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Dear friends,

Despite the fact that the pandemic continues in many ways to keep us apart, this is our biggest Newsletter yet. This is a testament to the fact that research, co-operation, and friendships can transcend the current barriers surrounding us. From seminars and workshops moving online to a Garden Party that saw many colleagues and classmates meet in person at the Faculty for the first time in a long time, staff and students have proven their adaptability throughout these trying times. Adaptability is certainly the key takeaway from many of our features this issue—with perhaps the fortunate exception of our Year Abroad students who enjoyed a Covid-free existence in Taiwan for most of their time there!

Changes have certainly had to be made to existing formats and even research plans, as explored in many of the interviews throughout this issue. Leisure, relaxation, and much-needed fun are also more important than ever, as our students have shown in our Life Beyond the Library segment.

Finally, we wish long-time colleague Dr Boping Yuan well as he retires after close to three decades teaching in AMES. So too do we bid a fond farewell to Shen-hsing Hong as she returns to Taiwan. Both have not only shaped our undergraduate students' Chinese abilities but, as our Where Are They Now? segment illustrates, have also prepared them for exciting and unusual careers in academia, wildlife conservation, and more!

- Kelsey Granger

Editor-in-chief, PhD candidate

Dear friends,

Here's to another year in the AMES Faculty - what a wonderfully strange one it has been! Despite continued disruption to the flow of a Cambridge academic year, it is safe to say that students, academics and staff seem to have adjusted to this new life of virtual classes and online seminars, stopping short of a remote year abroad (or so we hope). Overcoming the challenges of another year of pandemic-related lockdowns and restrictions, staff and students alike have been keeping busy, from research seminars and workshops to the publications of books and essays. Overarchingly, the faculty has stayed connected, testament to the extraordinary will and warmth of its every member - with online society anniversaries, socially distanced garden parties, and farewell picnics where some students greeted one another in person for the first time.

Assembling these various events, activities and perspectives through this newsletter has only highlighted how we have remained close when the times have threatened to draw us further apart. As they so often do, a Chinese *chengyu*



sums this feeling up perfectly: 天涯若比邻, and this was the inspiration for my painting (above). We hope you enjoy this issue!

- Juliette Odolant

Editor, Undergraduate student

# China Research Seminar Series

## Lent and Easter 2021



Illustration by Nick Stember made with the posters for each talk

In the spirit of 转悲为喜 ('turning sorrow to joy'), the China Research Seminar series made the most of the continuing pandemic to host another series of fascinating talks at a physical, but not social, distance. Thematically, the seminars over these two terms were concerned with materials of all sorts and sizes—visual, textual, narrative, spiritual, and otherwise — produced in a discontinuous succession of dynasties and nation states, spanning millennia and enjoyed by rulers and ruled alike.

Beginning in Mao era (founded in the Year of the Ox six cycles past), **Nathaniel Isaacson** introduced us to the discourse of distance with his talk on the creation of "quotidian utopias" through depictions of trains and their operators in countless films, comics, and posters pro-

duced by the art workers of New China. Continuing our focus on physical manifestations of visual media, we then took a great leap backwards with **Shane McCausland** to look at the evolution of the uniquely adaptable picture scroll, which bear the marks of their erstwhile owners from Song to Qing.

**Vincent K.L. Chang** brought us back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century with his talk on Chinese-Indonesian diplomatic relations from WWII and beyond, shedding much needed light on the birth of two nations through little seen photographs and archival documents. Turning to a bureaucratic antecedent of the PRC, **Anne Gerritsen** joined us to discuss the management of human and material resources at the imperial kilns of Jingdezhen. This was followed by a talk by **Rowan McLelland** on the curious case of the Matsuyama Ballet, the Japanese

dance troupe who brought revolutionary model operas to the world and back to China. Filling out our slate of creative arts, **Quincy Ngan** spoke next on the materials of painting, tracing the distinctive uses of the minerals azurite and malachite in the landscapes of the Song and Yuan.

Unearthing the "spectral polity" of rural Henan, meanwhile, **Emily Ng** brought our attention to the curious afterlives of Chairman Mao and his poetry in the folk religion of spirit mediums. Our spiritual turn continued with **Maggie Greene**, who presented her research in the rise and fall of the ghost opera in the 1950s and 1960, with a particular focus on artists, writers, and performers who brought these otherworldly plays to life — the subject of her most recent monograph *Resisting Spirits: Drama Reform and Cultural Transformation in the People's Republic of*

*China* (University of Michigan Press, 2019). This was followed up with a talk by **Tam Ngo** highlighting the recent resurgence in popularity of anti-Chinese rituals by Vietnamese spiritualists in defense of their hard-won national sovereignty.

In our penultimate session of the year, **Timothy Cheek** and **Klaus Mühlhahn**, joined by our very own **Hans van de Ven** participated in a lively roundtable, co-hosted by **Adam Chau** and PhD candidates

**Flavia Xi Fang, Wu Rong, and Nick Stember**. The topic of discussion, the 100-year anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, is the subject of a new book edited by the triumvirate, out now from Cambridge University Press.

Finishing our year with an apropos turn to the materiality of revolutionary discourse itself, meanwhile, **Yurou Zhong** introduced us to the very real attempt to replace Chinese characters with an alphabetic script, drawing on her Levenson Prize nominated book, *Chinese*

*Grammatology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916–1958* (Columbia University Press, 2019).

- 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](mailto:ayc25@cam.ac.uk)*

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

## At a Distance: Thoughts on the China Research Seminar Series Next Year

A survey conducted in the United States earlier this year found that 31% of Americans now report that they are "almost constantly" online. While we may still only aspire to such great heights of connectivity, the now all-online China Research Seminar has nonetheless continued to provide a very real, and very vital meeting space for the Chinese studies community at Cambridge — as real and as vital as before the pandemic began, when our meetings still ended with dinner and a round of "really difficult" questions at Salatong.

That said, as soon as it is safe to do so we are all eager, I think, to recapture some of the social warmth that inevitably goes missing when one tries to

emote through a computer screen.

As we approach the coming academic year then, it seems appropriate to reflect as a community on how we would like to continue the China Research Seminar. With the vaccination rate for the first jab at almost 70%, it seems inevitable that restrictions will soon be lifted. But, as with everything surrounding Covid-19, much is still uncertain. Even if we are able to meet in person, there will likely be many restrictions on the number of participants, and many more members of our community may find it impossible to attend for other reasons. Likewise, it seems probable that international (and even national) travel will remain difficult to arrange, drastically limiting the speakers that we can invite.

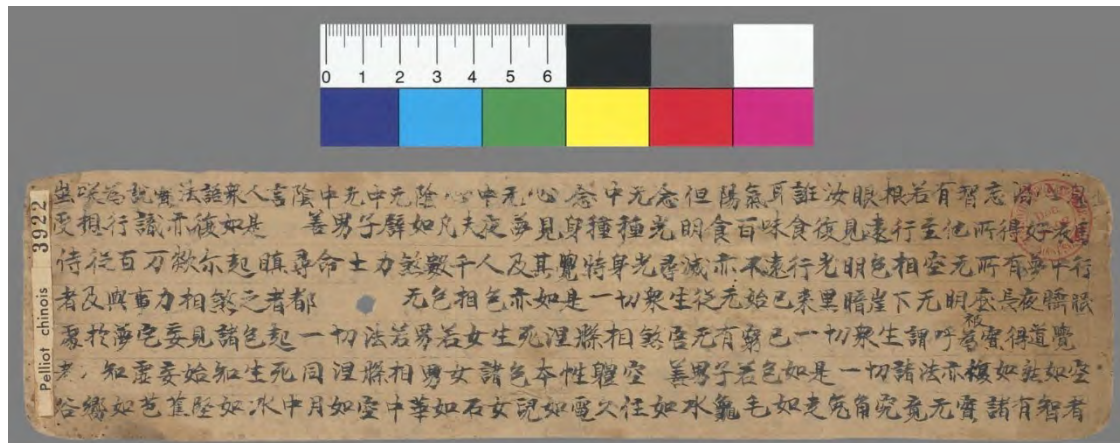
My (perhaps technologically naive)

suggestion would be to explore the possibility of adopting a hybrid model in which we broadcast our in-person talks online and solicit comments and questions from wider community listening in, in addition to those able to attend in person. Likewise, in the case of speakers who are unable to attend in person, we can consider using a projector to share their talk with an in-person audience—a solution that was used quite effectively for at least one talk in early 2020 when the restrictions were first implemented. A solution of this nature would allow us to preserve all of the advantages of being online, while also bringing back some of the conviviality of the before and after talk discussion.

- Nick Stember  
PhD Candidate

# At The Edge of the World

With both a new book, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture, End of the First Millennium*, and a feature in the five-part Chinese-language docuseries *Dunhuang: Edge of the World*, Dr Imre Galambos' research is clearly more relevant than ever. Here, we speak to Dr Galambos about his research on Silk Road studies and codicology, as well as where he sees this field developing in the future.



Wooden board from Dunhuang with the *Heart sutra*; Pelliot chinois 3922, courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Dr Galambos, your latest book *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture* has recently been published—how many years of research went into this book?**

This new book contains research I have done in the past decade and a half and is something I always wanted to write but never managed to arrange together into a single study. Nevertheless, most of the writing took place in the past couple of years when I decided to actively work on this project.

**Before coming to Cambridge in 2012, you worked at the International Dunhuang Project in London. Do you feel having such hands-on experience with Dunhuang manuscripts has advanced your research now? Or has it raised more puzzling exceptions?**

I think the opportunity to work at the British Library on a project focusing on these manuscripts has been extremely important in shaping my research. Being able to examine lots of manuscripts first-hand and to spend time on this inevitably led to smaller discoveries and realisations, but just as importantly it fundamentally changed the way I approached manuscripts. It also provided an opportunity to learn from some of the best Chinese, Japanese and Western scholars who came to the library to study the manuscripts. I realise how exceptional these circumstances were and I am very grateful for that.

**What was the most interesting manuscript that you worked with in researching this book?**

In the book I worked on different phenomena seen across groups of manuscripts, rather than individual manuscripts. One such phenomenon was that the direction of writing Chinese text could change under the influence of other cultures. Thus there were a couple of Tibetan-style pothi-leaf manuscripts from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, one of which is pictured above, in which Chinese characters were written from left to right horizontally, much like they are commonly written today. At the time, this would have been extremely unusual though.

**You also teach fourth-year undergraduate modules on Dunhuang, codicology, and the history of Chinese writing. What is the key takeaway you want students who take these modules to leave with?**

I have not taught these courses during the past three years but it is certainly true that teaching things that are directly related to one's research can be fun. One of the key aims in such courses is to introduce students to a particular field of study by taking them through the basics and making them read the most important publications. Ultimately, we hope to transfer some of our enthusiasm to them so that they develop a deeper interest in the subject.



**Why do you feel books, documentaries, and even movies continue to be made about Dunhuang over other Silk Road sites?**

Although the Silk Road is a modern construct, it managed to capture popular imagination by linking East and

West. It invokes romantic notions of travel, trade, and religion, conjuring images of once thriving cities buried under the desert sand. On the most basic level, the fascination is triggered by the contrast between polar opposites. There are, of course, also political and economic agendas, which make use of the idea of the Silk Road or their own purposes. In turn, this means more funding for highly visible projects, such as movies and TV shows.

**How did you find working with the Dunhuang: Edge of the World docuseries?**

I really enjoyed working on this, it was an honour to have been asked to participate. It was also exciting to have a glimpse of how such large film projects are made and to learn what interests much larger audience. And, of course, it was also wonderful to be able to reach millions of viewers.

**Having been to Dunhuang many times yourself, what was your 'wow' moment on-site?**

The Mogao Caves are stunning, and the caves are covered with art that has been produced or paid for by lay believers over the course of many centuries. But if I had to think of a 'wow' moment, it would have to be experiencing the vastness of the space when travelling in Western China. I was swept away by the sheer scale of the landscape, with boundless stretches of sand or rock desert. This experience not only changed my perspective of the region but also touched me on a deeper level.

**It seems like the Silk Road has become a household-name by this point, do you think interest in the Silk Roads and in Dunhuang will continue to grow in the West?**

Although there is increasing awareness of a variety of problems associated with the term

"Silk Road", or even its plural form "Silk Roads", it seems that it has indeed become a household name and will not be easily replaced with a more appropriate term any time soon. But even if it will, the manuscripts and artefacts found there will continue to be studied, as they represent a significant body of premodern material that does not exist anywhere.



**What are the remaining questions around Dunhuang that have yet to be answered by the material record we are left with?**

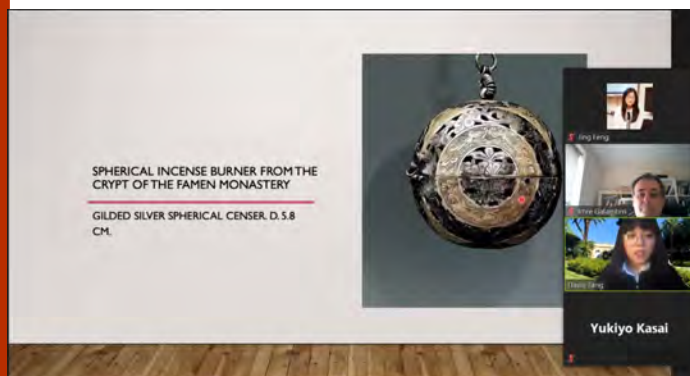
I would not speak about "the remaining questions" because that suggests that we are gradually crossing off items in a list of potential things to study. It is like saying that we have examined the Mona Lisa and the Venus de Milo, what else is left to do in the Louvre. Sure, there are other things to explore, but you can always come back and study what you have already looked at from yet another perspective. One of the key peculiarities of Dunhuang is the incredible amount of manuscripts and art that survived there. As research develops, new approaches and questions emerge which help to look at the material from a different point of view. In the course of this, we learn not just about Dunhuang but also about religion and society throughout East and Central Asia. To me, one of the most promising and exciting areas of research seems to be the multilingual and multi-cultural aspects of the region, that is, the interaction between various peoples who lived there.

**And finally, you will be on sabbatical next year—what are your plans?**

I am going to write. Since travelling is still limited, I will first try to catch up with my publication commitments and then I will try to work on something new.

# Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar Series

## Lent and Easter 2021



The Dunhuang and Silk Road Seminar series continued online this year, with both our Lent and Easter term seminars seeing scholars from across the world invited to speak. We had audience members join us from the US, China, Europe, and Inner Asia which has been one of the great benefits of this online approach. We are hoping to take a hybrid approach next Michaelmas as we move towards having in-person events. **Dr Galambos** and **Kelsey Granger** are also hoping to produce an edited volume on the life of objects related to the Silk Roads in the coming year alongside launching a YouTube channel with recorded talks from our programme.

Lent term opened with **Prof. Aleksandr Naymark** discussing Sogdian numismatics, and the theme of commerce continued as our own **Dr Paul Anderson** explored Yiwu and Eurasian commercial connectivities. On the other hand, excavated texts were the focus for both **Dr Christopher Foster**, centring his talk on a Han primer found in Jingjue, and **Dr Simone-Christiane Raschmann**, speaking on Old Uyghur literature in the Berlin Turfan collection.

Interconnectivity was again the cornerstone of the final two talks of Lent term, as our own **Flavia Xi Fang** (pictured) guided us from Venice to Damascus to Chang'an through the shared technology of spherical incense burners and as **Dr Tomas Høisæter** uncovered the complex economic landscape of Loulan and the presence of notable nomadic motifs

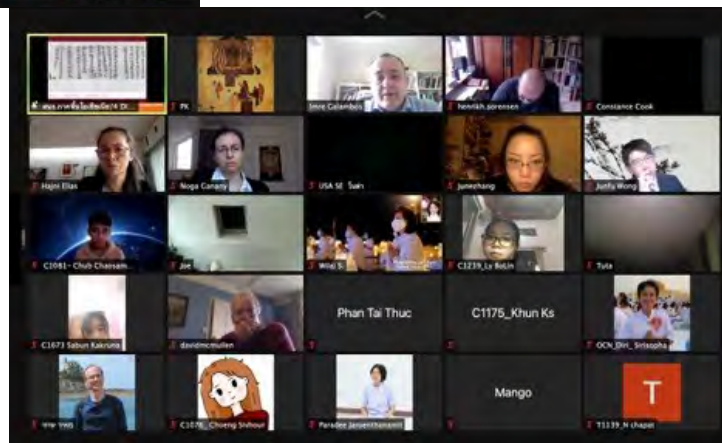
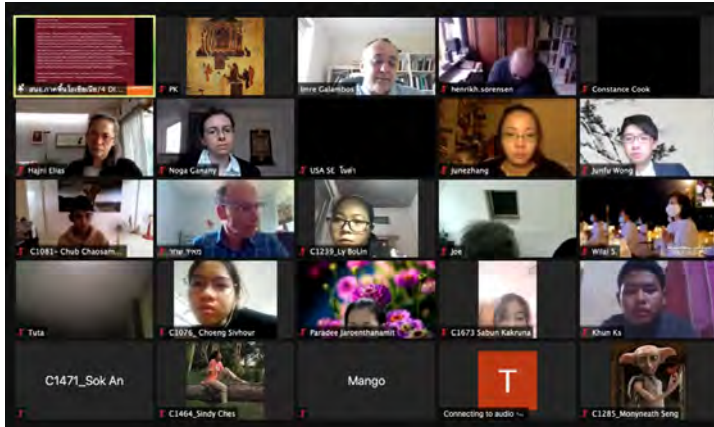
among grave goods.

While Lent term underlined the economic and technological connectivity of Silk Road cities and cultures, our Easter term programme instead presented a series of intriguing snapshots—**Prof. Tamara Chin** opened with a talk on the modern study of language contact and how scholarly approaches have attempted to explain linguistic phenomena. Equally, **Prof. Shen Hsueh-man** turned to the riveting subject of Dunhuang art and questioned whether the field had yet succeeded in fully understanding the rich context of these images.

The highlight of our programme, and arguably our best-attended talk, was that of **Prof. Roel Sterckx** on human and animal waste. From toilet demons and pig-pens to daring latrine escapes, it was a truly mesmerising talk that generated a lot of heated discussion! Our very own **Mia Ye Ma** then turned to Goryeo and a corpus of Water-moon Avalokitesvara paintings, while **Prof. Keith Knapp** combined texts, manuscripts, and excavated grave goods to show the nebulous state of the Twenty-four Filial Exemplars at Dunhuang prior to their more fixed state in received texts. In our last two talks of the academic year, the devil was truly in the detail as **Dr Márton Vér** gave a 'bottom-up' perspective on Mongol infrastructure through a close study of Old Uyghur documents and **Prof. Amanda Goodman** discussed an unusual reading mark in ritual manuscripts that may shed light on how these items were used.

*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](mailto:kl394@cam.ac.uk). These talks currently take place on Zoom on Thursdays at 5pm.*

# 2021 DIRI Buddhist Academy Zoominar Series



From the 12-30 April 2021, the Dhammachai International Research Institute (DIRI) collaborated with FAMES, the School of Social Sciences at the University of Otago (New Zealand), the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, and the World Alliance of Buddhists to hold the “2021 DIRI Buddhist Academy Zoominar Series.”

This event aimed to promote Buddhism and Buddhist Studies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve outstanding scholars, including our very own **Dr Imre Galambos** and **Dr Noga Ganany** were invited to lecture on Zoom for a global audience including monastic and lay Buddhists, academics and non-academics alike. It is hoped that this event of-

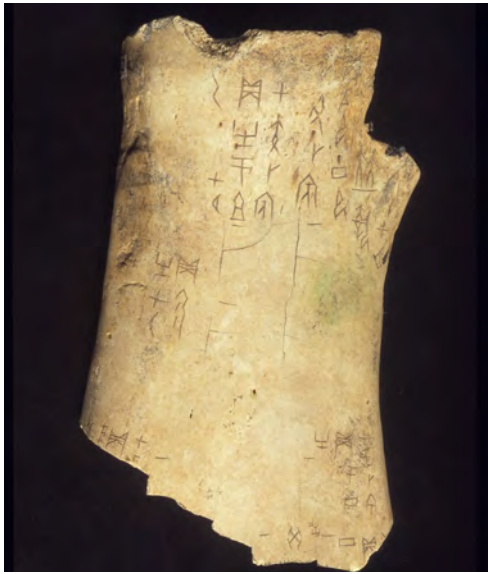
ferred a light of wisdom and peace that is flourishing in Buddhism and Buddhist Studies to those who attended, particularly given these unprecedented times we find ourselves in.

This event was attended by around 1,500 people and received positive feedback and discussion from the diverse programme of lectures.

- Rev Phra Kiattisak Ponampon  
PhD candidate

## Research Question: Divining the Future, Illuminating the Past

Cambridge can be considered as 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 a less well-known collection housed in the University Library, The Hopkins Collection of Chinese Inscribed Oracle Bones.



While the existence of Shang oracle bones may be relatively well-known within Sinology and beyond, many researchers in Cambridge may not be aware that some of these oracle bones are housed in the Cambridge University Library.

A total of 614 oracle bones make up the collection, with 293 dating to the earliest period of the Shang dynasty. Oracle bones were originally discovered by Wang Yirong 王懿荣 (1845-1900) who famously saw bones and turtle shells for sale in Beijing to be used in medicine. Spotting the strange engravings on these so-called 'dragon bones,' he began buying these in 1899 and by 1903, as rubbings of these inscriptions began to circulate, there was a veritable industry of

these bones real and fake alike.

Ultimately, the bones could be traced back to Xiaotun 小屯 (Henan), the capital of the Shang dynasty. It was only in 1928 that excavations led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences confirmed that these oracle bones were part of the Shang royal archive and dated to between 1400 and 1200 BC.

614 may sound like a large number of such bones given their antiquity, but in actuality some 200,000 fragments with 50,000 being inscribed upon have been unearthed to date. The study of these bones, *jiaguxue* 甲骨学, has sought to shed light on the lives and language of the Shang period, and has already revealed the chronology of Shang rulers, meteorological records of a solar eclipse and comet, and the rich ritual practices of a distant time period that is otherwise difficult to access.

So how did 614 oracle bones end up in Cambridge? The answer to this lies in the history of Lionel Charles Hopkins (1854-1952). Hopkins was based in China from 1874 where he was first a student interpreter in Beijing at the British Legation and, from 1901, Consul-General in Tianjin. Although he returned to England due to ill health in 1908, he continued to be connected to China—publishing over forty articles on Chinese palaeography mostly in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* until his death at the age of 98. His articles and research centred on his



large collection of close to 900 oracle bones which had been purchased piece by piece from fellow enthusiast Frank Herring Chalfant (1862-1914), an American Presbyterian missionary. Unfortunately, studies have since showed that some of these bones were fake. Indeed, many of these early collectors and antiquarians were duped by such practices. Nevertheless, while the field of *jiaguxue* has advanced greatly in the almost seventy years since his passing, Hopkins' work and collection provided great impetus to the field in its nascent stages.

His collection, known as the Hopkins Collection of Chinese Inscribed Oracle Bones, was bequeathed to the University. A published volume with drawings of the inscriptions was first made by Chalfant in 1939 as *The Hopkins Collection of Inscribed Oracle Bones*, however scholar Lee Yim 李稜 made improved drawings of the bones in chronological sequence while working at London University from 1955-1960. However, these drawings were not published. It was also around this time that the bones were also placed in specially constructed wooden trays rather than in cardboard boxes!

One of the finest volumes featuring rubbings of the entire Hopkins Collection would be that produced by Qi Wenxin 齐文心, an oracle bone specialist from Beijing's Chinese Academy of Social Science. In 1982, she travelled across Britain taking rubbings from all oracle bones in private and public collections, including the Hopkins Collection, and united these in five volumes.

For those interested in utilising the Hopkins Collection of oracle bones in their research, a catalogue of the bones is provided at the link below:

<https://chinese-cat.lib.cam.ac.uk/mulu/bones.html>

Here, the bones are first arranged by subject matter and time period, before more detailed tables list the bones by both period and subject matter with their Cambridge University Library number and where the rubbings can be located in published volumes. These are also noted as being inscriptions on bone or on shell.

Several bones have their pictures and inscription available online via this catalogue. For instance,



CUL 52, pictured on the left-hand page, has its inscription given online as:

甲戌卜宾贞与丁虫 一  
 …贞…丁 一 二告  
 癸…  
 甲…贞…亥…乙…  
 贞勿虫 七月 一  
 癸丑卜宾贞令邑并执 七月 一  
 甲寅卜宾贞虫于祖乙 七月 一

Furthermore, a 3D image is available online of this oracle bone (partially shown above) as part of a collaboration between The Cambridge University Library, Charles Aylmer (Head of Chinese Department), Dr Suzanne Paul (Keeper of Manuscripts and University Archives), Maciej M Pawlikowski (Chief Photographic Technician), and Prof. Dominic Powlesland (Affiliated Scholar, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research).

The importance of studying these bones cannot be overstated, and with this ancient archive on our doorstep, we hope more scholars will continue to divine the ancient past using the Hopkins Collection!

**Many thanks to Charles Aylmer for gathering the information for this feature. As these are such special items in the University Library collections, should you need to see these items in-person for research purposes please email: [chinese@lib.cam.ac.uk](mailto:chinese@lib.cam.ac.uk)**

# Needham Research Institute Seminars

## Lent and Easter 2021

The Needham Research Institute (NRI) hosted a series of 7 seminars across the 2021 Lent and Easter terms, organised and chaired by **Dr Jingyi Jenny Zhao** (ISF Research Fellow, NRI) and **Dr Avital Rom** (then Ho Peng Yoke Fellow, NRI). Instead of the engine room, where the Friday seminars normally take place against the beautiful backdrop of the NRI gardens, participants attended virtually via Zoom from different corners of the world.

The seminars covered a broad range of time periods and themes, reflecting the varied interests of the presenters. Three of the sessions focused on early China: **Prof. Jianjun Mei** (Director, NRI) presented his study of the bronze bells of the Western Zhou period recovered in Yichang, Hubei, noting the ways in which the unexpected content of the bells reflected bronze production and consumption practices of the time.

**Dr Avital Rom** set out to explore early Chinese perceptions of deafness in the physiological-medical, social, and philosophical contexts, raising a series of questions that are pertinent to disability studies.

Dr **Jingyi Jenny Zhao** examined the notion of humility in early Chinese thought in comparison with ancient Greek sources, arguing that rather than buying into prima facie contrasts between the

two traditions, it is more fruitful to examine in each case the contexts in which one is expected to exercise humility.

**Dr Huiyi Wu**

(Centre Nationale

de la Recherche Scientifique) presented materials that were also of a comparative nature, exploring how the Chinese and the Spanish empires sought to learn about their territories through the local gazetteers and the relaciones geográficas.

Seminars led by **Ms Jia Yu** (HPS, Cambridge) and **Dr Sally Church** (NRI) covered issues in translation and knowledge exchange. The former studied the impact of the compilation and reception of Benjamin Hobson's *Bowu xinbian* (literally, *A New Treatise of Broad Learning*); the latter shared her personal reflections on a recent translation project: *The Silk Road and Exchanges between East and West*, noting the variety of ways in which this work is distinctive in its approach and the challenges and rewards of making this book accessible in English.

Guest speaker **Prof. Robert. F. Campany** (Vanderbilt University) focused on his recent work on



dreams and self-cultivation in medieval China, sharing two paradigms of dreams based on the Chinese materials – the exorcistic and the diagnostic, which allow the individual to achieve forms of self-cultivation.

Due to the pandemic, the NRI has been largely closed to visiting fellows in the past year. We very much hope that the usual activities will resume come Michaelmas Term, and that we will all gather together in the engine room again in no time, sipping green tea and reading Chinese texts.

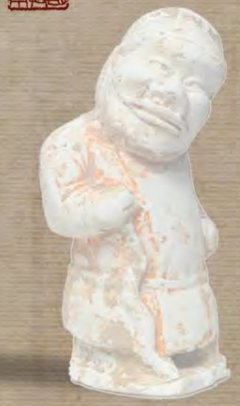
- Dr Jenny Zhao

*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.*



# Needham Research Institute

## Workshops 2021



Needham Research Institute  
19-21 April, 2021 Online Meeting

### OTHER BODIES

DISABILITY AND BODILY IMPAIRMENT IN EARLY AND MEDIEVAL CHINA

Keynote Speaker: **Roel Sterckx** (University of Cambridge)  
 Guest Speaker: **Christian Laes** (University of Manchester)  
**Robin D.S. Yates** (McGill University)  
**Olivia Milburn** (Seoul National University)  
**Wai-ye Li** (Harvard University)  
**Uffe Bergeton** (North Carolina at Chapel Hill)  
**Mark G. Pitner** (Elmira College, NY)  
**Leslie Wallace** (Coastal Carolina University)  
**Michael Hoeckelmann** (Friedrich-Alexander Universität)  
**Jesse Chapman** (NYU)  
**Avital Rom** (NRI, University of Cambridge)

For more information, contact  
Dr Avital Rom (organiser)

On 19-21 April 2021 the Needham Research Institute hosted an online international workshop titled “Other Bodies: Disability and Bodily Impairment in Early and Medieval China,” the first attempt at bringing together scholars to discuss the topic of disability in Chinese history, “Other Bodies” featured eight speakers and three moderators from ten academic institutions worldwide (including Cambridge, Harvard, and McGill University, amongst others).

‘Disability’, even in modern times (or, arguably, more so in modern times), is a term difficult to define. Indeed, so difficult that even the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities refrains from providing a definition of ‘disability’ or ‘persons with disabilities’, instead acknowledging that ‘disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction

between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’ In recent years, the academic field of disability studies has been similarly guided by the contention that disability is not merely an individual ailment but a social construct, which in turn sheds light on the cultural values of a given society. In a world that increasingly acknowledges the role of society in creating and preserving notions of disability, it is becoming increasingly important to research the social history of disability. While some scholars have endeavoured to study the history of disability in other early cultures, no concentrated attempt was made until now to examine ancient Chinese notions of disability. With this in mind, we embarked on a three-day workshop, which yielded some fruitful discussions on the subject.

A fascinating keynote talk was given by FAMES’ own **Professor Roel Sterckx**, who raised questions regarding the political motivations of early Chinese authors in discussing bodily impairments. Three panels then followed, with presentations on definitions of disability across various early Chinese genres, as well as presentations focusing on specific bodily impairments in early Chinese society. Finally, a Roundtable session provided a valuable opportunity to discuss questions ensuing from the juxtaposition of all presentations. This session was led by **Professor Christian Laes** (University of Manchester), editor of the wonderful volume *Disability in Antiquity* and an leading scholar in the studies of disability in ancient Rome.

Despite the challenges of hosting a workshop in the midst of a global pandemic, the online format of the workshop proved itself to be advantageous. Over 200 people from over 100 academic institutions registered their interest in attending the workshop, and between 50-90 participants attended each of the five sessions. In ordinary times, one could not have imagined such an attendance in a workshop dealing with a subject as ‘niche’ as disability in Chinese antiquity. Closed-captioned videos of all sessions will soon be available via YouTube, and the proceedings of the workshop will be published in an edited volume, expected to be published around the end of 2022.

- Dr Avital Rom  
PhD alumnus

# Thomas Wade Society Anniversary

**It's been five years since the Thomas Wade Society, originally founded in 2009, was rebuilt in 2016. Caroline Meinhardt, from the graduating class of 2016, speaks here about the past and future of this ever-growing alumni society.**

**Caroline, what was the state of the society when you took the reins in 2016? How many members are now part of the society?**

When my year group graduated in 2016, we found that there wasn't a structured way to stay in touch with alumni and the Chinese Studies faculty. I think it was after a few farewell drinks with our professors and fellow graduates during May Week that my classmate **Greg McMillan** and I decided we wanted to create an alumni society that would not only allow us to stay in touch with our tongxue but also connect with older alumni. We were told that our predecessors had created such a group in 2009 but that the effort had fizzled out, so we decided to resurrect the society – that's how the Thomas Wade Society (TWS) was (re)born. Today we have nearly 200 alumni, members of staff, current students and friends of the faculty on our mailing list and in our Facebook/WeChat groups.



**2017 reunion with the Class of '16 in the Royal Exchange**

**Have any alumni been involved with actively running the society?**

For the first few years it was mainly Greg and myself running the society. We were lucky to receive a lot of support from alumnus **Sir William Ehrman** (Class of '73) and **Professor Roel Sterckx**, who helped us secure sponsorship and put on our first few events. Over the years, countless others have since also helped us along

the way. With both Greg and myself living and working abroad (in Hong Kong and Beijing respectively), we have relied on many then-students and alumni to help us run our London and Cambridge-based events. The TWS community has been incredibly supportive and enthusiastic from day one and I'm really grateful for all the members who have helped organise events, participated as speakers in our careers talks and shared resources or advice. Keeping TWS alive alongside full-time jobs has been a challenge though, so I have recently expanded the TWS management team to include four alumni (**Sarah** - Class of '19; **Juliana, Iz** and **Lara** -Class of '20) and one current student (**Morrison** -Class of '23). You'll hopefully hear more from us in the coming months.



**2018 Inaugural Careers Event in Cambridge**

**There have been many regular events in the past five years run by the society including the Careers Event. Why do you think such an event matters for undergraduates studying China?**

The annual Careers Event gets right to the heart of one of the main aims of TWS aside from alumni reunions. Drawing from my own experience, I think a lot of Chinese Studies students graduate with a fantastic grasp of Mandarin and deep knowledge about China but no clear idea how to pursue a career in or related to China and what kinds of jobs would be a good fit. In my opinion, talking with other people who have done the course at Cambridge and gone on to work in China or China-adjacent fields is one of the most useful things you can do as you embark on the early stages of your career. Since TWS has a large and varied network of alumni working across all sorts of fascinating fields, in- and outside China, it felt natural and easy to bring some of them to

Cambridge to speak about their experiences at careers events. And as it turns out, it's not just students of the Chinese faculty that found these talks useful and inspiring, but also students from other subject courses and our own alumni.



**2019 reunion in Beijing with the Class of '20**

**Another regular event is the reunions in Britain and in China, often including the third-years on their year abroad. What has been a highlight for you at these events?**

I've really enjoyed meeting various groups of third-year students in Beijing. It's been fun to learn how they're getting on with their year abroad, exchange stories about travel adventures and hear about familiar struggles with Classical Chinese translations. I guess some things never change. It also always strikes me how even across generations, alumni have a lot of similar experiences studying and working in China. It was always fascinating to meet alumni in Beijing and hear their stories – whether it's over dinner in the beautiful hutong courtyard home of one alumnus (a particular highlight!), a drinks reception at the British Embassy or simply casual pints at a pub. Ironically, I have yet to make it to a single UK-based event, despite having organised them.



**2018 reunion in the Beijing Embassy**

### **How has Covid impacted the society?**

Unsurprisingly, Covid has meant that we haven't been able to organise any in-person gatherings in the UK in one and a half years. With third-year students now studying abroad in Taiwan and more and more alumni leaving Beijing (including myself), reunions in China have also temporarily stopped. But there's also a silver lining: Holding our annual careers event online, as opposed to in-person at the Faculty, meant that alumni were able to join as speakers or participants all the way from China, the US and elsewhere in the world. While we hope that in-person gatherings can resume soon, we may continue to make use of virtual event formats since our members are spread all across the world.



**2017 reunion in Beijing with the Class of '18 kindly hosted by Adrian Harley (Class of '88) in his hutong courtyard**

### **What do you feel the next five years hold for TWS?**

I'm excited for the next five years. I'm looking forward to the newly expanded TWS team re-launching events and activities after our Covid lull. Beyond continuing organising reunions in London, Cambridge and Beijing more regularly and improving our careers events, I'd also love to expand the resources we collate to help alumni connect and exchange career advice or job opportunities (such as our careers directory). In the longer term, a key goal is to formalize the structure of TWS as a society with new funding and larger-scale events and partnerships.

### **And how can people join TWS?**

To join TWS and sign up to our mailing list, fill out this Google form: <http://tinyurl.com/twssignupform> and join our social media groups on Facebook, WeChat or LinkedIn – details on how to join these are also in the Google form. We also always love it when alumni or students say hi via email to share what you're up to or any suggestions you might have for TWS. You can reach us at: [thewadesociety@gmail.com](mailto:thewadesociety@gmail.com)

## Thomas Wade Society Updates 2021

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the Thomas Wade Society held our annual careers event. As with many other meetings this year, the format was rather different as it had to be moved online. Fortunately, this afforded greater opportunity for alumni currently working in China to join us; after all, the event is focused on careers linked to China.

This year the four alumni who took us through their life journeys thus far were **Colette Howarth** and **Imogen Page-Jarrett** from the Class of '16, **Robert Cole** from the Class of '12, and **John Everard** from the Class of '78. Colette spent four years in China after graduating where she worked at the British Embassy countering human trafficking and is now back in the UK working at the Nursing and Midwifery Council. Meanwhile, Imogen obtained a Master's in Public Policy from Peking University and, after working a few different jobs in China, she is now there working as a Research Analyst at the Economist Intelligence Unit. Rob also went on to further study gaining a Master's in Management from Tsinghua University and is now a Vice President at Rothschild & Co. Finally, John spent the bulk of his career working for the Foreign Office from the 1980s to the 2000s. In 1998-2000 he was Head of the Political Section of the British Embassy in Beijing and held several ambassadorships before retiring.

It was a pleasure to hear from all of our alumni and, thanks to the diversity of their careers, it was great to learn about a variety of different jobs which current students can consider. The Q&A section was very enjoyable with current students keenly making use of the opportunity to meet and chat with alumni which has otherwise been particularly hard this year. Their questions also promoted some funny tales about working in North Korea or first starting as a foreigner working in Beijing. Around 40 people attended, including students, teachers and other alumni. Hopefully everyone gained something from the event and is left with some food for thought on what to do after graduating – a daunting enough challenge without weekly 听写 and 作文!

Remember to add yourself to the Thomas Wade Society alumni network if you are involved with Chinese Studies at any level to stay up to date with all our events. You can get in touch by emailing [thewadesociety@gmail.com](mailto:thewadesociety@gmail.com). We hope to see you at our next meeting.

- Morrison Cleaver

2<sup>nd</sup> Year Chinese and TWS Committee Member

## AMES Garden Party 2021

On the 25<sup>th</sup> June, the annual AMES Garden Party was held in front of the Faculty. With prosecco, strawberries, and facemasks, the event was greatly enjoyed by staff and students alike. The weather was wonderful and only added to the high spirits of classmates and colleagues finally seeing each other in person at a larger event for the first time in many months.

It was also an opportunity to thank staff and students for their continued patience with the unprecedented circumstances faced by the

Faculty, and to wish **Dr Boping Yuan**, **Shenhsing Hong**, and the graduating fourth-years, MPhil, and PhD students well in their future endeavours. Thank you to those who organised the event, and let's hope next year we will all see each other in-person more often!

**Prof. Mickey Adolphson**  
giving a speech





# Cambridge University China Forum

Despite not being allowed to return to university for the second term of this academic year, there were still plenty of CUCF events taking place. Lent term kicked off with 'A Conversation with Tessa Keswick'. **Lady Keswick** is an author and policy analyst who witnessed all of China's dramatic events of the 20th century first-hand alongside her husband, **Sir Henry Keswick**, chairman of conglomerate Jardines Matheson. Her talk was fascinating in detailing how the upper echelons of Chinese society have changed and how they have stayed the same bearing in mind everything that took place in the second half of the century. Her observations can be accessed in her new book, *The Colour of the Sky After Rain*.

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> we had a very topical event, 'Lone survivor? The future of the Chinese economy after Covid-19', in the form of a panel discussion with **Jinny Yan, Tom Orlik** and **Gabriel Wildau**. Given the time it took place, a lot of the discussions tended towards vaccine diplomacy and it is interesting to look back on this talk and remember how there was a common sense that China would lead the world in the vaccine rollout.

Following this, on February 11<sup>th</sup> the next event was 'A Conver-

sation with Sir Christopher Hum', who was Ambassador to the PRC, 2002-2005, and is CUCF's very own Honorary President. **Sir Christopher** provided eye-opening insights on what it was like carrying out foreign diplomacy through the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>. It was also timely to be reminded of the process behind the handover of Hong Kong within which Sir Christopher was a central figure.

CUCF was delighted to partner with the Cambridge Union for a debate titled 'This House Believes China is More a Threat than an Opportunity' and we hope that organising a debate on China as part of the Union's main series will become an annual affair. Attention turned to business on February 23<sup>rd</sup> in a panel discussion with **William Vanbergen, Rupert Mitchell** and **Tim Clissold** who elaborated on the innumerable challenges they faced as Westerners trying to establish companies in China and the subsequent rewards. **Torsten Weller**, business consultant and analyst at the China-Britain Business Council, gave a revealing talk on the key shifts in policy under Xi Jinping which revolve around the environment and data.

Our event with the highest attendance to date was a talk given by **Professor Jiwei Ci** on 'Democracy in China: Spillover, Compensation, and the Repressive State Apparatus'. There were several hundred people tuning in on March 9<sup>th</sup> to hear Professor Ci expound on his views on what will

increasingly battle with the question of its legitimacy.

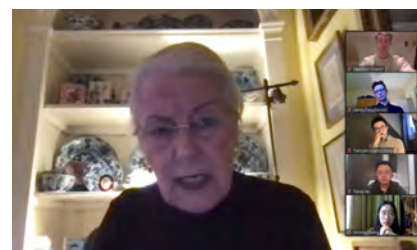
Finally, we had one event in the Easter term which was a panel discussion between Chinese journalists featuring **Emily Feng, Hannah Zhang, Bill Birtles** and **Nathan Vanderklippe**. The conversations between the speakers provided fascinating insights on the environment for foreign journalists in China.

As you can see, it has been another busy second half to the year. At CUCF we are all proud of what we have achieved in our inaugural year and we hope many of you will be interested in becoming part of next year's team when we open applications. Keep an eye out for an email or like the Facebook page to stay up to date. Lastly, CUCF has launched a journal and is inviting written submissions to contribute on all topics to do with China. Selected pieces will be displayed on the website, social media accounts and potentially an annual publication. To be considered, please email:

[contact@camchina.org](mailto:contact@camchina.org)

Have a great summer everyone!

- Morrison Cleaver  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year Chinese



**Lady Tessa Keswick**