

China Eye 友

SACU: The Society which has promoted understanding between the peoples of China and the UK since 1965

Winter 2020

Number 68



Contents include:

SACU Events, News, Essay Competition & AGM

Three Body Problem

The Story of China

China and the Global Money-Go-Round

The Voyages of Zheng He

Trump and the 'China Virus'

Differences in Chinese and Western Art

Sino File/Sinophile/China Eye Diary

CHINA EYE

Winter 2020 Issue No 68

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SACU E mail Newsletter

SACU issues a monthly E mail newsletter providing details of events and news about China. Members are invited to send details of happenings to SACU. If you wish to receive this newsletter, please let SACU have your E mail address, which will be sent out bcc (blind copies). This means that nobody else can see your E mail address. SACU will not use your E mail for any other purpose other than SACU business. It will not be passed to anyone else without your permission and you can unsubscribe at any time. Please send details to Ros Wong, membership@sacu.org.uk

The Winter issue (Number 69) of China Eye will be available in early March 2021. Please send news or articles for inclusion before 20 February 2021 to Walter Fung, 11 Collyhurst Avenue, Walkden, Worsley, Manchester M28 3DJ. Tel 0161 799 6944, E mail; walter.fung888@btinternet.com

Front cover: Chinese Garden, Zurich (WF)

Back cover: Chinese Garden Zurich (WF)

All photographs are by the authors except where stated.

Welcome

There are important and exciting things happening in SACU; please be sure to read pages 4-8: SACU notices, news, SACU Essay Competition, Speaker Bureau and especially the 2020 Zoom AGM.

There is a need for understanding China more than ever now with a number of issues coming together with the Covid-19 pandemic and the trade war launched by the US. Anti-China attitudes however are nothing new and are very deep-seated. Some think western anti-China attitudes began in California in the 1840s, eventually leading to the American 1882 Chinese exclusion Act. This was only lifted in 1943, but feelings never went away and were easily re-ignited by China's rise and the coronavirus pandemic.

Reliable news and information and seeing situations from the Chinese point of view are essential for understanding. China's development followed a different path from that of the West. Sources of information on China and its system of government are below and on page 4. The TED talk by Eric Li is especially informative (access via Google).

The Chinese people have faith in their government. Senior US politicians claim 'tyranny' in China and lack of freedom. However, 140 million Chinese went aboard last year and they were all happy to go home. This figure is expected to increase dramatically, maybe 400 million in the next 10 years. In addition, there are about 600,000 Chinese students studying in the West, all free to come and go as they please.

The TED Talk by **Graham Allison** entitled *We the Future* covers important aspects about China's rise and includes discussion on the Thucydides trap, in which an existing dominant superpower and a rising superpower inevitably clash. The rise of Athens instilled fear in Sparta which made war inevitable. To illustrate the speed and the energy associated with China's rise, Graham compared the time it took to renovate the Sanyuan Bridge in Beijing with a similar bridge in the US. The work on the Sanyaun Bridge took 43 hours, while, the work on the American bridge took several years and was three times over budget.

Anti-China views amongst senior UK politicians are persisting, although reports seem to indicate that UK-China business deals are proceeding quietly (see Sino File). The US 'decoupling' from China is very short sighted. Politicians forget how China helped save the world from the financial crisis of 2008, which was caused by problems in the US. China's affordable low-cost goods, helped prevent a worse recession. China also bought \$1 trillion of US bonds which helped keep the US economy afloat. Within a decade from now, US and other Western companies may well be seeking a share of the 700 million or so Chinese middle-class consumer-market to keep them in business.

For learning more about China, especially contemporary China and the present situation, I can recommend two books: *China: Engage, Avoid the New Cold War* by **Vince Cable**. (Bite Size Books, 2020) and *The China Wave*, by

Zhang Weiwei (World Century). More than half a million copies of the Chinese edition of Zhang's book have been sold. Both books are short and concise, but comprehensive and written in a clear style.

Also, the discussions and interviews of **Kishore Mahbubani** on Youtube are extremely illuminating. He has written two recent books on China's current position. The reasons why the US is launching a trade war (and cold war) against China: are: the Thucydides factor, American exceptionalism and the 'Yellow Peril' racist factor. Some analysts believed that by trading with China, it would change its pollical system to a more Western style, but this is not going to happen. Like the Christian missionaries of the last century, who believed it a duty to convert the heathens, liberal democracy advocates believe all counties of the world should convert to the Western-style and it is a duty to make this happen.

Walter Fung

Liverpool's deputy mayor calls for greater UK-China cooperation to fight coronavirus. Nov. 7 (Xinhua) -- The deputy mayor of Liverpool, councillor Gary Millar, also the city's mayoral lead on business and international relations, has called for greater cooperation between Britain and China in the battle against COVID-19.

Millar was one of the first citizens to be checked at one of the COVID-19 testing stations in Liverpool on Friday to enable the 450,000 population to be checked. He said, "I just wish we had done this sooner. We can learn a lot on control of this virus from China and other Asian countries where it is well under control." Millar said, "We should also have introduced testing in airports. If you go to China or the Middle East, people are routinely tested and if positive go into quarantine." "When you look to China and other countries in Asia, the numbers are so low because of testing and tracking,"

"We could learn a lot from China and some of the other countries over there," he said. China has showed the world that mass testing and tracing is part of the efforts that proved effective to bring the pandemic under control. In recent months, smaller-scale clusters of cases have been discovered in Beijing, Xinjiang, and Dalian where efforts to tackle resurgences have proven effective. They include quarantines, disinfection, contact tracing, targeted lockdowns and citywide mass testing.

Millar said "From my own knowledge of China, I am sure they would be more than willing to help if we asked. There is so much Britain and China could learn from each other, if only there was some co-operation. It is all about relationships between countries and sharing best practices as well as sharing data. Apart from virus control, Britain and China could also learn from each other about vaccines development, adding that British universities, especially those in Liverpool, already have "very close links" with China'.

We need to put aside political differences and perceptions, and overcome our own ignorance over China, and embark on a healthy dialogue," said the deputy mayor. "If somebody in our national government picked up the phone and spoke to me, or one of our universities, we could point them in the right direction, and start some form of co-operation with China," The longer it takes to get a grip on this pandemic, the more deaths there will be.

Can you contribute to 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 the support of individual members. All SACU Council members are volunteers, nobody is paid. If you can help, please contact **Zoe Reed, SACU Chair**, on 07768 207702 or email: chair@sacu.org.uk.

New Membership rates from 1 October 2019:

Individual	£23
Retired/Unwaged	£18
Students (PDF only)	£10
Institutions and Libraries	£27
Overseas Airmail	£35
Overseas (PDF only)	£13

Please make cheques payable to 'SACU', but to reduce the administrative burden, please consider paying by standing order, or use Paypal via our website: www.sacu.org.uk Send applications and renewals to SACU Membership Secretary, Ros Wong, 27 Portland Close, Bedford MK41 9NE. Mobile: 07906 956426, email: membership@sacu.org.uk Please be sure to include, full name, address, post code, telephone number and email address.

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 SACU Email newsletter your email details will be 'blind' and not visible to others.

The SACU Email newsletter is issued monthly and provides news and details of events involving China or Chinese culture. For your copy, please let the newsletter editor have your email address. Contact **Ros Wong** at membership@sacu.org.uk Please remember, you can unsubscribe at any time.

Michael Sheringham and Fang Wang compile the SACU email Newsletter. It is distributed by Ros Wong to whom information and enquiries should be directed.

Chinese Brush Painters' Society (Yorkshire)

This society provides a focus for all who are interested in Chinese Brush Painting. The society arranges workshops with Chinese and other experienced tutors and provides information and assistance to members on all aspects of the subject. The group produce a regular monthly newsletter packed with information. Meetings are however suspended during the coronavirus pandemic.

Further information from the Secretary, Anne Allan. Tel 01422 368482 or email mail@anneallan Website; www.cbpsyorks.co.uk

SACU: Online events

SACU, like other organisations, has suspended 'live' events because of the coronavirus pandemic. We are conducting internal meetings in the virtual world, using Microsoft Teams for Council and Executive Committee meetings. We are making increased use of our newsletter, social media and website to post articles and online events which inform and educate our members and readers about China and help counteract the many negative arguments currently appearing in the western media.

Our newly formed **Working Groups** are currently planning more Zoom online events so please do check our digital communications for details as they become available.

Website: www.sacu.org.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/sacu.uk

Twitter: twitter.com@sacuuk

YouTube: 1965 SACU

WeChat: ID: SACU1965

The Working Groups are:

- Public Education [UK], led by Zoe Reed
- Chinese and China Connections, led by Wang Fang
- Membership Support and Development, led by Ros Wong.

In 2021 the working groups will meet on SACU Council days and will also have independently convened planning meetings to programme more events. All meetings and events remain online.

All groups would welcome more members to join, so if you would like to be involved, please contact us.

Ros Wong
membership@sacu.org.uk

And a reminder... here are a few informative websites about China

- chinaexchange.uk includes past events such as interviews with Xue Xinran, Yan Geling and Rana Mitter.
- www.chinaminutes.com "China Minutes sets out to make sense of China and Chinese culture"
- <https://chinachannel.org/> The Los Angeles Review of Books with plenty of reviews of books both from and about China
- Laszlo Montgomery's history podcast series <https://www.teacup.media>
- <https://www.chinasage.info> "Your guide to all things Chinese" the website of SACU Vice President Rob Stallard.
- TED Talk by Eric Li (explanation of the system of government in China)

SACU EVENTS AND OTHER NEWS

In the current lockdown, SACU has events online via Zoom. A recording was made of the Zoom China Chat on the current **Hong Kong situation** held on 23rd August. SACU members Andrew Hicks and Barnaby Powell who both have experience of Far Eastern affairs introduced the subject. The recording, for members only, can be accessed via a link in the SACU Newsletter 1st September sent out by Ros Wong on the 18th October.

One important item emerged from this controversial subject is that land prices are high in Hong Kong, making accommodation costs high for ordinary people. So, despite the statistics showing a high human development index and high life expectancy, life is actually tough for the average person, especially the young. This probably contributes to the general dissatisfaction with the Hong Kong government.

On the 1st September, SACU invited a panel of speakers with differing areas of expertise, but all with long-standing experience of working with Chinese counterparts, to discuss their experiences and their views on **the value, the challenges and the benefits of cooperating with China, as well as the prospects, in these problematic times, for their continuing cooperation into the future.** This also was held via Zoom.

Our Panellists – Professor Kerry Brown, Professor Michael Wood, Graham Perry and Dr Ruby Wang – were chaired by Dr Jenny Clegg, SACU Vice President, and gave excellent presentations, and questions from the attendees stimulated a good discussion. Dr Wang could not attend but pre-recorded a video presentation.

The event was very well attended, however, for those who missed the live session or want to watch it again, please follow the link <https://youtu.be/VM2qHFjCy8U> to SACU's YouTube channel where you can find a full video recording.

The general message from the panellists was the need for greater understanding, better communication, learning from each other and mutual cooperation. Westerners should especially try to see the situation from the Chinese point of view. China has no interest in 'world domination' but only wants prosperity and stability. The West, UK and China's systems of government have developed along very different paths; the UK's democracy via Magna Charta, etc. whilst China has always had a centralised system with autocratic emperors and now the Communist Party.

The Communist Party of China has studied the history of regimes, in particular that of the former Soviet Union and assessed why it failed. However, there is no comparison between China and the former Soviet Union which was never an economic superpower. The political system in China is not going to change any time soon. Chinese people do not want a change because they have 'never had it so good' The West must understand that China in its present form is a reality and it is not going to go away.

Understanding is essential for peace in the world and global economic prosperity which will benefit us all. In addition,

cooperation between the West and China is crucial to effectively protect the environmental and address climate change.

Ruby Wang discussed China and the UK in the context of Covid-19. China tackled the pandemic with very decisive and strict measures, complete lockdown and travel bans, which were not possible in the UK because the general public would not accept such draconian practices and the government would be unwilling to implement them. However, the UK's NHS is respected in the world and lessons have been learnt from its organisation and free health care. In response to Covid-19, China set up 'Ten-day hospitals' (hospitals erected in 10 days in Wuhan) to cope with the very large numbers of patients; the UK followed this model with the speedy establishment of Nightingale Hospitals. Covid-19 treatment and vaccine development are progressing well and benefitting from international cooperation and joint efforts,

NO COLD WAR (The US and China)

A series of Zoom webinars on this topic are being held for an international audience. These are not organised by SACU, but are very relevant to SACU's interest; the first two were chaired by Jenny Clegg, SACU Vice-president.

They were free public events and were recorded. At present three have taken place and recording are freely available on Youtube and viewing them is highly recommended. These are just three in a series of on-going webinars organised by *The No Cold War International Campaign* made up of international peace organisations in several countries of the world including CND in the UK and CODEPINK (Women for Peace) in the US. In place of a cold war the movement campaigns for mutual dialogue between the US and China to address the common issues which face humanity especially climate change, pandemics, racial discrimination and economic development for all.

The first webinar was held on 25th July with about 10 speakers from all over the world, including Martin Jacques. It was 'attended' by about 140 persons.

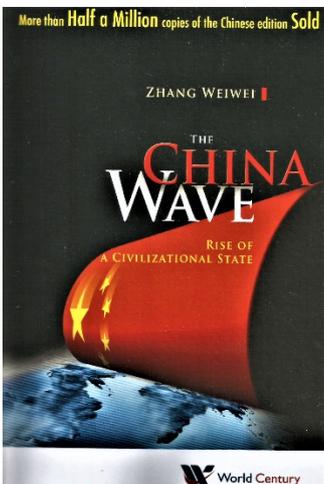
The second was held on 24th October and took the form of a dialogue between two very distinguished international scholars, Jeffery Sachs of the US and Zhang Weiwei of China. The attendance was a mind-blowing 400 'attendees' from 50 different countries. Jeffrey Sachs, shown below, is an economist and academic and expert in sustainable development. He is a former director of The Earth Institute at Columbia University.



Zhang Weiwei is Professor of International Relations at Fudan University, China and was an interpreter to the late Deng Xiaoping. Professor Zhang is the author of the recent book, *China Wave; The Rise of a Civilisation State*, World Century Publishing 2012, which is highly recommended.



Zhang Weiwei (above) and his recent book (below)



A third webinar was held on 14th November chaired by Sean Kang of the Qiao Collective of the US. About 10 speakers presented their views and opinion on the new cold war. Several maintained that the US is motivated by beliefs in white supremacy, capitalism and imperialistic views. The US cannot countenance the rise of China, especially as it is a non-white country. The analyst Francis Fukuyama wrote a book about 30 years ago, entitled *The End of History and the Last Man*, in which he stated his view that free-market liberal democracy as practised in Western countries was the ultimate in human government development.

The cold war is a new phenomenon, but has been substantially increased in the last year by the coronavirus pandemic and the comments of senior leaders in the US. Hate crimes against South-east Asians, people who are, or who look, Chinese has increased 300% in the first quarter of 2020. Governments incapable of controlling the virus, deflect attention on to China. One of the main organisers of the webinars, Carlos Martinez, summed up at the end of the third session by stating that capitalism and neo liberalism is in turmoil. The countries worst hit by Covid-19 follow these systems. The quality of life for many in the US is declining, whilst that in China is increasing.

SACU has had the benefit of cooperation with the Lau China Institute, Kings College and its Director Kerry Brown. They have provided SACU with venues for events and also Council meetings. EY (Ernst and Young) allowed SACU to use their splendid lecture theatre on the south bank and in addition arranged complimentary hosting and refreshments. Cypress Books (Guanghwa) hosted SACU events at their bookshop and also offer discounts on on-line purchases. SACU thanks all these organisations for their generosity.

Further details on all these items and other SACU activities and involvements are detailed in the 2019 Annual Report and Accounts. These can be accessed via a link form the SACU e mail to members on 3 October 2020.

CARG (Confronting Racism)

The Covid-19 Anti-Racism Group (CARG) held a webinar on 13th October with 141 attendees. It was reported he a disturbing average number of about 300 racial incidents have occurred each month since the pandemic began in mid-March. They have been directed against Chinese and South-east Asian (Chinese looking) members of the public. The incidents are expected to increase as unemployment rises because of the Covid-19 crisis. Police representatives encouraged anyone who has been the victim of a racist attack, whether verbal or physical to report it to the police. CARG comprises a substantial number of Chinese organisations and groups associated with Chinese peoples’ interests. SACU via Zoe was one of the first groups to join. In general, a study has found that Chinese are subject to racism more than any other ethnic group.



Desecration at a Liverpool Chinese cemetery (2012)

SACU SPEAKERS PANEL

Barnaby Powell is assembling a panel of SACU members who are willing to present talks on China to Schools. He and Linxi Li are preparing slides on China, Chinese culture, history and philosophy which can be shown to illustrate talks. A ‘fact sheet’ is also available to assist presentations. Anybody who is willing to be included on the panel, please contact Barnaby. E mail barnaby.powell@gmail.com

Walter Fung

SACU ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

SACU Annual General Meeting 2020 was held via zoom at 11.30 am on Saturday 10th October 2020. All SACU members were warmly invited to attend and the zoom link was included in the Members e mail Newsletter of 3rd October 2020.

Corinne Attwood has decided to stand down from the position of SACU Secretary. Zoe and the meeting thanked her for her valuable contribution over several years and presented her with a bouquet of 'virtual' flowers.

There were no other changes to Council. Ros Wong has continued as Membership Secretary, but passed on her duties with the Members e Newsletter during the past year to Wang Fang. Michael Sheringham, who is not a council member, helps Fang compile the Newsletter. It is e mailed out by Ros who has the membership e mail data base.

As reported in the last issue of China Eye, Linxi Li was appointed SACU Archivist and is building links with academic institution (King's College, Bristol University, SOAS as well as other relevant organisations such as the Sino-British Fellowship Trust, The 48 Group, Xinhua, China Daily and Cypress Books. A long-term objective is that the archive will be used for academic research and educational purposes. Linxi's full report is in the SACU 2019 Annual Report.

The Annual Report together with SACU Accounts for the year was sent out by e mail. It was noted that because of the Covid-19 pandemic the current Annual Report and Accounts actually covers an extended period, which includes the whole of 2019 and nine months of 2020. This was because it was not possible to hold the AGM during June 2020 as would have been the usual procedure.

Following the formal meeting, members were invited to participate in one of three sub-discussion working groups: UK Public Education, Membership Support and Development and thirdly, Working with Chinese Heritage people in the UK and working in China with Chinese organisations. However, it was not technically possible to hold the three separate discussion simultaneously and so the three groups met as a single entity.

This worked well, with useful points emerging. Members agreed that these discussion groups would continue, taking place after Council meetings. The format would be; main Council meeting in the morning to last until lunch. After lunch the discussion groups would meet to discuss the three project areas.

SACU Council encourages ordinary members to take part in these projects to pursue our mission of friendship and understanding. Please look out for notices in the monthly newsletter for details and dates of Council meetings and the subsequent discussion working groups.

Zoe Reed, SACU Chair indicated that she would be seeking a Vice-chair to collaborate with her in her duties with the view of eventually taking over the office of chair.

Anybody who feel they could fill the SACU posts of secretary or Vice-chair please be in touch with Zoe.

Further details on all these items and other SACU activities and involvements are detailed in the 2019 Annual Report and Accounts.

These can be accessed via a link form the SACU e mail to members on 3 October 2020.

China Eye Diary

This year (2020) is the Year of the Rat. Years are in a sequence of twelve animals: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.

2021; Year of the Ox
2022, Year of the Tiger
2023, Year of the Rabbit,

Chinese Festivals for 2021

12 February-Spring Festival (Chinese New Year)
In mainland China, there will be a week's holiday.
26th February, Lantern Festival (15th day of 1st month on the Lunar Calendar.
4th April, Qing Ming (Tomb Sweeping Day)
14th June, Dragon Boat Festival
14th August, Chinese Valentine's Day
21 September, Moon Festival
1st October, China's National Day (week's holiday)
14th October Chong Yang (Chinese Elder's Day)



Chinese New Year in Manchester (2018)



The SACU/ Peking University Essay/ Art Competition 2020-21; China Talks

The SACU/ Peking University Essay Competition began in 2015 as part of SACU's 50th Anniversary celebrations. Now in its 5th year, the aim of the competition is to help young people learn about the development of friendship and understanding between the UK and China and to consider how this might be further promoted.

- The submissions could be an essay or an artistic form, which could involve for example photography, other visual art, choreographed dance, etc.
- We suggest essays should be a maximum of 2, 000 words and videos no longer than 5 minutes.

THE ENTRY PROCESS

- Entries will be considered in two categories: 16 years and above; below 16 years.
- Each school will run its own internal process in order to select up to 3 entries for each category – 16 years and above; and below 16 years.
- The closing date for submissions for judging will be the end of April 2021.
- Each school will be encouraged to forward their views on their entries via their SACU member link to the judging panel.
- Schools will be asked to submit the email addresses for all entrants [not just the shortlisted 3 for each category] as all entrants will be given a free student membership of SACU for one year as a thank you for entering.

THE AWARDS

- The awards will be sponsored by Peking University with three prizes of £100 / £50 /£25 in each category.
- The judging panel, chaired by Dr. Frances Wood, renowned author on China and former head of the British Library China Collection and SACU Vice President, will give their views on the entries.
- There will be an Awards Event for all the shortlisted entrants on 15 June 2021 hopefully in London but if not on-line, involving Dr. Frances Wood and Prof Sun Hua of Peking University - an expert in historical figures who have contributed to building friendship between the peoples of China and the West.
- SACU is an officially registered charity in the UK. All entries submitted to SACU will be part of property of SACU, which endows SACU to use it for the purpose of promoting the friendship between the UK and China in the future.

The closing date for submissions for judging will be the end of April 2021. There will be an Awards Event for all the shortlisted entrants on 15 June 2021 hopefully in London but if not will be on-line. We hope SACU members will spread the news of the Essay Competition to schools in their areas so that more students in the UK will take part.

'China in the World' talks

This year, in addition to the competition, in order to enhance the younger generation's understanding of China, we would like to offer talks to the schools under the title of "China in the World". Members of our **Speakers Bureau** (see page 6) are all established writers and speakers on China with many years' experience of living and working in the Chinese world. It is hoped that these talks on China will offer thoughtful and insightful perspectives to the students, who may be interested not only in the competition but in the promotion of UK-China relationships in the future.

Schools/Teachers who wish to participate in the Essay Competition or request a speaker for their school, please contact Mrs. Fang Wang, the coordinator of these two items, for further details, at EssayCompetition@sacu.org.uk.

CHINESE BELTS HANGINGS ‘PRACTICAL WORKS OF ART’ PART 1 – PURSES

David Rosier

This is a two-part article focusses on items that both men and women of the Court, and Chinese High Society, suspended from a belt worn over their semi formal or informal robes. As we shall discover the great majority of these objects fulfilled a practical purpose but, as with all aspects of costume, these were highly decorative items often with specific symbolism reflective of the wearer’s aspirations. The items were a statement of the wearer’s status and, when worn with regulated court costume, became a form of ‘insignia of rank’.

The historical focus will be the *Qing Dynasty* (1644-1911) which was the period where the majority of surviving examples originated. The tradition of items suspended from a girdle, worn over a robe, however, stretches back to the dawn of Imperial history (*Qin Dynasty* 221-206 BCE). Purses that predate 1644 are extremely rare mainly because the items were regularly worn, and therefore deteriorated. Additionally, they were generally not regarded as articles that should be preserved for future generations.

In Part 1 we will focus on fragrance purses, produced in a vast array of styles and designs, and which were worn throughout Chinese society. Part 2 will then consider further items worn from a belt which would be classified as containers, such as coin and tobacco purses, plus fan and spectacle cases.

Introduction

Initially we will consider the structure of costume worn as this determined the form and purpose of all dress accessories. The core item of clothing for both men and women was the robe. These robes ranged from the most formal items, determined within the complex Court Costume Regulations, through to plain informal robes worn in private. None of these robes were constructed with integral pockets so any item that was deemed a practical necessity would have normally been suspended from a belt (*chao dai*) that would be worn around the waist and coupled with a decorative buckle.

The most important of state robe was known as the *chao pao* (Fig:1) and was worn by members of the Manchu Imperial family and certain ranks of the Han Chinese Civil and Military officials.



Fig:1 Chao Pao for senior official – 19th Century

As these were only worn occasionally the ceremonial belts, and the items attached, were prescribed within the regulations. These objects would have rarely been used for their original purpose.

The formal belts (Fig:2) would be of a defined construction with belt buckles constructed using materials that were indicative of the rank of the wearer.

The belt had pairs of items suspended from plaques constructed with identical materials to the buckle. The items were 2 fragrance purses, pair of kerchiefs and 2 small containers.

These formal belts would be stored in highly decorative ebonised laquer boxes with silk lined compartments.



Fig:2 Imperial *Chao Dai* - 19th Century

The item of costume that is of most interest with regard to belt accessories is the iconic dragon robe (*ji fu*) which men and women wore for semi-formal activities at court and in government (Fig:3).

These robes were worn by members of the Imperial Clan plus the civil and military officials and their wives.

The dragon numbers and design, plus the colour of the silk ground, indicated the rank of the wearer.

Belts (*chao dai*) would be worn with these robes but the wearer was free to add items that they felt were required.

Unfortunately portraiture from the period was essentially for Ancestor Worship and only

Fig:3 Male Dragon Robe – 19th Century

displayed the most formal robe which would not feature the *chao dai*. We therefore need to use our imagination as to how the ensemble would have appeared.



Beyond the court regulations men, and particularly women, wore highly decorative robes for family occasions and general informal wear. Belts with a proliferation of suspended decorative items was the rule. The remainder of this article will consider the most important of these items.

Fragrance Purses & Containers

The most common of belt accessories falls under a broad definition for a purse although the practical purpose of some of these items extends beyond the normal description of a container for coins and small practical items.

These items formed part of an overall ensemble that was designed to provide a statement regarding the wealth and status of the wearer, much as a luxury watch might do today. The majority of these items were created on a silk ground, itself a statement of wealth and refinement and were then embellished with fine embroidery.

A statement of wealth should not, however, be confused with the 'Rank' of the wearer because the costume regulations did not extend to these items so the wearer could

deploy iconography and colours that were restricted in their formal usage but had no such limitations in a private setting.

These are not items that have been subject to extensive academic study. This is partly due to the endless variation in design, decoration and the wide spectrum of quality in materials and workmanship deployed. Whilst these items formed an important sub-section in our collection of Chinese costume they had proved relatively easy to locate and prices have remained relatively modest compared to Imperial items.

Production of these items ranged from the Imperial Workshops, through specialist shops, through to items produced within families by young females demonstrating their embroidery skills.

Imperial Patronage.

As mentioned we lack images of these items being worn but Fig:4 is a late 19th Century photograph of Dowager Empress Cixi. Her eunuch attendants can clearly be seen wearing belts adorned with purses and other items.

Fig:4 Court of the Dowager Empress Cixi.



Senior members of the court would commission the production of sets of belt accessories from specialist workshops whilst the Imperial family were supplied by the Imperial Silk Manufactories. The set would typically include fragrance purses, tobacco purse, seal or archer

ring cover, fan case and a spectacle case as illustrated in Fig:5.

The materials, method of production and symbolism would be a personal choice but these items were very much regarded as a visual clue to the status of the wearer.



Fig:5 Imperial Set – Emperor Guangxu
(Late 19th Century)

Purses were also a popular gift, particularly for the Lunar New Year. This practise had been promoted and practised from the Emperor down through Chinese society.

Gifts from the Emperor would typically be produced using a silk ground in the Imperial yellow colour, a shade reserved exclusively for the Emperor in respect of regulated court costume. No such restriction applied to informal dress items so a piece of this colour is not certain to be produced for the Emperor. The quality of the workmanship will be the deciding aspect.

In Fig:6 this gourd shaped purse has been constructed with a silk ground of Imperial yellow silk. The quality of the embroidery is strongly suggestive of an item produced by the Imperial Workshops and so possibly had been given as a gift by a senior member of the Imperial Clan. The superb condition is suggestive of an item that was treasured rather than used for the purpose it was made which was containing tobacco or a snuff bottle.



Fig:6

Gourd Purse – Late 19th Century



Fragrance Purses

Purses worn from a robe belt normally had the function of fending off the unpleasant smells of daily life. These items were produced as matching pairs and would contain an inner wad of absorbent material on which perfume would be drizzled.

The wad would be placed in the purse and the container was closed with drawstrings. These purses would be used over an extended period and genuine purses show unavoidable wear.

Fig:7 Official's Fragrance Purses

The majority of these purses were 'heart-shaped' but varied considerably in size as well as decoration.

Fig:8 illustrates the range of shapes that were applied for fragrance purses. In this image all the purses are decorated with calligraphy to compliment the rather understated decoration.



In Fig:9 there are a pair of purses that would have been presented to a young boy that was embarking on the arduous Imperial Civil Service Examinations in the hope of qualifying as a Government Official (Mandarin). The wish is the boy will ‘ascend the Ladder to Heaven’

Fig:8 Fragrance Purses – 19th Century

Rarely can we be so certain that a purse was worn by a man or a woman.



Fig 9: Purses for a student of the Imperial Examinations

19th Century



Fragrance purses not only displayed a vast array of symbolic decoration but these decorative additions employed a wide range of textile design and embellishment techniques.

The purse illustrated in Fig:10 features the peony and other floral symbols linked to a wish for longevity. The design is finely embroidered using *seed (knot) stitch*. This stitch is one of the finest deployed and was also known as the ‘Forbidden Stitch’ by Westerners. It is virtually identical to *Pekin Knot* that originated in Beijing.

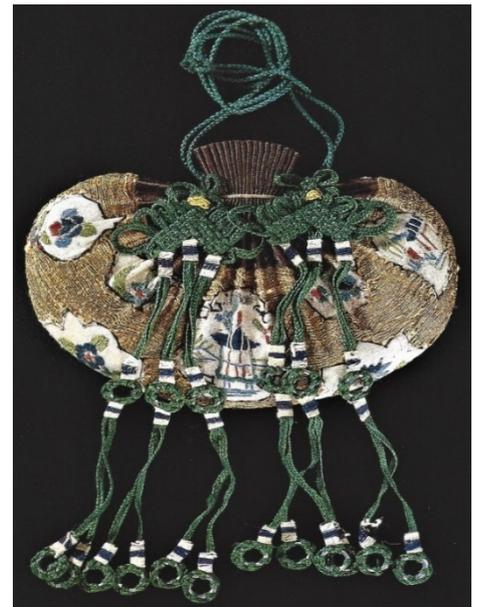
Fig:10 Fragrance purse or pouch. Mid 19th Century



Fig:11 illustrates a purse that has been created with a ground created with gold couched thread and white silk. The gold threads are created by wrapping gold leave around a silk filament core.

The areas of plain silk have a simple decoration. It is the use of expensive gold thread on silk that the wearer wants observers to notice. In the 19th Century many items of costume had extensive areas of gold couching as a mark of wealth. Sadly the goldwork lacked the refinement of items produce in the 18th Century.

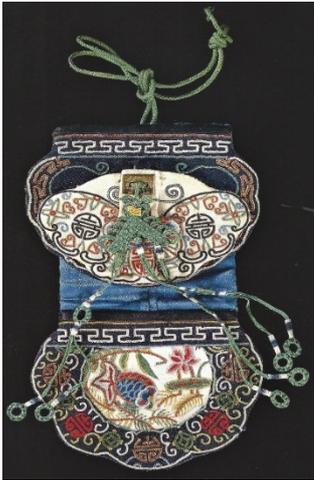
Fig:11 Gold couched fragrance purse. Mid 19th Century



In addition to fragrance purses there were a range of belt hangings that were termed purses but fulfilled the function of being a container. These purses were used to hold coins, keys, medicines, tobacco or a decorative snuff bottle.

The Da Lien Purse

A distinct form of container was known as a *Da Lien Purse*. These had a very distinct construction in that they incorporated 2 distinct compartments which were linked by plain silk. The purses were draped over the belt with one decorative section above the other as shown in Fig:12. They acted as a container for small objects that needed to be securely stored.



These purses were amongst the most decorative and often incorporated multiple design techniques.

The example shown represents the finest form of this type of purse but there existed considerable variety in terms of shape, symbolism and the quality of materials used. This reflects that this form of purse would be of use to all social classes, given its practical value, whereas fragrance purses were the preserve of high society.

Rounded or Oblong Large Purses

Additionally, there were purses that were of a larger construction and were used to protect small plaques, seals or documents. Often the interior was divided into various compartments. The purse treaded onto to the belt and was therefore only decorated on the side that would face outwards.

Fig:13 shows a scene from a popular Chinese Opera. The detail is embroidered using Pekin Knot except for the faces which have been done in a satin stitch. Whilst this item is of the highest quality it does show signs of wear which was common with these larger pieces that often were worn on a regular basis.



Fig:13 Large Belt Prse – 19th Century

Oddities

I will conclude Part 1 with a couple of unusual purse examples to give evidence of the endless variety that existed.

The first example (Fig:14) is a very fragile 18th Century purse where the silk has been created into a lattice-work. There is no scope to add an eye-catching design, beyond the gold couching, so one must assume that it is a very practical object where a fabric inner lining soaked in a sweet smelling fluid would be inserted.



Fig:14 Fragrance purse – late 18th Century

Lastly, Fig:15 shows a belt hanging that did not act as a container but nevertheless had a practical purpose.

The design of the item, which originates from Shanghai, was such that it would identify the occupation of the wearer. These were worn by prostitutes and presumably prevented any misunderstanding with a potential client. This is an item that has clearly been worn as it shows the ravages of time, particularly with the gold couching becoming detached as the silk stitches rot away. It, however, remains an interesting item of social history. This area of Chinese Costume collecting would be an excellent entry point given that, relatively speaking, items remain reasonably affordable. These items can provide an excellent insight into Chinese art, culture, symbolism and textile design of the 19th and 20th Century.

NOTE; If anyone has any Chinese textiles that they would like an opinion on then I would be pleased to report on. Images/measurements etc. can be sent to drosier@yahoo.com

Part 2 will continue the exploration of practical items that would have been worn from a robe

Liú Cíxīn 'The Three Body Problem', a Science Fiction novel

Ed Conduit

Ed is a new SACU member who has already made a number of suggestions for China Eye. This is his first article. He has also contributed to Zoom China Chats.

Liú Cíxīn (born 1963) is a nine-time winner of the Galaxy Award, China's most prestigious literary science fiction prize. He names Arthur C. Clarke as a major influence, and although many of the themes in his novels could equally well be written by this Brit or an American, his central themes bring a particularly Chinese perspective.

Some of his most awe-inspiring plots require the vision of a power engineer, which was his first profession. *'The Wandering Earth'*, for example, involves the world government using enormous plasma cannons to propel the planet out of range of the sun, which is about to become a red giant. He has been dubbed "the first cyberpunk Chinese author". Three novels appear as a trilogy, *The Three Body Problem*; it was previously called *Remembrance of Earth's Past*.

The *'Three-Body Problem'* is a difficult to solve mathematical puzzle left for us by Isaac Newton. The actual problem for all people of Earth is even more challenging. Very intelligent aliens originate on a planet in an unstable three-star system, so they are called the Trisolarians. Their evolution has forced them to be extremely resilient because of the planet's erratic orbit, but now they realise the planet will be drawn into one of the suns. They are looking for a new planet and have chosen Earth. Their surveillance devices are already here and their fleet will arrive in 400 years' time. A doomsday battle is expected.



The second novel is the *'The Dark Forest'*. This is a metaphor for intelligent life in the galaxy, in which every animal must keep silent to avoid attack by every other animal, or risk extinction. A possible defence for Earth against the technologically superior Trisolarians becomes apparent to Luo, the main character, who is a 'wallfacer'. If the location of their planet is 'published' into the galaxy, some third civilisation in the dark forest will destroy Solaris. The snag is that the location of Earth will also be visible and it will probably also be destroyed. The central theme becomes "Mutually Assured Destruction", which echoes

Chinese perspectives on nuclear standoff. *'Death's End'* is the third volume in the trilogy, in which a devastating dark forest attack occurs.

Liú Cíxīn's trilogy is available in English and Mandarin is not a big problem. I borrowed one volume from the library of Birmingham, where finding his name in the catalogue was the only challenge. His surname is 刘, pronounced "Lyo" and personal name is 慈欣. The book cover in the picture uses the characters 三体, pinyin sān tǐ, 'three body'. Pasting these characters into Google takes you straight to the baidu page, where right-clicking gives you an instant translation of the plot summary. The existence of a cyberpunk culture in China should allow much greater exchange between young people in Britain and China.

Footnote: In the September SACU Newsletter, Rob Stallard notes that US and Chinese production teams are to adapt Liu's trilogy for a Netflix 'Game of Thrones' series. This has been heralded by Barack Obama and the US Science Fiction author George RR Martin.

Panda Diplomacy by Ed Conduit

The ancient tradition of patronage through gift-giving seems to continue for the PRC as "panda diplomacy".

China loaned Taiwan tuántuán (团团, 'reunion') and yuán yuan (圆圆, 'round').

Taken together the mated pair mean 团圆 tuányuán (eventual reunion). As a diplomatic overture, is that brilliant or what? The names were lost on Westerners, but not on the Taiwanese.

Máo Zédōng in 1972 "gifted" to Nixon two giant pandas: Ling-Ling, female (玲玲, "tinkling of jade pieces", which were held by emperors to show their rank) and Hsing-Hsing, male (兴兴, "prosper"). In 2019 Xi Jinping made a 15 year loan to Russia of Ru Yi and Ding Ding. Were these successful overtures?

The "giant cat bear" (大熊猫, dà xióngmāo) was adopted by the World Wildlife fund, but is ecologically a poor symbol. It was on a course to extinction in the 1950s, restricted to one nutritionally poor bamboo and hemmed in by humans. Then its political value was realised and huge conservation resources were given.

The PRC declares its belt and road initiative (一带一路, yīdài yīlù) as its "gift to the world", costing it \$US900 billion. The "silk road" land route is by analogy with the Great Silk Road and the other element is the 21st century "maritime silk road". Western commentators have managed to see it in a more malign way, such as binding the recipient into a debt repayment burden it cannot meet. Or is that projection of Western banks' way of doing things? There are risks in each direction: China stands to lose its investment if it falls out with a country, but that country is seen as under Chinese patronage.

Some differences between Chinese and Western Art.

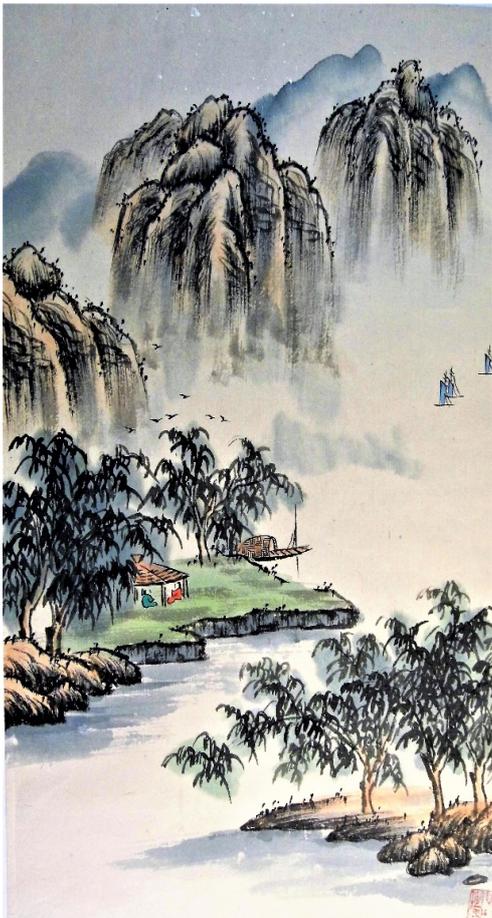
Brian Morgan

Brian is a long-standing member of SACU. He has taught Mandarin Chinese and Chinese brushpainting and has arranged Chinese art exhibitions in England. The painting shown below is one of Brian's own works.

In the past the differences between these two art forms was clear. Chinese painting came largely from rigid Confucian principles, stressing order and responsibilities in society.

Daoism developed as a reaction against these restraints, and rather like a religion but based on Nature; both about 600-500 BC; Daoism was passive, with action by inaction. Let natural events happen, and don't fight them. It developed spirit helpers from the mountains, streams, rocks, and trees, and stressed humility, frugality, compassion, and simplicity serene places.

Buddhism came in from India by the 4th century, and brought new pigments and themes for painting; - bird and flower, Xiesheng painting, and themes associated with seeking perfection in character.



Summer landscape. Peaceful fishing scene in a secluded lakeside hamlet. Mountains in an early Song Dynasty style with shading

This impressed the artist scholars, to observe and copy landscapes, to travel through them largely in imagination. With Daoist simplicity, all components were reduced to a minimum in quantity, detail and form.

They began to describe, in writing, in painting and in poetry, tall mountain peaks, waterfalls, lakes, trees and man made objects, including shrines in serene places. This was the development of 'Scholar Painting'.

During the Song dynasties, there was a re-think of painting themes with a new stress on symbolism, as displayed by the characteristics shown in plants. For example, plum blossom, with delicate flowers opening in deep winter, showed resistance to adversity, with hope for the coming Spring; bamboo, bending before a gale, but springing back up where a large tree would be uprooted, suggesting resilience; orchid, a rare physical or mental beauty; chrysanthemum, like the isolated hermit, suggesting independent, aloof but helpful thought. Despite these, and other major innovations, landscape art remained pre-eminent.

The Cultural Revolution nearly lost traditional art, but it did survive, and suffered many changes since, adding other themes following new worldwide communications. After this, there was an opening up of art, radiating from Xian, with new methods and themes, especially showing the past struggles of the people.

Chinese art has two principle styles, the meticulous style and the freestyle. Paints were originally mostly organic, and Buddhism brought new mineral pigments from India. Papers come in many forms, and brushes made from specific animal hair. Paints are absorbed deep into the papers or silks, and are held there by unique fixatives.

Chinese thinking is holistic, while Western thinking tends to be analytical, concentrating on individual forms within a painting. Western art, as we know it, has largely come into Britain from Italy, and later from France and Spain, and is far less versatile.

Western papers are non-absorptive and fairly limited, developing from vellums and parchments, to papers and board. Brushes used different forms of animal hair, but were very limited in choice compared to China. Western paints tend to sit on the surface of non-absorbent papers, and this greatly restricts the use of washes.

Western artists seem intent on completely filling the paper, with little thought for the abstract space demanded by Chinese scholar artists.

Chinese art carries messages; in Western art, only the messages in traditional inn signs seem clear to me. Portrait art has been significant in both art forms, especially in oil painting in the west, and influences from the continent. Of art galleries in China I know little, except the exceptional Institute of Fine Art in Beijing, and the new Rotunda Gallery in Xian.

China and the Global Money-Go-Round

Barnaby Powell

Barnaby is a SACU Council member who is well qualified to write this article explaining some of the financial factors affecting China's rise. He has 35 years' experience in development banking in Asia and also served as Secretary-general of the European Chamber of Commerce in Taipei.

Money is a circulating medium of exchange – it makes the world go round – but China is intent on ‘dual circulation’, defined as opening China to the world (‘The great international circulation’) on the one hand, while shoring up its own market and economic model (‘The great domestic circulation’) on the other. These are the major strands of the strategy outlined in their latest 5-Year Plan for 2021-25.

The international financial system – devised at Bretton Woods in 1944 – established the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) to facilitate international flows of capital for investment and trade. The regulatory framework thus created is now being reconfigured to reflect the shift in economic power to the East with the establishment of new institutions like the NDB (New Development Bank), set up by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank), a multilateral development bank with its headquarters in Beijing. These new institutions rival the existing Western-dominated order of the IMF/IBRD in funding the developing world's infrastructure.

At the same time, the prime value of the US Dollar as the major reserve currency and medium of trade settlement is likely to be re-aligned with other currencies to reflect their relative levels of foreign exchange reserves. At present, IMF member countries can borrow money at favourable rates from IMF reserves under SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) allocated in proportion to their fund quotas: US 42%; Euro 31%; RMB 11 %; Yen 8%; and GBP 8 %. For some time now, the RMB has been used in trade settlement with several countries, including Russia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia. The main constraint on its wider use remains that it is not freely convertible, which means it cannot be easily exchanged for currencies of other countries.

China is now the largest economy in the world producing a GDP of \$22.5 trillion in 2019, followed by the US with \$20.5 trillion and the EU with \$19.9 trillion. (These figures are based on purchasing power parity (ppp), which takes into account the effect of exchange rates, making it the best basis of comparison.) It has a mixed socialist market economy, composed of State-Owned Enterprises using economic planning, while it allows private businesses (which employ some 70% of the workforce) and investment to flourish. With a population of 1.4 billion people it still remains a relatively poor country in terms of its standard of living. Its economy produces only around \$17,000 per person (on a ppp basis) compared with around \$65,000 in the US. The aim of its 5-Year Plans is to double the size of the economy by 2035, by which time it intends to become the major manufacturer of railways, computer chips, jet planes, electric cars and satellites. This will necessitate an average annual economic growth rate of 4.7% over the next fifteen years.

One of the main thrusts of China's economic expansion is the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI), which has two prongs, the ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ and the ‘21st Century Maritime Road’. This is a mighty venture estimated to be costing initially over \$1 trillion, designed to extend China's trade reach and influence throughout the Eurasian landmass. Its main purpose is to improve infrastructure and communications (connectivity) between actual and potential trading partners for two-way supply lines. The initiative has been taken largely because big infrastructure projects completed with Western funding are very time-consuming and poorer countries have to follow first-world regulations. Thus, developing countries tend to let China fund transport and power, while leaving the West to take care of social sectors. Loans extended by China to poorer countries have given rise to the charge of ‘debt-trap diplomacy’, where recipients are believed to have trouble servicing the debt. This charge has been generally unfounded, as the more important concern is seen to be the sustainability of such lending, where China is working with multilateral development banks to ensure mechanisms are in place to protect debt sustainability.

China joined the WTO (World Trade Organization) in 2001 on the basis that it be given ‘Market Economy Status’. A Market Economy is an economic system in which there is free competition and prices are determined by supply and demand. Thus, ‘Market Economy Status’ is a term used by the WTO to determine how other WTO members are allowed to trade with other countries in imposing tariffs or other protective measures. China seeks to get the WTO to reduce the imposition of anti-dumping duties. China claims it should be granted this reduction as it is still a developing country, but this would clearly give it an immediate competitive advantage. It remains a contentious issue with the EU in particular and is unlikely to be resolved in the near future, unless it may be permitted as a trade-off in any future US-China trade deal.

Set against this monumental accumulation of financial reserves and other assets is a fast-rising level of corporate, household and government debt amounting to over 300% of GDP. Non-performing loans at Chinese commercial banks are estimated to amount to at least 1.5 trillion yuan. However, China has limited foreign debt and an unprecedented level of national savings – people typically save around 35% of their income in bank deposits, providing a kind of running tap of funding for government.

As long as China's economic growth remains robust, the government can rely on its performance to underpin its legitimacy. A major factor in the maintenance of popular satisfaction is China's software superiority and the availability of digital services for ease of transmission and communication of data and messaging. Chief amongst these services is ‘fintech’ (financial technology) for banking and financial services and a number of consumer applications like *WeChat* (for messaging) and *Alipay* (for payments). Most significant is the trial adoption of a digital currency (DCEP) to replace fiat cash and perhaps challenge the US dollar as the world's premier currency.

Hold on tight for the ride at a canter on the Chinese carousel!

Footnote; Barnaby has contributed to our knowledge of international finance and China in previous articles in *China Eye*; *The new wave of Asian Banks*, Autumn 2015, Issue No 47 and *The State of China's coffers*, Autumn 2018, Issue No 59.

Michael Wood's *The Story of China*

Michael Wood, SACU's President, gave a special Zoom online talk to the joint HSBC China Connect Group and SACU members on 19th November on the subject of his new book *The Story of China*.

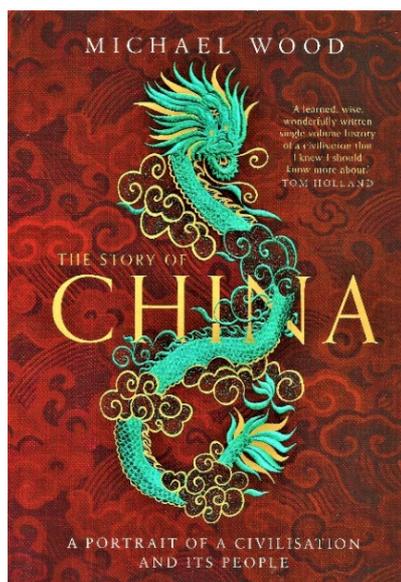
Michael has the gift of summarising not only his own book but the whole history of China and its people in a short vivid talk, gripping our attention by focusing on some key episodes and outstanding characters in the long saga of Chinese history and culture.

In the discussion, he mentioned that he is basically a filmmaker, which is obvious when he 'zooms' into these scenarios and animates these personalities. He is also like a classic Chinese painter who paints his Chinese-style 'painting' in a few bold brush strokes. His history is rooted in the inspiring writing of the early classics, such as the ancient 'Book of Songs/Poetry', the wisdom and humanity of the still-acclaimed philosopher, Confucius, the 'Records of the Historian' by the Former Han Dynasty historian Sima Qian', and the poetry of his favourite Chinese poet, Du Fu of the later Tang Dynasty.

He admires the outward-reaching, eclectic culture of the famous Emperor of the last Dynasty, Kang Xi, of the Manchu Qing Dynasty. He waxes lyrical about his treasured town of Kaifeng, a medieval capital which was illustrated in the famous Qing Ming Spring Festival scroll. He opens the scroll of Chinese history up to present days, but hesitates to respond to questions about China's future trajectory and role in the world.

Michael's enthusiasm for the world of China and its peoples permeates his talk and equally his book, which should become a landmark film.

Michael Sheringham



The book itself is large format (16 cm x 24 cm) and contains 608 pages. It traces the story of China from the earliest times; the mythical kings, the Yellow Emperor through all the dynasties to Republican China and finally to the Peoples' Republic to the age of Xi Jinping - even Covid-19 gets a mention.

This book differs from usual books on the history of China, in that more detail is allocated to the philosophical social aspects and the story of the people and personalities who shaped Chinese history and culture. Some names mentioned are hardly known in the West but very relevant to the story of China. Education throughout the various periods of history of China is described and discussed. More pages than are usual are devoted to Confucius and the 'Confucian Classics' and to literature in general.

Poetry throughout China's history is discussed and there are several pages on Du Fu as you might expect as he is the author's favourite poet. Excerpts from other Chinese poets and authors are also quoted in many parts of the text. They provide greater insight and more impact on views and events. The Chinese classic, the Dream of the Red Chamber is described in some detail and includes an account of the author, Cao Xueqin. This classic relates the joys and tribulations of the life of the nobility and shows, in the Qing Dynasty, how a family's fortunes can rise, but also fall from 'great heights.'

The book includes a number of very informative clear maps, which show the development of China through the ages and there are 24 pages of illustrations, most of them in full colour. This is a work of scholarship with 60 pages of notes and references written in a clear style making it suitable for the general reader as well as for the China specialist.

NB. You can access Michael Wood's films on China including *The Story of China* on Youtube.

Walter Fung

Contributing to China Eye

Members of SACU, or anybody with an interesting article or news item are welcome to contribute to China Eye. The ideal length is up to about 2,000 words together with two or three photographs. However, longer articles or even just a few paragraphs could be acceptable. To help the editor, please send contributions by email in Word. The usual format is two paragraphs, with narrow margins and font size 10. SACU is run by unpaid volunteers and it is not possible to pay for contributions, but non-SACU members will certainly be provided with a copy of the issue in which a submitted article is included.

China Eye is published four times a year about the middle of the months of March (Spring), June (Summer), September (Autumn), December (Winter). Please send in items as soon as possible, the 'deadline' for each issue is 20th of the month before. However, what is late for one issue, is early for the next.

The Voyages of Zheng He; 1405-1433

Walter Fung

Yongle, the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty in China sponsored the voyages of Zheng He, whom he appointed Grand Admiral. The ships were built in Nanjing, but set sail from Liuja Harbour in Taicang (near Suzhou) calling in at Changle in Fujian. The Zheng He ship-building museum is at Nanjing and Zheng He lived in this city, then the capital of China, presumably between voyages. His monument-tomb is here, although he was buried at sea. Yongle actually moved the capital to Beijing in 1421.

The man who was to become Zheng He was born Ma He, in Yunnan province in the south-west of China. His father was killed and he was taken prisoner by Ming soldiers who castrated him. Despite this disability, he was determined to succeed in life, inspired by the great Han historian, Sima Quan, who had suffered the same fate. Later he was sent to Nanjing, where he served Prince Zhu Di, who became the Emperor Yongle in 1403. To reward his exceptional organising ability and bravery in battle he was given the name Zheng He and appointed Grand Eunuch.

Yongle wanted to expand China's overseas commerce and trade links and influence and wanted countries to pay tribute to China. Some think this tribute implied help when needed. The Ming Dynasty had just replaced the Yuan Mongol Dynasty and maybe the new emperor wanted to re-establish China's prestige. Some scholars say that the Emperor wanted to search for the former emperor whom he deposed, but had escaped capture. In addition, Zheng He as a Moslem, wanted to visit Mecca.

The ships were all called 'treasure ships even though they were of different sizes according to their function. Some 62 were huge - 440 feet long, which was about five times as long as Christopher Columbus's Santa Maria. However, some modern naval historians doubt that ships of this size could have been built, maintaining that the height of trees limit ship length.

The ships carried nearly 28,000 men. The aim was not conquest, which would have been possible with a force of this size, but to collect tribute from various nations which recognised China's leadership. Although many soldiers were on board, only on two occasions was force used. On the fourth voyage Zheng He, with the authority of the Chinese Emperor, helped restore the rightful king to the throne Palembang in Sumatra. The other occasion was when Zheng He's ships were attacked by a force of 5,000 pirates. The pirate force which preyed on merchant ships around Sumatra, was eliminated.

Zheng He's voyages were missions of good will and not ones of conquest. Tribute was expected but gifts from the emperor to the rulers of countries were carried; Zheng He was an ambassador of peace. Arthur Cotterell in his book, *China, A History*, compares Zheng He with the Portuguese

who sailed into Indian ports with 'corpses hanging from the yards' and the massacres perpetrated by Vasco Da Gama in 1502 at Calicut, south-west India.

Zeng He's ships had the benefit of state-of-the-art technology of the time; magnetic compass, star navigation devices and star charts and of course maps.

The first voyage began late in 1405 and lasted until September 1407. The ships called in at Champa (Indo China), Thailand, Java, Malacca, Sumatra, Sri Lanka and Calicut (Kerala). The second voyage began in December 1407, just three months after arriving back in China. It was virtually a repeat of the first voyage, but also included Brunei. Three months after arriving back home, the third voyage began in December 1409 and visited many of the previous places but also included the Maldives, Quilon (Kerala) and Qeshm (Straits of Hurmuz). The fourth voyage began in winter 1417, two years after arriving back from the third voyage, Zheng He went even further afield this time to the coast of Africa, Muqdisho (Somalia) and Tanzania.

After arriving back in the summer of 1415, he was off on his Fifth voyage, in the winter of 1417. This time after revisiting 'local' ports, he seemed to spend more time in the Middle East, Baraawe (Somali), Aden, Ras As Salif (Yemen) and Tanzania again, returning to China during July 1419. On the Sixth voyage, which lasted from Autumn 1421 to August 1422 he again focussed on the Middle East and Africa. On the Seventh and last voyage Zheng He, at the age of 60, went to many of the places he had previously been to and in addition, visited Jobo (Seychelles) and Mecca, which must have been a climax for him, as a Moslem. This was his last journey, lasting from December 1431 to July 1433.

Zheng He's legacy is extensive. He is sometimes credited with the discovery of bird's nest soup, the introduction of the durian fruit to China and developing the game of mah-jong. The states he visited, about 33 in all, gave spices, fruits, gemstones and even 'exotic' animals such as the giraffe, ostriches, zebras and lions to China as tribute.

He respected other religions when landing in Buddhist countries such as Thailand, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Cambodia, where he visited Angkor Wat. He prayed for peace wherever he went and exchanged gifts with the rulers to whom he offered support. Zheng He, studied the architecture of the buildings and temples using the designs for pagodas and temples he had built in some places he visited. In the San Bao Gong Temple in Ayutthaya, Thailand is a 30-metre statue of Zheng He. There are relics associated with him in many lands. The Chinese community in Bangkok built a temple to his memory.

Zheng He died in 1433, a year after completing the seventh voyage but his work was never followed up. Soon after the ships were dismantled and his log books destroyed. Why this happened is a mystery. Some believe it was envy, Zheng He and the eunuchs were having too much influence. The Confucians maintained the voyages were wasteful and extravagance, while others thought that the advantages and

gains did not justify the expense. Although Zheng He's records were destroyed the writings of others survived. Some historians believe that Zheng He's travelling gave rise to the legend of Sinbad the Sailor. Zheng He was also known as San Bao (Three Treasures).

An extensive museum dedicated to Zheng He is in Malacca Malaysia. There is a statue of the man, costumed figures representing the Chinese Emperor and the Imperial Court and models of some of his ships. Although Chinese were in Malaysia from very early times, in 1459 during the Ming Dynasty, a Chinese princess came here to marry the sultan in Malacca. She was accompanied by 500 young girl attendants who eventually married young Malays and their offspring formed the basis of the settled Chinese community in Malaya. Chinese descended from these older families born in Malaya are known as Peranakan Chinese, sometimes called 'Baba' Chinese.



The Zheng He Museum in Malacca



A statue of the Grand Admiral in the museum



Zheng He (in purple) receives his command from the Ming Emperor



Gavin Menzies, in his book, *1421, The Year China Discovered the World*, claims that Chinese ships reached America, Australia and even the Antarctic. Menzies is a retired submarine commander, who for his research for the book, visited 120 countries and over 900 museums and libraries in every major seaport of the Middle Ages. Despite his very extensive work and research - This book of 520 pages includes over 100 pages of notes and references – not many professional historians accept all his findings. However, others suggest that some of Zheng He's reconnaissance ships may have reached the southern tip of Africa and possibly Australia.

Menzies wrote a follow-up book, *1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet sailed to Italy and ignited the Renaissance*. In this book, he maintains that ambassadors of the Chinese Emperor visited Florence and presented maps of lands unknown to Europe and also accounts of Chinese scientific and technical information to Pope Eugenius IV. Menzies claims that these helped to inspire Galileo, Leonardo Da Vinci and others and that Chinese maps were known to Vasco Da Gama and Columbus.

The Seldon Map, in the Bodleian Library Oxford, is an early 17th century map showing a system of sea routes from Fujian province, around Quanzhou and Zhengzhou. They lead to places such as Nagasaki, Hoi An (Vietnam), Manila, the Philippines, Sumatra and some say, a route pointing to India.

Another item of interest is the book, *The Island of Seven Cities*, by Paul Chiasson (Vintage, Canada, 2007), which explores the possibility that Chinese reached North America before Cabot and Columbus. The book mentions some aspects of the Mi'kmaq (a tribe of Native Americans) culture having roots in China.

Much of the information in this article was obtained from the Asiapac book. More detailed technical details of Zheng He's ships are in Gavin Menzies's book *1434*, especially chapters 1-4.

Further reading

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Arthur Cotterell, *China, A History*, Pimlico, London 1995

Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered the World*, Bantam Press, London 2002.

Gavin Menzies, *1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet sailed to Italy*, Harper Collins, London 2008.

Sino File of Current Events compiled by Walter Fung

Comments

I am grateful to Keith Bennett for sending me relevant news item from Xinhua.

One of the distinctive characteristics of Western ideology is individualism, which is a sharp contrast to Eastern collectiveness. George Soros, a guru of capitalism in his book, *The Crisis of Global Capitalism*, (Little, Brown, 1998) on page 95 writes. 'Pure reason and a moral code based on the value of the individual are inventions of Western culture; they have little resonance in other cultures. Confucian ethics are based on family and relationships do not sit well with the universal concepts imported from the West.' He goes on to say, 'The Western form of representative democracy may not be the only form of government compatible with an open society'.

Media appears to be starting to distinguish between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese people. The CPC has about 92 million members, they are the governing party and have been since 1949. Recent surveys, carried out by Western agencies, the Pew Research Institute and the Economist, have all found that over 90% of the people in China support their government.

The Chinese government has contributed more to the progress of mankind than any other agency in the whole of history and in such a short space of time; more than 800 million lifted out of poverty since 1978, literacy raised from about 20% in 1949 to about 99% now, longevity from 35 years in 1949 to 77 years. Now 95% of Chinese people are covered by basic health insurance. The current Five-year Plan will improve conditions further; a further increase in longevity is in the plan but handling climate change has the highest propriety.

From the British Press

Thomas Cook relaunched by Fosun Tourism Group

Fosun was Cook's biggest shareholder until Cook collapsed. The new Chinese owner said it would use a trust model devised in consultation with the Civil Aviation Authority to ringfence customer funds. Fosun has vowed not to touch customers' payments until after they return from holiday to rebuild confidence in the brand, the Thomas Cook brand, together with the Casa Cook and Cook's Club hotel business. Fosun, which led the £1.1 billion rescue deal, will relaunch the Thomas Cook brand today as an online travel agent. (From *The Times* 16/9/20)

Pompeo visits the Vatican

Mike Pompeo on a visit to the Vatican, criticised the Vatican plans to renew a two-year agreement with China which gave the Pope some say over the appointment of Chinese Catholic bishops. Vatican officials said that the agreement was an improvement from decades when Chinese Catholics, who recognised the Pope went underground.

However, Pompeo said that China was looking to snuff out the lamp of freedom on a horrifying scale. This was said during a symposium held at the US embassy in the Vatican. (From 1/10/20) (Pompeo was not reported to have met the Pope)

China and climate change

Now, in perhaps the most important news of 2020 that you may have missed, China has stepped up on its own as a climate leader. On 22 September, President Xi Jinping announced in a video address to the UN general assembly that China would aim to become "carbon neutral" before 2060 – Beijing's first long-term target. In so doing it joins the European Union, the UK and dozens of other countries in adopting mid-century climate targets, as called for by the Paris agreement. (*Guardian* 5/10/20)

Employability of students from Chinese universities

A report in *Times Higher Education*, published today, shows students from Chinese universities to rank number five, an increase of six places from number 11 in 2010. The US ranked number one, as it did in 2010. The UK was ranked number four, down from second place ten years ago. Germany showed the biggest gain from number 12 ten years ago to number three this year. France ranked second this year, up from third place ten years ago. (From *The Times* 19/11/20)

UK universities charter planes for Chinese students

A plane carrying hundreds of students from Beijing has flown into Belfast. This was the first of several chartered flights to bring Chinese students to study in the UK. More than 24,000 Chinese students have sought admission to British universities this year, up by 23%, of which 8,570 were accepted, a rise of 14%. Several UK universities have conducted surveys to ascertain which Chinese cities have the largest number of Chinese student applicants so they can arrange further charter flights.

This was after calls from some students asking for help with travel. Some of the students said they would reconsider coming to the UK, because of the risk of infection on scheduled flights. The Belfast flight was a chartered Qatar Airlines plane which carried 369 Chinese students going to Queen's University, who had paid £616 each. They all had had to take a Covid-19 test 48 hours before departure, and which needed to be negative.

The Trump administration has tightened visa requirements for Chinese students and with the deteriorations in China-US relations, fewer Chinese students want to go to the US. The UK was named as first choice by 42% of students compared to 37% for the US. In addition, the UK has reopened post-study work visas for Chinese graduates and offered shortened degree courses. (From *The Times* 22/9/20)

Signs of economic recovery in China

Factory production increased at the fastest rate of the year so far in August reaching 5.6%, and surpassing forecasts. Retail sales also, grew unexpectedly by 11.8% in automotive sales and 25.1% in telecommunication products. The country's trade and investment performance had all been better than expected after the Covid-19 pandemic. In the

first quarter of the year, China's economy shrank for the first time in decades, but began to recover in the second quarter and this recovery has continued. Analysts believe that the recovery, although unbalanced, is on a firm footing and should continue through the fourth quarter and into 2021. *(From The Times 17/9/20)*

China-led Asia-Pacific trade agreement

China and 14 other countries have signed one of the largest ever free trade deals, encompassing nearly a third of the world's population. Nations including Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand agreed to form the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This is a deal that cuts tariffs and increases market access in some of the world's most dynamic economies. The deal was almost 10 years in the making. It is hoped that the RCEP will boost Asian economies by reducing tariffs, implementing new online trading rules and possibly bolster supply chains with common, 'rules of origin,' which determine the national source of a product.

The RCEP covers 2.2 billion consumers in 15 countries and will mean that a RCEP-compliant product will be able to access all of the countries on beneficial terms. It is the first free trade deal between China, Japan and South Korea. *(From The Times 16/11/20)*

(Apparently India, fearing low-cost competition from China, pulled out of talks last year. However, other reports say that 'the door is still open').

China's new superfast trains.

Next year could see the further introduction of maglev trains in China running at speeds up to 600 km/hr or 373 mph. Such a train in the UK could cut the journey from London to Edinburgh to just over an hour and from London to Manchester to about half an hour. *(From Asia Times 2/10/19)*

Beijing and Caribbean Commonwealth countries

China is lending billions of dollars to nations in the Caribbean. These nations have been starved of finance for major infrastructure projects and they once depended on Britain and the US. Now they are looking to China for low-interest loans to build roads, bridges, ports and stadiums. Keith Rowley, the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago told reporters, after signing up to China's Belt and Road initiative in June 2018, that his country needs China's investment and China needs the location in the Caribbean. Dominica, Guyana, Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada signed similar agreements later that year. In 2019, Jamaica and Barbados followed suit. The deal included agricultural projects and a new national stadium. *(From The Times 28/9/20)*

Sweden bans Chinese 5G

Huawei and ZTE have been banned from building 5G networks in Sweden. The Swedish telecom regulator has said that four wireless carriers bidding for frequencies in a spectrum auction for the new networks must not use equipment from the two Chinese companies and must rip out any kit that is already in place. Action was taken after assessments by the Swedish military and security service.

Sweden's security service has called China one of the biggest threats to the country. *(From The Times 21/10/20)*

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

The Tokyo meeting between the foreign ministers of Australia, India and Japan and Mike Pompeo of the US, discussed Covid-19, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, humanitarian relief and also China. After plans made last year, Pompeo said that bringing the four governments together, will prove very important in the efforts ahead to ensure that China 'retains only its proper place' in the world.

Luo Zhaohui, China's deputy foreign minister said that the Quad is an anti-China front line and reflects the cold war mentality of the US. Apparently South Korea has shown little interest in joining the Quad, a 'mini NATO'. *(From The Times 7/19/20)*

Normal life returns in China

China appears to have returned to normal as couples are throwing lavish wedding banquets, travellers are filling up trains and planes and students, 240 million of them, have returned to class. Monitoring risk and tracking have diminished in importance and seem superfluous when China has not reported a single community case for 38 days. The handful of daily cases have all been detected at the border, where travellers from overseas are tested, quarantined and allowed to move on when a retest is negative.

In January China raised eyebrows with its harsh measures, especially when it sealed off the city of Wuhan and banned anyone from leaving. Elsewhere train services were suspended, flights were grounded and drones were dispatched to ensure rural villages stayed at home. China has developed a system that can swiftly put local surges under control. The campaign slogans are, 'test everyone who should be tested', - and early diagnosis, early isolation and early treatment'.

Health authorities built up testing capacities of nearly five million a day by July. Beijing can test a million samples a day and people can get tested at more than 200 facilities and get results in 30 minutes. In July, when a woman in Beijing tested positive, authorities mobilised 29 staff who traced all her movements in the previous month and within 24 hours they had identified and isolated 204 close contacts. *(From The Times 26/9/20)*

China launches first 6G satellite

China has successfully launched what has been described as 'the world's first 6G satellite to test the technology. The satellite uses high-frequency terahertz waves to achieve data transmission speeds many times faster than 5G. The telecom industry is still several years away from agreeing on 6G specifications and therefore it is not certain that this technology will make it into the final specifications. China has recently begun to establish a national 6G research and development group. The satellite also carries technology to monitor crops and forest fire protection. *(From I 9/11/20)*

Chinese studied anatomy before Greeks

Ancient silk manuscripts from a Chinese tomb 1,800 years old are being hailed by scientists as the oldest surviving

anatomical texts. Researchers say that the documents map out 11 'pathways' through the body, which are now used in acupuncture. They demonstrate that anatomy was being studied long before classical Greek times. The Mawangdui manuscripts were found in a tomb near Changsha in the 1970s but are believed to have been placed there in 168 BC. A study concludes that they are the earliest surviving anatomical descriptions of the human body.

Bangor University's school of medical sciences realised that the texts are an atlas of the human body from a different perspective and different from the Western view of arteries, veins and nerves. The texts reflect the traditional Chinese medicine based on concepts of yin and yang. Scholars previously did not think the works described anatomy, because dissection of human bodies was frowned upon at the time. Confucian culture venerated ancestors and shunned dissection. However, later texts indicated dissection of criminals' bodies was involved. *(From The Times 3/9/20)*

Chinese 'smart city' designed to cope with pandemic

A new 'smart city' is to have a 'state-of-the-art' neighbourhood designed to cope with a future pandemic outbreak. Architects working on Xiong'an, a new city south of Beijing have been commissioned to make blocks of apartments specially equipped to allow residents to continue to function under lockdown conditions. Each flat will have a balcony for access to the open air and there will be communal areas large enough to allow social distancing. Vegetable gardens, greenhouses and solar panels on the roof will help self-sufficiency.

The project is the invention of Barcelona-based architects, Guallart. The founder, Vicente Guallart said that the concept stems from the crisis taking place and the objective is to create new urban life based on the circular bio-economy. 3-D printers will be available to make replacements for broken items if supply chains are disrupted and drones will make deliveries. There will be special 'neighbourhood apps to alert residents about lockdowns and other health information. The new city of Xiong'an is being built to relieve the pressure on Beijing and has the personal backing of President Xi Jinping. Most of the city's industry will be cutting-edge technology firms. *(From The Times 9/9/20)*

Kashgar in Xinjiang tests 4.7 million in three days

After finding an asymptomatic coronavirus carrier on Saturday, 4.7 million tests were carried out in three days. Health officials in the ethnic Uighur region said they were confident that they had contained the virus.

In the far west of Xinjiang 182 infections had been found in and near a school uniform factory, resulting in the shutdown of the factory and a strict lockdown of neighbouring villages. Groceries were delivered to the doorsteps of the houses.

Beijing introduced a programme to track all imported refrigerated and frozen imported food after viruses were found on packaging. The capital's outbreak in June could have been started with contaminated seafood from a high-risk area. *(From The Times 29/10/20)*

From the Chinese Press

BEIJING, Sept. 21 (Xinhua) -- Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday shared his thoughts on the role of the United Nations (UN) in the post-COVID era, opposing unilateralism, bullying or any country acting like "boss of the world." Xi made the comments at a high-level meeting to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN. Stressing that the UN must stand firm for justice, Xi said no country has the right to dominate global affairs, control the destiny of others, do what it likes, or keep advantages in development all to itself.

He also said that it is imperative that the representation and voice of developing countries be increased so that the UN could be more balanced in reflecting the interests and wishes of the majority of countries in the world, stressing that the UN must uphold the rule of law amongst countries.

LONDON, Aug. 25 (Xinhua) -- British fashion brand Burberry has teamed up with China's tech giant Tencent to create an interactive WeChat shop in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen. Shoppers can now use the Chinese messaging and social media app, WeChat, to engage with the shop. The latest collaboration between the British brand and the Chinese tech company could pave the way for more interactive stores in the future, and revolutionize the consumer shopping experience.

Josie Zhang, president of Burberry China, told Xinhua that Burberry decided to launch in Shenzhen because it was the home of Tencent and because the city is known as a global technology hub. In 2019, the two companies got together to see how they could inspire Chinese consumers to interact and purchase their products.

Bird protection and home stay

Eight years ago, Fujian farmer Yang Meiling, in the county of Mingxi, was captivated by the beauty of four silver pheasants with their white feathers and long tails. He began to feed them regularly and even learnt to imitate their voice so he could call them when food was ready. This particular species of bird are in fact under Chinese state protection.

Wild-life photographers began to turn up and the birds became a tourist attraction for bird watchers. Yang and his family, including his grandchildren, began to provide services for them including local food, This developed into a business and eventually homestay was offered. Now 8,000 tourists from 30 countries come each year. *(From China Daily 2/10/20)*

SHANGHAI, Oct. 16 (Xinhua) -- British luxury retailer Harrods will open its first permanent private shopping space in Shanghai in December. The store, to be located in the Pudong New Area of Shanghai, will aim to offer personal shopping services to China's high-end customers. "The Chinese market has a growing level of wealth and the younger generation is going to be really big spenders in luxury in the future," said Ward, Harrods' Managing Director, "We want to make sure we engage at a very early stage so we need a permanent residence in China," Ward added. "If it works, we'll go to other cities in China."

“During the fashion extravaganza, Harrods organized a live-streaming event where industry leaders and insiders held discussions on topics, such as the future of luxury, how luxury can lead to sustainability and the global influence of Chinese designers. "We are here supporting Shanghai Fashion Week because it will eventually start to lead world fashion," Ward said

Eight-day ‘Golden Week’ national holiday

This year, National Day, October 1, coincides with the Mid-Autumn Festival. This has extended the annual week-long National Day holiday to an eight-day period. As holidaymakers plan trips in droves, tourism companies are offering deals at a discount, and scenic spots have cut their ticket prices. The domestic tourism industry is looking forward to recovery but adhering to prevention and control measures.

Epidemic containment, besides boosting economic interests, has to also guarantee public safety. Due to the still challenging situation outside China, the authorities have to prevent a rebound at home triggered by arrivals from abroad. Hence, besides regular prevention measures, related administrations and scenic spots need to have emergency plans.

During the holiday, services, including catering and accommodation, should be regulated. Local governments need to pay attention to food safety and strengthen supervision while also ensuring there is no food wastage. They should also establish online platforms where consumers can complain to ensure their legitimate rights. *(From Beijing Review 29/9/20)*

CPC Politburo meeting to discuss key document

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) met on September 28 to discuss a report seeking public opinion on a CPC document on the formulation of the 14th Five-Year (2021-2025) Plan for Economic and Social Development and future targets for 2035.

The document, after being revised based on opinions expressed at the meeting, will be submitted for deliberation at the fifth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, which will be held in Beijing from October 26 to 29. A set of regulations on the work of the CPC Central Committee was also reviewed at the meeting, which was presided over by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC. The gathering of public opinions has given full play to democratic values and views and suggestions of Party members and those outside the Party, an important practice of China's socialist democracy. By convening and presiding over a number of symposiums, Xi has directly listened to opinions and advice on the country's economic and social development in the 2021-2025 plan period from all walks of society. *(From Beijing Review 8/10/20)*

While the COVID-19 pandemic has crippled the global economy and limited international travel, collaboration between China and Europe in fighting the crisis has continued.

When Italy was at the European epicentre of the novel coronavirus outbreak in March, China donated medical

provisions including face masks, and increased exports of supplies and equipment. The Chinese government also dispatched medical teams to help combat the pandemic.

In Ireland, Irish respiratory consultant Oisín O'Connell told China Daily that the knowledge and experience shared by Chinese medical practitioners during the early days of the novel coronavirus outbreak was "instrumental" in Ireland's response to COVID-19 and has helped save many lives.

During the last week of August, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, France, and Germany, in a bid to strengthen links with Europe. The countries agreed to strengthen cooperation between China and Europe in response to the pandemic and to restart personnel exchanges and practical cooperation to contribute to the global economic recovery. Last month, phase-3 trials of a Chinese vaccine were launched in Ankara, Turkey.

Jenny Clegg, Vice-president of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding, said: "In this time of crisis, international collaboration is vital. Europe and China are now leading the way. Through joint research efforts and sharing resources, the two sides are taking invaluable steps to tackle COVID-19."

Christopher Bovis, a professor at University of Hull, hailed the cross-border collaborative engagements between European governments and China. He said: "It demonstrated commitment and willingness in cooperating on COVID-19-related research, vaccine development, and medical equipment provision encouraging openness and data sharing in order to ensure rapid development for the benefit of every nation. The economic combating of the pandemic is a global responsibility."

Ollie Shiell, founder of consultancy Asiability, which helps to bridge relationships between businesses in China and the United Kingdom, noted that UK Research and Innovation dispenses a budget of more than 8 billion pounds (\$10.44 billion) to help foster and support research collaborations across universities, businesses, charities and governments, and among the funded projects are many research collaborations with China.

"Universities from Warwick, Oxford, Manchester, Imperial College London to a great many more have been beneficiaries of funding to help them work with counterparts across China on issues of mutual concern of the pandemic," Shiell said. "In fact, it would probably be a more difficult task to identify which universities in the UK and China are not working together to address the pandemic."

This month, an inaugural online festival for cultural and creative exchange between China and the UK was launched by the British Council, in partnership with UK's Department for International Trade, VisitBritain, VisitScotland, the British Embassy in China and the China Visual Festival. Around 50 organizations from both countries have provided digital content. *(From a report by Wang Mingjie, China Daily Global 16/10/20)*

SAO PAULO, Sept. 17 (Xinhua) -- The cooperation between Brazil and China during the development of a coronavirus vaccine is a "win-win arrangement" said. Dimas Covas, director of the Butantan Institute, a biologic research centre and vaccine manufacturer in Sao Paulo. He also lauded the creation of an alliance between Chinese company Sinovac Biotech and the Butantan Institute and said that it is a win-win arrangement for both Brazil and China, because Coronavac may be the first or one of the first vaccines to be used worldwide. Covas's institute is the largest manufacturer of influenza vaccines in the southern hemisphere.

China-Brazil cooperation has been strengthened in general in recent years, especially with the opening of a commercial office for the state of Sao Paulo in Shanghai in 2019, which has helped foster the alliance with Sinovac Biotech. Beijing-based Sinovac Biotech, a Nasdaq-listed Chinese biopharmaceutical manufacturer, began final-stage trials in July on Coronavac, its inactivated COVID-19 vaccine.

LONDON, Oct. 7 (Xinhua) -- Amid rising coronavirus infections across Britain, the 64th BFI London Film Festival (LFF) launched here on Wednesday, with 58 films from around the world, including China, will deliver both virtual and physical screenings in the next 12 days. Among them, there are Chinese feature "Striding into the Wind", directed by young Chinese director Wei Shujun, and a Britain-China co-product "Sound For The Future", directed by British filmmaker Matt Hulse, according to the LFF website.

LONDON, Oct. 28 (Xinhua) -- China is way ahead of the global electric vehicle competition (Financial Times, opinion article on Wednesday). It has become one of the most favourable places in the world to make competitively priced electric vehicles (EVs). Chinese battery makers and auto parts suppliers will benefit substantially from the domestic market and from global market demand since they are way ahead of the competition due to advantages of scale. The development of China's local new EV supply chain will be stimulated by U.S. carmaker Tesla's entry into China. Tesla rolled out the "Model 3" from its gigafactory near Shanghai, east China.

China accounts for 55 percent of global new EV sales. In September, overall sales of passenger vehicles in China gained 8% year-on-year to hit 2.09 million units, while new EVs sales surged 67.7% to 138,000 units. To meet new demand generated by green consumption, China will boost the NEV industry and consolidate the construction of infrastructure including charging facilities and strengthen international cooperation.

BEIJING, Nov. 18 (Xinhua) -- A total of 68 cultural relics have been returned to China from Britain, said the National Cultural Heritage Administration. The cultural relics, which were smuggled overseas, were retrieved following joint efforts by the administration and the UK foreign affairs and customs authorities. Some of the cultural items have significant historical, artistic and scientific value. The artefacts were captured by the British police in 1995 when smuggled to Britain, they were later identified as lost cultural relics of China. The retrieved cultural relics, dating

back as far as the Spring and Autumn Period (770 B.C.-476 B.C.), through the Warring States Period (475 B.C.-221 B.C.) and on to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), are being exhibited on the administration's website.

In 1989, China accepted the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property

LONDON, Nov. 4 (Xinhua) -- Britain's red meat and dairy products will be showcased at an international exhibition in China this month, the British Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has said. Britain's high-quality beef and pork, alongside a selection of cheese, will be showcased in FHC China, the 24th International Exhibition for Food, Drink, Hotel, Restaurant, Foodservice, Bakery and Retail Industries, which starts on Nov. 10 at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre.

XIAMEN, Nov. 13 (Xinhua) -- East China's Fujian province on Thursday launched its first direct air cargo route linking Xiamen City and London. A charter cargo aircraft carrying 32 tonnes of textiles, shoes, semiconductors and other commercial goods took off from Xiamen for Heathrow Airport. The route is operated by Xiamen Airlines and is the company's first direct connection with the U.K. The route will promote economic, trade and cultural cooperation between Fujian and Europe. Three more charter cargo flights will be launched soon. Xiamen Airlines launched an air cargo route linking Xiamen and Spain's Valencia in late May, its first direct connection with Spain.

LONDON, Nov. 2 (Xinhua) -- As the coronavirus pandemic continues to ravage the world, China is expected to see broader economic recovery which will offer opportunities to the West hit hard by the virus, British media have reported. In an opinion article published Monday on its website, the Financial Times (FT) said the Chinese economy has seen "a vigorous bounce back" despite the impact of coronavirus and China is emerging as the engine of global growth. China is the only big economy expected to show a positive advance this year, with the IMF projecting growth of 1.9 percent. In an earlier report, Reuters also said China is expected to see a further rebound of consumption and broader economic recovery as consumers return to fashion week, cinemas, live performances and restaurants.

With the easing of restrictions gathering pace in the third quarter, China's hospitality sector is set to accelerate its recovery. The services industry had been the most affected by COVID-19 but now, with restrictions being lifted, the industry is gradually emerging from its downturn, which would provide a strong boost to the consumer market. Data released on Saturday by the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics showed that China's manufacturing and service sector activities stood above average expansion for eight straight months as economic recovery continued apace amid the government's pro-growth measures.

In an opinion article published on FT's website, Ray Dalio, the founder, co-chairman and co-chief investment officer of Bridgewater Associates which is a U.S. investment management firm, said the anti-China bias "has blinded too

many for too long to opportunities" in a changing world. "The world order is changing, yet many are missing this because of a persistent anti-China bias." He noted that China is succeeding in exceptional ways despite some persistent doubt about the country and that China has achieved some of the world's lowest COVID-19 case rates and while over the past year, China's economy grew at almost 5 percent, without monetizing debt. Prejudice and bias always blind people to opportunity.

LONDON, Nov. 10 (Xinhua) -- With the help of "revenge spending" from the COVID-19 pandemic, sales of Wednesday's "China's Singles' Day" online shopping festival, which is similar to "Black Friday" in Western countries, is expected to break new records, the BBC reported Tuesday. Noting that "China's Singles' Day", which falls on Nov. 11 annually, is the world's biggest 24-hour online shopping event, with 1.9 billion products ordered and delivered last year, the BBC said, that it is thought that pent-up demand from the pandemic will help to break new sale records. Robot cleaners, vacuums and toolboxes are all expected to be popular items for shopping carts. And luxury brands are also hoping to get a boost, as millions of Chinese have been unable to travel overseas because of the pandemic.

LONDON, Nov. 18 (Xinhua) -- Chinese Ambassador to Britain Liu Xiaoming has called on the Chinese and British business communities to work together to write a new chapter for the China-UK win-win cooperation. Liu made the remarks on Tuesday while delivering a keynote speech at an online briefing of the fifth plenary session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held in Beijing last month.

Liu said the conference reviewed and approved the CPC Central Committee's Proposals for the Formulation of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period and beyond, the high-quality growth of China's economy will create more opportunities for cooperation between Chinese and UK businesses.

China's huge market, open and win-win cooperation, China and the UK complementing each other in innovation, green development and synergy present opportunities for the business sectors of both countries. The UK has unique strengths in climate response, clean energy and green finance. Liu called upon the Chinese and British business communities to work together for a brighter future.

LONDON, Nov. 17 (Xinhua) -- China's domestic demand rose sharply in October, joining the recovery in industrial production and exports, the British think tank Oxford Economics said on Tuesday. Retail sales of consumer goods, the main gauge of China's consumption, climbed 4.3 percent year on year to 3.86 trillion yuan (about 584.5 billion U.S. dollars) last month, quickening from the 3.3-percent gain in September. In the meantime, China's value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, went up 6.9 percent year on year in October.

Amid sustained government efforts to rein in housing speculation, China's housing market remained stable in October, with new

home prices in four first-tier cities -- Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen -- increasing by 0.3 percent month on month in October, 0.1 percentage points slower from a month earlier. China's unemployment rate in urban areas stood at 5.3 percent in October, 0.1 percentage points lower than that of September. Priority has been given to stabilize employment and ensure living standards.

British diplomat rescues drowning woman

Stephen Ellison, 61, British consul general in Chongqing, jumped into a river in a tourist area called Zhongshan Ancient Town on Saturday and pulled to safety a 24-year-old Chinese student who had slipped into the water.

The award was offered by the government-backed Chongqing Foundation for Justice and Courage, and came with a reward of 50,000 yuan (US\$7,600).

Ellison, who assumed his post in Chongqing in October, said he would donate all the prize money to charity next week at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the consulate's establishment. (*From South China Morning Post 20/11/20*)

Sinophile by Flo and Ivor Kenna

The cover of Beijing Review for May the 27th has the headline, 'Hands-on Help'-. People first policy strengthens public morale during Covid-19 outbreak. Inside there is an article entitled: 'Every Life Counts'-. Saving elderly patients with Covid-19 is a societal duty'.

Readers will recall that Covid-19 is responsible for far more deaths amongst the elderly than amongst the young. By diligent eating of harmful food throughout their lives, elderly people build up ill-health conditions for themselves. This may be the basis of change. Then along comes Covid-19, the condition of change. The condition of change takes effect through the basis of change. Such is one of the laws of contradiction.

Another example is, 'A single spark can light a prairie fire'. If the prairie is wet, the spark can have no effect. The spark is the condition of change. If there is no spark, the prairie will not go up in flames. This is based on Mao Zedong's booklet, 'On Contradiction'.

Coming back to the Beijing Review article, we read; 'China would rather bear the pressure of an economic downturn to save every life at any cost.' Many elderly patients had pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and other organ dysfunctions before they were infected with Covid-19. The pre-existing conditions might eventually result in the death of an elderly patient. Covid-19 simply advances the date of death. This is all especially interesting in view of the debate over lockdown taking place in the UK at the time of writing. Later on, in the same issue of Beijing Review there is another article celebrating 45 years of China-EU diplomatic ties turns 45, the coronavirus outbreak offers new chances for greater consolidation. China and the EU seem to be getting along very well indeed. Another article is headed, 'Pompeo Puts US Credibility at Risk'; - describes how the Secretary of State spreads lies.

SACU President Michael Wood has place of honour in Beijing Review for June 25th in connection with the BBC documentary, about Du Fu, China's Greatest Poet.

Later on in the same issue, there are edited excerpts from an article by the China Society for Human Rights Studies released on June 11th, 'Pandemic Magnifies Crisis of US- Style Human Rights'. Briefly the four-page article shows in detail that black lives do not matter in the US.

Trump and the ‘Chinese Virus’

Andrew Beck

Andrew worked in education at all level for 42 years. Although retired from full-time work he continues to teach at and advise international universities, as well as researching and writing on a wide range of art, communication, design, and media topics. He works with several leading Chinese universities

Trump says whatsoever he wants. This characterised his behaviour in commerce and media. Seeing no reason to change he continued to say whatever he wanted in the 2016 election campaign. Shaping reality in his own image is what Trump does consistently. This infuriates fact-checkers but it delights Trump. Perhaps this is why he sees a soul mate in Vladimir Putin. As Massa Gessen has observed: ‘It’s not just that both Putin and Trump lie, it is that they lie in the same way and for the same purpose: blatantly, to assert power over truth itself’.

Taking up the Presidency, Trump saw no reason to change: ‘This kind of obfuscation, this level of confusion, is exactly what we have come to expect from our national leader. Trump has destroyed our trust with wanton abandon—trust in our political system, trust in our institutions, trust in science, trust in America itself—simply because it benefits him, personally, to do so’ (Anne Applebaum).

The game he’s always played is not Truth or Consequences but No Truth and Damn the Consequences. This doesn’t take much effort for this is how Philip Pullman characterised Lyra, the heroine of *His Dark Materials*: ‘Being a practised liar doesn’t mean you have a powerful imagination. Many good liars have no imagination at all; it’s that which gives their lies such wide-eyed conviction’.

Trump is no ideologue. If there’s one thing about him that’s consistent it’s his very inconsistency, his wilful contrariness: Trump as Pendulum President. Whilst he’s perfectly happy using the rhetorical weaponry of racism, misogyny, and nativism, they are only the verbal behaviours of an over-entitled narcissist who never experiences any pain swinging from one firm position to its exact opposite. After all, were it not for personal caprice he would not even be a Republican.

It is this unpredictability that many of Trump’s closest allies find most attractive. Trump’s son-in-law and senior advisor Jared Kushner admires him for this: ‘He’s unpredictable, which is a great strength’. Moreover, ‘The hardest thing that people have in understanding him is they see him as fixed, where he’s actually, he’s not a solid, he’s fluid in the sense that – and that’s a strength’. According to Kushner it’s all open till the deal’s signed, and even then he might still change his mind or renege on deals he’s agreed. Where David Cay Johnston deplors Trump’s history as a ‘flim-flam artist ripping off employees, investors, governments, and suppliers’ Kushner sees this as a strength.

Whilst this kind of behaviour might have been seen as reprehensible in a political landscape where there was at least the illusion of polite conventions, in the post-truth age they are par for the course. In January 2017 Trump joined the company of Big Men, a sort of international community of big swinging dicks with whom Trump wanted to get on: ‘[He] liked personal relationships and liked it when heads of state were his friends’ (Woodward). But his route to achieving sound relations is tortuous: first belittle, insult, and threaten people, then sit down with them at a meeting of equals. In an act of textbook projection Trump, speaking with Woodward after the January 2020 World Economic Forum at Davos, said Xi was “[V]ery cunning. I get along with him fantastically well”.

It comes as no surprise to observe how Trump has switched radically in his characterisations of and behaviour towards Xi Jinping. During the 2016 Presidential election campaign Trump adopted a consistently anti-Chinese stance. But on assuming office this all changed. In a 9 February 2017 telephone call with Xi Trump signed up to One China policy. Soon after this, from 6 to 9 April, Trump hosted Xi at Mar-a-Largo, his Palm Beach, Florida, resort. Xi reciprocated and Trump made an official visit to Beijing from 8 to 10 November. After both visits official communiqués were issued and superficially all appeared to be going well. Behind the scenes Kushner took a somewhat divergent view: ‘Kushner cast the One China decision as one of cynical pragmatism. “President Trump would say that he was going to respect the One China policy,” Kushner said. “That wasn’t that big of a give, because you could always say you wouldn’t respect it a day later.”’

Almost immediately Trump did one of his habitual switcheroos. The November 2017 love-in was swiftly followed by a declaration of trade war in January 2018. Trump increased customs tariffs on China imports such as household equipment. This was ramped up in March to include (tellingly) medical equipment. The tit-for-tat tariff impositions escalated in June, escalated even further in September, but by December a kind of truce was declared. Talks to resolve differences began in February 2019 but by August Trump was raising tariffs yet again. Nevertheless, by 13 December 2019 the Phase One US-China trade deal was ‘totally done’ according to US trade representative Robert Lighthizer, barring some translations and revisions, and was signed on 15 January 2020.

When Trump attended the 2020 World Economic Forum from 21 to 24 January he was back on form as the Pendulum President. Publicly he was positively blasé about Covid-19: ‘It’s one person coming in from China. We have it under control’. He made no attempt to blame China for the outbreak and was privately full of admiration for Xi: “[H]is personality is incredible [...] his strength, his mental and physical strength, is great”. Calling Woodward at home on 7 February Trump praised Xi for the way in which he was dealing with Covid-19: ‘I think he’s going to have it in good shape’. In the same phone call he elaborated on this and confirmed happy relations between them: ‘I think he’s going to do a good job. He built a number of hospitals in record-setting time. [...] We’re working with them. [...] The relationship is good. Much better than before. It was strained because of the [trade] deal.’

As far as can be established it was on 16 March that Donald Trump made his first public use of the phrase ‘the China virus’. On that date Trump tweeted, ‘The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus’. Then at the 19 March White House press conference Trump repeated the phrase. A sharp-eyed *Washington Post* photographer present captured a candid picture of Trump’s large point printed script. The photograph clearly showed that Trump had taken his favourite black Sharpie, had struck out ‘corona’, and substituted it with ‘Chinese’ turning ‘corona virus’ into ‘Chinese virus’.

Despite his public use of ‘Chinese virus’ behind the scenes Trump maintained convivial relations with Xi. Furthermore, he admonished some White House hawks who, feeling empowered, wanted to escalate the verbal attacks on China. Trump spoke with Xi by telephone on 26 March. Xi expressed concern about the phrase. In response Trump said that ‘[H]e personally and the American people loved the Chinese people and would never tolerate mistreatment of people visiting from China’. That call ended cordially. Speaking with Woodward by phone on 28 March Trump told him that he had stopped White House hawks ramping up the rhetoric: ‘Trump was worried because he knew words could cause wars. He told them, “You can’t do that shit,” and stopped them fast’.

But come May something changed. Speaking with Woodward on 22 May Trump maintained Xi knew what he was doing combating the virus. Then Woodward tried to look inside Trump's mind: 'Trump was doing a 180-degree turn from his natural optimism. He seemed to be searching for someone to blame'. It seemed that Trump was saying China deliberately let the virus get out of control: they couldn't beat it so they let it rip. Woodward paused for breath: 'It had never occurred to me that Trump would think President Xi had deliberately let the virus spread'.

With Trump's approval ratings plummeting, with former supporters increasingly alienated, with disgruntled former Trump administration members publishing their own memoirs (after White House attempts to block publication former National Security Adviser John Bolton published *The Room Where It Happened* on 23 June), and with his brand of spiv capitalism thoroughly exposed, Trump decided to bet the house on mobilising and orchestrating anti-China sentiments to win a second Presidential term. Knowing anti-China soundbites would play well with core supporters Trump upped the stakes and moved from panda hugger to panda mugger and then to panda fuzzer.

Nothing better exemplifies Trump's by now consistent anti-China stance than his address to the virtual United Nations General Assembly on 22 September. Only one sentence into his address Trump proclaimed, 'Seventy-five years after the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations, we are once again engaged in a great global struggle. We have waged a fierce battle against the invisible enemy - the China virus - which has claimed countless lives in 188 countries'. From then on there was no letting up in his attack on China: he accused China of false reporting about Covid-19, of controlling the World Health Organisation, of polluting the world's oceans, of overfishing other countries' waters, and of a rampant disregard for the environment. The only other target of Trump's ire in his entire speech was the United Nations itself. In stark contrast Xi adopted a statesmanlike tone in his address and spoke about a united global struggle against 'the virus'; his concern about developing nations, especially Africa; the agenda for sustainable development; the need to face up to economic globalisation; the need for green revolution; China's support for the United Nations; and a promise to share China's vaccine with the world (by implication in opposition to Trump's America First doctrine).

In the first Presidential debate on 29 September in Cleveland, Ohio, Trump continued to blame China: '[I]t's China's fault' [19:54], tweaking the 'Chinese virus' to the 'China plague' [32:56], and the nonsensical barb to Biden, 'China ate your lunch' [45:06]. Whilst the final Presidential debate in Nashville, Tennessee, was less heated Trump stuck to his guns: 'It's not my fault that it came here. It's China's fault' [10:58]. Trump ended the debate with his old themes of Make America Great Again and the Chinese Virus: 'We have to make our country totally successful, as it was prior to the plague coming in from China' [1:29:50].

In the last week of the 2020 Presidential campaign trail Trump committed to a furious rally schedule. With nothing left to lose, empowered by his own 'miraculous' Covid-19 recovery, and drunk on his own rhetoric, he spontaneously invented stories about Biden and China. At his 21 October rally in Gastonia, North Carolina, Trump claimed that Biden 'let communist China plunder your jobs while his family raked in millions from China and foreign nations'. On 27 October he claimed, 'Biden gave your jobs to China. Biden has a secret China bank account'. The latter was simply Trump spinning on its head a true story about himself and dumping it on Biden. The 21 October edition of the *New York Times* revealed that Trump had an open bank account in China through which he had paid nearly \$190,000 in taxes.

Old allies from his 2016 campaign came to Trump's aid. When Joe Biden tweeted that he would bring democracy back to the US,

on 26 October Nigel Farage retweeted this and added 'And sell it to China'. This was Virtual Farage but two days later Actual Farage joined the Viral President at his Phoenix, Arizona, rally to gushingly praise Trump. As an ideologue Farage articulated Trump's verbal whims and fantasies into a marketable political commodity: localism versus globalism.

History will judge various countries' leaders not by what they said about Covid-19 but by brute statistics. Total deaths per country are one index of success or failure in dealing with Covid-19. A sharper guide is deaths per 100,000 head of population. On 25 October Johns Hopkins University & Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center reported that US deaths per 100,000 were 68.74, UK were 67.43, and China were 0.34. China sceptics might doubt this but this is precisely what panda muggers have been doing since China's opening up in 1978 all the way to its becoming the second largest global economy in 2011.

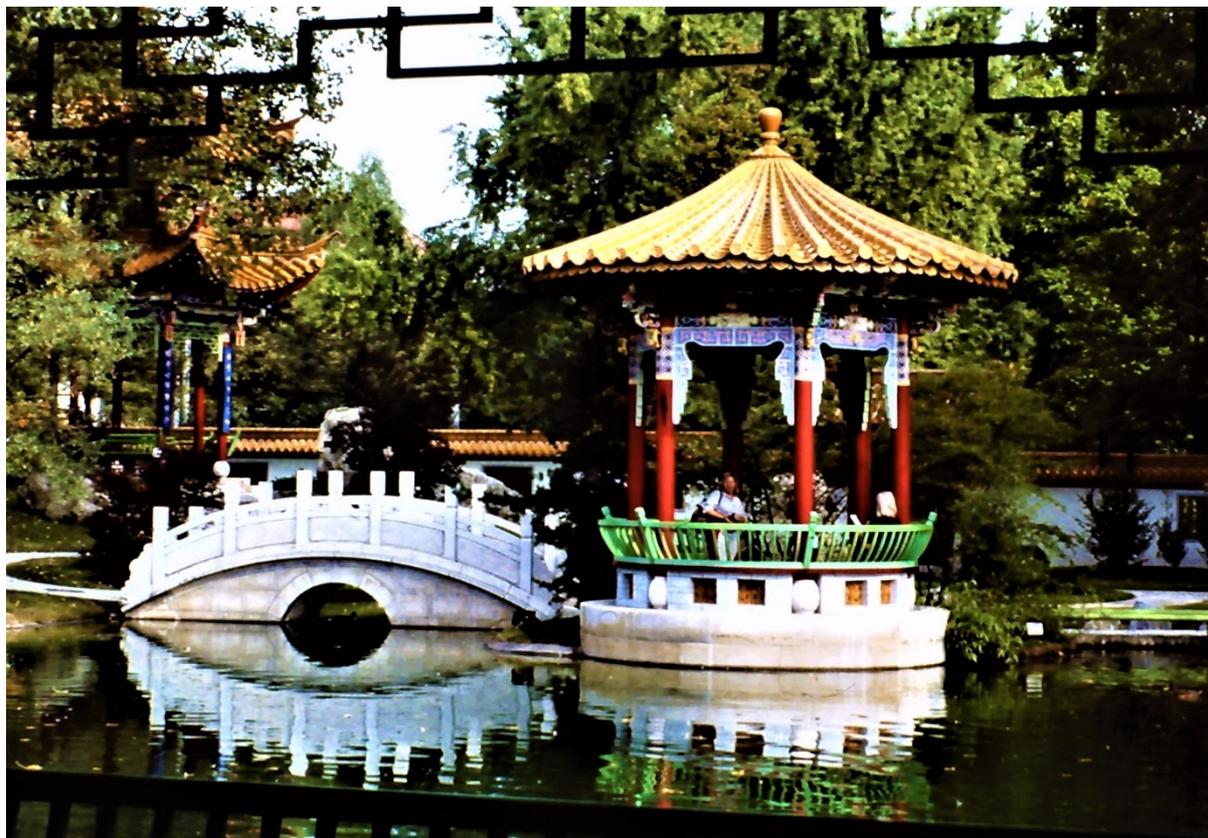
Kroeber has skewered the deliberate falsification thesis thus: data inconsistencies may be explained by 'ordinary analytic econometric work, without resort to conspiracy theories about deliberate falsification'. He elaborates, 'The falsification theory also fails a simple logical test. If the government publishes false data, it must either rely on this false data to make economic policy, or it must keep a secret set of true data. If it uses false data, economic policy will quickly run aground'. There's no logical reason to suppose the Chinese government would publish false data about rates of Covid-19 infection or deaths but it is a measure of the success of Trump's poisonous rhetoric that so many people so vocally doubt statistics about Chinese Covid-19 deaths.

Trump's Presidency dreadfully exacerbated global tensions. It offered a horrific example of how little a country's leader did to prevent unnecessary deaths and to protect its citizenry. Looking away from his own mess he attempted to direct the public gaze to China as the pantomime villain responsible for his failures. Seeing that an apparently 'democratic' system led to this toxic stew of colossal caprice and leviathan self-love China's 'keyboard heroes [see] no reason to bother with a democratic electoral system that could produce Trump or Brexit' (Wang). This is but one of Trump's toxic legacies.

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