and graduate from the Imperial Examinations.

Walter Fung

### From the British Press:

#### New Arctic Route?

A 36,000-tonne Chinese cargo ship, the Tianen, built for polar expeditions, has arrived at Rouen, France, having set off from Lianyungang in China on 3 August. The ship, which can plough through ice 80cm thick travelled across the Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean. Beijing first proposed a Polar Silk Road in January and is willing to work with other countries to build a polar Silk Road. Beijing has been granted permanent observer status on the eight-member Arctic Council. The Polar Route is 12 days shorter than the route through the Indian Ocean and Suez can and can save up to 300 tonnes of fuel, making goods being carried, cheaper. Since 2013, China has sent ten freighters via this route. The first ship was accompanied by the ice-breaker, the Yongsheng. *(From The Times 6/9/18).*

#### Philippines relinquishes rights to islands

Manila and Beijing are negotiating a deal that would enable them to jointly exploit underwater oil and gas. This benefits both countries and the Philippines has relinquished its rights to the territories in the South China Sea. This is after a 2016 international tribunal ruled in favour of the Philippines; a ruling rejected by China. Reporters have described it as an important consensus on properly handling the issue and a commitment to pragmatic cooperation and joint development. *(From The Times 12/9/18)*

#### China disrupts access for US companies

China has suspended the acceptance from US companies as a retaliatory measure in the escalating trade war with the US. Jacob Parker, the Vice-president of China operations at the US-China Business Council, said he had been told by cabinet-level Chinese officials that this measure would be in place until the US-China business relationship improves and stabilises. *(From The Times 13/9/18)*

#### First Chinese developed cancer drug.

The cancer drug, fruqintinib, is in the final-stage trial, 18 months after demonstrating its effectiveness in cutting off blood to tumours with colorectal cancer. This is the first home grown oncology drug discovered, developed and commercialised in China to be approved by Chinese drug regulators and is considered a watershed moment in China becoming a pharmaceutical powerhouse. China's biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry is gaining momentum with some government support. Christian Hogg, the chief executive of the company, Hutchinson China Meditech, commented that this is proof that technical talent in this area, exists in China. *(From The Daily Telegraph 6/9/18)*

#### The obesity league of nations

In 2016 more than a quarter (29.5%) of UK adults were classed as obese, compared to 37.3% in the US. Many other developed and developing nations had significant numbers of obese people; Turkey-32.2%, Hungary-28.6%, Greece-27.4%, Spain-27.1%, Canada-31.3%, Australia-30.4%, Germany-25.7%, France-23.2% and Russia-25.7%. China

had just 6.6% and Japan 4.4%. The lowest rate worldwide was Vietnam-2.1% (source: FAO, UNIEF, IFAD and WHO, 2018). *(From I (Independent 14/9/18).*

#### Vatican agreement?

The Vatican and China are close to securing a deal to end decades of disagreement over the status of the Catholic Church in China and the appointment of bishops. There are 2 million Catholics in China and Beijing is seeking to heal relations with the Holy See. The Vatican is one of 17 countries which still recognise Taiwan and China hopes that improved relations with the Vatican, might lead to it cutting relations with Taiwan. It is believed that Beijing has offered to recognise the Pope as head of China's Catholic church which is under the supervision of the Chinese religious affairs office.

A Vatican official is visiting Beijing later this month. For decades there have been disputes over who appoints bishops in China. The Vatican has ex-communicated three of the seven bishops appointed by Beijing, while China has rejected bishops appointed by the Pope, who is regarded as the head of the underground churches in China. *(From The Times 20/9/18)*

#### Chinese companies surging ahead in AI investment

China's biggest tech companies have overtaken the giants of Silicon Valley in the race to invest in artificial intelligence and machine learning this year. Out of \$14 billion (£10.6 billion) of AI investment made by the biggest eight US and Chinese tech companies this year, the Chinese companies Baidu, Alibaba, Ant Financial and Tencent have taken a clear lead. According to Pitchbook, a financial data firm, the four Chinese companies account for \$12.8 billion of the total, while the four biggest US firms, Alphabet, Amazon, Apple and Facebook together accounted for just \$1.7 billion. Innovation has played a part in the Chinese success and lead, but it is easier to bring different pots of data together in China, because privacy requirements are lower. *(From The Daily Telegraph 8/10/18)*

#### The New Silk Road

A new road has just been opened joining Lianyungang on the Yellow Sea coast of China to St Petersburg in Russia. It will take ten days to drive the 5,248 miles, but this is much quicker than the equivalent sea journey, which takes 45 days. The first stage is the Lianyungang to Khorgas on the Kazakhstan/China border. Border trade here is up by 17% this year so far, with produce such as fresh produce, high tech items, textiles, etc. The objective is to promote global trade along the ancient Silk Road. This is part of the Belt and Road Initiative by China, which is expected to cost more than \$900 billion; already \$80 billion has been spent. *(From The Times 10/10/18)*

#### Social responsibility of celebrities

There is concern about Fan Bingbing, the Chinese film and TV star, after she was awarded zero out of 100 in social responsibility rankings. She has not been seen in public for months and there is a rumour that she has been detained for tax evasion. There has been a crackdown on the entertainments industry viewed as 'promoting money worship', distorting social values and misleading young people to blindly chase celebrities. There is now a pay cap

on leading actors and actresses; they should not receive more than 70% of the total wages bill for the cast. *(From The Guardian 13/9/18)*

### **Chinese new aviation and aerospace**

China has unveiled a full-size prototype of its new stealth combat drone at the 12<sup>th</sup> China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in Zhuhai (near Macao). It is a high-altitude, high-speed plane capable of long-endurance reconnaissance, ground attack and air combat. It can fly up to 42,650 feet and has a top speed of 571 mph. The air show showcases some of China's most advanced fighters, engines, drones and radar systems. China is competitive in the global market because of low prices and a willingness to share technology. It is wooing countries that are not allowed to purchase from the US because of political restrictions. However, some experts believe that truly cutting-edge technology was unlikely to be for sale because China would want to guard its best technologies. *(From The Times 9/11/18)*

### **Arrest of Interpol president**

China confirmed that it had arrested the Chinese president of Interpol, Meng Hongwei who disappeared in late September after returning to Beijing for a visit. Later it was reported that he was being investigated for taking bribes and other wrongdoings. His arrest is evidence that nobody is above the law and that Mr Meng had only himself to blame for his difficulties. Interpol has been informed that Mr Meng had resigned as head of Interpol. *(From The Economist 13/10/18)*

### **A Chinese 'Greyfriars Bobby'**

A dog has been seen waiting for more than 80 days on the road where its owner died. The animal was spotted by the roadside in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, where its owner died in August. Footage of the dog has been viewed more than 1.4 million times on Sina Weibo (Chinese social media). How the owner died is not clear, but is believed to have happened on 21 August. Drivers often give the dog items of food, but it runs off when approached. *(From I (Independent) 14/11/18)*

## **From the Chinese Press**

### **China's space station (CSS)**

This could be launched as early as next year, 2019, and all UN member states will be welcome to jointly use its facilities, China's Ambassador to the UN, Shi Zhongjun, announced at Vienna. He said all countries, regardless of their size and state of development, will be able to participate on an equal footing. The CSS is expected to be launched by 2019 and fully operational by 2022 will be the world's first space station built by a developing country.

It will consist of a one core module with two experimental ones and will have the capacity to accommodate up to three astronauts and a maximum of six in rotation. It will operate at a height of 400 km above the Earth and will be used to conduct research in space medicine, life science, biotechnology, microgravity and Earth science as well as space technology. *(From Beijing Review 7/6/18)*

### **New Energy Vehicles (NEV) policies**

China is to release a package of policies to enhance the competitiveness of NEVs. New manufacturers will be required to have a minimum annual production capacity of 100,000 units and have sustainable development. There will be tighter restrictions on diesel and petrol cars in the 'most draconian' policy, which include suspending new projects and limiting production capacity. More will be done to facilitate the development of smart NEVs and create a favourable environment for intelligent vehicles. China is the world's largest market for NEVs with 700,000 vehicles sold in 2017. *(From Beijing Review 30/8/18)*

### **More guesthouses in China**

More than 20 households have opened guesthouses in Yongxin village, Wuzhong City in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region since 2017. *(From Beijing Review 30/8/18)*

### **Robotic parking**

The first robotic parking facility in Israel built by a Chinese company was opened at a train station in Kfar Saba City on 14<sup>th</sup> October. The Israeli branch of Tangshan Parking Equipment Co (TOPP) set up the facility with the local government. The usual price of setting up 500 spaces on five or six floors is about \$18 million, but the TOPP's system cost only about \$6.9 million. TOPP has so far set up about 750,000 parking spaces in China. The company has also completed projects in Russia, Japan, Colombia and Australia. *(From Beijing Review 25/10/18)*

### **Chengdu, global metro city.**

The Brookings Institute, an American public policy think tank has ranked Chengdu third in the world for economic growth in their 2018 Global Metro Monitor report. The institute considers the 300 largest metropolitan areas in the world, which account for 36% of global employment growth and 67% of global GDP growth. In 2012, only 48 cities in China were on the list. This year 103 cities in China are listed, exceeding the number in North America and Western Europe. *(From Beijing Review 30/8/18)*

### **Poverty alleviation**

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs on 22 August unveiled new measures to tackle poverty. They will include; strengthening support for social welfare and mobilising non-governmental organisations, volunteers and philanthropists to assist the anti-poverty campaign. There will be improved subsidies for disabled people, better care for the elderly and left-behind children. There will also be improvements in community-level governance. Civil affairs officials at all levels were called upon to cut red tape, prevent corruption and increase efficiency and transparency. The target is to lift all rural residents out of poverty by the year 2020. *(From Beijing Review 30/8/18)*

### **Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region's 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was founded in 1958. During the 60 years, GDP has grown 1,053-fold, whilst the GDP per capita has grown 289-fold. Roads and rail track have been constructed and poverty reduction has been substantial. In 1982, 1.19 million people were living in poverty; this had been slashed to 239,000 by 2017. The disposable income per capita since 1957 has increased 135-

fold in urban areas and 104-fold in rural areas and are now, \$4,262 in urban areas and \$1,553 in rural areas.

With more than half of its area being desert, Ningxia has made remarkable improvements in environmental conservation, especially in soil and water conservation and desert control. The trend to desertification has been reversed and the area of desert has been reduced for 20 consecutive years. *(From China Now November 2018)*

### **Thaw in China-Japan relations?**

Xi Jinping held talks with Shinzo Abe, the Japanese Prime Minister in Beijing on 26 October. This followed on from the talks Li Keqiang had in Tokyo to attend the seventh meeting of leaders from China, Japan and South Korea. The meeting in Beijing was an important official event and attended by 1,500 business people. Over 50 business agreements worth \$18 billion were signed between Japanese and Chinese local governments, companies and financial institutions. Abe's trip indicates both sides willingness to seek a détente in bilateral relations. He received a warm welcome from Chinese leaders, who appreciated his efforts to improve relations. *(From Beijing Review 8/11/18)*

### **Poverty relief in Xinjiang**

Between 2014 and 2017, nearly 1.85 million people have been lifted out of poverty. The central government and other provinces have been providing aid for this region. A policy of implementing the development of industries, rural tourism, education and healthcare in southern regions has been carried out. In 2017, over 6.1 billion yuan (\$879 million) was spent on fighting poverty with more than 80% of the funds going to the four southern prefectures of Hotan, Kashgar, Aksu and Kizilsu. Of the 1.33 million people living in extreme poverty in these regions, about 400,000 are expected to be lifted out of poverty in line with a three-year plan. *(From Beijing Review 1/11/18)*

### **China the most optimistic country**

The report 'Priorities of Progress: Understanding Citizen's Voices' released by the Economist Intelligence Unit, is based on a global survey of 50 countries to examine how citizens feel about their country's progress. It has found that China is the most optimistic country in the world with 91.4% of its citizens believing that China will become a better place in the next decade. People are generally optimistic in the emerging markets of Asia and Africa. In Indonesia and Vietnam more than 70% of the respondents thought that their country is moving towards a better society.

In contrast only 38% of Americans believed that the US is moving towards a better place; in Germany and Italy the figure was 12%. *(From Xinhua internet 12/11/18)*

### **Illness insurance expansion**

About 5.81 million rural families impoverished due to illness-related expenses have been lifted out of poverty since the new health insurance programme in 2016. In 2017, registered poverty-stricken patients only had to pay an average of 15.8% of their medical expenses. This was a decrease of 26.6% compared to the previous year, 2016. Since the programme started a total of nine million patients in difficulty have received targeted medical treatment. *(From Beijing Review 1/11/18)*

### **Opening of new Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao bridge**

Xi Jinping officially opened this 55-km Y shaped bridge at a ceremony in Zhuhai in Guangdong. It is the largest sea-spanning bridge in the world and consists of two artificial islands, an underwater tunnel and a series of bridge spans. The construction began in 2009 and involved an investment of 126.9 billion yuan (\$18.3 billion). It will cut the travel time between Hong Kong and Macao from 210 minutes to 30 minutes. *(From Beijing Review 1/11/18)*

### **Liverpool's China Dream festival ends in blaze of fireworks and fun**

Specially commissioned artworks will light up Liverpool's iconic waterfront as a finale of the city's year-long China Dream festival. The installations will represent the five elements which underpin Chinese philosophy: metal, wood, water, fire and earth. China Dream, in partnership with University of Liverpool, has been a season of exhibitions, performances and events aimed at shining a light on modern Chinese culture, and also exploring the relationship between China and Britain. The artworks are the finale of this year's China Dream season which has seen a ten-month celebration of Chinese culture as part of the program of events marking ten years since Liverpool was crowned the European Capital of Culture in 2008. *(From Xinhua website 28/10/18)*

The exhibition of the Terracotta Warriors at Liverpool's World Museum from 9/2/18 to 28/10/18 formed part of the programme. Also forming part were the 'This is Shanghai' events; the main one was in the Cunard Building. The events celebrated the relationship between Liverpool and its twin city, Shanghai.

### **China's Three-year Transport Development Plan**

China's plan is to build a fully-fledged transport system by the year 2020. By this time, there will be 30,000 km of high-speed railway which will cover 80% of Chinese cities with a population of at least one million inhabitants. In addition, there will be 150,000 km of highway covering all cities with a population of more than 200,000. Civil aviation airports will cover cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants and there will be 180 new deep-water berths for vessels with a tonnage of 10,000 tonnes. *(From China Today 30/10/18)*

## **Sinophile**

### **Flo and Ivor Kenna**

From Beijing Review (BR) for 26<sup>th</sup> July, we learn that China spent 801 billion yuan (\$119 billion) on railway projects and put down 3,038 km of new track in 2017. (China leads the world in deBeeching!) The same issue comments that China is the only middle-income economy on the Global Innovation Index 2018's list of the world's list of the world's 20 most innovative economies. Furthermore, China and the EU reached agreement on setting up a working group to overhaul the World Trade Organisation and maintain the Iran nuclear deal and committing to abide by the Paris climate change pact.

In BR of 2<sup>nd</sup> August, details were given about the machine developed by iFlytek Co. Ltd which can quickly and accurately translate between Chinese and 33 other languages including English, Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish German and Russian. BR of the next week reports the EU Japan Economic Partnership Agreement is to be prepared to resist trade protectionism. Also that at the end of 2017, the length of China's railway network was 127,000 km and 25,000 km of this is high-speed lines with a designed top speed of 350 km per hour; this accounts for 66.3% of the global total of high speed rail.

BR of 16<sup>th</sup> August reports that China will impose a 25% tariff on \$16 billion worth of goods imported from the US on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. BR of 23<sup>rd</sup> August makes the point that Chinese smartphone maker Huawei has surpassed Apple to become the world's second-largest smartphone seller. Other editions of BR note that Chinese workers and factories only receive 5% of the value of an iPhone (mainly local costs), while Apple's design, brand and marketing account for nearly 60% of its value. Also noted is that Chinese imports have helped the US middle class.

BR of 13<sup>th</sup> September states that Xi Jinping noted that China values sincerity, friendship and equality in pursuing cooperation. China follows a five-No approach. No interference in African countries but pursuance of development paths that fit their national conditions. No interference in African countries' internal affairs. No imposition of China's will on African countries. No attachment of political strings to assistance in Africa. No seeking of selfish political gains in investment and financing with Africa.

Abe, the Japanese leader, in BR of 18<sup>th</sup> October, invited Xi Jinping to visit Japan, saying that through this exchange of visits at the leaders' level, I hope to raise Japan-China relations to a new level.

On the 'green front', 99% of the 385,000 e-buses on the road globally are in China.

October 25<sup>th</sup> BR takes issue with the US trade war approach to China. Again, neither China nor the US refer to China's average pay being a fraction of that in the US. China's workers are very bit as good as US workers. On the other hand, US workers will never work for pay much less than the US middle class.

At one time, according to BR, the British Virgin Islands (BVI), a tax-haven, was the largest foreign direct investor in China. We wonder if such is still the case. BVI imposes strict secrecy, so we shall have to wait for China tell us. Meanwhile, \$70 billion is the foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow in the first half of 2018, making China the largest FDI recipient worldwide in that period.

BR of 1<sup>st</sup> November has an interesting picture of the Saudi Investment Fund meeting in Riyadh on 23 October. Nearly

all the front seats are empty! On a more domestic issue, Peking University and People's Daily are concerned about whether continuous staring at electronic devices will lead to myopia which will exceed 700 million sufferers in 2020.

China has just completed the longest sea-spanning bridge in the world, 55 kilometres. *The National*, the newspaper that supports an independent Scotland, for October 30<sup>th</sup>, would like to see a bridge between Scotland and Northern Ireland, a modest 21 miles, about 33km. Time to call in the experts?

Not everybody knows that in Japan, the average lifespan of cats is 18 years, but Chinese cats can hardly reach 12 years. In Europe and the US, cats eat nutritious food, whilst China's cats eat left-overs. Never mind, things will improve as China becomes more of an importing consumer economy!

## China Eye Diary

### Chinese festivals

In China, Chinese New Year is celebrated as the Spring Festival and is the most important festival in China. Each year is associated with an animal: the full sequence of 12 years is, in this order, Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit (or Hare), Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep (or Goat), Monkey, Rooster (or Cock), Dog and lastly the Pig (or Boar).

**2019 is the Year of the Pig and Chinese New Year 2019 is on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

### Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art (CFCCA)

This is the new name for Chinese Arts Centre. This year is the 30<sup>th</sup> year since its foundation in 1986 by a group of Chinese artists based in Manchester. They were concerned that their work was not seen by mainstream society. The Chinese Arts Centre was founded with the assistance of Manchester City Council and Arts Council England.

Market Buildings  
Thomas Street  
Manchester M4 1EU  
Tel: 0161 832 7271

[www.chinese-arts-centre.org](http://www.chinese-arts-centre.org)

### Scotland-China Association (SCA)

Please check with the Scotland-China website for updates and venues [www.scotchchina.org](http://www.scotchchina.org)

The SCA is SACU's sister organisation north of the border. It was set up a year after SACU. Joseph Needham and Han Suyin addressed the inaugural meeting at the University of Edinburgh in May 1966. There are events in both Edinburgh and Glasgow.