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Letter from the Editor

Dear friends,

Has there ever been a more surreal start to a new academic year in Cambridge than this one? With the continuing pandemic, face masks, hand sanitiser, and social distancing have truly become the 'new normal.' But how quickly we have all adapted, from the Faculty building itself which is now kitted out with sanitising stations, one-way systems, and screens, to the Library with its new booking system.

Students, new and old, have had to face a daunting term—not only braving the chill of a classic Cambridge winter but also a second lockdown and the isolation this can cause. It is therefore hugely warming to hear that the second year cohort have managed to find ways to stay connected even when socially distanced, as described in their Student Updates.

Our lecturers, too, have adapted to a mix of in-person and on-line teaching amongst the pressures of child-care, research project deadlines, and giving conferences via webcam. Our seminar series have both moved to Zoom and, beyond the usual technical difficulties, have been able to bring together upwards of sixty participants from as many as three continents at once! The write-ups of this term's line-up shows that there can be *some* benefits to a life online.

Articles continue to be written by our staff and graduate students alike, as given in the Updates section, and books continue to be published. Congratulations to Emma Wu, Dr Imre Galambos, and his PhD supervisee Flavia Fang on their latest releases!

Of course, not all of this has been easy. This



has been, for many of us, a tougher term than most. With such limitations on socialising, travelling, and even on accessing archival resources, I'm delighted to introduce a new section to our newsletter: Life Outside the Library, where we feature the hobbies and ventures our own staff and students have taken up, re-visited, or managed to continue during the lockdown. There is more to all of us than just being learners or teachers of Chinese language, history, and culture (I hope!) and so this feature will hopefully inspire us all to do more of what we love in these trying times.

And finally, our own second year cohort have even shown that a pandemic is no obstacle for starting a new society—launching the Cambridge University China Forum and organising an exciting first term of events. Please do check out the report on CUCF in this issue to find out more.

I hope you enjoy the interviews, features, and updates in this issue, and wishing you all the best for 2021!

- Kelsey Granger

China Research Seminar Series

Michaelmas 2020

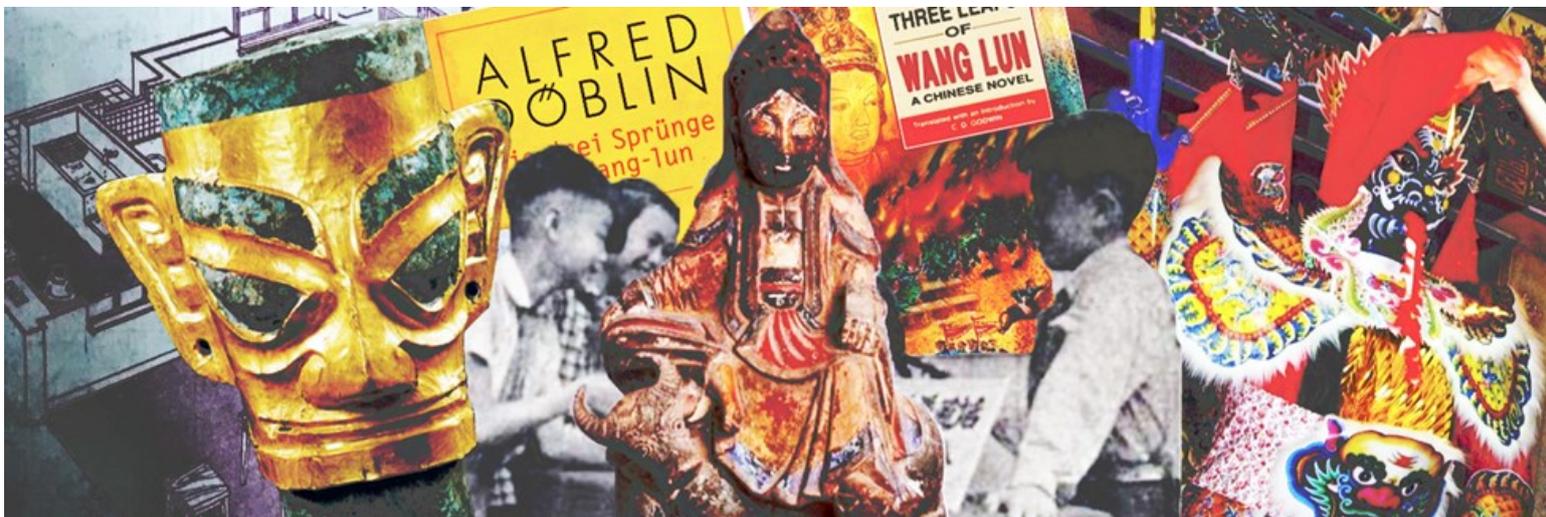


Illustration by Nick Stember made with the posters for each talk

The weekly China Research Seminar restarted this term, physically (but not socially) distanced via Zoom, beginning with **David Midgley's** fascinating talk on Alfred Döblin's sources of inspiration for *The Three Leaps of Wang Lun*, a "Chinese novel from the Wilhelmine era."

For the second seminar, our very own PhD candidate **Jacqueline Zhenru Lin** recounted the results of her fieldwork exploring innovative uses of e-commerce platforms by charitable organisations to support disadvantaged veterans of WWII.

Following this, **Hajni Elias** shared her latest research into material culture of the Sanxingdui, Jinsha and Dian

peoples, providing provocative evidence for a "Southwest Silk Road." Leaping forward again to the 20th century, **Janet Chen** provided a light-hearted look at language policy in the early PRC, providing ample evidence of the difficulties teachers and cadres faced in making Mandarin the "common tongue."

Returning to the spiritual realm, **Adam Yuet Chau** presented his recent work on "doing religion," taking a range of objects used in contemporary religious ceremonies in Taiwan and the PRC to demonstrate the "agency of things." The material turn was continued by **Jennifer Altehenger**, who presented her ground-breaking work on the forgotten legacy of Mao-era innovations in man-made wood and

furniture design.

Concluding this first round of talks, **Meir Shahr** introduced us to just a few of the many beguiling incarnations of the Ox-king, in both popular literature and in religious practice, providing an *udderly* captivating final talk for the term.

- Nick Stember
PhD Candidate

If you would like to be part of the China Research Seminar mailing list, then please contact organiser Dr Adam Chau at ayc25@cam.ac.uk

These talks currently take place on Zoom on Wednesdays at 5pm.

Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar Series

Michaelmas 2020

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

DUNHUANG AND SILK ROAD SEMINAR SERIES

Michaelmas 2020

DR ZHANG DAYING <i>The Silk Road and Erya</i>	22nd Oct
DR IMRE GALAMBOS <i>Afterlife of a Poem from Dunhuang</i>	29th Oct
PROF. CHARLES SANFT <i>Han and Qiang Interactions in the Hexi Region as visible in texts from Xuanquanzhi</i>	5th Nov
PROF. CARMEN MEINERT <i>Travelling on the BuddhistRoad: Aspects of a Research Programme to Explore the Spread of Buddhism in Eastern Central Asia</i>	12th Nov
DR KŌICHI KITSUDŌ <i>Maitreya dwelling on the top of Mt. Sanwei: Transmission of a Buddhist image of the Song Dynasty</i>	19th Nov
PROF. JOACHIM GENTZ <i>Textual Bonding in Early Chinese Manuscripts</i>	26th Nov
PROF. SUSAN HUANG <i>Elite Uighurs as Cultural Middlemen of Buddhist Books and Woodcuts in the Mongol Empire</i>	3rd Dec* 5pm



These talks are hosted on Zoom each Thursday at 1:30pm GMT and require pre-registration to join. This seminar series is organised by Dr. Imre Galambos with the generous support of the Glorison Global Network.

For further information, contact: Kelsey Granger (PhD candidate) at kl394@cam.ac.uk

As the Dunhuang Seminar series moved online to Zoom, we soon realised the pitfalls and benefits alike of 'living online.' Without the need to be physically present in Cambridge, speakers and guests could join us from across the world—timezones not withstanding! Equally, by advertising our seminar series more widely via the Ancient India and Iran Trust among others, we soon found our audience growing from the dozens to

the Islamic community of the Hexi region.

Prof. Charles Sanft transported us back to early China in his fascinating talk on Han perspectives on the Qiang as shown by finds at Xuanquanzhi. Equally, **Prof. Carmen Meinert** moved the series into considerations of methodology in discussing her BuddhistRoad project and how the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia will be assessed in the scope of this project.

Buddhism, too, was the topic of

upwards of fifty-sixty participants from across three or more continents at any one time.

Our series this term opened with visiting scholar **Dr Zhang Daying** who presented on *Erya xue* in light of manuscript finds at Dunhuang. Series organiser **Dr Imre Galambos** also focused on the Dunhuang corpus, tracing a poem through time and space as it took on new meaning among

Dr Kōichi Kitsudō's presentation on a particular image of Maitreya present in the Song dynasty. Proving just how varied the topic of manuscript culture, Dunhuang, and the Silk Roads can be, we moved from art to syntax as **Prof. Joachim Gentz** explored textual bonding in early Chinese manuscripts with meticulous colour-coding, shedding light on new ways to understand the themes and inner logic of these texts. Finally, we moved stateside for **Prof. Susan Huang's** insightful presentation on elite Uighurs, Buddhist temple and postal networks, and wood-block prints in the Mongol era.

From texts to art and from the theoretical to the evidential, this term has not only re-affirmed the breadth of our remit, that of Dunhuang and the Silk Roads, but also the reach our seminars can have by being online.

- Kelsey Granger
PhD Candidate

If you would like to be part of the Dunhuang Seminar mailing list, then please contact Kelsey Granger at kl394@cam.ac.uk

These talks currently take place on Zoom on Thursdays at 1:30pm, though the time is likely to change next term.

Past and Present



In this issue, we speak to Cambridge Chinese Studies alumni Prof. Geoffrey Sampson who graduated under the tutelage of Michael Loewe in 1965. Here, he speaks about his rich experiences studying Chinese as an undergraduate, his subsequent career in linguistics and informatics, as well as about his latest book *Voices from Early China: The Odes Demystified* in which he returns to the world of early China.

“There are three of us to teach you Chinese history, so we are taking a millennium each.”

I went up to St John’s to read Chinese in 1962, cycling each morning to the old Oriental Studies building (a Victorian family house) out on Brooklands Avenue. It was a different world. China didn’t feel like somewhere people could actually visit. There was certainly no possibility of studying there (but I don’t believe even degrees in European languages included a period overseas, in those days). We undergraduates were being let in on the secrets of a great civilization that, to almost any Brit, was a blank Terra Incognita.

I had started learning Chinese as a schoolboy hobby, expecting to play with it for a few weeks, but soon I was hooked – when it came to university applications, I knew this was the subject for me. The vastness of what we were taking on was brought home by a remark in our first history lecture: “There are three of us to teach you Chinese history, so we’re taking a millennium each.” By graduation I was convinced that all students should spend some time on Sinology: what other subject gives such a vivid sense of how different from ours a successful human society can be?

Our tiny band of undergraduates was seen

by everyone else as wildly eccentric in our subject choice. Just two others graduated with me; one went to the Bank of England to help establish its first China desk (if anyone had suggested she might live to see China the world’s second-largest economy, it would have sounded utterly fanciful). Oriental Studies felt more like a family than a university department, and things were run with family informality. In my second year I happened to be the only candidate due to take prelims in the summer. I was taken aside by Piet van der Loon, later the Oxford Professor of Chinese, who took us for one of our Classical set texts (he was given two-hour lecture slots, because he never arrived less than half an hour late or finished less than half an hour early); he said “I’m supposed to set you an exam, but you’d obviously pass so I can’t be bothered”. A Cambridge summer term without exams was a rare pleasure, but I wonder whether he’d have got away with that today?!

We were offered a linguistics option for finals, and this was when the world was growing excited about Noam Chomsky’s “generative grammar”. That hooked me too, so from Cambridge I moved on to a programme of graduate study in the USA which centred on linguistics, though I also took courses about a new kind of machine called computers. Returning to Britain I climbed the academic ladder, eventually being appointed to a linguistics chair in 1984. About then, though, it was becoming clear that

Past and Present continued

generative linguistics was past its sell-by date. I seized a chance to spend the second half of my university career in informatics, with periods of secondment to industrial research. Eventually I reached retirement age teaching and writing about electronic business, and information-technology law.

I never lost sight of Chinese. In 2006 I published a little book containing translations of a few dozen of the poems in the *Book of Odes* (詩經), among the earliest literary monuments in any living language. One Chinese reviewer was kind enough to describe my book as “the only readable translation I have found, certainly the only one that makes these ancient poems enjoyable to read”. That encouraged me to spend several years of retirement producing a translation of all 305 Odes; and this was published, as *Voices from Early China*, in 2020.

The Odes fascinate me, offering vignettes of life in the unimaginably remote society of the early Zhou dynasty. Many Odes have great charm, for instance some are by women about their love problems – for such early literature it is remarkable how many poems are by women. Over the centuries, their content has been obscured by developments in the Chinese language, by prudish or pompous commentators, and by translators who were more interested in philological technicalities than in the poems’ human significance. I have tried to cut through these obscurities to present versions in down-to-earth English.

But also, I offer something which has only become possible recently. The Professor during my years was Edwin Pulleyblank, from Canada, and he got me interested in his special subject: reconstructing the pronunciation of Chinese as spoken in past ages. The sound-system of Zhou-dynasty Chinese was much richer than modern

Mandarin, and the Odes poets exploited it for literary purposes: the Odes were the earliest rhyming poetry in any language, and full of alliteration and assonance, though later sound-changes destroyed all that speech-music. I kept up with this research during years when my professional responsibilities lay elsewhere. Around the turn of the century, the subject reached the point where we feel reasonably sure how most words sounded. So, alongside my translations and the originals in Chinese script, I spell the Chinese wording out alphabetically, allowing the poems to be read aloud as one can read poetry in a European language, hearing the sound-effects which the original audiences heard.

Mine has been a nomadic career, but I have never ceased to be deeply grateful that I had the good luck to study Chinese, and study it where I did. Thank you, Cambridge!

- Prof. Geoffrey Sampson

Voices from Early China

The Odes Demystified



Geoffrey Sampson

“The Odes fascinate me, offering vignettes of life in the unimaginably remote society of the early Zhou dynasty.”

Prof. Sampson’s latest publication, *Voices from Early China: The Odes Demystified* is available at special 25% discount for WadeSoc members and the wider readership of this newsletter. This offer is available exclusively through the Cambridge Scholars Publishing website at:

<http://www.cambridgescholars.com/voices-from-early-china>.

Enter the discount code ODES25 at the checkout to redeem.

An Interview with Prof. Roel Sterckx

In this issue, we feature a recent interview, available in Chinese online at the following link, with our very own Prof. Roel Sterckx about his academic work, recent publications, and his thoughts on teaching in lockdown:

https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404565791206146167#_0



作为如今世界上最顶尖的汉学家之一，是什么契机让您开始关注中国，并选择研究早期中国（先秦

两汉）的呢？

I grew up in Belgium and did my undergraduate studies in sinology at the University of Leuven where history, classical Chinese and philosophy were an important aspect of the curriculum. Back then, in the 1980s, studying Chinese at University was still considered 'exotic' by many in Europe. Most of our time as undergraduates was spent in a language lab doing intensive training in modern Mandarin. This was of course necessary to gain a high proficiency in modern Chinese, but it also meant a great deal of rote learning. Classical Chinese was an excellent anti-dote to this daily routine, since we could read and discuss more advanced texts and engage their contents. So I opted to do more classical Chinese and history in my senior years and wrote an undergraduate dissertation about the Eastern Han philosopher Wang Chong.

原来那时候您就对中国古代哲学有所了解啦~其实，学习古代汉语也是我们中学的必修课之一，让许多中国学生都非常头疼呢。

And then of course, there was the Needham Research Institute. My most nervous moment as a student in Cambridge was to present at a reading seminar in front of Joseph Needham. Fortunately,

he was very gracious and encouraging in his feedback. My own teacher and supervisor at the time, Mark Edward Lewis (now at Stanford) would go on to write a series of seminal books on early China. I was privileged to be in the good company of so many great scholars and teachers

原来是有这么多优秀的前辈与老师的引导使您最终走上了汉学之路的呀，看来拥有好的学习环境与榜样真的是非常珍贵呢！那我们来谈谈您之前在中国出版的汉学著作吧，您对中国古代食物与动物的兴趣可以说在汉学家中独树一帜，读者们都很期待您本人的解答~在《早期中国的食物、祭祀和圣贤》中，您认为宗教经济与百姓的生活是息息相关的。可以简单介绍一下，为什么宗教经济在古代中国这么重要吗？

No problem. The offering of sacrifice was the single most important practical aspect of early Chinese religion. Sacrifice is about the offering of goods (animals, food, objects) and this required a sophisticated organization and a whole bureaucracy of officials whose sole task it was to provide supplies for these rituals. The obligation to contribute to sacrifices also affected every level of society, from the small households who looked after their own ancestors, to the grand ceremonies at the level of the state. As I understand it, the Chinese economy in pre-modern times, was a



The Needham Research Institute

combination of multiple systems of exchange. There was, from Han times onwards, a quantitative and commercial way of trading goods, and these transactions were regulated by administrative law. But, alongside this, there was also a very extensive gift economy resulting from ritual obligations. In a gift economy, transactions are not so much concerned with the material value of the actual good, but they are all about establishing relationships between the giver and the recipient. In a way, these parallel economies continue to exist in most societies today.

祭祀居然与礼物经济有关，而后者已经成为中国影响深远的文化之一，在现代社会仍是非常常见的。这一点让我感觉很有意思~请问能否简单介绍一下祭祀与个人的关系呢？在早期中国，食物的制作、消耗与交换，以及宗教祭祀中的食物祭祀行为，与个人的修身养性有什么关系吗？

When we read texts of this period, it is quite clear that attitudes towards food and dining in ancient China were part of what it meant to be a cultivated person. Virtually all sages, real and mythical, at some point are characterized as people who have an organized diet, who never over-indulge or exploit resources, and who know to adapt their diet to the cycle of the seasons. Confucius is a nice example of this. In the Analects, we encounter him as someone who demands quality (e.g. he would not accept or share food that was no longer fresh) while also never over-indulging (he could drink all day without getting drunk, we are told). Likewise, in the Daoist tradition, cultivating the body often meant regulating its intake of food. In short, there was a perception in early China that “we are what we eat” and that a balanced and harmonious diet produces a balanced body and mind. The same applied in religious practice: sacrificing in essence meant feeding the ancestors and, thereby keeping them happy and appeasing them.

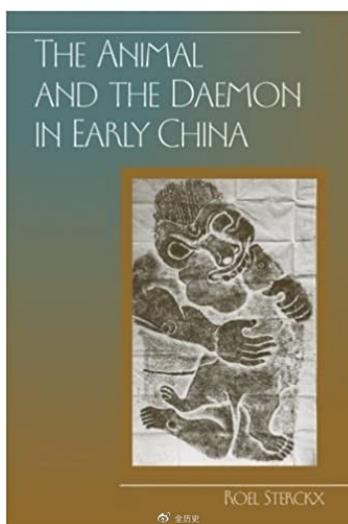
饮食在中国传统文化中的确非常重要。如此看来，儒家文化也告诉我们饮食规律是一个富有修养的体现，不仅仅是对身体有益处，也是

自身道德的修炼。除此之外，“动物”也是您以往著作中反复出现的主题，而这在其他汉学研究里是十分罕见的，那么您为什么会为早期中国的“动物”感兴趣呢？“动物”的研究对您来说，为什么如此重要？

When I studied Chinese philosophy, it was always impressed on me that Chinese thought focuses first and foremost on human society (以人為本) and that an interest in the natural world, with the exception perhaps of the Daoist tradition, was the exception or that motives in exploring nature in China were merely utilitarian. It is indeed striking that, for instance, the ancient Chinese never developed a zoological literature on the level of, say, the ancient Greeks.

Yet, I was always dissatisfied with this explanation as Chinese texts of the period are full of information about the non-human world. I was convinced that the ways in which societies perceive the natural world is an excellent measure to understand them; indeed our attitudes towards animals tell us more about humans than animals! Both Chinese and Western scholars at the time did not write about it. So I wrote a book about it. That was nearly twenty years ago. In the meantime, the world has changed.

Animal studies now have become a buoyant field within the humanities and social sciences and more scholars, in China and in the West, are now focusing on the study of the non-human world and its relationship to Chinese thinking.



If we wish to understand how and why we have arrived in the current ecological crisis, it will be incredibly important that the next generation of scholars examine Chinese attitudes towards the natural world from a historical perspective. It is also very important that we write about it in an accessible way so that Western readers, who often have to

An Interview with Prof. Roel Sterckx

rely on short-term journalism, can be introduced to some of the basic paradigms of the Chinese tradition.

使西方读者从更加专业、深入的角度了解中国传统文化，从而拉近与中国的距离、减少误解与偏见是一项意义重大的任务。从学术上来说，您似乎倾向于将自然科学融入早期中国的文化与宗教研究，这样的跨学科方法有什么优势吗？

“Interdisciplinarity” is a term which, in my view, is used and abused too much. For me it is almost impossible not to work from an interdisciplinary perspective and most of us do this almost naturally or spontaneously. Anybody who studies a civilization or period in history that is not one’s own will approach the subject through questions inspired by a discipline or context one is familiar with. The best way in my view to engage in comparative work is to focus on the questions that are asked in different philosophical traditions (and indeed disciplines) rather than be side-tracked by the labyrinth of answers each society or individual gives to a specific question.

我们知道，在您致力于学术研究与教学的同时，也会创作一些通俗性的历史书籍，而这类历史读物对于向读者普及历史有非常重要的作用。去年您推出的通俗历史著作《中国的思想：从孔子到庖丁》今年也将在中国问世，能跟大家分享一下从事大众历史写作与学术写作有什么不同吗？写作期间，您有遇见过什么棘手的问题吗？

Writing a book for a general readership is challenging but it can be tremendously rewarding. I wrote *Chinese Thought* partly because I was frustrated that there was no book out there on the

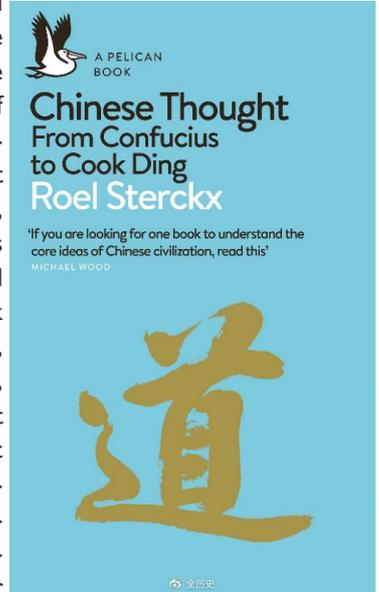
market that would introduce young readers and the general public in the West to some of the basics of Chinese philosophy and, most importantly, how these ideas were embedded in society, back then, and also, to some extent, in the present day. Most books are either too scholarly (and unreadable) for the non-initiated public, or they are too trivializing and based on bad research.

The main problem I encountered was to ensure I never forgot who my readership was while I was writing. Ironically, the more one knows about a subject as an academic, the more difficult it often is to write about it in a succinct and direct way since one always wants to say too much. So one should avoid endless footnotes and scholarly debates and try to distill what you think the reader should take away from your narrative.

的确，有时候通俗易懂地讲明白一件事情比单纯地“掉书袋”难多了。

To explain concepts that we use everyday (Dao, qi, yinyang, etc) to someone who has never heard of them can be more difficult than writing a technical article. Deciding on what one should leave out of a book, rather than what to include, is also not always easy. It is also wise to think of such books as a personal account.

The way I introduce Chinese thought to my readers will be very different from how other writers do this. My emphasis is on topics and themes I personally have found fascinating over my 20 years



“Writing a book for a general readership is challenging but it can be tremendously rewarding.”

of teaching and lecturing undergraduates and speaking to audiences. Teaching students and trying ideas out on them is the real lifeline and motivation for me to attempt such writing. I hope that Chinese readers, who will of course be more familiar with some of the language and content than English readers, will enjoy the book as an “external” or “outside” look at their own tradition.

时至今日，海外汉学已取得异常丰富的成果，我相信中国的读者一定会对这本书很感兴趣的！让我们回归学术吧，作为剑桥大学的汉学权威与大众读者的偶像，您是否跟大家透露一下您目前的研究方向与学术项目呢？

I am currently writing a book on how agriculture influenced philosophical and political thought in ancient China. I have always been more interested in the lives of ordinary and hard-working people rather than the world of literati, officials and the court. It is fascinating to discover that concepts and practices on the fields and farms of ancient China (such as the use of the plow, weeding, water management, etc.) have provided a rich treasure of metaphors and images Chinese philosophers could draw on. Our landscape and environment not only influence us physically, it also shapes how we think. So I want to explore how the world of the farmer inspired the thinking of those who were observing and managing them.

果然如此，我发现近年来您一直对早期中国社会中不同的职业（商人、农民）的社会政治作用很感兴趣，还发表了一些论文，包括《战国农民与商人的意识形态》(2015)与《西汉农业与商业思想》(2020)，在这些研究中您最大的发现是什么？传世文献中的描述，例如史记、汉书是否与历史真相有很大的区别？

My most important lesson from this work is that historians ought to be very careful in distinguishing ideology from actual practice when studying ancient societies. Most accounts of Chinese economic thought tell us that, in the Confucian view of the world, merchants were despised whereas farmers and scholars were elevated to the top of moral society. We are also told that in ancient

China, everyone stuck to their profession and people did not multi-task. These are gross oversimplifications of historical reality.

To give you one example, the idea that Qin Shihuangdi granted the peasant “ownership” over a plot of land, or that merchants were “suppressed” (重农抑商) is far more complex. Much of this depends on how one defines “ownership,” it also does not explain the rise of markets and commercialisation during the early empires.

The core question we should ask is why China has been able to turn itself into one of the most versatile mercantile societies in the world against the background of a so-called “Confucian” ideology that allegedly tried to give merchants a bad name?

这周我们就可以去朝圣了~不在北京的读者朋友们来北京也有新的地方打卡了！但是，据我所知，由于英国的第二波疫情，您居家办公已经很长时间了，在此期间有遇见过什么难处吗？

I think we are facing the same challenges all university teachers have experienced. After our first lock-down I had to switch to online-teaching and all my academic trips and engagements have been put on hold. I suspect this will unfortunately continue for some time yet.

The most difficult challenge was organizing interactive discussion online; having to home-school my 10-year old son while also doing my university work was also a challenge. I find that “living online” really wears out after a few months. It is not good for human psychology. I believe teaching and scholarly exchange is a “contact-sport” that can never be replaced by a computer-screen. It is the presence of people that inspires people. So I very much look forward to the day we can meet, teach, and learn face-to-face again.

To read the extended interview, as well as Prof. Sterckx’s answers in Chinese, please visit https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404565791206146167#_0

“I believe teaching and scholarly exchange is a ‘contact-sport’ that can never be replaced by a computer-screen.”

Language-learning in Lockdown

In this issue, we speak to Chinese language-teacher Emma Wu about language-learning in lockdown, her advice for students, and her upcoming book *Practical Chinese Usage: Common Words and Phrases*.



Wu laoshi, you have been teaching Chinese here in Cambridge since 2003. Are there any stand-out memories for you?

The stand-out memories are ever present. That is together with the students, the feeling of learning being a life-long journey, and an extremely rewarding one.

“Learning [is] a life-long journey, and an extremely rewarding one.”

What has been the greatest challenge in moving language-learning online due to Covid?

I miss seeing in person those eager-to-learn eyes and feeling the motivated vibe exuded by the students.

Have there been any benefits to teaching Chinese online?

Surprisingly, yes. The students end up having more varied learning materials in greater quantity. For example, I make pre-recorded audio files to help students familiarize with what will be covered in

class before each lesson, which I think enables us to make more efficient use of our precious class time over Zoom. We also try to respond and act in a timely manner to students' feedback and with a view to optimizing learning outcome. I hope that some of the practices will be kept post the current situation.

As one of Cambridge's 'official' eccentric professors (as awarded in a 2014 article), what were the inspirations behind some of your much-loved grammatical analogies, such as mei 没 and le 了 never going to Cindie's together, as well as your penchant for James Bond references?

I'm deeply in awe of and forever fascinated by the magic power of language. How words are put together can invoke certain effect on our minds and our feelings. Very often, I have to read the word, sentence or paragraph several times in order to savour it, if I find it elegantly written and can capture precisely what it describes. And that's what makes me tick.

Language-learning in Lockdown

continued

“I’m deeply in awe of and forever fascinated by the magic and power of language.”

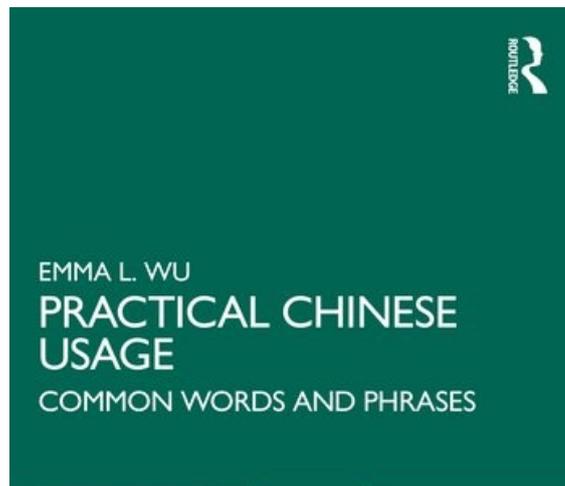
Love and comparison of different cultures in terms of how and why what you say can put a smile on people’s face enralls me. It’s a privilege and an extravagant treat to be able to dedicate one’s life to striving to understand the elaborateness of what words can bring, the difference they can make

depending on how they are strung together, and ultimately, in many cases, one has to avail oneself of the seemingly tucked-away culture and history in which the very language is embedded.

And finally, you also have a new book coming out this winter, Practical Chinese Usage: Common Words and Phrases. Is this book more intended for teachers or for learners of Chinese?

It’s intended for both learners and teachers. The book is accessible to learners of intermediate level onwards. For teachers of Mandarin as a second

language, who would like to dive into the intricate details of some very tricky grammatical phenomena, I hope that the book will be helpful or at least point in the right direction as to how to solve some intriguing linguistic puzzles. And believe it or not, it is extremely gratifying to complete a puzzle (often temporarily, until you move onto the next one, that is!).



Second Years' Report on Mich '20



As October approached, we were all supremely excited to embark on our second year of Chinese studies at Cambridge. Our group chat buzzed at the thought of returning to our much-loved second home and being reunited as a class after so many months apart. A C5 lesson with Hong Laoshi in Rooms 8 and 9 during Week One was our first in-person meeting of the term - seeing each other in 3D as opposed to Zoom boxes felt almost surreal.

With our weekly mask-donned meetings and a plethora of online classes, seminars and lectures, the bustle of Michaelmas term soon kicked in. Much of the energy we had stored up over the long lock-down period was put to good use in developing our language skills. C4's English to Chinese translations and writing tasks challenged us in particular, as we learnt how to sound more idiomatic and fluent in our Chinese and adapt the vocabulary and grammar we use to suit particular styles of writing such as letters or expositions. Translating 'Afternoon Tea' by Qiu Shanshan with Dr Inwood in C5 also introduced us to the delicate art of translating modern vernacular literature. Our study of Classical Chinese was continued in spooky ghost stories and beautiful, melancholy poetry from the Han dynasty. We were also able to choose two option papers this term, and have therefore been expanding our knowledge in a diverse range of subjects and disci-

plines such as Dynastic Chinese history, language and nation in Modern East Asia, Japanese literature, history or politics or Linguistics.

Despite the increasingly strict restrictions and the mental and physical challenges that came with them, we have still made efforts to incorporate social activities into our term timetables. Brief (socially distanced) trips to the market for dumplings or Beijing pancakes on Mondays, visits to the windows of 同学 in isolation and a Ghibli movie night over Netflix party have all been welcome additions to what has been a stressful term for all. Our Covid-safe Secret Santa, expertly co-ordinated by Sophie, has been a wonderful way to draw the term to a close, embrace the festive spirit and connect with each other from afar.

We look back on this term with gratitude to our all our teachers for their marvellous job in keeping us learning during this difficult time, and look forward to next term with hope that things may return to at least a little bit more normal. Until then, 圣诞快乐!

- Harriet Howarth

Undergraduate class of 2019

Introducing the Cambridge University China Forum



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY
CHINA FORUM
劍橋大學中國論壇



Earlier this year, a group of us, now second year students, set up a new society called the Cambridge University China Forum (CUCF). It is based on China Forums at other universities, such as Harvard and Oxford, and aims to hold events throughout the year to discuss China and its role in the 21st century. We aim to put on talks which are accessible to Cambridge's whole student body and beyond, because we feel there are many topics pertaining to China that deserve greater attention in the West. This is also a student-led society to encourage those students with a keen interest on Chinese topics to act on them.



Jonathan Hillman, Dr Bushra Bataineh, and Morrison Cleaver on the Belt and Road Initiative

In Michaelmas of 2020, despite the pandemic, CUCF so far has put on a series of interesting events that we hope some of you reading this enjoyed. Our first talk was given by **Kerry Brown**, the academic, author and sinologist. His talk titled 'Finding a Path Through the Diverging World' has been viewed over 250 times between Facebook and YouTube. In Week Two I organised a discussion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with **Jonathan Hillman** and **Dr Bushra Bataineh** from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies think tank. The talk was fascinating and revealed China's evolving attitude toward international infrastructure development projects. Mr Hillman has just released his first book

on the BRI, titled 'The Emperor's New Road', featured in the *Financial Times* and in *Foreign Policy*. Fifty students were present on the live Zoom call and many contributed to a lively Q&A session.



Isabel Hilton OBE

Following that we had 'A conversation with **Isabel Hilton OBE**' on 'China and Climate Change: Hero or Villain' for Week Three. Ms Hilton gave a superb, thorough talk taking us through all of the major international climate agreements and China's actions in response to each of them. I really do recommend anyone interested in China's environmental efforts to check it out! We then held an online screening of Zhang Yimou's 'Red Sorghum' and our Week Five event was a student-led event wherein a pair of students are presenting on the ties that connect our own university and China, to be followed by a group discussion.

To stay up to date with the society's activity, the best thing to do is to like the Cambridge University China Forum's page on Facebook [@camchina](https://www.facebook.com/camchina). We also have accounts on Instagram, WeChat and LinkedIn. To find out more about the society do check out our website at www.camchina.org where you can also sign up to our mailing list. Thank you for reading and I hope to see you join us for our next events!

- Morrison Cleaver

CUCF Speakers Officer

Undergraduate class of 2019



Staff Updates



Dr Imre Galambos is pleased to announce that his latest book, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture, End of the First Millenium* will be published by De Gruyter this December. This book explores the world of Chinese manuscripts from ninth-tenth century Dunhuang, an oasis city along the network of pre-modern routes known today collectively as the Silk Roads.

This study centres around four groups of manuscripts

from the mid-ninth to the late tenth centuries, a period when the region was an independent kingdom ruled by local families. The central argument is that the manuscripts attest to the unique cultural diversity of the region during this period, exhibiting—alongside obvious Chinese elements—the heavy influence of Central Asian cultures. As a result, it was much less ‘Chinese’ than commonly portrayed in modern scholarship. The book makes a contribution to the study of cultural and linguistic interaction along the Silk Roads.

Dr Galambos has also had a co-authored article with Dr Kōichi Kitsudō (Ryūkoku University) titled "The Story of Shunzi in Old Uyghur" included in *Acta Orientalia Hung.* 73 no. 3, 451-466.

Dr Heather Inwood has spent much of the past year juggling work with the needs of her two small children, which has proven especially challenging during the long pandemic months and resulting disruptions to childcare. Consequently, her ongoing research into contemporary Chinese popular fiction has been largely superseded by mask-making, gloop-mixing, patio-illustrating, stone-collecting and – the one year-old’s favourite – spider-spotting. A particular highlight has been watching and live-translating the 1999 CCTV cartoon version of *Journey to the West* and memorising the lyrics to its theme tune.

She has also completed a biography of the poet Zhou Zan for publication in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Chinese Poets Since 1949* and participated in a roundtable at the Uni-

versity of Edinburgh on Chinese science fiction as world literature. She is looking forward to a delayed year of research leave in 2021-22, when she hopes to be able to make more progress on her current book project.

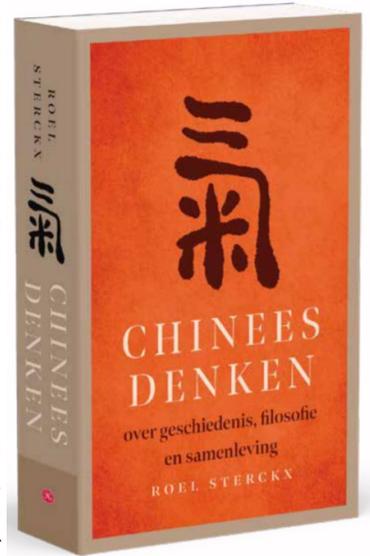
Prof. Roel Sterckx reports that: “I have given virtual lectures at Beijing University (“Philosophies of Wealth in Early China”

and “Agriculture and Philosophy in Early China”) and the University of Sheffield (“Turning Farmers into Sages”). We also ran the first workshop, together with LMU colleagues, in the “Ritual and Materiality Project.” And I discovered how hard it is to write in one’s native language after a 30 year interval when drafting an afterword for the Dutch edition of *Chinese Thought*, the cover of which is graced by the calligraphic artistry of our own graduate-student Flavia Fang.”

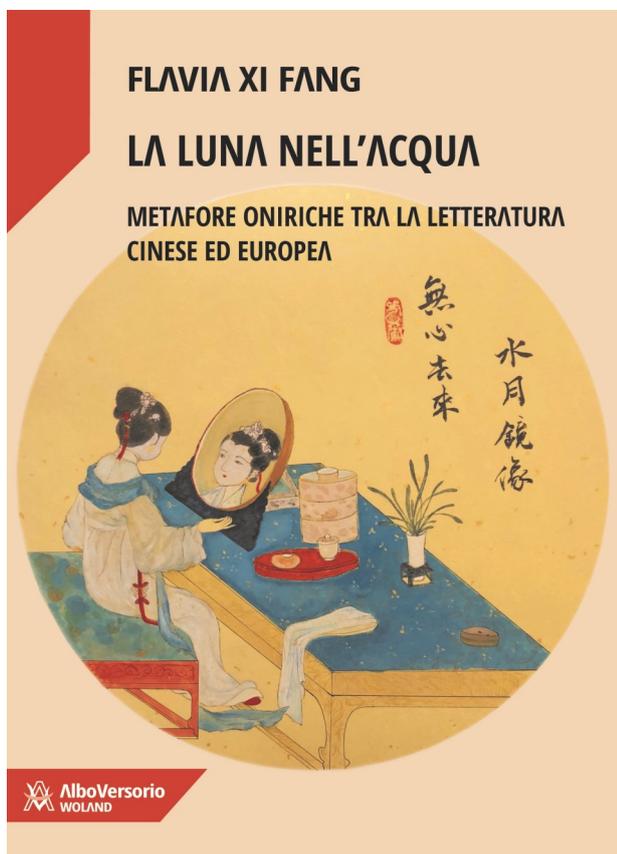
Dr Adam Chau is convening C8 (China and Globalisation, 1850 to the Present) this year with a new focus on ‘language and the nation’, exploring the sociopolitical processes behind the invention of modern Mandarin Chinese as a national language.

He gave a remote seminar (‘Humans Visiting Gods; Gods Visiting Gods: Chinese Pilgrimage Culture’) for the Anthropology Research Group at Oxford on Eastern Medicines and Religions (ArgO-EMR) on 21 Oct and another seminar for our own research seminar series (‘A Multitude of Objects: Re-materialising the Study of Chinese Religious Life’) on 11 Nov.

His article (co-authored with Dr LIU Jianshu) entitled ‘Spirit Mediumism in Shaanbei, North-Central China’ appeared in *Spirit Possession and Communication in Religious and Cultural Contexts*, edited By Caroline Blyth (Routledge). One hundred scholars have responded to his call to contribute to the planned edited volume *Chinese Religious Culture in 100 Objects*.



Graduate Student Updates



Flavia Xi Fang writes: “I am a third-year PhD candidate working on the cultural impact of the Silk Road on the social life of women in the Tang dynasty. In January, I talked about aromatic materials and Dunhuang manuscripts at the EFEO in Paris as part of the Cambridge-Hamburg Graduate Conference. Later in the year, I published my first book on dream metaphors in Early Modern literature titled *La luna nell’acqua* (in Italian). An article about the interplay between sartorial practice and the expression of social identities in the Tang dynasty is now under editorial revision for publication.”

Flavia has also turned her hand to gardening—see our feature on page 18 for more information.

After the world went into lockdown, **Ashton Ng** spent much of his time publishing articles, including: “Is the Laozi a text on statecraft?” (*Bochum Yearbook of East Asian Studies* 42), “Bibliophilia: the Passion of Ming Dynasty Private Book Collectors” (*Ming Qing Yanjiu* 24-2), “Making Sense of the Pandemic with Classical Chinese Idioms” (*British Journal of Chinese Studies* 10), and “The Busy Teacher’s Handbook to Teaching the Zhuangzi” (*Education About Asia* 25-1). His PhD project, titled “Han Fei’s Ideal Polity,” seeks to accurately contextualise the political ideas of the above-named Warring States thinker.

Veronica Wang is currently undertaking fieldwork in China for her thesis on Chinese youth culture and individuation in post-2012 China. She travels between Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou and Sichuan to participate in and observe various cultural events, ranging from official-endorsed TV shows to folk queer activities, alongside interviews with hosts and peer participants. Apart from her fieldwork, she tries to promote ‘public academia’ by regularly updating writings and videos of themed discussions with other academics on her Weibo account. If anyone else in the department is interested in this project, she welcomes any suggestions or cooperation!

Second-year PhD student **Bingbing Shi’s** research centres on modern Chinese literature and film. She finished her first-year report in May and have been conducting fieldwork in China since then. During the past few months, she has stayed in Beijing, collecting materials for her dissertation and interviewing directors and writers such as Pematseden and Li Er.

Graduate Student Updates

Bingbing also writes short stories and book reviews in her spare time and some of them were published in literary journals in China.

Final-year PhD student **Jing Feng** reports that: "In November, I was invited by the Faculty of Literature and the Centre of Manuscript Studies of China West Normal University to give a seminar on the latest developments in European manuscript studies. The total audience numbered 248 (online) +48 (in the conference room). For me, it was especially meaningful since it was the first time that I was paid for giving a seminar. There are lots of aspects of my presentation which remain to be improved, such as expressing myself more clearly and responding more diplomatically. But at least it was a good start!"

In memory of beloved PRC children's book author Ye Yonglie 叶永烈 (1940–2020) who passed away on May



15 of this year, third-year PhD candidate **Nick Stember** has begun posting a draft translation of the illustrated chapter book *Little Smarty Visits the Future* (Young Children's Press, 1978) to his personal blog www.nickstember.com. Ye's son, Ye Dan 叶丹,

kindly granted permission to have this ground-breaking work translated into English to allow for his father's work to

reach the widest possible audience.

Between editing the Cambridge Chinese Studies Newsletter and assisting Dr Galambos in planning and organising the Dunhuang Seminar series, third-year PhD stu-

西 | 华 | 师 | 范 | 大 | 学 | 写 | 本 | 学 | 研 | 究 | 中 | 心 | 系 | 列 | 讲 | 座

写本學講堂

第四讲

欧洲写本学新进展

主讲人：冯 婧
主持人：邵小龙

讲座时间：2020年11月19日 晚18:00
讲座地点：线上 腾讯会议 会议号 217 818 028
线下 西华师范大学文科楼331会议室

主讲人简介



冯 婧，英国剑桥大学亚洲与中东研究系博士候选人。博士课题为敦煌卷子本研究，导师高奕睿 (Imre Galambos)。曾于2016年赴美国哥伦比亚大学交流。2019年赴大英图书馆、法国国家图书馆、圣彼得堡东方写本研究、柏林国家图书馆、柏林-勃兰登堡科学研究院对敦煌、吐鲁番发现的卷子本进行实物调查。

主办：西华师范大学文学院 西华师范大学写本研究 写本研究

dent **Kelsey Granger** has been continuing research into the origins and development of lapdog-keeping in Tang-Song China. Hoping to complete her thesis this year, she has also been translating frankly adorable Tang-Song era dog and cat poems with her good friend at Edinburgh Hattie Gemmill, and has an article forthcoming in the *Bulletin of SOAS*: "Three Curious Dogs in a Dunhuang Manuscript: Re-evaluating the Identification of 'Yaks' in Pelliot chinois 2598."

Dr Adam Chau wishes to congratulate his supervisee **Miss Li Xiefei** for having earned her PhD earlier in the year, whose thesis is entitled 'Qiaoxiang and Managing Overseas Chinese Affairs in Contemporary North China: The Case of Changyi County and Its Sojourners,' and another supervisee **Ms Jacqueline Zhenru Lin** for having recently passed her viva. Her thesis is entitled 'The Digital Life of Goodness: National Heroes, NGOs, and Commercialised Charity in China.'

Where Are They Now?

In this issue, we hear from recent graduates and alumni about their academic journeys, experiences, and their next steps after Cambridge.



Undergraduate and Doctoral alumnus Prof. Ghassan Moazzin (Undergraduate class of 2008) writes:

I arrived in Cambridge as a first-year undergraduate in 2008. At the time, tackling such a difficult language and vast subject of study seemed very daunting indeed. However, I was lucky in that St Catharine's College and the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies offered a supportive and very welcoming study environment and my teachers provided constant help, support and advice throughout my studies.

By the time I reached my final year as an undergraduate student, I had developed an interest in modern Chinese history and fortunately was able to stay in Cambridge for my Ph.D. on the history of foreign banking in modern China - something I had certainly not thought possible when I first arrived in Cambridge. I continued to benefit much from the support of my teachers at the Faculty and was also able to spend an extensive period of time in China doing archival research (little did I realise at the time how easy archival research was then compared to the difficulties Covid-19 has brought to archival research more recently).

As I approached the end of my graduate studies in 2017, some of my teachers in Cambridge recommended applying to do a postdoc in Japan and so I soon found myself on a plane to Tokyo, where I spent a very fruitful and enjoyable period of time at the University of Tokyo tackling a new language, getting to know Japanese scholars and scholarship and further working on my research.

In 2019, I moved from Tokyo to Hong Kong to take up an Assistant Professorship at the University of Hong Kong and luckily both HKU and Hong Kong more broadly have proven to be fascinating places for researching and teaching Chinese economic and business history.

Cambridge International Scholar from 2012-2015

Prof. Yang Fu 傅揚 writes:

I began my postgraduate course in Chinese Studies in October 2012, and received a PhD degree in October 2016. My days in AMES and Cambridge were both rewarding and memorable. The research community in Chinese Studies was relatively small yet supportive; I benefited greatly from all sorts of interactions with senior members as well as my fellow postgraduates. Equally fruitful was my regular participation in events held by the Needham Research Institute, where I had the chance to share my then ongoing projects and meet new people.

Supervised by Professor Roel Sterckx, my dissertation, 'Economic Discourse in Early Chinese Thought: From Antiquity to the Mid-Warring States Era,' aimed to redraw the map of the intellectual world of early China by investigating how economic issues figured in the thought of past thinkers and texts. Some of its chapters have been revised and published as journal articles in both English and Chinese publications.

After receiving my doctorate in 2016, I served as an assistant professor at Soochow University, Taiwan, from 2017 until 2020. In August 2020, I moved to my current position at National Taiwan University. My ongoing projects are mainly concerned with China before the tenth century, the themes of which include socio-economic discourses, knowledge and empire formation, and the history of political culture.



Prof. Yang Fu and Prof. Roel Sterckx in 2016



Prof. Yang Fu and his son at NTU in 2018

Life Outside the Library



This issue, we talk to green-thumbed graduate student Flavia Fang on her experiences starting a vegetable garden during the first national lockdown.

Researching and writing a PhD dissertation can be lonely and occasionally frustrating even in the best of times, let alone in a time when the whole world is enveloped in a cloud of adversity and uncertainty. As the Latin proverb says, “mens sana in corpore sano,” to better take care of our physical and mental wellbeing, we started doing gardening adopting an allotment near our student accommodation in Cambridge when the first national lockdown commenced.

A little vegetable garden is something that I have always wanted, but I thought I would be doing it much later on in life! Thanks to St John’s College which provided some land for

student gardening, we started this little project. Apart from the classic potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, and squashes, we have been adventurous by adding more exotic specimens like artichokes and ginger in our plant group. They are still thriving in the cold and misty English winter!

Taking care of the plants, which is usually combined with a short walk in the quiet and green spaces from the College to the Faculty, has allowed us to spend some good quality time outdoors and to enjoy a bit of bucolic tranquility. It is a concrete and creative activity that has helped not only take care of ourselves, but also the environment. For this reason, the College student gardening initiative was acknowledged by a University

Gold award for sustainability. The most exciting part of gardening is, of course, taking what we have grown from the field to our table and taste the unique sweetness of our own produce!

- Flavia Xi Fang

Current graduate student



Advertisements and Further Information

FACULTY OF ASIAN
AND MIDDLE EASTERN
STUDIES, CAMBRIDGE



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
ALUMNI
THOMAS WADE SOCIETY

The Thomas Wade Society was founded in 2009 as the University of Cambridge Chinese Studies Alumni Society. Until 2016 the society was dormant, when the Class of 2016 decided to rebuild the society

into something new that could bring faculty members, alumni and friends of the faculty together.

If you would like to join the TWS network, please complete the sign-up form at <http://tinyurl.com/twssignupform> and/or join the society's social media groups on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/553636164826475/> and LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8577879>. If you have any questions, would like to find out more or even help out, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the committee at thewadesociety@gmail.com.



Founded by our current second-year students, the Cambridge University China Forum (CUCF) hosts a range of exciting events relating to China. To find out more, please join our Facebook page [@camchina](https://www.facebook.com/camchina), or go to our website www.camchina.org to join our mailing list.

Daniel Crouch Rare Books (4 Bury Street, St James's, London SW1Y 6AB) is a specialist dealer in antique atlases, maps, plans, sea charts and voyages dating from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Please scan the QR code to access our WeChat account where we post articles on our pieces in Chinese, or contact Miss Qi Sun qi@crouchrarebooks.com



Looking to join our seminar series mailing lists? Please email kl394@cam.ac.uk (Kelsey Granger) to be added to the Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar series mailing list and ayc25@cam.ac.uk (Dr Adam Chau) to be added to the China Research Seminar series mailing list.

Is there something you would like to be included in our next issue? Don't hesitate to contact the editor by email at kl394@cam.ac.uk whether it be with regards to an event, advertisement, interview idea, general suggestion, or an article contribution. Alumni 'where are they now' suggestions, vintage photos of the Faculty, and class (virtual) reunions are especially welcomed!

University of
Cambridge,
Sidgwick Site,
Sidgwick Avenue,
Cambridge
CB3 9DA

www.ames.cam.ac.uk

For more information and updates, check the Cambridge Chinese Studies twitter account: <https://twitter.com/ChinaCambridge>

Plus, check our library's twitter account for events and information: https://twitter.com/ames_library