Sine

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2022 is the year of the Tiger

Cover image by Anisa Caine

Síne is Gaelic for China

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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 2021-22

The Scotland-China Association has continued to operate successfully throughout the pandemic, shifting meetings entirely online. We are not in a position to know how long this situation will continue but, as noted in the previous issue of *Sine*, it does have certain benefits. We are grateful to Youling Sun for her technical help with setting up Zoom. We are also grateful to Craig McKenzie for stepping in at very short notice in March to give a talk on doing business in China.

The 2022 AGM will be held on May 28th at Quaker Meeting House, Edinburgh and we are delighted that Wendy Alexander has agreed to be our speaker. We are intending to hold this as a hybrid meeting, enabling attendance in person and on zoom. Members will be sent notification in advance, together with a booking form for lunch.

This issue of Sine, as usual, contains a range of subject matter, with some emphasis on Shanghai. Betty Barr gives us some insights into care for the elderly in the city in Orchid Residence, no doubt representative of institutions elsewhere in China. Joe Goldblatt, Emeritus Professor of Planned Events at Queen Margaret University, has contributed a fascinating, well-researched article on the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum, where he is honorary vice chair and for which he serves as an international ambassador. The article on drama in China is a summary of the two talks given to the SCA in spring 2021.

In 2022 we have a major innovation, the Reading Room. Members who use email will have had the first issue of Reading Room, which offers suggestions for China-related reading. For convenience of readers we have listed the first batch of suggestions in this issue of Sine. We aim to send out Reading Room by email at approximately monthly intervals. Those of you who do not use email will receive a three-monthly notice by post. We'll be pleased to hear of any interesting titles, with a brief resume, in any genre – fiction, non-fiction, poetry etc.

Please send your suggestions in the first instance to Valerie at valeriepellatt888@btinternet.com

We have a group of frequent, loyal and eloquent contributors to the magazine, but we would like to cast the net wider. If you have anything of interest to write about, or if you know of anyone who would like to contribute an article, please let us know. Readers' letters would also be very welcome. The Scotland-China Association is a non-political cultural organisation, and we welcome any subject matter that relates to Chinese-speaking cultures worldwide. We are considering a photographic issue – please contact Valerie if you have photographs, old or new, which may be of interest to readers.

Finally, we are still looking for a secretary!



Tiger, paper mosaic by Li Yan 1998

The Orchid Residence (Lan Gongguan)

Betty Barr

How would you like it if your total housework consisted of washing two spoons and two pairs of chopsticks three times a day? That is the situation in which we now find ourselves!

In October 2021 we moved to Lan Gongguan, a Senior Citizens' Residence not far from our former home, my university, and, most importantly, our friends. We are in Hongkou District, which is fairly central in Shanghai, so space is at a premium and there are no large gardens within our compound, only a small one with a few benches. There is, however, a fairly large park across the ten lane road from us. (I have not been there yet. Maybe in the spring.) Our pharmacy, fruit store and hairdresser are all within walking distance.

We moved because in the summer of 2021 George came down with pneumonia and, aged 94, he could no longer climb the four flights of stairs to our fifth floor flat. I could not lift him when he fell. Here, nurses check his blood sugar twice a day and doctors come often to see him.



Lan Residence Forecourt

The Residence is twelve years old. It was built by private funds with government assistance, and it is managed by an energetic 35-year-old who is still studying for an advanced degree in Senior Citizen Residence Management. There are four wings around a large courtyard, which is used for parking for visitors.

We are in Building 1 on the ground floor, of which there are several large rooms. - a dining room (for non-COVID times), a calligraphy room, a sports room with tables for snooker and table tennis and an auditorium where, for example, we attended a concert given by local primary school children on the occasion of Chung Yang Jie*. The Residence consists of four blocks built around a courtyard and we are in Building 1, the main building in the compound, which was formerly a hotel. So we are right when we say we are living in a five star hotel! Twice we have attended social gatherings where we took part in the games that were played. Recently, a young member of staff who has a beautiful singing voice, George (harmonica) and I (piano) have started regular sessions one morning a week, Auld Lang Syne being our party piece. I guess we may be invited to perform at the next concert.



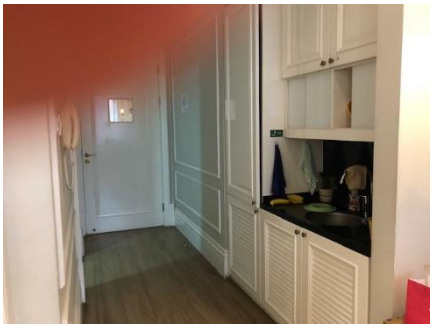
Senior calligraphers at work.
The red calligraphy by the window reads
'An old horse knows the way.'

We are on the fourth (top) floor (with a lift). At either end of the corridor is a large terrace where there are wrought iron tables and chairs. There, we

can exercise, sit in the sunshine, or join impromptu discussion groups. Our room is like a one-room flat and is fine for us though others might think it too small. It is about 40 square meters with space for two single beds, a small table, and two comfortable armchairs, and there is a small hall, with a kitchen sink, fridge and water heater, leading to a bathroom. If we want to heat food, we can do that in a shared microwave along the hall. We sit at the table to be served good Chinese food three times a day - after which I do my housework!



Residents' suite



Kitchen area in residents' suite

There are about 300 residents, including five centenarians and many nonagenarians! About 20 percent are male. Among them are retired teachers and professors, doctors and other professionals. Two couples on our floor are retired university professors, one from my own university! On our fourth floor there are 14 rooms and about 20 residents (I am still not quite sure how many!)

Soon after we came, we discovered that a woman who lives at the other end of the hall graduated from the school where my father taught for more than 20 years, then Medhurst College, now Jiguang Zhongxue. She later worked at the school for a number of years. Although she had not met him, she knew my father's name. This was very heart-warming to me and made me feel at home here. In general, the atmosphere is very warm and friendly and we all greet each other when we meet. My spoken Chinese has improved greatly in the last few weeks, I, of course, being the only

Westerner. Some of the women are illiterate, a reminder of modern Chinese history, but others are well educated. One man who is two months older than me told me he had had five years of primary education.



Orchid residents and nurse

On this floor there are three carers, one man and two women. They are all from Henan Province, one of the poorest provinces in China. They are on duty 24/7 and even put up three beds in the corridor at night. Xiao Ding, the man, gives George a bed bath every morning and helps him get dressed. (I dress myself!) Da Li, an older woman, is responsible for filling out the forms we must give to the gateman when we go out during this COVID period. A doctor drops in most days and nurses come morning and evening to check George's blood sugar and give him injections of insulin for his diabetes. (We go back to No. 1 Hospital for a monthly injection for his prostate cancer.)



George with doctor



Entrance to the 'five-star hotel!

Our building, the main building in the compound, was formerly a hotel. So we are right when we say we are living in a five star hotel!

Editor's note

For those newer members who are unacquainted with Betty and George, Betty was born in Shanghai, daughter of an American mother and Scottish father. She has lived through very interesting times, including internment in a Japanese camp, studies in Shanghai, America and the United Kingdom, and a teaching career in China and Scotland.
While teaching in Scotland in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Betty was secretary of the Scotland-China Association.

In the 1970s she found her way back to Shanghai as a teacher, at what was then Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute, now Shanghai International Studies University. She remembers watching Nixon arrive in China in 1972 and was proud that the Shanghai Communique was signed in her home town.

In 1984. Betty returned to Shanghai from Scotland to marry George, the widower of a former institute colleague and friend, and to be stepmother to Minpu. George, also an English teacher, came from a very different background from that of Betty, but they have one very important thing in common. They are both dyed-in-the-wool Shanghairen.

Both Betty and George are celebrities in China, and especially in Shanghai, featuring frequently on TV and in the press, most recently in *Shanghai Daily.*

Betty recalls meeting the Queen on two occasions, when she was awarded MBE in 1996, and earlier when the Queen visited China in 1986: 'Before I realized what was happening, my sovereign was approaching me. Not having received any instructions as to protocol, I stuck out my hand to welcome her. This was a big mistake! One is supposed to wait until the Queen stretches out her hand. George, with great aplomb, did the correct thing.'

*Chung Yang Jie is the 'Double Ninth' festival, taking place on the ninth day of the ninth month of the lunar calendar. Nine, (*jiu* 九), is a *yang* number, representing vigour.It is a homophone of the Chinese words for chrysanthemum (菊), wine (酒) and long time or long life (久). Chong Yang Jie activities include climbing to a high place (登高) drinking chrysanthemum tea or wine, appreciating chrysanthemums and tidying ancestors' graves. Chrysanthemums and Cornus officinalis (茱萸) are worn or hung in the house for their cleansing properties. In both China and Taiwan the festival now celebrates the elderly.

The Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum: A Never-ending Story of Compassion and Courage

Joe Goldblatt

Introduction

As I gently knelt before the memorial to the Shanghai Jews in the nearby small park and placed a memorial wreath during my first visit to the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum in 2003, I immediately thought of the famous pronouncement of Scotland's first geologist, James Hutton. Hutton reportedly was asked by leaders of the Church of Scotland if his geological explorations upon the Salisbury Crags had finally confirmed that the earth was 2000 or so years old. Hutton famously paused, closed his eyes, and responded slowly and carefully, stating, "There is no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end."

And so it is today with regard to the conditions for stateless persons throughout the world. I suppose that one of the reasons I have visited the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum, which was formally established in 2007 with an addition to the original Ohel Moshe Synagogue, is that my own grandparents were at one time stateless immigrants themselves.



Plaque in public park near the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum

My parents rarely talked about their parents' background. However, I know from researching our family history that they came from many parts of eastern Europe to seek refuge in the United States at the end of the 19th century. As they boarded the ships that brought them across the sea, they had absolutely no idea nor guarantee of what they might find. However, packed within their limited luggage appeared to be boundless hope and aspiration for a better life for themselves and their children.

The Anschluss and Ho Feng Shan

I have often wondered about the Jewish people in Vienna who, following the 1938 Anschluss in Austria, suddenly became stateless refugees. In every national catastrophe there always seems to emerge one or more heroes who disobey the normal conventions and do what they believe is morally essential to help others. In Vienna, the Chinese diplomat, Ho Feng Shan, began saving the lives of nearly 20,000 Jewish people.



Ho Feng Shan

Ho was a prominent Chinese writer and diplomat based in Vienna. When the Anschluss began, he realised that none of the European countries would agree to open their borders to unlimited numbers of Jewish refugees. In fact, during this time there was a conference in Evian, France, where representatives from dozens of European countries gathered to deal with what they described as "the Jewish predicament". Following much heated debate, only two countries in the entire world agreed to accept unlimited numbers of Jewish refugees. The Dominican Republic in South America and China were the only two countries who immediately stepped forward and courageously said, "Send the Jews to us, where we shall welcome them, unconditionally."

As these two doors began to open a wee bit to the millions of Jews who faced extermination by the Nazi regime, Ho Feng Shan began stamping passports with Chinese visas to allow immediate entry into China. As soon as the Nazi government began to rule over Austria, they demanded that Ho close his diplomatic office. Remaining determined to continue to help the Jews escape, he took his visa-stamping equipment home to his apartment

in Vienna and continued to process thousands of visas. The Austrian Jews soon were able to board trains (and later ships) and cross through Russia into China, first arriving in the bitterly cold city of Harbin. Some of the Jews remained in Harbin, but the majority continued their journey southward to the city of Shanghai where the weather conditions were more favourable.

During my second of four visits to the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum, I sat down for coffee with the museum's curator and director, Mr Chen Jian. I asked him why China, among all the other nations of the earth, was one of the few to welcome the Jewish people. Chen smiled and said through his interpreter, "The Jews are very clever people. They are highly educated. They are hard-working. They were doctors, scientists, dentists, business people, engineers, and China needed all of these professions. We knew they would make good citizens."

And so, through the compassionate efforts of Ho Feng Shan and the Chinese government, nearly 20,000 stateless Jewish refugees found a temporary, and for a few a permanent, home in Shanghai.

For the most part the Jews were warmly welcomed in China, and they made good lives there whilst living in an area near the famed Bund and establishing the first synagogue. Jewish life, comprised of clubs, businesses, and the annual ritual celebrations, continued as they once had known it in Austria. However, after the Japanese invaded and seized control of China, this normality became more restricted and subject to the cruelty of the Japanese government.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japan's control of Shanghai led to the establishment of the Restricted Sector for Jewish Refugees. Over 10,000 Jews lived in this ghetto, which was controlled with an iron fist by the Japanese. Only a few Jews were allowed each day to leave the ghetto for work that would benefit Japan. The remainder lived under harsh conditions until the end of World War II.

The place of worship for most Jewish communities is the synagogue, which is often the first building to be established by the Jewish community when

they begin to immigrate to a new community. In Shanghai, the Ohel Moshe synagogue was first established by a small community in 1907, and as the congregation grew to 250 families in the 1920s, the local Rabbi (minister, teacher) led a fund-raising effort to expand the building to accommodate the growing population of Jews. However, in 1949 the new Communist government confiscated the building and turned the synagogue into a psychiatric hospital. It remained under government control until it reopened in the 1990s.



The Museum courtyard and the Synagogue

If you visit the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum today, the first building you will enter is the historic synagogue, where you will find a two-storey building with a traditional women's gallery above the ground floor. In the Orthodox branch of Judaism, men and women are seated separately. On the ground floor you will see to your right the building's original ark, which would traditionally have contained the scroll of the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew bible, known to Christians as the Five Books of Moses. This scroll is the central ritual element in every Jewish synagogue. Rising above the ark is the Ner Tamid or Everlasting Light that symbolises the eternity of God and is also found in every synagogue. However, in the now-deconsecrated Ohel Moshe synagogue, the Torah is absent, and this precludes its use as a place of worship.

I recall that, upon my first visit to the synagogue, an elderly Chinese gentleman greeted me at the door and in broken English offered me a tour. At the end of the tour I asked him if I could return for Sabbath (Saturday morning) services. He seemed astonished and said, "No services here. Services at Rabbi's house." When I inquired as to how many people actually attend the weekly Sabbath services, he held up six fingers. In the Jewish tradition a minimum of 10 Jewish men are required to hold a service

where the Torah is read. I realised that the community had greatly reduced in size over time.

As I prepared to leave the museum, I asked my new Chinese friend if he was a member of the Jewish community. To my delight he smiled from ear to ear and said, “No! I am the Shamash!” In the Jewish language of Yiddish, the term *shamash* means a person who is a caretaker for the synagogue. As I walked away I thought how wonderful that the Chinese people were still helping the Jewish people, albeit a much smaller number today, in looking after their historic synagogue.

The upper floor of the museum contains a small research area where descendants of the Jewish refugees may search for their family members’ names upon a computer database provided by the museum. It also contains a small display about the history of the immigration of the Jewish people of Shanghai and the highly respected and famed first Chief Rabbi of the synagogue, Meir Ashkenazi.

Expansion and Opportunity

One hundred years after the opening of the original synagogue the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum expanded into a new modern building next door, where they were able to inform, educate and inspire future generations of visitors by more deeply profiling the lives of the courageous Jewish individuals who once sought refuge in Shanghai. This expensive expansion was almost entirely funded by the Chinese government.

Dozens of well-appointed display cases depict the everyday experience of the Jewish people by telling the story of their life cycle events, including weddings and bar mitzvahs (the rite-of-passage ceremony for a Jewish boy at the age of 13), the professions in which they worked, and the hardships they endured during the Japanese occupation.

As you make your way to the exit of the museum campus, you will walk alongside a 34-metre (112 ft) long copper memorial wall that was unveiled at the site in 2014, engraved with the names of 13,732 Jewish refugees harboured in China during World War II. The last time I visited the

museum, I noticed that there was a large group of 100 Chinese primary school children silently reading the names and behind them a group of 50 Chinese Muslims also learning about the bravery of these individuals who sacrificed everything to try and find a better life in China.



Copper Wall listing 13, 732 names of Jewish refugees in China

International Relations

During my second visit to the museum, I noticed a colourful display of flags from nations from all over the world. Upon studying the flags, I was surprised to see that my Scottish saltire was not among them. I asked the director of the museum if I could return the next day with a Scottish saltire and place it among the flags of the other nations to show our support for the Chinese people and their Jewish refugees. She readily agreed, and then I had to find in a city of 27 million people one small Saltire flag. To my surprise I could not easily locate one. Then one of my local Chinese friends reminded me that China is the workshop of the world, and if I wanted a Saltire he would manufacture one overnight; however, there would be a minimum order of 100 flags. I placed my order and the next day returned

to the museum and had my photograph taken, carefully and thoughtfully placing the flag between the flags of the United Kingdom and Israel. I then began handing out 100 flags to my Chinese friends as I made my way to Beijing the next day.

Once I had arrived in my hotel room in Beijing the phone rang. It was the director of the museum, who announced, "Big trouble!" When I asked about the big trouble, she explained that Scotland did not have diplomatic relations with China and that there had been an official complaint about my placement of the Scottish Saltire in the museum's display of nations from throughout the world who did have official diplomatic relations with the Chinese government. I immediately apologised for my error and told her to please keep the flag in a secure place because, perhaps, one day I might return with official permission to display my country's flag. She graciously accepted my apology and then gratefully agreed with my request.



Placing the Saltire flag at the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum

What Happened to the Jews of Shanghai?

During the 1950s, when the Jewish state of Israel was being established, many of the Shanghai Jews made *aliyah* (immigrated to Israel), others went to the United States, and a very few returned to Europe. Today very few Shanghai Jews are still alive. Many of these surviving refugees have been studied by the distinguished scholar, Professor Kevin Ostoyich of Valparaiso University in the United States, and he has a theory about why they did not return to their European homes. According to Professor Ostoyich, in 1950 a group of Shanghai Jews returned to Bremen, Germany, and were severely disappointed by their reception and the German government's refusal to pay reparations to them.

Whilst a few years ago the Jewish population of Shanghai was so small that services were held in the Rabbi's front parlour, today there are three synagogues and a Jewish Community Centre as well as a thriving life for Jewish people in Shanghai. This revival of the Jewish people in Shanghai is largely due to the increased international trade with China during the past several decades and to the number of Jewish workers and officials attached to companies as well as individual artists, café owners and others in Shanghai today.

As you reach the end of the copper wall containing the names of the thousands of courageous Jewish refugees, you will see a massive sculpture depicting a Jewish family of refugees. It is hard to tell whether this family is coming or going. I met the sculptor of this remarkable work of art and, although he is not Jewish, he based his design upon the novel "The Song of Survivors" by Bei La, and the sculpture bears the same name.

The four figures in the sculpture, created by Lü Qizhang, depict the Medavoy family standing on the deck of a ship, reluctantly and sadly saying farewell to Shanghai as they set sail for Chile in 1947. Their sadness comes from their sense of loss at leaving a country and its people where they were able to achieve their dreams through hard work.

As I stood with my wife before this statue, I suddenly began weeping uncontrollably as I remembered my own grandparents and how they were forced from their homes due to the pogroms in eastern Europe and set sail for what they considered at that time the Promised Land of the United States of America. They were among the lucky ones, as the USA, just as most of the other countries in the world, had established quotas and would only admit so many Jewish people who were fleeing for their lives.



The Song of the Survivors

Becoming Vice Chair of the Museum

In 2019 I was invited by the director of the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum to accept the title of Honorary Vice Chair in recognition of my long-term support for this institution. I was also invited to address their first conference of scholars and government officials who would gather in Shanghai to commemorate the establishment of the museum and promote

its next level of expansion, which has resulted in the museum spaces growing by several thousand additional metres.

I began my talk before 500 international scholars and Chinese leaders by reciting the ancient Hebrew prayer that many observant Jewish people speak upon rising each day. The *Shehecheyanu* prayer thanks God for our life, for sustaining us, and for helping us to reach this moment. I then explained that since the establishment of the Ohel Moshe synagogue 112 years earlier, the Chinese people had shown great understanding, tolerance, and love towards the Jewish people, and in doing this, they were symbolic of the bravery of Ho Feng Shan, who is now the only Chinese person listed upon the Wall of the Righteous in Jerusalem's Yad Vashem (Holocaust Memorial Museum).



Ho Manli, journalist and daughter of Ho Feng Shan

Ironically, I recently made contact with a friend from 40 years ago who, upon reading one of my articles about the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum, told me that she had actually met Ho Feng Shan nearly 60 years ago in Mexico City, where he was the Chinese ambassador and his daughter was her 12-year-old friend. She recalled having breakfast in their home and said that Ho Feng Shan was an excellent cook and gracious host. The young daughter of the diplomat had established a successful career as a journalist, and I asked my friend to please introduce me to her.

His daughter, Ho Manli, contacted me a few days later and thanked me for keeping the story of her father alive for new generations to discover and emulate. She also agreed to meet with me sometime in the future. I hope to invite her to Edinburgh to speak about her father so that all of us may learn from a living descendant of one of the world's darkest times how each of us may become a light unto the nations if we have the courage, compassion, tolerance, understanding, and love to help, one person at a time, repair our troubled world.

Drama in China:
the famous, the foreign and the ancient

Valerie Pellatt

Early influence from the west: Sanskrit stories

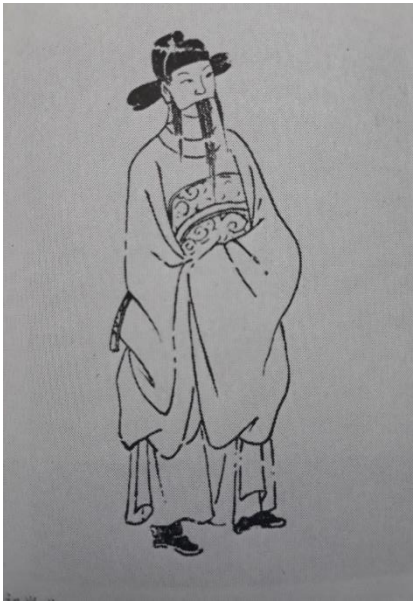
Chinese drama, like European drama, originates in religious and royal ritual, involving dance, music and acrobatics. Evidence has been found in figurines of acrobats in Han dynasty tombs, and later in Tang and Yuan dynasty images of dancers and musicians. One of the earliest influences was Sanskrit stories, introduced from India through Buddhism, and disseminated as street story-teller entertainment. This developed as song and dance during the Northern Qi (550-577) and Tang dynasties (618-907). By the Song dynasty (960-1279) various forms had culminated in the *zaju* (杂剧) or miscellaneous drama, which became the heart of Chinese theatre. The traditional forms, which have continued even in the model opera of the mid-twentieth century, always have music, song, dialogue, some kind of acrobatics, and movement and gesture which are dance-like. In the traditional drama there is no fourth wall. Actors address the audience, and explain what is going on.

The Yuan dynasty – foreign occupation (1271-1368)

During the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty theatre developed into a sophisticated, highly popular art form, which was well-documented. The ruthless Mongols, led by Genghis Khan, had subdued other societies to the west of China, and absorbed their culture. Similarly, in China they enjoyed and promoted the *zaju* drama. The Yuan court banned Confucianism, which had kept Chinese society relatively stable and peaceful, though conservative, throughout the preceding Song dynasty. Other schools of thought were condoned and encouraged by the Yuan emperors. In the absence of the strictures of Confucianism, everything else flourished, and there was a great flowering of varied thinking and creativity.

Civil service examinations, rooted in the Confucian classics, were discontinued from 1238-1314. Disappointed literati - would-be civil

servants - were rendered unemployable, and many turned to popular literature or play writing. These art forms, though enjoyed by many, were not considered serious. Moreover, the foreign invaders unwittingly encouraged an art form that they came to enjoy and patronise, but which lampooned them at every opportunity.





Yuan Dynasty theatre costumes

The Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644) – Han culture restored

The first Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, who succeeded in driving the Mongol rulers out of China, loved drama and actively encouraged the creation and collection of songs and plays. Ming emperors had an ambivalent attitude to drama, enjoying court performances, and encouraging the creation of suitably educational and moral plays for the masses; however, any criticism or irony would be silenced. Actors could not take the re-introduced civil service exams, and serving soldiers were not allowed to sing. Dramatists who wrote anything considered seditious

had five days to take their work for burning, or risk execution along with their extended family.

Confucianism was back in the frame and with it came a resurgence of all things Han, and southern. The style known as *nanxi*, or the Southern play, had existed alongside *zaju*, but with the return of Chinese confidence, it became more popular. The music of the *nanxi* consisted mainly of *kunqu*, or the songs of Kun, or Kunshan, an area of Suzhou. This style was noted for its melismatic songs, in which one syllable is extended over many notes, now a distinctive characteristic of the music of Chinese drama.

Tang Xianzu, a contemporary of Shakespeare, and now recognised as a major Chinese dramatist, wrote four *chuanqi* (strange tales) in *kunqu* form, the most well-known being *Peony Pavilion*. Tang's plays feature dreams – a useful device for inserting material which would not be acceptable if it were represented as 'real life.' As far as we know he wrote only four or five plays, but has been ruthlessly exploited in recent years to bolster China's soft power. Tang's *Peony Pavilion* now has the status and significance in China of *Romeo and Juliet* in the UK. Arguably, it may have been the quatercentenary of Shakespeare that inspired the popularisation of Tang Xianzu in recent years.

Ming theatre society: troupes and actors

Theatre troupes during the Ming dynasty were of two main types. There were independent, very often travelling, troupes, and troupes owned by wealthy families who had their own theatres. Actors in household troupes were often recruited from among the family servants. Actors tended to specialise in certain role types. Although the travelling troupes had little or no scenery or props, the private theatres had elaborate backdrops, props and costumes, which became more lavish as time went on. Household performances were sometimes in a courtyard, with a red carpet laid out to demarcate the performance area. Performances by independent troupes took place on village or temple stages, as had been the case in previous times.

Although the Ming court smiled on drama, there was government monitoring and disapproval. There are accounts of dissipated behaviour, particularly at the big spring festival events, which might involve hundreds of horses, dozens of dancing girls, pavilions, flags, drums and weapons. Plays might last three or four days, and highways and waterways were subject to congestion as spectators from every walk of life flocked to the shows (Dolby 1976: 106-7). But the late Ming rulers were still aware of the use that could be made of drama. Philosopher Wang Yangming proposed the bowdlerisation of all lewd plays in order to use them as 'subliminal advertising of virtue' (ibid: 109).

The Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912) - more foreign invaders

In 1644 the Manchus occupied China, establishing their capital in Beijing. As in previous dynasties, government policies both helped and hindered the development of drama. The Qing dynasty adopted Confucianism as its means of statecraft, and in the early years of the regime, many Han officials cooperated. During the early Qing period, literature and the arts among the Han people were characterised by nostalgia for the habits and styles of the Ming dynasty, as much political as cultural. As in the Yuan dynasty, hostile feeling towards the foreign regime drove some creative endeavour, including drama.

The enduring favourite *Peach Blossom Fan*, by Kong Shangren, is an example. Although a romance, it has an underlying political theme of loyalty to the weakened Ming dynasty. The play is rooted in nostalgia for the Ming, but was acceptable to the Qing rulers because of its promotion of the concept of loyalty.

All the Qing emperors commissioned and supported drama for political and propaganda purposes. Emperor Shengzu, for example, kept his own theatre troupe and his outdoor pageants included live tigers and elephants. Among Emperor Gaozong's literary and cultural achievements was the sponsoring of a wealth of drama. Macartney's journals of his 1793 expedition to Gaozong's court give accounts of drama performances, noting how the women sat separately in boxes, and how audience silence was preserved. Although he thought the performance inferior to Sadler's Wells, Macartney

was impressed by the 'invention and ingenuity' of the mechanical creatures and scene-shifting devices used in the staging (Dolby 1976: 132-3).

Gaozong, like other Qing emperors, was well aware of the dangers of popular entertainment. He enjoyed a good play, but was keen to prevent his subjects watching or participating, particularly the Manchus themselves; his domestic palace dramas focused on virtue and decent moral behaviour. He forbade the performance of drama at funerals (regarded by many as essential to the ritual) and also charity performances by monks and nuns, which were intended to prevent, or end, pests and diseases. His successor Ren Zong even banned theatres in the city of Beijing. Theatre-going was thought to be the cause and the expression of the decadence of many Manchus, who had become soft, ignorant of their military traditions and their language. The ban did not work. Many people were dependent on theatre for their livelihood, and in 1811 the ban was relaxed on condition that theatre was not used to stir up trouble.

Gaozong also oversaw the burning of thousands of books, believing that the ignorant populace might not be able to distinguish truth and fiction – a notion closely linked to satire and sedition. In the history of criticism of theatre in China, the accusation of lewdness is never far from the surface: men dressing as women, nuns dressing as prostitutes and so on, might incite the general public to bad behaviour. To avoid repercussions, playwrights would often use a pseudonym or remain anonymous.

Needless to say, theatre was irrepressible. There was an economic side to the argument: entertainment was the main source of income for many thousands of people. Any ban on theatre had disastrous economic consequences.

Lavish palace performances set a standard for wealthy households to follow. Court actors were often eunuchs or professional actors, sometimes brought to the court from professional troupes seen by the emperor on his travels to the south. The court plays tended to use southern *kunqu* style for romantic scenes, and *yiyangqiang*, the noisier, more vigorous northern style, for battles and such like. The two styles co-existed for a long period during the Qing dynasty. Perhaps because of the restrictions on content

and message, ever greater emphasis was placed on technique. It was apparent that the play-going public of the north were not very keen on *kunqu* – they preferred the earthy, noisy, direct style of *jingqiang* (capital music) which was a variety of *yiyangqiang*. In the 1780s, Anhui style drama was very popular at court. Southern *kunqu* style was said to be soft, romantic, beguiling, meandering and slow. By contrast, northern *yiyangqiang* was considered vigorous and bold.

Dowager Empress Ci Xi (1835-1908) adored drama, and the palace eunuchs continued to organise a theatre troupe which played both inside the palace and in public theatres. Throughout this period, responsible senior officials tried repeatedly to ban theatrical activities – one of the major arguments was still the endangering of women's moral virtue.

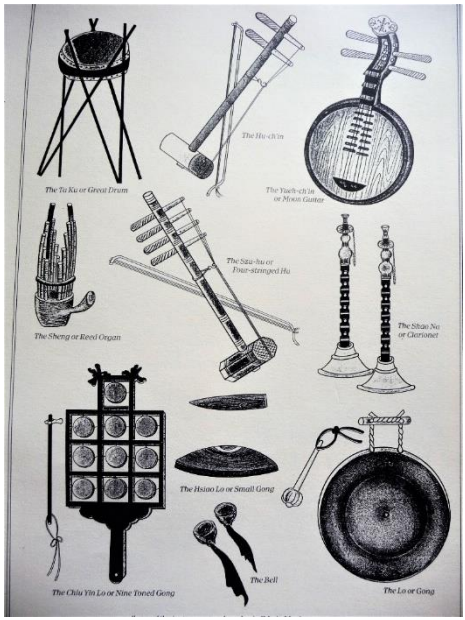
A note on gender and the theatre

Throughout Chinese history, until the twentieth century, actors of both sexes were reviled, and often equated with prostitutes. Travelling troupes might take in orphans to become actors, and they would be trained from a very early age. The precision of gait, gesture, speaking and singing voice required in a professional actor meant that training was rigorous and even cruel. Depending on the period, the area and the type of drama, men might act female roles, and women sometimes act male roles. It was often considered unseemly for a woman to act on stage, yet there were all-female troupes. The low status of actors did not however, prevent social mobility. Actresses might become concubines to wealthy men, and there is evidence that in the Ming dynasty particularly, there was considerable mixing of actresses in the women's quarters of wealthy households. From the late nineteenth century until the 1930s, men played women's parts on stage, even in modern spoken drama, as it was considered unseemly for a woman to act as a woman, but not for a woman to be portrayed on stage by a man. Some male cross-dressing actors achieved celebrity status, as in the case of Mei Lanfang. The cultural attitudes which disallowed women from the stage encouraged the use of eunuch actors in court circles. Political and ideological trends led to huge change in this and many other aspects of drama throughout the twentieth century.

Development of *jingju* or 'Peking Opera'

During the nineteenth century *jingju*, or Peking opera, developed from the northern *yiyangqiang.* The romantic slow, refined southern form, *kunqu*, suffered, partly because the Taiping rebels occupied the area around Suzhou and Kunshan from which most *kunqu* actors were recruited.

While the instruments and music of *jingju* were similar to those of *kunqu*, a distinguishing characteristic of *jingju* was the use of the *huqin*, the two-stringed bowed fiddle that originated among the Mongols.



Musical instruments used in traditional Chinese drama

The range of roles was similar, but in *jingju* there was a greater emphasis on the *laosheng*, the older male roles, and tougher, more vigorous, often military plays and music. The historical themes of intrigue and battle appealed to the Chinese audience of the late 19th century, for China was beset on all sides by powerful nations exploiting a weak, now technologically backward, nation. Scripting for these plays may be minimal, yet when staged they are complex, rich, musical and dramatic events (Dolby 1976: 179). Leading actors would develop their own individual take on a character or technique, but generally the entire staging and performance were prescribed. Techniques were passed down in families, or troupes, and published in complex manuals (ibid: 181).

The basic roles of kunqu and jingju

jing (净): (usually high-status characters such as generals or emperors) the painted face; the colourful, *damian*, or big face, is a good character, and the white face is a bad character. Long black beards and high-soled boots add to the effect of grandeur.
sheng (生): the male role, including *xiaosheng*, a scholar or young official, and *laosheng*, the older man.
chou (丑): the clown, who may be a servant, a worker, perhaps an animal character like Monkey, or sometimes an evil character.
dan (旦): the female roles*: qingyi,* the good, refined woman, *laodan,* the older woman, *huadan,* flirtatious woman of lower status, *wudan,* the warrior woman, etc.
Kunqu in addition has the *mo* (末), an elderly man with a long beard, which may be black, grey or white depending on the age of the role: the *mo* character may often perform the prologue and other asides.
Age, occupation, status and moral qualities are denoted by costume and make-up.

Costumes
Kunqu costumes are based on Ming fashion. *Jingju* costumes combine Ming fashion for Han ethnic roles and Manchu costume for Manchu roles and other ethnicities. Costumes are a mixture of historical garments and theatrical imagination. Mei Lanfang, for example, developed his own costumes to suit his roles and technique. Costume is prescribed according to role. Most roles wear robes, except those which require energetic movement, such as clowns, soldiers, servants and the animal roles like Monkey. Accessories and props contribute to identity, for example, a scholar will hold a fan, and an official will wear a traditional gauze cap.
Colours are based on the five colours of the five Chinese phases. They are divided into the upper five 'pure' colours for nobles, officials, generals and leading characters, and lower five mixed or mid-tones worn in informal scenes, and to help delineate personality. Neutral hues - beige, grey, etc. are for servants. The brighter and stronger the colour, the bigger the costume, the more important the role.

Make-up

Make-up is de rigueur in any kind of Chinese performance. It is highly symbolic, and makes a clear statement of the character's age, status, and disposition. In *jingju*, each character role has a distinct symbolic colour and pattern. Villains have white all-over paint, with a few black lines. The *chou* or clown has white around the eyes and nose. The *laosheng*, older man, and *laodan*, older woman, wear little if any make-up, and it is natural colour. The young *dan* female roles and young *sheng* male roles have pink around the eyes and on the cheeks, with red lips and black pencilled eyes and eyebrows.



An actor prepares his makeup on stage.
(Indy Steve CC)



Costume Boot
(ChinaVine CC)

Sets

Jingju has no stage sets, and a limited range of essential props. Flags, for example, may denote a sedan chair, or an army (1,000 troops per flag). An oar denotes a boat. Stage furniture always consists of a table and two chairs. These are moved around and covered differently to denote, for example, a throne room or a wedding scene.

The traditional drama of China is in every respect symbolic, conventional, and predictable. It is now a tool of China's soft power, both domestically and internationally. Its stories and messages, though changing subtly from time to time, involve loyalty, romance and the triumph of good over evil.

Drama in twentieth century China: cultural reform and European influence

Cultural reform and the influence of Europe

In the dying years of the Qing dynasty, Chinese reformers and statesmen realised that China could only match the might of Japan and the European powers by modernising its infrastructure, its technology, and its attitudes. This included educational and cultural reform. Among the language reformers was Hu Shi, who, with his contemporaries, led a movement to promote spoken Chinese in written mode. Drama was an ideal vehicle for this. The works of Shaw, Wilde, Chekhov and Ibsen provided a template for a new style, eagerly espoused by leading Chinese writers of the time. This new style was called *huaju* (话剧) 'spoken drama,' and unlike the centuries-old tradition, did not depend on music, song or acrobatics to deliver its impact. The everyday language of the new form was designed to be easily understood, and to contribute to the education of the Chinese people, of whom, at that time, only a small minority were literate (Song 1999: 19). The first public *huaju* – an adaptation of *La Dame aux Camelias* - was performed in Japan in 1907 by a group of Chinese students who called themselves the Spring Willow Society.

One of the early landmark plays was Hu Shi's *The Greatest Event in Life* – a short play inspired by Ibsen's *Dolls House*. Another play, *Thunderstorm*, by Cao Yu, exploits and develops the themes of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. While the playwriting of this period was informed by the eminent dramatists of Europe, the new style of acting was driven to a great extent by the techniques of Stanislavski, the great Russian actor-director. The appeal of Stanislavski's approach was that of reality – reformers felt that it was essential to bring to the people the reality of daily life and daily language.

The spoken drama created new challenges for actors. Hitherto, their roles had been partly created and crafted by the symbolic costumes, make-up, gestures and movements prescribed in traditional Chinese theatre. Now, they were in effect stripped naked – thrown back on their own resources. They had to act as human beings acted, not as legendary kings, queens and

supernatural beings acted. There were no prologues or asides to tell the audience who they were and what their back story was. The new, invisible fourth wall prevented any explanation from the stage – all information had to be conveyed through the acting.

The form developed through a series of variations, including the *wenmingxi* (文明戏), 'civilised play' and the history play, and music was sometimes re-introduced. It was hard for a Chinese audience to accept drama without music. Intended to contribute to the level of literacy and knowledge in China, spoken drama was valued by the republican regime. It was a means of propaganda and instilling virtue, yet remained a subversive tool for critics of the regime.

Drama as Party propaganda

Once the People's Republic was established, drama was still an important propaganda tool, but now messages were channelled through socialist realist plays (Gunn 1983, Cheung and Lai 1997). Lao She, for example, wrote *Teahouse* (茶馆) and *Dragon Beard Ditch* (龙须沟), depicting Chinese society before and after the founding of the People's Republic. Lao She's plays were overtly pro-Party propagandist, but that did not prevent his persecution and subsequent suicide during the Cultural Revolution. These plays typify the 'slice of life' dramas popular in the first few years of the PRC, and were to become popular once more in the relaxation following the Cultural Revolution.



Teahouse film version

The contradictions that surrounded drama through China's imperial past continued in the twentieth century, if anything, exacerbated by the strictness of Mao's regime. In 1942, Mao's 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature' set out guidelines for writers and artists. Mao emphasized the need to popularize and at the same time elevate the arts for the broad masses. After centuries of oppression that had kept the majority of Chinese illiterate, the nation needed art that would be accessible to ordinary Chinese people, uplift them, and give them something to aim at (Mao 1942).

Mao 'believed with a passion that great consequences ensued from the way a country managed its theater' (Chen 2002: 58). This is perfectly illustrated in the case of the 1960 play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* by Wu Han. Wu was an eminent historian who had criticised the Nationalist side during the civil war. Invited by Mao to write on Hai Rui, a Ming dynasty figure who had fought for people's rights against bureaucrats, Wu focused on Hai

Rui's criticism of the reigning monarch of the time. Mao saw that Hai Rui's dismissal in the 1961 play paralleled his dismissal of Marshall Peng Dehuai. The controversy over the play sparked the Cultural Revolution (Spence 1990: 599-603).

The 'Model operas' of the Cultural Revolution

The period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is characterised by the *yangbanxi* or model operas (样板戏) and ballets. In 1966 a Shanghai forum, led by Jiang Qing, worked on new, radicalized versions of modern operas (Spence 1990: 603). The 'famous, the foreign and the ancient' was to be replaced with the integrity of the proletariat (Jiang 1968). This unshaking ideology led to the model operas, ballets and symphonic music like the *Yellow River Concerto*. These were not entirely new creations: *The White-haired Girl*, for example, was a folk tale, performed as a 'folk opera' in Yan'an in the 1940s, then adapted as a ballet (Chen 2002: 79-80).



Whit-haired Girl Ballet (record sleeve)

The model operas show a blend, even contradiction, of styles and approaches, and a degree of continuity with tradition. At their core were the musical forms and instruments of traditional *jingju*, but, in line with the aim of making foreign things serve China, some western orchestral music was used. The semiotics of costume and make-up remained, but were no longer the elaborate gowns of nobility: still rigidly prescribed, costumes were symbolic of idealised stereotypes of social classes. Worker, peasant and soldier heroes and heroines sported rosy cheeks and

red lips, while nationalist and Japanese soldiers and class enemies (landlords and foreigners) had ashen-grey makeup.



The Red Lantern model opera

The drama and literature of this period allowed no nuance – characters were bad or good, and any dramatist who depicted a character who wavered (a 'middle character' 中间人物*zhongjianrenwu*) would be criticised and blacklisted. All endings were happy: workers, peasants and soldiers won the day, under the guidance of Chairman Mao and the Party. Gunn notes that the Chinese Communist Party never appreciated satire or nuance (1983: xv). This approach continues, in line with the notion of 'main melody' (see below), aiming to create a perception of modern China as ideal, while the old society is unremittingly bad.

With liberalisation in 1979 the model operas were seen as tedious, unentertaining representations of Maoist propaganda. In recent years, however, they have been re-evaluated as part of the development of traditional drama. During the Cultural Revolution writers, actors, critics

and artists were abused and tortured and many died. Skills were lost when more than a generation of them were sent to the countryside or factories to do manual labour, but *yangbanxi* did at least keep vocal and instrumental techniques alive.

Propaganda teams were a vital tool in the Party's education programmes. They date back to the War of Resistance against Japan, when they were sent to lift soldiers' spirits. In the 1960s and 70s they became a core part of the cultural landscape, taking the Party line in art, story-telling and drama to villages, factories and schools. Most large units (communes and brigades) had a propaganda team, as did military units. Model operas were central to their work. They were a huge encouragement to amateur involvement in the arts, and are often depicted in the 'peasant paintings' and propaganda posters.

Experimentation and revival in the 1980s

Following liberalisation, the 1980s brought a welcome retrospective of European- and American-style drama and literature. The spoken dramas of the first half of the century were revived and there was a wave of 'exploratory plays' (探索剧) – the equivalent of 'experimental' on European and American stages. These plays may not seem very *avant garde* to western audiences but they were significant in the development of realistic, modern drama in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Cheung and Lai 1997: xvii). Brecht had borrowed Chinese traditional techniques of staging (Brecht 1964) which were now borrowed back by Chinese experimental playwrights.

Advancing technology, primarily television, provided a showcase for the arts, and it was not long before period drama and serial soaps took to the screen. Growing wealth meant that audiences could afford tickets, and companies could put on increasingly sophisticated staging. Big names came back – the director Lin Zhaohua for example, worked with experimental playwright Gao Xingjian on *Bus Stop*, a play highly reminiscent of Beckett's work. A number of writers who had been discredited were once more recognised: Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm* and *Sunrise*, and Lao She's *Teahouse* and *Dragon Beard Ditch*, were staged and re-translated for foreign consumption.

The apparent freedom of this period of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' was subject to restrictions. Writers and artists embraced the depth and range of possibilities open to them; there was contact with foreign counterparts, and the possibility of travel. However, the Party was and is still in charge, and anything that hinted at criticism or dissent would be banned. Disastrously, this took, and still takes, the form of post-publication censorship. The first night of a play may appear warmly received and successful, but might be swiftly and unaccountably shut down. Not knowing what will be acceptable to the Party, writers and artists often self-censor.

Main Melody

Censorship and self-censorship in China hinge on the notion of 'main melody' (主旋律). The idea was first used in the early 1980s to promote Deng Xiaoping's reforms. From 1990, following the Tiananmen Incident, it came to apply to the creative industries. Conceison (1994: 190) defines the metaphor: 'Chinese society consists of a cacophony of voices, but the loudest and clearest of these should be the CCP and socialism' (ibid: 191). It is possible, most notably for established, trusted artists, to exploit the policy to some extent and slip in something which is a little off the wall (ibid.). The effect of the main melody approach is that plays and novels tend to have happy, or at least satisfactory endings, and poetry tends to be somewhat romantic and positive, or at least ambiguous. Writers whose work is uncompromising tend to be side-lined, and will often end up working and living outside China. From 2013, the slogan has been 'Give full scope to the main melody; spread positive energy' (Li 2016: 59).

The impact of theatre old and new

Since the 1980s, and now more than ever, there has been borrowing back from European and American theatre. The work of Gao Xingjian owes much to Brecht and Beckett, for example, and the plays of Tang Xianzu ride on a wave of Shakespeare fervour. There is rich intercultural exchange of drama, music and dance between China and other countries. Theatres are full, and the audience is mainly young, for all types of theatre.

Unsurprisingly, given the role of music in traditional Chinese drama, there is a passion for musicals – shows such as *The Lion King* play to packed audiences.



Scene from a 21st century play 命中注定 (Destiny by Yin Tao)

Traditional *jingju* and *kunqu* are now well researched and funded, and have been given world intangible heritage status. China's increasing wealth has allowed ever more lavish productions, and the genre has become a core part of China's soft power: the spectacle of traditional 'Chinese opera' shows the foreign world that China is not only famous and ancient, but also wealthy and powerful.

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Reading Room

The titles suggested in our first *Reading Room*, published 17th March 2022, are as follows:

THE WATER KINGDOM (a Secret History of China) by Philip Ball. First published in 2016 by Bodley Head. And by Penguin/Vintage in 2017.
TWILIGHT IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY by Reginald F. Johnston. First published by Victor Gollancz in 1934 but has been re-published many times and is easily available on Amazon. Latest re-issue by OUP in l987 in paperback.
PRECIOUS CARGO (Scots and the China Trade) by Susan Leiper. Published by National Museums of Scotland in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh in 1997.
OUR FRIENDS IN BEIJING by John Simpson. First published in 2021 by Hachette UK.

In addition, Roy Peachey, who spoke to the association in January 2022, has published the following novels:
BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT published by Eyrie Press in 2019, ISBN 978-1-913-149-02-4.
This work of fiction explores the unrecognized, unrewarded contribution of the Chinese Labour Corps in WW1 through the one eye of a Chinese interpreter. Wang's adventures and reflections as an intellectual belonging neither to the brisk British military, nor to the earthy members of the CLC, reveal a great deal of the futility and misery of the efforts on both sides. Wang's lofty Shakespearian English, learned at school in Shanghai, is slightly unnerving for the reader – it is sometimes quite difficult to see him as Chinese. The story is absorbing and upsetting in equal measure.
THE RACE published by Cranachan in 2021, ISBN 978-1-911279-83-9
Aimed at a readership of around 12 years old, this novel follows the path of a young mixed race athlete inspired by Eric Liddell. Lili and her father discover Liddell's story, which is told parallel to Lili's own story. Peachey's researches have unearthed some interesting aspects of Liddell's life which have surprised readers as much as they surprised and inspired the fictional heroine.

Brian Holton, speaking in April, has produced many works of Chinese poetry in translation, and his own poetry, including:
STAUNIN MA LANE – CHINESE VERSE IN SCOTS AND ENGLISH, published by Shearsman Books in 2016
ISBN: 9781848614666 (ISBN10: 1848614667)
HARD ROADS AN CAULD HAIRST WINDS: LI BAI AN DU FU IN SCOTS, published by Taproot Press in 2021
ISBN: 9781838080037

Events . .

Events 2022-23

Tuesday 12th April: Brian Holton talks about his recent collections of Chinese poetry, translated into Scots: *Staunin ma lane – Chinese verse in Scots and English* and *Hard Roads an Cauld Hairst Winds: Li Bai an Du Fu in Scots*

Tuesday May 10th: Dr Alison Hardie of Leeds University will speak on 'The practical side of paradise: Garden craftsmen of the Ming and Qing.' This will be a zoom meeting, starting at 7.30pm.

Saturday 28th May: Annual General Meeting of the association, 10.30 for 11.00 am, followed by a talk by Professor Wendy Alexander, Vice-Principal (International) of Dundee University. Professor Alexander served in the first three Scottish Cabinets, including as Minister responsible for Further and Higher Education, and also served as Scottish Labour Leader in the Scottish Parliament. She has strong family connections to China. Title TBC. This meeting will be hybrid.

Autumn 2022: we hope to have Dr Andrew Law of Newcastle University to speak on the *Hanfu* movement (postponed from 2021) and Ann Gillian Chu of St. Andrews University to speak on the influence of the Church on the Democratic Movement in Hong Kong.

The Burrell Collection: once the initial crowds have died down, we aim to have a SCA group visit to the Burrell Collection. Details to be announced later in the year.

China - Through the Lens of John Thomson – this exhibition, featuring some of the photographs discussed by Betty Lau in her 2021 talk to the SCA, is open at Heriot-Watt University until early June. Well worth a visit.

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Monkey	1908	1920	1932	1944	1956	1968	1980	1992	2004	2016
Rooster	1909	1921	1933	1945	1957	1969	1981	1993	2005	2017
Dog	1910	1922	1934	1946	1958	1970	1982	1994	2006	2018
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
Rabbit	1915	1927	1939	1951	1963	1975	1987	1999	2011	2023
Dragon	1916	1928	1940	1952	1964	1976	1988	2000	2012	2024
Snake	1917	1929	1941	1953	1965	1977	1989	2001	2013	2025
Horse	1918	1930	1942	1954	1966	1978	1990	2002	2014	2026
Goat	1919	1931	1943	1955	1967	1979	1991	2003	2015	2027

