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Dear friends,

When compiling this issue, the theme seemed to be how things were slowly going 'back to normal' with the return of in-person teaching, seminars, and graduate meet-ups. The news lately may mean a total return to normal is still a way off, but if the last lockdown Newsletter issues are anything to go by, staff and students will be just as busy as ever!

Celebrations, like that of Michael Loewe's 99th birthday, did manage to take place, as did the new Qing literature reading group led by visiting fellow Prof. Philip Clart. Even the Poetry Recital returned in-person to the delight of the First and Second Year students! The China Research Seminar series also returned for a shorter

programme held in-person once more.

Other aspects of academic life have embraced the advantages of remote hosting, with the Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar series continuing online and drawing in attendees from around the world. The same can be said of the Thomas Wade Society and Cambridge University China Forum online events, as well as the new Ask the Professors event, all covered in this issue.

Whether things return to normal eventually or move to a new normal, it is clear in this issue that the academic, social, and personal events of Cambridge Chinese Studies continue apace, and that neither distance nor time can keep us apart forever!

- Kelsey Granger

Editor-in-chief, PhD candidate

Dear friends,

Greetings from Taipei, Taiwan! All time difference aside, living here in Covid-free Taiwan makes it near impossible to avoid a feeling of remoteness - all goings on in Cambridge feel very distant. The thought of a gowned formal seems like a completely alien reality to us, our new favourite means of gathering being hot pot. A late night trip to the Van of Life has been replaced by 小吃 in the nearest night market!

Some of you, students who graduated years ago, or professors on sabbatical, may be experiencing a similar sense of removal. Yet a read through this term's report seems to have brought me back to Cambridge - a memory of the rich

academic and social life centred on the Chinese studies faculty. After adapting to over a year of Covid-affected online education, most in-faculty events have adopted hybrid formats. Yet whether online or in person, research seminars, a Qing literature reading group, or Cambridge University China Forum panels, there is no shortage of ideas and dialogues circulating within the Faculty.

Wherever you all are, dotted around the globe or still in Cambridge, I hope you enjoy perusing these updates about the activities and current occupations of colleagues, professors and classmates. Wishing you a restful break and a happy New Year!

- Juliette Odolant

Editor, Undergraduate student

Past and Present: Celebrating Michael Loewe

In this issue, we congratulate emeritus fellow **Michael Loewe** on receiving the prestigious **World Contributors to Sinology Award** and his 100 歲 birthday this winter.



Michael Loewe is a name synonymous with Sinology for many of us in AMES and beyond. And despite experiencing 99 years, or 100 歲, of life so far, this winter might be one of the most memorable. In October, Michael was awarded the World Contributors to Sinology Award. A write-up in Chinese is available [here](#). The receipt of such a prestigious award only cements Michael's longstanding and impressive contributions to the field.

Equally memorable was the convivial gathering of peers, colleagues, and friends of Michael in the Old Music Room of St John's College on November 2nd to mark Michael's birthday. The event was organised by **Prof. David McMullen**, **Sarah Allan**, and **Michael Nylan** (pictured right), with around thirty guests thrilled to toast to Michael's health and happiness. A speech by our own **Prof. Roel Sterckx** reminded us all of how Michael has steered the Faculty through calm and troubled waters both before and after his retirement in 1990. **Sarah Allan** also announced a festschrift that will be published in honour of Michael's continued legacy.



It was wonderful to see so many colleagues, including **Imre Galambos, Adam Chau, Hajni Elias, Susan Daruvala, Peter Kornicki, and Tim Barrett** among others. Further pictures of the event are available online [here](#).



Michael Loewe was born on 2nd November 1922 in Oxford and went on to read at Magdalen College, Oxford. Following the outbreak of war with Japan in December 1941, Michael was assigned to learn Japanese at the secret Bedford Japanese School run by Captain Oswald Tuck RN. He was on the first course, which began in February 1942 and lasted for five months. Towards the end of the course some training in cryptography was given. After completing the course, Michael was posted to Bletchley Park, where he worked in the Naval Section until the end of the war.



CHAC meeting, Chicago in the early 1990s



Researching in the Needham Research Institute in 2011

He studied Mandarin Chinese in his spare time and, during a six-month stay in Beijing in 1947, Michael became interested in traditional and historical Chinese topics, which he began studying at the School of Oriental and African Studies after returning to Britain. He received a first class honours degree in Chinese in 1951, and in 1956 he left the government to serve as a Lecturer in the History of the Far East at the University of London.

SOAS awarded him a PhD in 1963, and he subsequently joined the faculty at Cambridge, where he taught until retiring in 1990 to focus solely on research and scholarship. He has continued to give talks to delighted peers and students at SOAS, AMES, the Needham Research Institute, and beyond.



Giving a seminar at the Needham Research Institute in 2013



Roel Sterckx, Michael Loewe and Prof. Edward Shaughnessy in 2015 researching an oral history of the Cambridge History of China

Next year, his century, also marks over fifty years of seminal publications on the Han dynasty and early Chinese texts, with an updated edited volume of *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide* being edited by Imre Galambos, John Moffet, and Enno Giele currently in progress. Let's hope that Covid doesn't stop us from having quite the birthday bash to celebrate!

Research Question: From Daily Life to the Divine

Cambridge can be considered a hub for research on China, with well-stocked Faculty and University libraries, the Needham Research Institute, and the Fitzwilliam Museum right on our doorstep. In this issue, we discuss the impressive collection housed in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) houses 2,639 Chinese objects in both the archaeology and anthropology collections, of which 341 have been classified as archaeological objects. Among them we hold spear heads, hammers, a large number of Neolithic axes/axe-heads, and also bronze artefacts such as knives, arrowheads, and dagger-axes.

Many objects from our collections of Chinese material are on display. In the Andrews Gallery, amongst the archaeology collections on the second floor, there are many large, decorated ceramics as well as several bronze weapons, some of which are highly decorated. In the Maudslay Gallery on the first floor there are a number of objects from finely made clothes to an array of Zisha teapots made by twenty-first century masters.

The majority of the objects in the archaeology collection were donated by Louis Colville Gray Clarke, a British archaeologist AND Curator of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, between 1922–1937, and then Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge from 1937–1946. Other donors were W.C. Pei, mainly linked to a deposit of stone implements of the Pleistocene period, Oscar Raphael who donated a group of bronze weights, and Professor Sir William Ridgeway who collected extensively from various regions.

The anthropology collections came to MAA through 138 named collectors, donors, and

vendors. The two largest collections were made by female Cambridge anthropologists, Dr Ethel John Lindgren (233 objects) and Professor Dame Caroline Humphrey (151 objects), both of whom provided collections from Inner Mongolia. Other female collectors include the 1920s traveller and photographer Mary Lumsden and a Miss U. Lumley, about which little is currently known.

Other collections came from missionaries, military men, scholars, and diplomats. The bequest of Captain Henry Edward Laver of his collection of items relating to Chinese archery numbers approximately 200 objects. Several items are recorded as having been taken after military action or donated by military officers. An extraordinary seventeenth-century gilt wooden figure of Guanyin was originally in the collection of the Royal United Services Institute. Other items were purchased in prize sales after the Battle of Peking in 1900.

There are significant collections from missionaries and church figures, notably Miss Myra Gertrude Carpenter (China Inland Mission), and father and son James Laidlaw Maxwell (English Presbyterian Mission) and Dr John Preston Maxwell. A smaller collection comes from another Presbyterian missionary, Reverend Garden Blaikie.

Anthropologist Alfred Cort Haddon donated over 100 artefacts, and Ivor H.N. Evans, Cambridge anthropologist and museum curator in Malaysia, donated more than 80.

Ethnomusicologist Lawrence Picken's collection was purchased for the Museum in 1977, some collected in China by Picken himself and some acquired from other Chinese and European collectors.

Archaeology Collection

Within the archaeological collection there are objects representative of the Han Dynasty such as a ceramic spoon from a tomb in which light traces of glaze remain. **[MAA accession number 1922.1098/Record 2]**



The collection also includes four flint arrow-heads from a Han grave, some with a tang. Two are beige in colour, one is dark grey and one is black. **[MAA accession number 1927.536 B]**



The collection houses a string of 17 blue and white spherical beads which is a total of 72 cm long, with 14 irregular cylindrical glass beads of light and dark blue alternately. This piece dates from the Qing Kangxi period and falls under the Beck Collection. **[MAA accession number 1947.2256]**



Early items in the collection includes a stunning Shang Dynasty ceremonial dagger-axe with phoenix design on hilt. **[MAA accession number 1933.14]**



A very interesting oracle bone (length 4.6 cm, width 4.3 cm, depth 0.5 cm, 7.8 g), probably of cattle scapula, from the period of King Wu Ding 吳丁 (1250-1192 BC) in the Shang Dynasty. **[MAA accession number 1927.835 A]**



Research Question contin.

It has an inscription deciphered by **Charles Aymer**, the former Head of the Chinese Department at Cambridge University Library: Characters on the lower right corner read: 'On the day *gui* you... divination was made [asking if...] not [...]'. While the upper right reads: 'Divining on the day *ding si* [i.e. 54/60], Zheng [the name of the diviner] asks if X [name partially missing] should go back to Yu-ji [conjectural reading of a place name]. [Divination made in] the fifth month.'

A final example of the range of artefacts included in the archaeology collection would be this Song Dynasty bronze, silvered mirror with a Swastika outlined in relief (a motif often used in Buddhist iconography). **[MAA accession number 1948.1850]**



Anthropology Collection

The 2,127 artefacts from China in the ethnography or anthropology collections are extremely diverse, including items as wide-ranging as clothing and costumes, jewellery, currency, weights and measures, religious and devotional items including Buddhist and Daoist figures and amulets, musical instru-

ments, vessels, weapons, tools and paintings, prints and drawings, personnel adornments, vessels of many types, toys, boxes, musical instruments, weapons, coins, suits of armour, etc.

See, for instance, a figure of the Taoist deity Guan Di dated to 1842. which was donated to the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1851 by Isaac Bernard, an Officer in the Merchant Service. **[MAA 1890.9 M]**



Equally fascinating for those studying Chinese and Inner Asian religious practices is this shaman's costume which was worn by an unnamed Orochen shaman and purchased from her father after her death. This costume was purchased in Anggo Xules, Hulunbuir, Inner Mongolia and was collected by Dr Ethel John Lindgren. **[1933.377 A]**



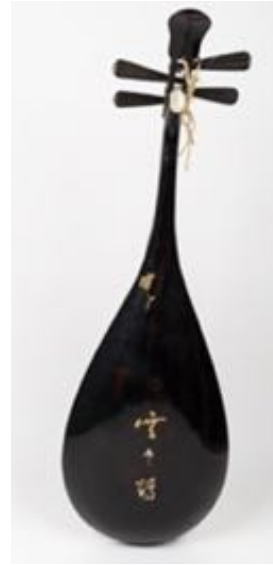
Further religious and devotional items in the collection include those related to Buddhism. See this gilt wooden figure of Guanyin which was consecrated in 1643. Purchased from the United Services Institute in 1862 by John Williams, this piece was then donated by Reverend John Williams in 1960. [MAA 1960.400.1-3]



In the secular world, a particularly striking item would be this brick of black tea, stamped with trader's mark 'Qin'. This tea would have circulated on the tea-horse road, and is now housed in the Ridgeway Collection. [MAA 1927.126 A]



Finally, the range of items housed in the museum can be demonstrated by the stunning array of musical instruments present, like this 'Crane flying in the clouds' lacquered pipa (lute), collected by Liang Zaiping and housed in the Picken Collection. [MAA 1977.284]



Many thanks to Dr Jimena Lobo Guerrero Arenas, senior curator in Archaeology at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, for this feature. The museum is now open to the public and is a COVID-Secure visitor attraction. Entry is free, but you need to pre-book your tickets [here](#)

Our collections are all searchable online at <http://collections.maa.cam.ac.uk> to which we are continuing to add new research and images. Please send any research and access queries to admin@maa.cam.ac.uk

You can also keep up with the latest news at the museum on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and on the [MAA's website](#)

China Research Seminar Series

Michaelmas 2021



Illustration by Nick Stember made with the posters for each talk

Spanning a range of topics from books to Buddhist deities, the China Research Seminar series kicked off the academic year with a talk from **Professor Daniel Knorr**, the newly arrived Temporary Assistant Professor in Modern Asian History. Speaking on the topic of the Qianlong Emperor's 1748 visit to Baotu Spring, "The Greatest Spring in all the World," Professor Knorr discussed the complicated process of placemaking at the height of Qing imperial power. Moving from earthly to celestial powers, this was followed by a talk from **Professor Megan Bryson**, University of

Tennessee, Knoxville, providing compelling evidence for the arrival of Mahākāla in Yuan-dynasty China via the Kingdom of Dali by way of the Southern Silk Road.

Jumping forward to the 20th century, **Professor Alison R. Marshall**, Brandon University, spoke on the afterlives of KMT material culture in the contemporary Chinese cultural sphere, taking us from Guangdong to Vancouver, and back again.

Furthering this focus on remnants of popular culture, **Professor Cynthia Brokaw**, Brown University, followed with an insightful talk on the ups and down of doing field research in the so-

cial history of the book. Finally, **Professor Sixiang Wang**, UCLA, brought the research seminar to a close — for this term at least — with his talk on Ming influences on Korea's Chosŏn dynasty. Stay tuned for another round of fascinating talks in Easter 2022!

- Nick Stember
PhD Candidate

If you would like to be part of the China Research Seminar mailing list, then please contact organiser Prof. 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 2021

This term saw the Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar series continue online, attracting both listeners and speakers from Europe, North America, and East Asia. With **Prof. Imre Galambos** on sabbatical this year, we reduced our term-card from an average of seven talks to five, but did not feel any lack in the diversity of topics covered in this programme.

The term opened with doctoral student **Nadine Bregler** (Universität Hamburg) who explored the so-called Wang Fanzhi poem collections found in multi-text manuscripts from Dunhuang. Combining codicological examination with literary cross comparisons, she argued that the way these poetry collections were titled did not mean that Wang Fanzhi was the actual author, but rather that the poems were grouped under this mysterious name as a subgenre of poetry.

So too did our second speaker, archaeologist **Prof. Arnaud Bertrand** (Catholic University of Paris), re-examine assumed knowledge with his in-depth study of Xuanquan documents and the founding of the Dunhuang Imperial Commandery during the

Western Han period. Through the use of satellite imagery, archaeological excavations, and the texts discovered at surrounding sites, he brought into question dates given in the transmitted record for the founding of this commandery.

From the Han period, we moved back to the medieval period as our own **Kelsey Granger** (University of Cambridge) discussed two furniture items on the Silk Roads: the rattan hour-glass stool and the round fringed rug. Placing these items in the context of the changing sitting customs of the time—i.e. the move from predominantly floor-sitting to chair-sitting that occurred from the mid-eighth-eleventh centuries—she argued that a consideration of these overlooked furniture pieces enriches our understanding of this liminal period of floor- and chair-sitting. Involving maritime and overland trade routes, the movements of pilgrims, merchants, materials, and artisans, these two furniture items embody the interweaving narratives of this time period.

The themes of transport and trade were also the key focus for **Prof. Xin Wen** (Princeton University), who honed in on the movements of diplomatic travel-



lers on the Silk Roads from 850-1000 CE. Finally, our term closed with **Prof. Zsombor Rajkai** (Ritsumeikan University) who joined us from Japan. He also centred his talk on diplomatic travellers, here the Ming envoy Chen Cheng and his life experiences enroute to Herat.

This programme, while featuring fewer talks than usual, remained just as rich and as varied as the Silk Road itself!

We have also launched our YouTube channel with select recordings from our Easter and Michaelmas programme. You can find this [here](#).

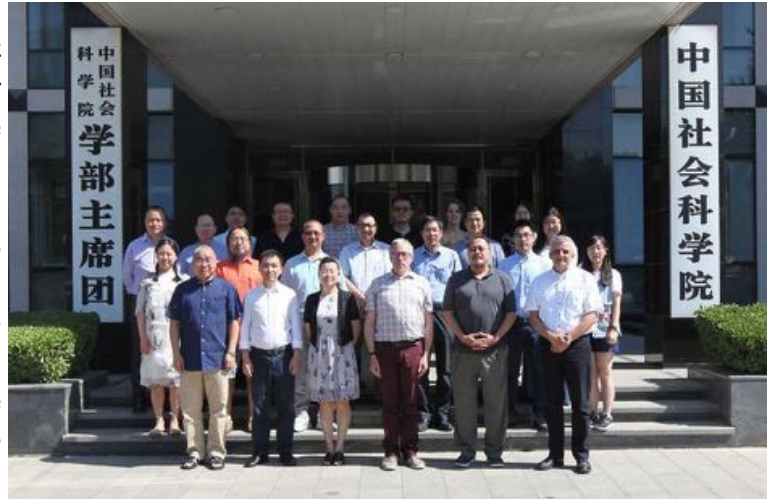
If you would like to be part of the Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar mailing list, then please contact Kelsey Granger at kl394@cam.ac.uk. These talks currently take place on Zoom on Thursdays at 5pm.

How I Came to Cambridge

This issue we hear from Prof. Adam Chau about how he chose to pursue a career in academia focusing on Chinese religion, as well as his journey from student to professor.

I would like to use this small piece to convey to our undergrads a sense of what academic life is like since so many of our past and current students seem to have their minds set on careers in finance and business, civil service (e.g. the Foreign Office or even MI6) and law. My colleagues and I have always wondered: why do so few graduates of Chinese Studies programmes in the UK (including our own) apply to Chinese Studies postgraduate programmes (our own **Ghassan Moazzin** and **Kelsey Granger** being rare exceptions in recent times)? How can so many young people declare their fascination with China in their applications, spend four long years trying to master the language (including literary Chinese and non-simplified characters!) and learn about the culture and history, and then, abruptly so it seems, switch to becoming a financial analyst or lawyer?

Admittedly, Chinese Studies is one of the many humanities subjects that can serve as a sound foundation for embarking on careers in the 'real world' – we do speak of the so-called 'transferable skills' (language abilities, analytical and writing skills, etc.), don't we? – and some graduates work in Chinese societies, in particular mainland China and Hong Kong, with Chinese people, and keep their interest in China alive. It is also undeniable that a brilliant performance in the Tripos exams does not necessarily mean that the person has the inclination or aptitude for a career in research and teaching. But have so many young men and women not been (mis-)lured by the seeming glamour of James Bond who allegedly graduated from our Faculty when it was still called Oriental Studies and jobs in the City? Could not a few more consider a life in the 'ivory



Prof. Adam Chau (in orange shirt) with colleagues at the conclusion of an international workshop on Chinese religion at the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing. Taking a formal group photo is an important academic ritual in China!

tower' (though be warned that universities are very much part of the 'real world' as well)? What might make becoming an academic a possible career option? Does being a banker really beat being a sinologist? Would you prefer to play with other people's money than to play with another civilisation's ideas?

Our undergraduate students in Chinese Studies mostly see us as teachers, imparting to them in the classroom and during supervisions our knowledge on China and assessing their progress by marking their exam scripts and dissertations (though I suspect most students and teachers share a dislike for the standard three-hour exams based on essays). But teaching undergraduates is only one part of what we academics do. For sure we have to do administrative work as well, building the best and most rigorous possible curricula, doing admissions interviews, recruiting new colleagues as well as

negotiating the demands of a complex, labyrinthian collegiate university that is Cambridge, where introducing change can sometimes be a slow and arduous process.

But we also train graduate students in our MPhil and PhD programmes, who are apprentice-scholars attempting to blaze their own unique trails of research, producing end ‘products’ that are around 15,000 words for the MPhil dissertation and 80,000 words for the PhD thesis, many of which form the basis for future publications. Our PhD supervisees eventually become our colleagues in different parts of the world. It is obvious that spending a year for an MPhil and then three or four more years for a PhD (sometimes longer due to all sorts of factors and ‘distractions’ such as family commitments) constitute a huge commitment in time and money. Of course, many of our PhD students are funded by scholarships from the Cambridge Trust, the China Scholarship Council, and other funders, but there are still huge opportunity costs, i.e. time spent not making money, gaining work experience or doing other things. But such a long period of postgraduate training (think apprenticeship, often not that different from how craftsmen learn their trade) is an essential investment for a future academic career, and most who have done it consider it not only worthwhile but in fact pleasurable. Speaking of pleasure, doing sinology can give so much pleasure that many continue research and writing well into retirement. For example, our own **Michael Loewe** has published more books after he retired, and, at age 99 (一百歲) is in the middle of revising a new book manuscript comparing the Han Dynasty with the Roman Empire!

The most rewarding part of our job as China scholars is doing our own research and contributing new and original insights to the understanding of all aspects of Chinese history, society, literature, language, politics, religion, linguistics, etc., and, for that matter, the world at large. Insights on China are, and should, at the same time be insights on the world. Depending on one’s disciplinary background, one collects ‘data’ using all kinds of methods: visit-



Prof. Adam Chau with the giant prize pig display and its proud offerers from Hsinpu Taiwan

ing libraries and archives (archives are depositories of original documents and some historians claim that they love that ‘special smell’, and nothing excites them more than opening a dusty archive box!); poring over inscriptions, manuscripts and all manner of texts from inscribed bamboo strips to Dunhuang manuscripts; from late-imperial ‘morality books’ to internet fiction and social-media posts; conducting ethnographic fieldwork and interviews; etc.

I can speak briefly about my own experience as an academic. It is quite astonishing to think that it has already been twenty years since I earned my PhD in sociocultural anthropology from Stanford University (2001) and started my professional academic career. Most anthropologists love doing fieldwork, especially the kind of long-term fieldwork that led to their PhD thesis work. I can still recall vividly my year and half spent in the rural areas of Shaanbei 陝北 (northern Shaanxi Province) collecting data for my PhD on the revival of popular religion during the reform era.

How I Came to Cambridge contin.

During these months, I stayed at temples and inside villagers' homes, attended dozens of temple festivals and numerous funerals and weddings (funerals and weddings always end with elaborate banquets and drunken merry-making), travelled on the back of trucks with local opera troupes that were performing for one temple festival after another, drank 'burning liquor' accompanied by delicious watermelons, learned how to sing Shaanbei folk songs, bought and helped slaughter sacrificial pigs, observed séances conducted by spirit mediums, listened to folk story-telling, walked or rode on the back of motorcycles along mountain paths, and talked to thousands of locals: peasants, merchants, local officials, opera singers and musicians, martial artists, miners, forestry workers, shopkeepers, children and teenagers, students, the elderly, factory workers, contractors, sex workers, restaurant owners, cooks and waiters, truck and bus drivers, stonemasons, construction workers, temple bosses, Daoist priests, spirit mediums, fengshui masters, fortune-tellers, and even some petty criminals, etc.. It was an exhilarating and



The palanquin of the Goddess Mazu passing over devotees for special blessing from central Taiwan

memorable experience. The resulting study became my doctoral thesis and eventually a monograph titled *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (2006, Stanford University Press).

I subsequently became a professional anthropologist teaching and researching on religion in China, especially the social aspects of religious life (i.e., how people "do" religion in China). After the long-term fieldwork in Shaanbei, I have conducted many shorter spells of fieldwork research, over the course of the past twenty years in rural and urban China, Taiwan, and among Chinese communities in Southeast Asia (mainly Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore) and Europe. These fieldwork trips varied from a few days to a month. It is this broad range of fieldwork experiences among many kinds of



Giant prize pigs as offerings at temple festival from Hsinpu Taiwan



Worshippers converging upon the Black Dragon King Temple in Shaanbei (northern Shaanxi Prov-

communities that made me appreciate the diversity of Chinese religious practices. This appreciation has been further deepened by my experience as a teacher and a scholar, teaching courses, supervising and examining dissertations and theses, reviewing article and book manuscripts, giving public lectures, interacting with colleagues at academic conferences, and constantly reading and writing. In my work I like (some may say 'indulge in') inventing new concepts and expressions in order to better characterise a particular sociocultural phenomenon and to contribute to theoretical and comparative discussions; examples include 'modalities of doing religion', 'red-hot sociality' (for translating and theorising on 紅火, 熱鬧), 'text acts', 'household sovereignty', 'religious subjectification', 'ritual terroir', etc. I always encourage my own students to invent new concepts rather than mechanically applying existing theories.

As an anthropologist specialising in Chinese religion and society, I have been fortunate to be part of a vibrant, ever-expanding, global scholarly community that extends from Europe and North America to East Asia. The wide (some may say wild) range of my research interests, admittedly not always followed through with equal thoroughness, has brought me to interact with colleagues of all kinds: from anthropology, sinology, religious studies, history, folklore, etc. Since I came to the UK in 2005 and since joining the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Cambridge in 2008, I have been interacting particularly closely with colleagues in Europe, especially in France and Germany.

The above is only a brief account of my path thus far as an academic. I hope that those students who think that they might be interested in pursuing an academic career will feel inspired talk to any of us to explore the possibilities.

- Prof. Adam Chau

Needham Research Institute Seminars

Michaelmas 2021

We are delighted to have resumed in-person seminars at the NRI in Michaelmas 2021, with four fortnightly Friday sessions on an interesting range of topics.

The first three sessions were given by members from the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Cambridge. **Ashton Ng** led a text-reading seminar on Han Fei's ideal polity, based on readings from the "Wudu" 五蠹 (The Five Vermin) chapter. **Prof. Imre Galambos** raised a series of questions on how the physical form of two inscribed wooden planchettes from Dunhuang reflects the contexts in which the manuscripts were used. **Kelsey Granger** surveyed a range of textual and material sources relating to the trend of lapdog-keeping in Tang-Song China, revealing the rich social history surrounding this phenomenon. Finally, visiting scholar **Anna Strob** (Tübingen) (pictured below) presented on Alfonso Vagnone's *Kongji gezhi* 空際格致 (Investigation into Phenomena in the Atmosphere, c. 1633), a Chinese adaptation of the Coimbra commentaries on Aristotle's natural philosophy. The

talks were well attended; it was wonderful to enjoy discussions in the company of colleagues and friends within the NRI and across different departments.

In addition, a special seminar and a lunch reception were held on 10th November 2021 to celebrate the publication of **Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd's** recent book, *Expanding Horizons in the History of Science* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) (pictured below). This rich work utilises examples from earlier societies and indigenous groups to suggest ways in which non-western societies offer opportunities for us to revise many of our own preconceptions. The seminar, convened by **Jenny Zhao** and **Arthur Harris**, took place in the KP Tin Hall, with around 30 invited guests in attendance. Arthur gave an overview of the book and its arguments before inviting Prof. Lloyd to comment. A lively discussion then followed. Conversations continued into the lunch reception, which was held in the Richard Eden Suite at Clare Hall, with scholars from the fields of an-



thropology, Classics, and Chinese studies in attendance.

Please look out for the NRI Lent Term programme, which will be circulated towards the beginning of term. We look forward to seeing you at the seminars!

- Dr Jenny Zhao

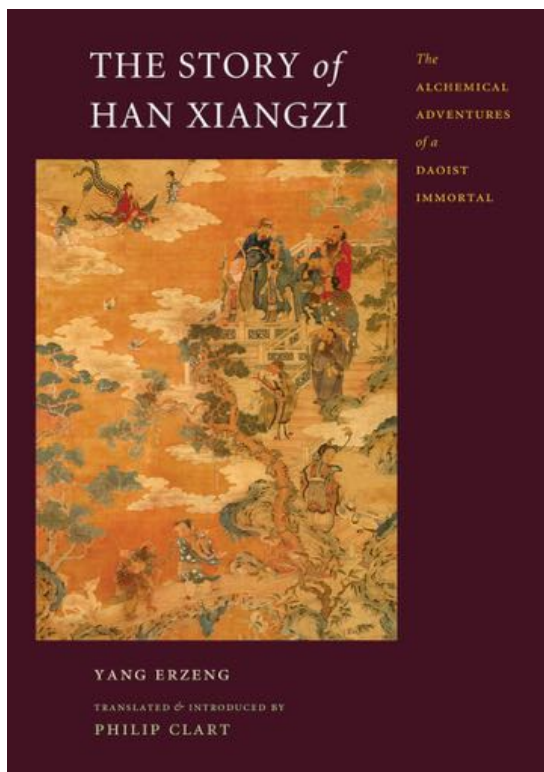


If you would like to attend the NRI Seminar series, please search for 李约瑟研究所 on

WeChat (or scan the QR code attached) and search "Needham Research Institute" on Facebook.



Qing Literature Reading Group



Professor Philip Clart of Leipzig University is spending the Michaelmas and Lent terms as a visiting fellow at St John's College, working on a book manuscript with the tentative title *The Continuing Adventures of Han Xiangzi: Popular Literature and Religion in China (17th–20th c.)*. This will be the summation and conclusion of a long-running project on the cycle of legends surrounding the Daoist immortal Han Xiangzi 韓湘子 (one of the famous eight immortals 八仙), which he began with an integral translation of an early seventeenth-century novel (*The Story of Han Xiangzi: The Alchemical Adventures of a Daoist Immortal*, University of Washington Press 2007). He will carry the story forward to the diversification of the narrative in various genres of popular literature (*suwenxue* 俗文學) through the Qing and Republican periods (1644–1949), including narrative ballads (*daoqing* 道情 and *gece* 歌冊), prosimetric tales (*baojuan* 寶卷), and local opera.



Starting in November, Professor Clart has been leading a weekly open-ended series of guided readings of mostly Qing-period vernacular versions of the Han Xiangzi story in different genres of popular literature (including some with a heavy dose of local dialect terms). Participants include a small group of staff members, MPhil and PhD students, and even a second-year undergrad! Those who are interested in joining the reading group in Lent should contact Professor Clart at clart@uni-leipzig.de.



Second Year Updates



First, Second, and Fourth Year students at the annual Poetry Recital (held in-person again at last!)

As the start of Michaelmas approached, we were all very excited to (finally!) return to in-person learning. It was an unbelievable experience to be able to see everyone in person in our first class of the year, C6, with **Professor Sterckx**, where we dived into the world of Han dynasty poetry, followed by our first-ever in-person class with **Wu Laoshi**.

This term was full of changes, from all the new content in our different option papers, seeing 同学 on a daily basis, and welcoming three new classmates (Sal, Jeanne, and Caitlyn) into our little group. We were always eager to learn and hear each other's ideas during our oral class PowerPoint presentations with **Wang Laoshi**. Topics ranged from tips on visiting countries to cultural and gender discrimination.

We were also introduced to the strange and bizarre world of 志怪 (*zhiguai*), looking at stories focusing on adulterous dogs, Indian magicians, and ghosts. Through



the texts seen in our C5 class, we gained insight on some aspects of Taiwanese culture that were heretofore unknown to us, like the 大拜拜 (*dabaibai*) religious festival and advice on the night markets.

Of course, our interactions weren't limited to the classroom. We had a magnificent feast prepared by our resident Michelin-starred chef, Sam Meston, and some great culinary contributions by everyone else too! Our group chat was filled with Chinese jokes and memes (We're finally starting to understand most of them!).

We definitely cannot forget to mention the amazing end-of-term poetry recital with the first-years. (They did an incredible job by the way, put us to shame). We had a great time introducing ourselves to everyone, reciting a couple lines each from 乡愁 (Nostalgia) and 再别康桥 (Saying Goodbye to Cambridge), and, to top it all off, singing 遇见 by Stephanie Sun to a very eager audience. We would like to thank Wu Laoshi, Wang Laoshi and **Zhao Laoshi** for organising this event and giving us some very cool prizes (I personally got, not just one, but two pencils engraved with idioms).

Our second Michaelmas term was definitely an intense one, but it was made so much better by the physical presence of everyone, and we will cherish it for a very long time. Here's to Lent term being even better for everybody! Until then, 圣诞快乐!

-Romano Tucci
2nd Year Student