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The Scotland–China Association is a society of people, generally based in Scotland, who have an interest in all aspects of Chinese life and civilisation.

It exists to foster friendship and understanding between the people of Scotland and China. The Association is non-political and non-sectarian.

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Update: The Scotland China Association in 2020-21

Through a difficult year and a half Dale has expertly maintained communication with us all, and we have been able to meet online. SCA activities have taken place almost entirely online since September 2020 – a situation none of us would or could have imagined eighteen months ago. While we miss the social aspects of in-person meetings, in some ways meetings have been enhanced by online activity. We have far more members and non-members attending meetings, and have saved venue rental, though this of course affects the organisations from which we hire rooms. There has been one exception: the Glasgow branch committee met informally in August. We are hoping that branch activities will start soon.

Dale and other members have kept us supplied with links to the latest news from China, and the latest international press and pundit comments. We are grateful to the Asia Scotland Institute, which has streamed a series of public, often free, in-depth webinars.

Planning with pandemic restrictions in mind, the national committee has organised a 2021-22 programme of online talks by speakers from a range of locations in the UK. We hope to arrange some informal in-person meetings, for example meals, and visits to botanic gardens, museums, etc. One of our members has suggested we set up a reading group – if you are interested, please get in touch.

Membership of the association is decreasing. We are no longer a sole conduit for information about China, and visiting China is unlikely in the near future. However, we feel we have a great deal to offer, not least through our uniquely Scottish perspective. If you know of anyone who might enjoy SCA activities, please encourage them to join.

National secretary vacancy

We are looking for a national secretary to replace Tom Nisbet, to whom we are grateful for years of service. If you are interested in this voluntary, but fascinating position, or know of someone who might be, please let us know.

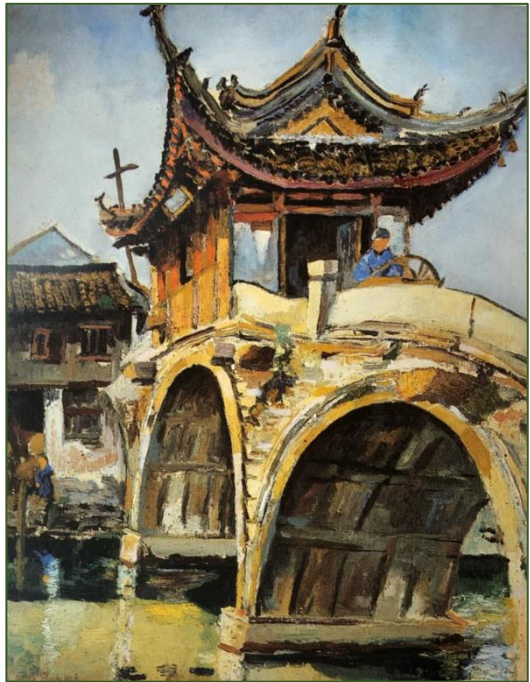
Oriental Supplement to the Scots Thistle: Robert Cecil Robertson in China, 1925–1942

by David Macfadyen

He was exactly the type of man to represent Great Britain in that part of the world – a man of boundless physical and moral courage, a keen humanitarian, and a vigorous champion of the cause of the Chinese, among whom he had hosts of friends.

British Medical Journal, 24 October 1942.

Cecil Robertson, just turned 36, raised his glass to his wife Eleanor to toast "The Lassies". It was the 25th of January 1925. This event took place on the SS *Patroclus*. The Robertson family, which included 18-month-old Ailsa, was travelling to Shanghai where Cecil was taking up a public health appointment with the Municipal Council. They got a fine view of the city from the small boat that carried them away from the *Patroclus's* anchorage. What they saw on the skyline were the possessions of imperial powers, represented by the great thoroughfare of the Bund. Cecil Robertson had come to Shanghai to serve



*Robert Cecil Robertson (1889-1942),
The Wantung Bridge. Oil.
Ailsa Tanner, My Parents*

the Chinese people, as assistant pathologist to the municipality. If Cecil's motive in moving to China was humanitarian, then this was a quality

imparted by his mother. Annie Morton Robertson (1862-1920) was one of the women of Royaumont, the Scottish Women's Hospital on the Western Front during World War I.

He had fine credentials. After graduating in medicine from the University of Glasgow and highly decorated war service, he received a doctorate from his alma mater, a postgraduate qualification in public health, a membership of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, and a fellowship of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. Pathology and bacteriology were Robertson's specialties. He had co-published scholarly articles on harmful bacteria and looked after former soldiers suffering from tropical and infectious diseases at the Scottish National Red Cross Hospital.

The Shanghai Municipal Council governed the International Settlement and was dominated economically and politically by the British. They had not recruited a bacteriologist for entirely altruistic purposes. Infectious diseases were a threat to the commercial trade that underpinned the city's prosperity. The League of Nations Health Organisation (LNHO) was about to open an Eastern Bureau at Singapore to collect and distribute epidemiological data to and from ports as well as ships at sea. Among Asia's ports, Shanghai was one of the busiest, and LNHO Director Ludwik Rajchman visited the city that year. As a bacteriologist, it is likely that he would have met Robertson either on this or during six subsequent visits, for it took little persuasion on Rajchman's part to convince Robertson to join the Organisation in 1938.

The Robertson family soon found themselves amidst anti-imperialist protests that had great consequence for modern Chinese history. Demonstrating students and workers were killed and wounded by municipal police in what became known as the May 30 Tragedy. A subsequent strike paralyzed Shanghai for the entire summer of 1925. It would have been understandable if the Robertsons had retreated into the expatriate life of the city. They developed an interest in Chinese culture, however. Eleanor was a painter who, as Eleanor Allen Moore, came to be known as one of a group of women artists called the Glasgow Girls. During her stay in Shanghai, she painted landscapes and townscapes, but her preference was to portray Chinese people. One of her finest watercolours is of an actor in the traditional Chinese Opera. Cecil had no training in art,

but also painted, and developed a style that involved study of the local atmosphere, history and culture.

On arriving in Shanghai, Cecil produced a continuously updated album to share with family and friends in Scotland. This included Eleanor's sketches as well as his own photographs and articles. It was a family tradition to circulate such informative scrapbooks, and Cecil entitled the journal *Oriental Supplement to the Scots Thistle*. Ailsa included an extract of one of her father's pieces on "Houseboating in China" in *My Parents*, a 1997 book that is beautifully illustrated with Eleanor and Cecil's paintings of people and places in China.¹ They clearly loved getting away on "The Bluebird". He describes a houseboat trip to the delightful city of Suzhou that he and Eleanor made "before the anti-foreign riots made it dangerous to venture more than a few miles from the Settlement". This was a sightseeing and sketching expedition. Eleanor's watercolour of the canals and Cecil's of the Great Pagoda, together with his oil painting of the "twenty-four century old" Suzhou walls, feature in Ailsa's tribute to her parents.

Robertson made many friends in the Shanghai Public Health Service, "not only among the members of the European community but also among the Chinese staff, who were as devoted to him as he was to them" (Thompson, 1943).² He was said to be "a good linguist and even achieved a smattering of Chinese". In 1926 there was a cholera epidemic in the city, and he reported the treatment of 368 cases.

Three years later, Robertson accepted an appointment to head a division of pathology in the newly founded Henry Lester Institute for Medical Research in Shanghai. This was the year in which Rajchman established cooperation between the League of Nations and China, one that was broad in scope and long lasting. In March 1930, he reported in Geneva on the situation he had found, questioning how far technical collaboration could improve health and concluding that the health reorganisation of China must be achieved concomitantly with the economic revival of the country. He pointed out that there were cities of immense populations, which posed problems for municipal administrations that were embarking on modernisation. The total population of Shanghai amounted to roughly three million, and Rajchman drew attention to the health services of the city,

which were directed with special competence by an energetic Commissioner of Health for the Municipality, Hu Hou-ki, the first Chinese to receive a Rockefeller Fellowship in Public Health at Johns Hopkins. Implementation of the cooperative agreement with China proceeded immediately and a detailed survey of the ports was completed: in June 1930, two League staff visited Shanghai to discuss epidemic disease control with the International Settlement and the French Concession, which had extra-territorial authority.

Before the Henry Lester building was completed, and while the Institute director was away, a disastrous flood occurred on the Yangtze. In July 1931, the river rose three metres above the seasonal average and flooding affected some 50 million people over a vast area. Cholera, dysentery and gastrointestinal infections spread rapidly among the displaced population, and doctors, medical students, nurses and others were mobilised. Wells were chlorinated, trench latrines constructed, and fly breeding controlled. Emergency hospitals and laboratories were established, and displaced persons were immunised with typhoid and cholera vaccines. Robertson's response was reported by a colleague:

... here is the Yangtze out of hand, one of the greatest floods in history! What are we going to do about it ... He [Robertson] took the lead and a plan of campaign was worked out. One of the Moller Line of steamships was chartered and soon an army of Chinese workmen was busy on this old cargo boat ... an up-to-date pathological laboratory was installed and equipped. Volunteers were called for, Chinese and foreign members of the staff of the Lester Institute and Hospital offered their services and, within a matter of days, the S.S. '*Hannah Moller*' was steaming up the Yangtze to Hankow ... to render assistance to the victims of the flood.



Cecil Robertson (2nd row, 3rd from right) with team on *SS Hannah Moller*, 1931.
Photo courtesy of Ian Robertson.

The response to the disaster was international. The League of Nations sent Sir John Hope Simpson to China, where he was asked by the Chinese to act as Director-General of the National Flood Relief Commission. Rajchman (on yet another visit) gave advice to the Commission and mobilised all available LNHO staff to undertake air and marine surveys, assist field units in the lower Yangtze, help operate health units in the Wuhan area, and assist with malaria control. In September 1932 Ambassador Quo Tai-chi expressed his country's appreciation to League staff for carrying out their flood relief work "with untiring devotion".

By the time the *Hannah Moller* returned to Shanghai, the Lester Institute building had been completed. In a 1933 silent film, Robertson takes the viewer through "the various laboratories in my Division", which were considered to be "the best equipped suite of laboratories in the Far East". During his years at the Institute, he regularly published research papers on bacteriology, almost always with a Chinese co-author, and became president of the Shanghai Medical Society.

In 1934 an attempt was made to kidnap Robertson. He had left his home in his car for the Institute with his chauffeur and the eight-year-old son of his Chinese cook, who was to be vaccinated. Robertson was shot at twice and one of the kidnappers was wounded. He forced open the car door and jumped out holding the boy, while his captors escaped. He attributed the incident to the gangsters mistaking the car for that of a wealthy Chinese.

In 1937 bombs fell on the International Settlement. On Saturday, 14 August, at 4:46pm, the public health department diary noted, "Palace Hotel hit! Many injured and dead in Street! -- In Nanking Road opposite Cathay Hotel". Over 1000 were killed and Robertson was officially reported among the dead. He later telegraphed the single word "unharmd" to his families. Eleanor and Ailsa were evacuated to Hong Kong and later settled in Tighnabruaich. For three months, Shanghai experienced not only bombardment, but brutal fighting, which inflicted immense civilian suffering and led to an influx of refugees. In September 1937 Robertson reported on the situation, noting a shellshocked and nerve-strained addition to the refugee population. Throughout the hostilities, refugees had been hiding amongst shell-torn ruins and had been exposed to all the terrors of warfare.

The War of Resistance to Japan resulted in the greatest displacement in Chinese history. At some point during the war approximately 15 to 20 percent of the Chinese population was on the move. The huge upheaval was described by Barbara Tuchman as "a steady trudging toiling stream of people carrying goods and equipment and themselves out of the area of the invader. Boats, trains, carts, pack animals and coolies, under repeated bombing, shared in the inland trek". Robertson drew attention to the public health implications of internal displacements by forwarding a report of a Red Cross worker to the *British Medical Journal*, which published it in June 1938. Many important hospitals, including foreign missionary institutions, had been bombed or evacuated. The health services of the Provincial governments were depleted of staff. All of this had resulted in a very grave situation where the outbreak of epidemic diseases was an ever-present danger.

Robertson's candidature was accepted by the Chinese to head one of three new League of Nations epidemic units deployed after the outbreak of war. It took him just one hour after meeting Rajchman to decide to serve with the League in China. He asked to be based in Changsha, because his former assistant at the Lester Institute, Tang Feifan, was son-in-law of the Governor of the province (Hunan). In Rajchman's view, Robertson visualised "perhaps better than the others how the underlying idea of the whole Plan, namely the strengthening of the Chinese medical and sanitary organisation, can be effected". It was Robertson's responsibility to recruit three other English-speaking international staff to join the unit, but he was able to recruit just one young British physician and an Austrian bacteriologist already in China. The English-speaking unit was responsible for anti-epidemic work in the Central Provinces of Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, and to some extent in South Anhui, Zhejiang and Fujian.

A German-speaking unit was located in the north. Facilities for the care of the sick existed in the small town of Yan'an in Shaanxi Province, the terminus of the Long March. On the slopes of the hills around the town, numerous caves had been dug, in which schools and a hospital were established as well as dwellings. This unit brought assistance to Chinese people within Communist controlled territories. Action in this area was to include the enlargement of the central hospital and digging an ice cellar and six more caves. A French-speaking unit operated in south China, its headquarters and base laboratory being at Nanning with annexes at Wuzhou, both in Guangxi Province, and in Guangzhou (Canton) in Guangdong Province.

With these three units in place, a national Epidemic Commission was convened early in 1938 by Liu Ruiheng, Government Representative on the Commission and one of China's most prominent medical leaders. The focus of the international staff was to help prevent the spread of transmissible diseases. One scourge, cholera, was actively spreading owing to movements of refugees and troops, and there was fear of a fresh pandemic during the spring and summer of 1938. Serious international and national repercussions were expected if military operations were to extend to the region of China where plague was endemic. Any movement of refugees carrying lice was likely to lead to epidemics of typhus. Troops on the march

and displaced people also brought the risks of smallpox, typhoid and dysentery to rural populations. Vaccines came to play a vital role in wartime public health. Epidemic units, including a League unit based in Xi'an, in Shaanxi Province, helped construct the technological systems that made mass immunization possible.

Chinese delegate Hoo Chi-tsai (later UN Assistant Secretary General) paid tribute at the League of Nations Assembly in Geneva to the expanded cooperation between the Health Organisation and his government. He stated that a year previously the League had sent to China three anti-epidemic units whose work had been of the greatest value, and he hoped that the League would again send a technical adviser to be attached permanently to the Chinese Central Administration and that the anti-epidemic missions might continue their work for another year.

On 6 December 1938, Hoo and the Chair of the League Health Committee attended discussions to implement the League's continued support to China and raised no objection to Robertson's appointment to head the China Mission. On 1 January 1939, however, the Ministry of Health in London wrote saying that Robertson was understood to be not entirely "persona grata" with the Chinese authorities. The Secretary-General was determined not to abandon Robertson's candidature and approached the Foreign Office in London. It emerged, in February 1939, that the issue was one that continues to concern global agencies with a substantial presence of technical staff within countries: should leadership be in the hands of national staff or international staff? It appeared that F.C. Yen (Yan Fuqing) felt he should head the LNHO mission. In effect, he had been doing so for a year, having moved with the Nationalist government to China's western hinterland and set up headquarters of the National Health Administration at Geleshan, just outside Chongqing. Robertson wrote to Geneva saying:

Yen is very much against me personally having anything to do with the debated appointment of Head of the Mission. This is why I cabled you that I had no great desire to have the responsibilities of this post placed on my shoulders. I suppose the real reason is that Yen regards himself as Head of the Mission and does not understand the underlying reasons that the Supervisory Commission had in mind when they made this safeguard in the League's interests.

Pierre Dorolle, a French epidemiologist in the LNHO team in South China, commented on the "*question Robertson*" saying he was a colleague who was senior to Robertson and to whom he deferred. He held the view, however, that Robertson was an independent academic, not suited to the sort of field organisation foreseen for the coming year. Dorolle nonetheless offered to cede leadership to Robertson because his position in Shanghai was financially insecure, while he (Dorolle) enjoyed a stable, pensionable position with the French administration.

The Minister of Economic Affairs sought a better balance in the programme of technical cooperation for 1939 with more emphasis on river conservancy, agriculture and engineering. These manoeuvrings led to Scottish physician Melville Mackenzie being sent from Geneva. The Chinese Delegation to the League was informed that Mackenzie "had been appointed as the Secretary General's representative (temporarily) for a period of two months and that the Secretary General would appoint his successor in due course". The correspondence suggested that it would be highly desirable for the Epidemic Commission to meet as soon as possible and proposed that Yen and Robertson be included together with Dorolle and Mackenzie.

Staff contracts in the three LNHO units were extended until 31 October 1939. The *British Medical Journal* reported, early in 1939, that Mackenzie was proceeding to China by air as the Secretary-General's representative, stating:

... last year the League of Nations ... collaborated with the Chinese health authorities in widespread epidemiological work ... For this purpose ten senior medical officers, with the necessary transport, laboratory equipment, and drugs, were maintained by the League in China throughout the year. At the last Assembly of the League the Chinese delegation urged that this valuable work should be continued, and the Assembly voted a further sum of 1,500,000 Swiss francs to continue the technical assistance to China, particularly with reference to the control of epidemics.

Mackenzie was charged with discussing with the Chinese Government at Chongqing and the Epidemic Commission the modifications to be introduced in the light of the previous year's experience. The last leg of his journey was from Indochina by train over what was then the main route of supply to China, from Hanoi to Kunming (capital of Yunnan Province). Mackenzie told his wife, Faith, that if the Japanese were to blow up the Indochina railway "we have an easy retreat down the Burma road" and said to his mother that "this road running along the Caravan track of Marco Polo will become one of the great highroads into Asia in the future". He wrote to Faith of the difficulty of persuading people to take precautions against dying from malaria or cholera when, any day, they might be killed by bombs.

On Mackenzie's arrival in Chongqing, Yen convened a three-day meeting of the Epidemic Commission, which set out a scheme of action to which all participants (Yen, Robertson, Dorolle and Mackenzie) formally agreed by appending signatures to a Report addressed to the League Secretary-General. At the request of the Government, Robertson was assigned to malaria control along the Burma Road. The Government accepted Mackenzie's proposal that Pierre Dorolle be the Secretary General's Representative. Dorolle retained his leadership in China until early in 1940, when the French refused to renew his secondment. The post lapsed with his departure.

The 1200-kilometre road from Kunming to Mandalay – the "Burma Road" – had opened in December 1938 and its strategic importance was apparent. In November 1938 the Secretary of the League's China Committee wrote to the British Foreign Office enquiring about the state of the Road. The information he requested was urgent, since it was proving difficult to move supplies from the base in Hong Kong, and the League was contemplating moving this to Indochina but feared that communications there with China might be cut "in the near future". Malaria constantly interfered with the work along the tropical sections of the Road. For many of the workers it was fatal, and the fear engendered by their deaths drove others back to their villages. Mackenzie assigned to Robertson the important task of "surveying the region extending from Kunming to the Burma frontier with a view to elaborating remedial measures and to advising the Chinese government

about the control of epidemics". This role for Robertson was the idea of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which sought to find a position for him where he would be independent of Yen and proposed creating a special unit for malaria control in Yunnan, where more than 100,000 men were at work along the Burma Road.

Robertson informed Geneva that the British Foreign Office was interested in health conditions prevailing on the China–Burma frontier. In November 1939, a visit to him by three United States malaria experts was considered in Geneva to be "a most happy cooperation". In his last report on the China–Burma Road, he credits by name three leading Chinese members of the malaria survey team for excellent work done under difficult circumstances.

At the end of 1939, Robertson accepted the position of professor of bacteriology and pharmacology and Head of the Pathology Department at the University of Hong Kong. In the summer break of 1941, at the request of the Chinese government, he returned to China and also visited various health authorities in the British Federated Shan States. Writing to the editor of the *Lancet*, he said he was pleased to be returning to the Burma Road, as it showed that the Chinese appreciated the value of his previous services and because he was able to see for himself the effectiveness of the measures adopted as a result of his previous recommendations.

After the Battle of Hong Kong in December 1941, he was held in internment by the Japanese in the Bacteriological Institute. Leung Kwok-tok, a former laboratory technician at the Institute and agent of the clandestine British Army Aid Group, went to Hong Kong to help Robertson escape into China. He arrived too late, however. Robertson had died on 4 August 1942. The circumstances were obscure because of the Japanese occupation. A contemporary who had known him from medical school stated in a eulogy in 1943 that, "for a man of his intense activity, confinement in enemy hands must have been almost unendurable". This friend saw Robertson (in the words of Browning) as "one who ... never doubted clouds would break, never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph". An earlier obituary recorded that his "international reputation as a bacteriologist, and his notable services in the prevention and cure of disease in China during the past two decades, had made him a

revered figure in the medical life of that great country". Another mentioned that one of Robertson's Shanghai paintings had been shown at the Royal Academy. Robertson wrote down his thoughts on Western and Chinese painting in a 1941 article on *Landscape Painting in China*. In this, he observed sadly that the region was darkened to all artistic expression by the clouds of war, but he drew personal satisfaction from tangible memories in the way of paintings.

The development of China in the period in which Robertson served is analysed by historian Yeh Wen-hsin. In her book she quotes the observation that China's cooperation with the League of Nations was "one of the most purely disinterested aid programs of the twentieth century". A contemporary perspective comes from Chinese diplomat and former premier, W.W. Yen (Yan Huiqing), who says in a foreword to Quan Lau-king's 1939 review of China's cooperation with the League that the Chinese people have reason to be grateful for the League's technical cooperation with China in matters of health, education, economics and finance, communications and transit etc.

Pearl Buck, sister of Edgar Sydenstricker, who had been a League of Nations epidemiologist, advocated such aid in 1933, saying,

No one can doubt that China is one day destined to be among the most powerful of modern nations. We of the West, if we have any wisdom, must begin to build for that day. We must build not so much for treaties and diplomatic relationships, which change with the exigencies of time, but in those other deeper relationships with the people, relationships at once more intangible and more solid. We must share with the Chinese the best we have of education, of public health, of science, of all modern equipment for the acquisition of knowledge, for each manifest friendly cooperation will be the soundest basis for future international peace and understanding.

What Buck prescribed is illustrated in this story of one individual, a Scottish doctor. The paintings of Cecil Robertson and of Eleanor Allen Moore are permanent records of their "deep relationship" with China.



Eleanor Allen Robertson (1885-1955) Street Scene Shanghai
By kind permission of Bridget Paling.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the grandchildren of Cecil Robertson for helpful comments and for permission to use the graphic from Ailsa Tanner's *My Parents: Eleanor Allen Moore & Robert Cecil Robertson* (Helensburgh: Springbank Press, 1997); and to his nephew, Ian Robertson, for sharing personal records, including the photograph of the team on the *SS Hannah Moller*.

The author visited China twice in connection with his work with the World Health Organization and once after retiring. Primary sources accessed for the present article include private papers at the Wellcome Library (PP/MDM); an archive at the Institute Pasteur (AIP RAJ); and the archives of the League of Nations in Geneva, researched for a 2014 University of Glasgow doctorate on *The genealogy of WHO and UNICEF and the intersecting careers of Melville Mackenzie (1889–1972) and Ludwik Rajchman (1881–1965)*. The article also draws on a 1943 tribute to Robertson by Gordon H. Thompson in the *Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology*. Readers may request a referenced copy of the article from David Macfadyen at <dm8610875@googlemail.com>

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Crossing Cultural Boundaries: a Chinese dragon and a Scottish ceramic print

Graeme Cruickshank

The link between Scotland and China in this instance came to light in the southern Thai city of Songkla, not far from the border with the Malay peninsula. This former pirate stronghold now pursues the more peaceful maritime occupation of fishing. The occasional helicopter drones overhead carrying oilmen offshore, while a few tourists stroll along the white sands of Samila Beach. Otherwise, Songkla is a typical bustling modern Thai town.

Development has been somewhat piecemeal and mercifully limited (in the 20th century, at least), so that a fairly high concentration of venerable buildings, in varying states of repair, have survived to the present day. Many of them display charming Art Nouveau and Art Deco proportions and details, with a distinct Chinese influence evident in such features as gables and eaves.

An impressive stretch of the old town wall remains, built in response to a royal decree of 1836. On the opposite side of the road, on Thanon Chana, is the excellent town museum which houses an interesting range of well-displayed artefacts, though perhaps the most intriguing exhibit is the museum building itself (See Figure 1). It was constructed in 1878 as a residence, almost palatial in scale, for Phraya Sundranuraksa, the assistant Governor-General of Songkla.

The building is an excellent example of the Southern Sino-Thai style of architecture. Some of its less permanent features of a non-structural nature have happily been preserved, and one large gallery houses a series of elaborately carved wooden door panels. Of particular interest is a pair of rectangular panels which appear to have been fixed above doors. In that position, the openwork carving would admit ventilation, and it also allows the appearance of the design to change according to varying conditions of lighting.



Figure 1 Songkla Museum

The main design element in each of these panels is a dragon of obviously Chinese origin (see Figure 2). It is depicted full-face, an attitude which is somewhat unusual, but hardly rare. Examples are to be found scattered throughout the field of Chinese decorative art in a number of Eastern countries, such as the one shown here – the centre-piece of a *pakua* painted ceiling in the Lungshan Temple in Taiwan (see Figure 3). Figure 4 shows a typical full-face dragon motif from an embroidered robe. It was the encounter with the dragon in Songkla Museum, however, which sparked off the recognition that there was a connection here with the once-thriving pottery industry in Scotland.



Figure 2 Songkla Museum carved dragon



Figure 3 Painted ceiling, Lungshan Temple



Figure 4 Full face embroidered dragon motif (creative commons)

Arguably the greatest of all the Scottish industrial potteries was that of J.& M.P. Bell & Co. (Ltd.), who styled themselves the Glasgow Pottery (notwithstanding that they were the third to adopt that title, and there were dozens of others thriving in the city during Bell's period of active production, 1842–ca.1912). Bell's Pottery produced a staggering array of wares, one of their special features being to cater for the specialised needs of the export trade. In particular, they latched onto the region of South-East Asia.

We know this because Bell's created a series of patterns especially for the countries of that region, the evidence of which is still to be found there in relative abundance at the present time (or it was, until Internet selling led to its global dispersal). Specifically, a total of 38 patterns were lodged with the Designs Registry, part of the British Patent Office, in later Victorian and Edwardian times. The great majority of them (30) were aimed at the East Indies, and were quite often given Oriental-sounding names, ranging from *Batavia* in Java to *Woosung* in Taiwan (or Formosa as it was then).

The subject matter rarely had any connection with the selected name; it seems that the main requirement was that it had an exotic ring to it.

One of Bell's designs in particular (Registered Design No.449234) offers a close parallel with the Chinese dragons in Songkla Museum, with the Scottish transfer-printed plate and the Thai wood carvings standing up to close comparison (see Figure 5). Indeed, the only major difference is that the Songkla dragons occupy rectangular panels, whereas the one from Glasgow fits into a circular plate, and thus the disposition of their bodies varies accordingly. That apart, they are strikingly similar, and their facial characteristics in particular clearly derive from a common Chinese model – the piercing eyes, the flattened nose, the flared eyebrows, the upper beard curled, the lower beard pointed.



Figure 5 Bell's ceramic plate design No.449234

One has to look carefully to discern differences, though under close examination, a few may be discerned, so that the two creatures are by no means identical. The Songkla dragon has a smooth scalp, on which appears a Chinese character 王 representing 'Wong' or 'Wang.' As this is a very common Chinese surname, an alternative meaning might be preferred; the character may also be used to indicate 'king'. This translation might be considered to be a more fitting, if slightly exaggerated, designation for the owner of this palatial abode. On the other hand, it might indicate that at some point, this was a building of notable significance to the Wong clan. No such Chinese character appears on the Glasgow dragon, whose scalp is textured. In addition, the latter's cheeks are scaly rather than curly-haired, and the mouth is more agape.

The carved dragon has four legs, as is the norm, the upper two clutching objects (one square, the other spherical, the former bearing the same Chinese character as appears on its forehead), so that only one claw is visible on each upper foot; the lower feet appear to have three claws each. By contrast, the engraved dragon exhibits six legs, each foot having five claws (though two of the nails have been omitted from the fifth claw, *ie* the lower left one). If there is a significance in this, then it is not obvious. Another tiny difference may be discerned in the pointed beards, that of the Songkla dragon coming to a single point while the Glasgow one has multiple points.

Although it takes a bit of unravelling, they also have differently-constituted bodies. That of the Sino-Thai dragon is 'normal' (meaning that it looks similar to the way dragons normally appear in Chinese art), being long and sinuous, and ending in a regular reptilian tail. The extraordinary Scottish dragon, however, appears to have **two** bodies with **two** tails, but just the one face!

The backgrounds to the respective dragons differ slightly. Both have stylised clouds, but only the Songkla version also has stylised waves. In the top-right corner of the carving, there appears the lower half of the sun, with a surround of cloud. This is absent from the engraved design, for the good reason that there is no corner in a circular pattern in which to accommodate such a decorative device.

Just how a Scottish industrial pottery got hold of such a design is a mystery at present, but there is one more link worth noting. The Songkla carving belongs to the final flourish of Thai art, known as the Bangkok period (18th to 20th century). Bell's Pottery, despite exporting this and other similar designs to the East Indies, and sometimes naming them after Chinese provinces, chose to call this particular one *Bangkok*. Yet one more element in the curious tale of Crossing Cultural Boundaries.

It is clearly evident that a Thai wood carving dating from 1878 and a Scottish ceramic print dating from 1905 share a common source, and that must lie in Chinese art. Given the spread of Chinese people throughout much of South-East Asia, and the influence of their art on neighbouring countries, it is perhaps not surprising to find such a dragon in southern Thailand. The same cannot be said of Scotland, and it is quite amazing to find its close relation being produced so far from its homeland.

Note: A version of this article first appeared in the magazine *Siam Araya* [Thai Civilisation], No.28, May 1995, pp.84–86; and April 1996, p. 119. As it was translated into the Thai language and printed using the Thai alphabet, it has had a rather limited readership outwith Thailand.

Chinese Herbal Medicine:

Part 4: Tea and Tea Leaves

Tony Butler

Loch Ewe is a north-facing loch in Wester Ross. Not only is it very beautiful but it played an important role in World War 2. It is a deep loch and convoys assembled there before setting out on the perilous journey to Murmansk and Archangel in Russia with vital supplies for the war effort. On the 25th February 1944 there was a severe storm on Loch Ewe and the American ship *SS William H. Welch* went aground. Only a few members of the crew were washed ashore and most of them were in poor condition. Help was sought from the nearby naval base but the weather was such that it was slow in coming. As a patriotic act, the redoubtable Mrs Mackenzie, who lived in an isolated cottage on the lochside, responded by using the whole of her weekly tea ration to make a great pot of hot tea to sustain the survivors. She is remembered fondly, not so much for her bravery in the storm, but for the sacrifice of her entire tea ration in one brew, providing support for the British view that one cannot survive for long without the sustaining effect of the ‘cup that cheers but does not inebriate’. China and Britain are amongst the great tea drinking nations of the world.



Tea bush *Camellia sinensis*

Tea is made from the dried leaves of the evergreen shrub *Camellia sinensis* infused in boiling water. It is drunk for enjoyment and for its health-giving properties.

The word tea comes from the Hokkien word *te*. Hokkien is the dialect spoken in Amoy (now Xiamen) in Fujian

Province. In Mandarin the drink is known as *cha* (茶) and the term ‘cuppa cha’ is commonly used in the south of England. However, in spite of the

crucial role tea drinking plays in British life, the practice is not that old. There were well established trade routes from China, such as the Silk Road, but tea was not traded. By the 17th century the main non-alcoholic drink of gentlemen in London was coffee and much business was done in coffee houses. It was the Dutch who first brought a shipment of tea from the Far East to Europe in 1610 and by 1660 tea drinking was quite popular. It was, however, limited to the upper classes, as tea was expensive and it was thought that special expensive china vessels, based on Chinese models, were required for its consumption. Women were rarely seen in coffee houses as the houses had acquired a doubtful reputation so, rather than go out for refreshment, an aristocratic lady might take tea in her boudoir, possibly inviting a few female friends. However as the century progressed tea houses and gardens replaced coffee houses. The gardens were popular with families and the tea houses started serving light dishes as well as tea. Tea houses reached their zenith around 1900 with, as examples, Miss Cranston's tea room in Glasgow, decorated with murals by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Bettys Café in Harrogate and Lyons Corner House in London. A few had afternoon dances at which dancing the tango became quite popular for a short time. Whether tango dancing was an appropriate way to relax on the way home after a busy day at the office is somewhat questionable.

In opening tea houses the British were emulating the Chinese who had had them for over a thousand years, whereas Chinese coffee houses are a recent development. It is said that the use of the leaves of the tea bush for preparing a drink was invented by Shen Nong, the legendary father of Chinese agriculture but we really have no idea when the habit started. The world's first monograph on tea, the *Classic of Tea* (*cha jing* 茶经) appeared in the Tang dynasty and tea has played a substantial role in Chinese life ever since. The tea house has been a gathering point within the life of the community and it not only offered refreshment but also the opportunity to discuss and conspire. Much political discussion, as well as subversive plotting, occurred in Chinese tea houses and the authorities would occasionally close a tea house for fear of revolution. On the other hand, Chinese tea houses were frequently associated with artistic activities such as calligraphy and ballad singing. In more recent time the situation has changed. After the Communists came to power in 1949 most people were

too busy to visit a tea house and during the Cultural Revolution tea houses disappeared. There has been a revival in recent years.

The popularity of tea houses in both China and the UK was due to the soothing effect of drinking tea. Dr Johnson drank 25 cups every day and that may have helped him to work so prodigiously hard. However, particularly in China, tea was also seen as a medicine, for strong tea can be pungent and astringent and these are the characteristics of other herbal remedies. There is a long entry on tea in the *Ben Cao Gang Mu*, (本草纲目) the great 16th century compendium of herbal remedies. Much of it is concerned with the cultivation of tea and the different varieties found in China. It also gives guidance on the correct cultivation of the tea bush. In spite of the long introduction, the range of diseased conditions for which tea is claimed as a remedy is quite small. It is said to assist in the management of asthma but any warm drink might do that. It is more widely recommended for the treatment of dysentery, an intestinal infection. The symptoms of dysentery are similar to other intestinal dysfunctions and so it is difficult to be certain about the diagnosis. Tea is also thought to have a soothing effect on the troubled soul and certainly my aunts subscribed to the view that ‘having a nice cup of tea’ would solve most, if not all, of life’s problems. There is no mention of tea or tea leaves as a treatment for burns in the *Ben Cao Gang Mu*.

A more valuable source of information on the medically useful properties of tea is a much more recent publication *Zhong Guo Shao Shang Da Quan* (中国烧伤大全) *Compendium of Chinese Recipes for Burns*, published in 1993. It appears to be a compilation from a variety of sources, including folk traditions. Many of the recipes, and there are 117 altogether, mention the use of tea leaves or willow bark in the treatment of burns. Recipe number 40 is typical of many:

Boil tea leaves to make a thick soup and put the soup
on the burnt site.

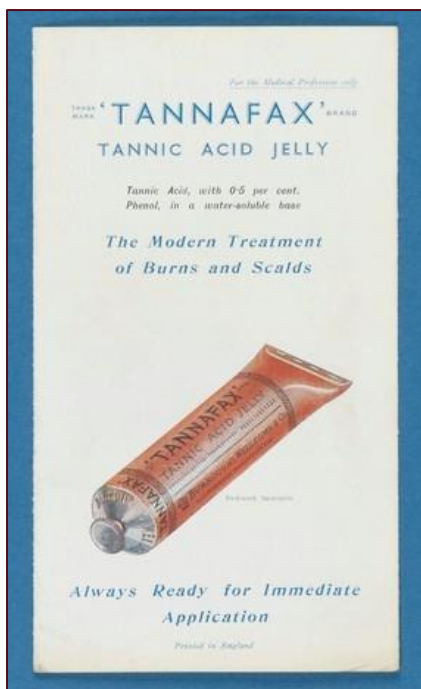
Other recipes mention willow bark. Tea leaves and willow bark are related in that they both contain tannins. Sensible writers would leave the matter there but tannins are so important in the treatment of burns that the matter

must be taken further. Tannins constitute a very large family of polyphenolic compounds to be found in the vegetable kingdom. Most of them are very large molecules and, by and large, each plant or tree produces a tannin with a distinctive chemical structure, possibly more than one. The differences are small and uncovering them has provided many chemists with careers. However, chronicling the results of their endeavours makes for dull reading. Life is much easier if you define a tannin by what it does rather than by what it is. A tannin is a plant-based substance that brings about the coagulation of proteinaceous material. Coagulation is what happens when you boil an egg; the fluid material of the egg white turns into a solid. Tea leaves and willow bark both contain tannins, rather different in chemical structure, but both coagulate protein. Why is that important in the treatment of burns?

Burns vary in their severity. Mild burns, and the following remarks apply only to these, damage only the outer layers of the skin but this may allow dangerous pathogens to enter the body. The skin is our primary defence against infection. A patient with bad burns dies of infection rather than directly from the burns. In the days before antibiotics this was a regular outcome and there was little that could be done to overcome it. From the burn-damaged skin much proteinaceous material is released by necrotic cell death from the tissue that has been damaged. The presence of tannin at the site of the burn brings about coagulation of this material leading to formation of a solid sheath or coagulum that may give some protection to the injured skin and reduce the entry of pathogens. The tannin may also act as an antioxidant. The fact that a number of materials containing tannins are recommended in the treatment of burns suggests that formation of a coagulum may be beneficial.

A tannin can be extracted from the galls of oak trees (an abnormal outgrowth in plant tissue caused by an infection); it is called tannic acid. In mediaeval times iron salts were added to tannic acid to give an intensely black fluid that was used as an ink. There are certain similarities between tea and tannic acid and, as Chinese medicine suggests a role for tea leaves in healing burns, tannic acid was tried and found to be equally successful. In fact, tea contains no tannic acid but an entirely different type of tannin, equally effective in bringing about protein coagulation. By the 1930s

applying tannic acid to a burn was part of standard practice of many physicians. Generally first aid kits of that time contained a bottle of tannic acid solution although it was not all together clear what you would do with it in an emergency. It was also available as a cream manufactured by Burroughs Wellcome called Tannafax.



A tube of Tannafax for a first aid kit
(Wellcome Image)

Some physicians were unconvinced of the value of tannic acid in the healing of burns and one in particular made his views known widely. That was Sir Archibald McIndoe, the plastic surgeon who worked miracles in the facial restoration of pilots whose planes caught fire as the result of enemy action, particularly during the Battle of Britain. Their burns were far more severe than those treated previously. As they were pulled from the burning wreckage a bandage soaked in tannic acid was applied to the extensive burns. These bandages were in place for several days before the sick pilot arrived at a specialist medical unit, frequently Sir Archibald's hospital in East Grinstead. Then the bandages were removed to allow full examination of the injuries. Sometimes removal caused such intense pain that the

patient had to be anaesthetised. This observation was reported in the prestigious scientific journal *Nature* in 1940. Sir Archibald wrote to the War Office begging it to stop including tannic acid bandages, or any cream containing tannic acid, in the first aid kits supplied to those who rescued pilots. That this hazard had not been reported before may be because the pilots' burns were far deeper than those sustained in previous generations. So deep, in fact, that the bandage became attached to the basal layers of the skin. After lengthy deliberation the removal of tannic acid from first aid

kits was achieved. At the same time other dangers in the use of tannic acid were noted and it gradually fell out of use. The development of antibiotics in the 1940s also had a dramatic effect on dealing with the danger of massive infection as the consequence of burn damage to the skin.

If you look at alternative medicine websites on the Internet you will find that a number recommend applying tea leaves to minor burns to speed up healing. As the burns heal spontaneously quite well it is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of this procedure. Many physicians would claim that tannins and tannic acid do more harm than good, so it is better to protect minor burns and let Nature take its course. For more serious burns medical help should be sought as soon as possible. For very serious burns the wonders of modern plastic surgery are needed. So the legacy of Chinese herbal medicine in relation to the healing of burns is a mixed one. Tea leaves may be beneficial for minor burns but harmful for more serious ones.

In surveying Chinese traditional medicine one cannot help but admire the perspicacity of Chinese physicians who, with little knowledge of molecular structure and human physiology, came up with so many herbal cures that alleviate, to some extent, the burden of pain and disease. However, we must not overestimate their achievements. The success rate for herbal remedies is way below what we would expect for modern pharmaceutical drugs. Quality control is difficult with herbal remedies as plants contain various amounts according to the season, climate and mode of cultivation. However, the unique flora of China does give it a special place in pharmaceutical endeavour. Plants sometimes produce very strange and unexpected substances and we would be unwise to ignore what Chinese physicians of a former age said about them. The discovery, in the 1970s, of artemisinin, a completely new drug for the treatment of malaria from the plant *qing hao* 青蒿 (*Artemisia annua*), is a wonderful thing for Chinese science and the world. There may, or may not, be more substances like artemisinin in other Chinese plants. Only time will tell.

I am grateful to John Moffett for locating a copy of the *Zhong Guo Shao Shang Da Quan* in the library of the Needham Research Institute in Cambridge and some jolly good lunches in Robinson College.

**Mither Tongue: the poems of Jidi Majia in three-way translation - translated into English
by Denis Mair, with selected groups of poems then translated into Scots.
Elizabeth Leith**



Mither Tongue front cover

Anyone involved with primary-age school children in Scotland knows that around the last week in January there is an annual outbreak of children learning a Scots poem, sometimes by Burns, but more usually not, and there is much talk among parents around the school gates about how to pronounce the poem chosen from the short list offered by the teacher. Questions such as ‘what does it mean?’ are Whatsapped to ‘locals’ to aid in the coaching and encouragement of the young learners. Scots Week passes, and the children settle back into whatever version and pronunciation pattern of English they have learned from their families and in their particular niche in the class system. While in my experience the children, especially in the younger classes, enjoy this foray into Scots, this is not an

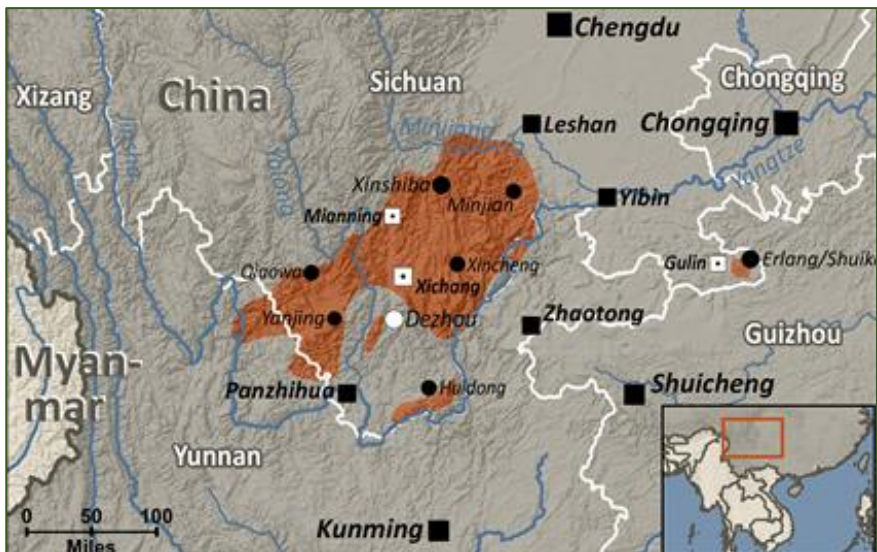
ideal situation for our beautiful Scots languages, such as the Doric, The Lallans (or Lowland Scots), Shetlandic and others. The BBC for years have allowed 'Educated Scots' and sometimes more localised pronunciation patterns, but as Billy Connolly recently recalled, in his early years of fame he was urged to 'tone down' his language (not just the vocabulary!) to make it more accessible! I still hear of children being withdrawn from their local schools to 'go private', with one of the reasons given by parents being 'we want them to speak properly'. In my long-gone primary school days, the more ambitious sent their children to 'Elocution' classes where they learned to recite both Scots and standard English poetry in accents never heard elsewhere! Like many children, I learned from earliest days at school to use Scots in the playground, and English with the faintest whiff of Scots in the classroom, but it was better to obliterate any 'Englishness' as that led to 'batterins' outside class!! I still have bitter memories of a day I told the teacher I wanted to tell the class a story. As the story got underway, I was harshly rebuked for speaking in a 'too Scottish way' and the story went unfinished. Confused? I certainly was.

However, today there is considerable financial support and teaching in schools for the Celtic language Gaelic, and places in the 'Gaelic' schools are sought after by Scots and non-Scots parents. Hopefully there is also an increasingly enlightened attitude towards the use of Scots more generally, much helped by the Scottish Poetry Library and other institutions, and by the (slightly) wider range of voices used by the BBC.

It is against this background that my interest in the poetry of Jidi Majia and the volume 'Mither Tongue' was sparked. This book presents a selection of poems by the Chinese-Yi-Nuosu poet Jidi Majia, who writes in his native Nuoso language, translated first into English by Denis Mair, a long-time collaborator of Majia, and then different groups of poems are retranslated into Lowland Scots by Stewart Paterson, into Shetlandic by Christine De Luca, and another group are rendered in Doric by Sheena Blackhall. The result is beautiful and both linguistically and culturally fascinating. There is a very informative introduction by the poet Gerry Loose, who describes Jidi Majia as 'first a Nuosu poet, then a poet of China, and next a poet of the world.' Or to use the words of Patrick Geddes in another context, a

‘man who thinks globally and acts locally.’ There is also an ‘afterword’ by Denis Mair which offers valuable insight to the poetry of Jidi Majia. Parallels between Nuoso and Scots are many and very clear.

Jidi Majia writes in the Chinese minority language Nuosu, the standard Yi language which is still spoken by over 2 million people in the area of Northern Yunnan and Southern Sichuan: there are some 10 million Nuosu people. The 2011 UK census showed that while some 58,000 people are able to speak Gaelic, 1.5 million stated that they could speak Scots, so we in Scotland have something to learn from this little volume.



Nuosu area, Shengzha, China

Nuosu is taught (alongside Mandarin) in schools in these areas and it has its own radio stations, TV broadcasts and publications. The Red Army on its Long March passed through the Liángshān area with relative ease in 1935 enabling the Nuosu people to gain credit with Central Government, which would appear to have remained in place. The writing system was one of very few officially recognised after Mao Zedong’s investigation into minority peoples. An example can be seen in the top lines of the signpost below.



Signpost in Nuosu, Chinese and English

Jidi Majia was born in 1961 into a well-respected Nuosu 1914, after reading Pushkin, he decided that he should be a poet, and thus express the cultural and spiritual identity of his own people. He quickly became recognised as a successful poet but also as a leader and administrator. Ai Qing, father of Ai Weiwei, was a mentor in his progress as a poet. Many themes related to nature and culture in his homeland recur in Jidi Majia's work. Black and white is also a recurring theme: while this is a common

metaphorical theme throughout China, in Nuosu culture it has even greater significance as the Nuosu refer to themselves as the Black Tribe, and one can trace multiple references in the poems in this volume.

In 'The Enduring One' (Da Een Beyond Foryattin in Christine da Luca's translation into Shetlandic, with its striking use of strong alliterative sound) the poet uses symbols from nature, and the beliefs of the Nuosu people to link to man's existential condition.

In the long poem I, Snow Leopard ('Snaw Ghaist' in Stuart Paterson's Lowland Scots translation) the leopard suggests the beautiful, but terrifying, solitude of the mountainous terrain, the difference and yet the strength of a minority people and the changes that inevitably take place as part of globalisation. The tiny extract below shows the universality of this monologue by the 'verra Chiel o the snaw-croont bens/haudin gaird owre lanesomeness, ayebidin.' While serving as



Jidi Majia

Lieutenant – Governor to Qinghai Province, Majia befriended an eminent zoologist doing fieldwork on the snow leopard, with its black and white markings, and dedicated the poem to him.

English

‘With every passing year,

Extinction of creatures is happening

We know there is not much time left’

Scots

‘Wi ilk year that gaes by

A when o craturs deen awa;

We ken we’re staunchin for time’

In 'Dedicatit tae Mama' - Twenty Sonnets written on the theme of his mother after her death and beautifully translated into Doric by Sheena Blackhall, Jidi achingly suggests the power and the influence of his mother and her links to an older, passing society. It is impossible to do these justice here, but one short quotation may remind readers of our own national poet:

I won't back down (I winna back doon)

Doric: noo I dinna need tae fash that mither'll murn

Since I'm nae leevin this life fur masel,

I winna back doon

Frae defendin the richts o man .

One of the outstanding features of this book for me is the variety and differences in the Scots versions presented and the power they display. The book is important to those with an interest in Scotland and in Scots language because of its themes of identity and the range of Scots language presented by the three translators into Scots. It is also important to those interested in China and Chinese culture for the universality apparent through its presentation of a minority culture.

The book is available from Vagabond Voices, Glasgow and was published with support from Creative Scotland.

Events . .

national, online Autumn-Winter 2021-22

The next four meetings will be held online.

We will send out a notice of the meeting inviting you to register (very simple – just email). Once you have expressed your wish to attend, we will email you the link and passcode for the meeting. Meetings will open at 7 pm and the speaker will start at 7.30 pm. This will give everyone time to log on and get settled. There will be time for Q and A after the talks.

We are hoping to arrange informal in-person meetings at a later date, for example meals, and will email members as and when plans become reality.

Online meetings

Tuesday, 19 October

Beyond Financial Well-Being: Explaining the Migration of Rich Chinese to Western Countries

Speaker: Chau Wai Fong (Grace), PhD Candidate, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Glasgow

Tuesday, 9 November

Engaging readers in the UK with Chinese writing

Speaker: Dr Frances Weightman, Associate Professor, East Asian Studies School of Languages, Cultures & Societies, Leeds University

Tuesday, 14 December

Reviving an imperial and classical imaginary of China's authentic cultural past: the Hanfu movement and young adults in China

Speaker: Dr Andrew Law, Senior Lecturer in Town Planning, Newcastle University

Tuesday 11 January

Title TBC

Speaker: Roy Peachey, writer and journalist, author of *The Race* (Eric Liddell connection)

Tuesday March 8th

Title TBC

Speaker: Brian Holton, translator of Chinese poetry into Scots, will give a talk about his work.

... in Glasgow

Glasgow Branch are seeking enthusiastic Committee members willing to help with planning events in Glasgow. If you would like to be involved, or have suggestions for future meetings, please get in touch with a Committee member. Meantime, check the SCA website (www.scotchchina.org) for announcements of forthcoming events in Glasgow.

Robert Colvil, g.colvil@sca.org | Barry Moore, b.moore@sca.org
Mike Nelson, m.nelson@sca.org | Ian Cameron

Sources of information on China available online

Major newspapers: The Guardian, The Times, The Washington Post, South China Morning Post and others, all available online, as well as in print.

Asia Scotland Institute: an invaluable source of information and discussion. The subject matter of ASI talks and webinars ranges broadly across Asia, is often China-focussed, and invariably involves discussion of China in relation to other countries. The talks are later made available free on Youtube.

BBC: Radio 4 has broadcast a number of excellent programmes, including Chinese Characters, China in Slogans, China's Great Science Leap, and many more, all available on 'sounds' on the BBC website or app.

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Pig	1911	1923	1935	1947	1959	1971	1983	1995	2007	2019
Rat	1912	1924	1936	1948	1960	1972	1984	1996	2008	2020
Ox	1913	1925	1937	1949	1961	1973	1985	1997	2009	2021
Tiger	1914	1926	1938	1950	1962	1974	1986	1998	2010	2022
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