A COMPENDIUM FOR ETHNIC CHINESE

KNOWING YOUR ROOTS

IN THE WAKE OF THE NEW *XIONG-NUS* AT CHINA'S GATE

LIM YU-BOOK
林有木

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Lim Yu-Book
Email: yubooklim@gmail.com

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Preface

I was born in 1949 in then-colonial Malaya. World War II had ended, but Malaya was just entering the Emergency period when the colonial government declared the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) illegal. Members of the party had to go underground; many retreated to the jungles to fight for their cause. The party had many sympathisers; new villages were formed by the colonial government to fence in the more rural Chinese, lest they became the lifelines of the Communists.

My grandpa hailed from Chin-Jiang[1] (晋江, Jinjiang), a county in the province of Fujian. He married a Peranakan of heavy Javanese heritage. My father was schooled in classic Chinese, and he married my mother who, although born into a 'school-fragrant' family, was not sent to school. Nonetheless, she had the opportunity to learn a great deal about wisdom and virtues from my maternal grandmother, who was apparently very knowledgeable about Chinese classics and legends. My mother would always fill us with 'historical' lessons when she had to discipline us. The morals in the stories she told us remain the guiding philosophy of my life.

Father and Mother had to start their own home; however, they had to leave their eldest child with Grandma, a common expectation then. My eldest brother was sent to an English school. The rest of us were sent to Chinese school. My grounding in Chinese history and Chineseness was further reinforced during my primary school days. I loved to read about our great sages, legends, deities, scholars and poets.

Reality seeped in. There was hardly any future for Chinese school leavers then! My family decided to switch me to an English school when it was time to begin my secondary education. I had to do a year

[1] In a separate chapter, the author will argue that the romanisation of Chinese names, places and terms is in need of an overhaul.

of 'Remove' class before I could enter Form 1. The school was quite discriminatory; it lumped all those from Chinese schools in the two bottom classes of the form until we sat for the Lower Certificate of Education at the end of Form Three. We were an outcast class. Hok-Kien, the Mǐn-Nan (閩南) version of Fujianese, became our lingua franca. We sought comfort in our own world, and most of us got engrossed with the books of the martial arts variety. I was fortunate that my home was full of Chinese literature. Besides the classics, I got the opportunity to read Lu Xun (鲁迅) and other more modern scholars. My older brothers, who were still studying in the town's Chinese high school, and I continued to identify ourselves differently from those who streamed in from the English schools.

I completed my degree at the University of Malaya in 1973. By then, English was already the 'universal' language. Although we continued to practise Chinese culture and traditions, we did not look upon China as our motherland. Few could be proud of mainland China at that time. Japan was rising, and China was still time-warped with Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution madness. Despite Japan's atrocities against the Chinese during WWII, we were willing to learn from them, even culturally.

Like most other parents, we sent our children to English schools, thinking that was the best way of assuring a good future for them. But I also engaged a tutor to teach my two children Chinese. Unfortunately, because of lack of emphasis, they hardly learned any. My wife was born into an English-educated family, so Mandarin and Chinese writing were totally alien to her. We spoke English at home. Apart from Chinese customs, my two children had hardly any knowledge about Chinese history and our sages' teachings and wisdom. As their only source of geopolitical knowledge is from Western media, they naturally take a very negative view about news in or from China. I feel concerned. (However, I am not saying that what you read or hear from Chinese sources are authoritative; many narratives are of the Qian-Long[2] variety – blind

[2] The Qing emperor who rebuffed George Macartney in 1793.

to truths and actual developments, where China is right wholesale, regardless.)

I believe there are many ethnic Chinese who are like my children. One does not have to swear allegiance to China (your loyalty must be given to the country where you are a citizen.) But China today, even if you do not agree with its 'totalitarianism' (as the West wants you believe), is a country that you certainly can be proud of – for the phenomenal achievements of its 'dictatorship' over the last 30 or so years.

I am most dismayed by the worldview of many ethnic Chinese who seem to pride themselves as 'Whites'. We love to use the term 'yellow bananas' to describe them. You can excuse those who have been born into a Western environment, but for those who have emigrated, like the former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's aide Yu Mao-Chun (Miles Maochun Yu), you just cannot imagine they can be so anti-China, even though they were the beneficiaries of China's talent-grooming policy. I also have highly educated folks who live in white suburbs in Australia, who for reasons of their own, are quite negative about China. To them anything good about China is not to be believed!

Chinese can only stand tall if China is respected. I strongly believe we also can help change China in our own small ways. To help disseminate this seemingly simple message is now my mission. And this is precisely the reason why I am compiling this book (I cannot say I am writing this book, for much of what I am writing is 'plagiarised' from somewhere. I only organise the contents to suit the messages I am trying to put across).

Readers may find the book's organisation somewhat strange – with boxes of facts or legends appearing all over the chapters. The original intention of the author is to give readers a crash course on Chinese history, right from the legendary Yellow Emperor to what China is today. The dynasties and eras are written in chronological order. The materials in boxes are facts and legends that first happened in the appropriate period, hence their sporadic appearance. At the suggestion of Dr Wan Chang Da who thought that some of the 'boxed' information and

narratives deserve more serious discussion, I have taken some of these out and put them in separate sections. I welcome critiques from readers, and I will definitely bear good suggestions in mind when I work on later editions.

I

THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

Chapter 1

Written Chinese (中文, *Zhōng-Wén*)

Chinese is one of the oldest continually used writing systems still in use. The characters themselves are often composed of parts that may represent physical objects, abstract notions, or pronunciations. Literacy requires the memorisation of a great number of characters; college-educated Chinese speakers should know about 4,000.

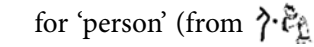
Various contemporary Chinese characters have been traced back to the late Shang dynasty, but the process of creating characters is thought to have begun some centuries earlier. After a period of variation and evolution, Chinese characters were standardised under the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE).

Because of its geography, pronunciations developed into unintelligible local varieties, but all are able to communicate through its writing. It was not until the early 20th century that classical Chinese[1] (文言文, *wén yán wén*) was replaced by vernacular Chinese (白话, *bái huà*).

Chinese characters were extensively used in Korea, Japan and Vietnam until nationalism crept in to replace them. Chinese characters are developed on six basic principles. The first two principles produce simple characters, known as 文 (*wén*):

1. Pictographs (象形 *xiàng-xíng*), in which the character is a graphical depiction of the object it denotes. Examples: 人 (*rén*)

[1] The classic form is charactised by its formal and highly stylised syntax, vocabulary and grammar. It is different from the spoken varieties and requires specialised study to understand and interpret. It was widely used in literature, poetry, philisophy, and official documents throughout China's history.

for 'person' (from  to 人), 日 (*rì*) for 'sun', and 木 (*mù*) for 'tree' or 'wood'. The evolution of 馬/马 (*mǎ*) for 'horse' is depicted below:

2. Ideographs (指事, *zhǐ-shì*), in which the character represents an abstract notion, e.g.: 上 (*shàng*) for 'up', 下 (*xià*) for 'down', and 三 (*sān*) for 'three'.
3. The remaining four principles produce complex characters, historically called 字 (*zì*), although this term is now generally used to refer to all characters, whether simple or complex. Of these four, two construct characters from simpler parts:
   - Logical aggregates (会意, *huì-yì*), in which two or more parts or characters are used to construct a composite character to illustrate a concept, e.g., 'East' in Chinese is 東, which is made up of two characters, 日 (*rì*) for 'sun' and 木 (*mù*) for 'tree'. The Sun rises amongst the trees. From where? The East, of course. Hence 東. However, 東has now been simplified to 东![2]
   - Phonetic complexes (形声, *xíng-shēng*), in which one part denotes the general essence of the character (such as water-related or eye-related), and the other part of the character is used for its phonetic value, e.g.: 晴 (*qíng*) for 'clear/ fair (weather)', which is composed of 日 (*rì*) for 'sun' and 青 (*qīng*) for 'blue' or 'green', which is used for its pronunciation.

[2] The mainland government implemented a simplification process to reduce the complexity of written Chinese as part of a reform effort to promote literacy. However, Taiwan and Hong Kong still stick to the traditional version (繁体, *fán tǐ*).

4. In contrast to the popular conception of Chinese as a primarily pictographic or ideographic language, the vast majority of Chinese characters (about 95 percent) are constructed as either logical aggregates or phonetic complexes.
5. The last two principles do not produce new written forms; instead, they transfer new meanings to existing forms:
   - Transference (转注 *zhuǎn-zhù*), in which a character, often with a simple, concrete meaning takes on an extended, more abstract meaning, e.g.: 网 (*wǎng*) for 'net', which was originally a pictograph depicting a fishing net. Over time, it has taken on an extended meaning, covering any kind of lattice, or even a computer network.
   - Adaptation or borrowed form (假借, *jiǎ-jiè*), in which a character is used, either intentionally or accidentally, for some entirely different purpose, e.g.: 哥 (*gē*) for 'older brother', which is written with a character originally meaning 'song' or 'sing' (歌, *gē*). There was no character for 'older brother', so an otherwise unrelated character with the right pronunciation was borrowed for that meaning.

Chinese characters are written to fit into a square, even when composed of two simpler forms written side-by-side or top-to-bottom. In such cases, each form is compressed to fit the entire character into a square.

Source: Wikipedia

Chapter 2

Chinese Surnames (姓, *Xing*)

Han Chinese are believed to be the first people to use surnames. The earliest surnames might be matrilineal, but Han Chinese family names have been patrilineal for millennia, passing from father to children. Prior to the Warring States period (5th century BCE), only the ruling families and the aristocratic elite had surnames.

Chinese view their surnames as part of their shared kinship and Han identity. Chinese are exogamous and they are supposed to refrain from marrying those with the same family name. Koreans, which follow many traditional Chinese practices, are most diligent on this practice.

Married women used *shi* (氏) to denote their maiden origin.

Around 2,000 Han Chinese surnames are currently in use. Nineteen surnames are used by around half of the Han Chinese people, while 100 surnames are used by around 87 percent of the population. Some of these surnames include Wang (王), Li (李), Zhang (张), Liu (刘), Chen (陳), Yang (杨), Huang (黄), Zhao (赵), Wu (吳) and Zhou (周). Many non-Han Chinese have adopted such surnames.

Another point to note: Chinese surnames come before given names.

Chapter 3

The Roots of Chineseness

The Chinese concept of things under heaven

There are many other philosophies and occult arts believed and practised by Chinese, but few are as profound as those mentioned below. There are basically two principal philosophical schools: the *Dào-Dé* (道德) school, and the *Rú* (儒) school. There are also the lesser schools, like the *Xiá* (侠) school, and the *Fǎ* (法) or legalist school of philosophy.

The great sage of the Dào-Dé school is Lao-Tze (老子, c. 571 BCE-?). In the Rú school, you have Kung-Tze (孔子, Confucius, c. 551-479 BCE), Men-Tze (孟子, Mencius, 371-289 BCE), and Xun-Tze (荀子 c. 298- 238 BCE). The sage in the Xiá School is Mer-Tze (of Mo-Tze, 墨子, 479-381 BCE), and Han Fei-Tze (韓非子, 280-233 BCE) in the *Fǎ* school. These thoughts were subject to varied interpretations in the ensuing centuries.

Lao-Tze's Dào-Dé school is different from the spiritual or mystical or religious Daoism (道教) that one often sees in temples in the Chinese world today. The practice of this form of Daoism was already evident in the early days of Chinese civilisation. Its more formal articulation can be attributed to Yang Chu (杨朱, 440–c. 360 BCE), followed later by Zhuang-Tze (莊子, 369-286 BCE).

Note that *Tze* (子, sometimes spelled as *Zǐ*) in these names can loosely be translated as 'master'. Thus, Kung-Tze is simply Master Kung. Kung was the family name; their full names would contain another given name.

Who are these sages or great masters?

Lao-Tze

Lao-Tze, the greatest Chinese philosopher

There is a strong misconception that Lao-Tze is the founder of Daoism. Lao-Tze's philosophy is in many respects the opposite of what modern Daoists subscribe and practise. Lao-Tze is all about abstracts, while the latter is about spiritualism, materialism, and indeed, superstitions to many.

There is no authoritative record on the life of Li Êr (李耳), the man behind the name Lao-Tze. He is generally believed to be the older contemporary of Kung-Tze. He is credited with the authorship of *Dào-Dé Jīng* (道德经, *Scripture of the Right Path/Good Deeds/Virtues*). It is regarded by some as the first Chinese philosophical work, albeit a very abstract one. However, some scholars believe the system of thought in the book as a whole cannot be the product of a time either before or contemporary with Kung-Tze.

Dao-De Jing is a law of nature. If anything develops certain extreme characteristics, these will invariably revert to become the opposites. It is upon calamity that blessing leans, and upon blessing that calamity rests. Those with little will acquire, those with much will be led astray. His concept of *wú-wéi* (无为) does not mean having no activity; it actually refers to acts that are carried out without artificiality or arbitrariness. A very *yin-yang* (阴阳) concept indeed!

Lao-Tze appeared contemptuous of the Confucian virtues such as human-heartedness and righteousness, for he saw these as representing degeneration from *dào* (道, right path) and *dé* (德, good deeds). Ceremonials are the degeneration of loyalty and good faith, and are the beginning of disorder in the world. To Lao-Tze, there is no disaster greater than not knowing contentment with what one has; no greater sin than having desire for acquisition. In essence, people should have few

desires. Wisdom (智, *zhì*) and ignorance (愚, *yú*) are two sides of the same coin. The *yú* the sage is great wisdom, and not the *yú* of the child or ordinary people. The latter kind of yú is the gift of nature, while that of the sage is an achievement of the spirits.

Lao-Tze is a household name amongst Chinese; however, few really understand his philosophy in depth. It is abstract – this is the way; this is also not the way kind of stuff – but he remains very popular among Chinese intellectuals.

Kung-Tze, the greatest Chinese sage

Kung-Tze

One thinker whose pre-eminence remains to this day is Kung-Tze. Born Kung Ch'iu (孔丘) in the era of *Chun-Qiu* (春秋) when China, though nominally ruled by the House of Zhou (周), was carved into many fiefdoms by the barons of the day) in the state of Lu (鲁国), in the southern part of the present Shandong province (many Koreans claim Kung-Tze to be theirs). Kung-Tze was essentially an idealist on political and social reforms. He drifted from one state to another, failing to make much headway with the various barons to whom he was trying to advance his concept of statecraft. He died a disappointed man.

He is generally credited with the following six works, which are said to form the basis of Confucianism on which the Chinese philosophy and culture are principally premised:

- *Lún-Yǔ* (论语) or *The Analects*, a collection of his scattered sayings compiled by his students or disciples
- *Liù-Yì* (六艺) or *The Six Arts/Classics*
- *I* (易, pronounced *yi*) or *Book of Changes*
- *Shī* (詩) or *Book of Odes/Poetry*
- *Shǐ* (史) or *Book of History*
- *Lǐ* (礼) or *Rituals/Rites*

- *Yuè* (乐) or *Music*
- *Chun-Qiu* (春秋) or *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, a chronicle of Lu (鲁国), extending from 722 to 479 BCE.

Later historians were inclined to conclude that he was not the author of *Liù-Yì*. It is believed *Liù-Yì* had existed before his time, for it had been the basis of education for aristocrats during the early centuries of feudalism.

Nonetheless, Kung-Tze must be the first person in Chinese history – in his private capacity – to teach students in large numbers. The students also travelled with him during his various visits. Kung-Tze was a conservative and a traditionalist; to him social hierarchy and generational respect and deference (正名主义, *zhèng-míng zhǔ-yì*) was not to be compromised. The concept may sound airy-fairy, but can be elaborated simply as one acting correctly in accordance to his capacity. "Let the ruler be ruler; the minister, minister; the father, father; and the son, son." In other words, every hierarchical status deserves the essence or station it carries. Every rung in the social relationship implies certain responsibilities and duties. Kung-Tze's own moral beliefs, which centre on his concept of the 'superior man', are the backbone of his philosophy on state and society. He is said to be the founder of the Rú (meaning 'literati') school.

Four words are supposed to be the embodiment of Confucianism:

- *Zhí* (直) or straightforwardness, absence of ulterior motives. The superior man abhors hypocrisy. A superior man conducts himself with genuineness. He does not take advantage of others. However, even though *zhí* is an important virtue, it must be dispensed with *lǐ* (礼, great mannerism) with humility.
- *Rén* (仁) or human heartedness. A man of *rén* is supposed to be one whose virtue has reached a stage that is beyond any level of selfishness or self-interest.
- *Zhōng* (忠) or loyalty, devotion to others, no betrayal.
- *Shù* (恕) or forgiveness, accommodation.

Kung-Tze believed in great exemplariness. His *Lún-Yǔ* emphasises *xìng* (性, human character). A superior man acts with *yì* (义, great principle, moral attitude) and an inferior man thinks of *lì* (利, profit) before he does anything. And not unlike the other sages, *dao* (way or truth) and *de* (virtuous deeds) are also part and parcel of Kung-Tze's teaching. But Kung-Tze appeared to think *li* (rituals, ceremonies, proper conduct, or correct protocol) should serve as the driver of all other virtues.

Readers may want to understand the background of some of the customs or traditions that are deemed Confucian, for example, a filial son (孝子, *xiao-tze*) is supposed to mourn for a period of three years and the logic is this: "A child cannot leave the arms of his parents until he is three years old; in return he should therefore mourn for an equal length of time," which certainly sounds archaic in modern times.

After his death, Kung-Tze gradually came to be considered as the teacher, superior to all others, and a sage who is the embodiment of good Chinese culture.

But Confucianism is more than Kung-Tze. Two other philosophers expanded it further. The first is Men-Tze (Mencius to the West). Men-Tze (371-289 BCE, or thereabouts) represented the idealistic wing of Confucianism. The second is Xun-Tze, who probably lived between 298 and 238 BCE. Xun-Tze represents the realistic wing of Confucianism.

A quick run-through of the lesser-known sages:

Men-Tze

His hypothesis is that humans are born *sân* (善) which refers to a sense of compassion that extends to an innate behaviour to not to do harm unto others. His *hao-ran-zhī-qi* (浩然之气, exuding the *qi* of great morale) is a concept of a man's obligation as a 'citizen' of the 'Great Nature'. However, it is his concept of social organisation that has had a profound impact on the way Chinese conduct themselves. For example, he advocated the concept of 'graded' love. To fellow humans, a superior man exercises *rén-xìng* (人性, human-heartedness); to family, it is

affection. If a ruler lacks ethical qualities, his people have the moral right to rise up, even to the extent of getting rid of the ruler. These ideas of Men-Tze have exercised a tremendous influence in Chinese history. The right of revolution is enshrined provided the cause is just. Understanding *dao* is also part and parcel of his concept of the accumulation of righteousness.

Xun-Tze

His theory is the opposite of Men-Tze's. It argues that men are by nature *è* (恶) which does not mean 'evil' exactly, more like 'bad motives'. His hypothesis was that man was born with inherent desire for profit and sensual pleasure. Fortunately, man possesses intelligence, which makes it possible for him to develop 'goodness'.

Mer-Tze

A large part of Mer-Tze's teaching was an extension of *yóu-xiá* (游侠, knight-wanderers) ethics – sincerity and honour in their promises, and decisiveness in their actions, even to the extent of endangering their own lives. And unlike Men-Tze, his concept of love is without scale. While the students of Rú were mainly from the upper or middle classes, Xiá attracted followers from the lower classes.

Xiá school followers consider ceremonies, rituals, music, and arts unproductive. However, they do agree with Confucianists on the virtues of *rén* (仁) and *yì* (义), but on the principle of a more all-embracing love (兼爱, *jiān-ài*).

The Rú School's impact on the Chinese is most profound. Take marriage for an example: The primary function of marriage, to Rú, is 'creation for replacement' – the creation of a new 'me' for the demised 'me'. The demised 'me' hopes that the new 'me' can continue the demised 'me's life and achievements. This will ensure the sustenance of the family line for ten thousand generations (万世, *wàn shì*). Every new 'me', if he is able to uphold this hope, is termed a filial son. The way he upholds this hope is the way of a filial son.

To Men-Tze, the consequences of being non-filial are grave; the paramount of which is the deprivation of any male offspring. Although Kung-Tze and Men-Tze both advocated filial piety, they did not consider it as the fundaments of *dao* and *ter*. *Jen* is supreme in Dào-Dé, and *siau* (filial piety) naturally follows if one is *rén*.

Spiritual Daoism and its founders

Yang Chu

The starting point of the spiritual Daoist philosophy is the preservation of life and the avoidance of injury. Yang Chu's belief represents the first phase of that philosophy.

His principle is 'each for himself' as opposed to Mer-Tze's 'all-embracing love'. He was a hermit who would not take the world, even if it was given to him for free.

Zhuang-Tze

Zhuang-Tze represents the later phase of Daoism. Chuang-Tze emphasised the distinction between what is of nature and what is of man. The more the former is overcome by the latter, the more there will be misery and unhappiness.

The Chinese traditional respect for the past stems from the nature of their overwhelmingly agrarian population. Farmers were rooted in the soil and rarely travelled. They cultivated their land according to seasonal changes, which repeated year after year. Past experience was their beacon. Whenever they wanted to try something new, they had first to look back for precedents.

Since the time of Kung-Tze, most philosophers have appealed to ancient authority to justify their own teaching. Kung-Tze's authority was based on King Wen (文王) and the Duke of Zhou. Mer-Tze based his authority on the legendary Yü, who supposedly lived a thousand years earlier than King Wen and the Duke of Zhou. Men-Tze cites *Yao* and *Shuen*, who were supposed to have antedated *Yü*. The advocates of

Daoism drew upon the authority of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung, who were reputed to have lived several centuries earlier than either Yao or Shuen.

Most of these philosophers lived either in the Chun-Qiu or the Warring State period. During the reign of China's 'First' emperor, Qin Shi-Huang (秦始皇), he ordered all historical records (except those of Qin's) and works of these philosophers burned. But books of medicine were spared.

However, the very violence of the Qin dynasty led to its speedy downfall (213 BCE). The demise of Qin paved the way for Han. The Han Dynasty's Emperor Wu (汉武帝, 140-87 BCE) approved the recommendation of Tung Chung-Shu (董仲舒, 179-104 BCE) and formally announced that Confucianism, in which *The Six Classics* held a dominant place, was to be the official state teaching. With this pronouncement, Kung-Tze was gradually elevated, in the eyes of Chinese, to a superhuman being, a god among men.

Early Chinese cosmology

Ancestral worship has been practised by Chinese well before the Yellow Emperor (*Huang-Di*)'s time. Early Chinese took spirits and ghosts seriously. They also represented the two sides of the supernatural world – the former protective and the latter destructive to one's well-being. Spirits, therefore, had to be worshipped and ghosts bribed or subdued with their help. Early Chinese had long observed that the movements of the Sun, the Moon and the stars seemed to dictate the well-being of *di* (地, Mother Earth) and, consequently, on human activities. There must be some form of celestial determination and intervention!

Nobody likes uncertainty, and with Chinese minds being so fertile, arts and calculations aimed at foretelling fortunes and misfortunes took root like wild weeds. *Sûh-sûr* (术数), which can be crudely translated as calculation arts, or *fāng shù* (方术), not really occult arts per se, take many forms, such as astrology, almanacs, five elements, divinations, forms or physiognomy. However, it is perhaps *feng-shui* (風水) that the mystique of Chinese culture is most identified with. Believers and

practitioners, some of whom are highly regarded intellectuals, would argue that *feng-shui* is not an occult art. Its *ao-miao* (奥妙, abstruse and mysterious) nature is too deep for mortals to fathom. To many, it is even a science in its study and practices.

It is believed that Chinese practised *feng-shui* in a formal manner as far back as early as the Chun-Qiu era. There was, at the time, even an official called *tu-fang guan* (土方官), whose principal responsibility was to determine the suitability of sites for town and country; in essence, this official was the town-and-country planner for the imperial house.

Ironically, except for the concept of *I* (易, pronounced *yi)*, which refers to constant change or evolution, Kung-Tze appeared to be a sceptic of *xuán kōng* (玄空, the overall description of spirits and ghosts), *sûh-sûr* and the like, which was the predecessor of *feng-shui*. But this fact has conveniently been ignored by those who are subscribers of both Rú philosophy and *feng-shui*. This belief has become so extrapolated that it is now a big business opportunity for many.

The role of Buddhism

The introduction of Buddhism seems to have given many Chinese the realisation that civilised people other than the Chinese existed. Those who believed in Buddhism regarded India as the 'pure land of the West'. However, Buddhism combined with Mystical Daoism has become almost an occult practice of many forms amongst Chinese.

But a distinction has to be made between *Fó-jiào* (佛教) and *Fó-xué* (佛学). The former is Buddhism as a religion and the latter as philosophy. Buddhism as a religion did much to inspire the institutional organisation of religious Daoism. Daoism was almost invariably opposed to the Buddhist religion, but Daoist philosophy took Buddhist philosophy as its ally. Chinese Buddhism is deeply impregnated with Chinese thoughts; it has evolved with a distinct Chinese philosophical tradition. And again, the process of its dissemination and diffusion has given rise to much distortion and idiosyncratic interpretation that Daiost-Buddhism has become an occult art of many forms by itself.

The way in which Mahayana Buddhism most influenced the Chinese has been the concept of the universal mind, in what may be called its negative metaphysical method. According to Buddhism, all the phenomena of the universe are the manifestations of the mind. Whenever one acts, speaks, or even thinks, the mind is doing something, and that something must produce results, no matter how far in the future. This result is the retribution of karma. Karma is the cause (因, *yīn*), and retribution is its effect (果, *guǒ*). The being of an individual is made up of a chain of causes and effects. And this karma may be accumulated over the course of many rebirths. The result is an emancipation of the individual possessing this karma from the wheel of birth and death. And this emancipation is called nirvana.

Be that as it may, Confucianism, Mystical Daoism, Dào-Déism and Buddhism are not mutually exclusive. There is me in you, and you in me, the result of a big cooking pot! Diversity makes a culture even more resilient.

Chapter 4

Romanisation of Chinese Names, Places and Terms: Issues

There is a great deal of adhocracy, incoherency or make-do approach in the way Chinese names, places and terms have been or are spelt alphabetically today. There is apparently no central or coordinating authority to ensure nomenclature. Ethnic Chinese living in Western countries will often have to accept that their given names will be truncated to a single word. In my own case, I have always been addressed as '*Yu*' over counters and call centre service providers. I will usually try to explain that my given name is Yu-Book, and notwithstanding my protestations, most would revert to Yu. "Isn't that your first name?" they would insist. I am sure this experience is not new to readers. My purpose in bringing this up is not to highlight a need. If we can tell John Fitzgerald Kennedy carries three names – first name John, middle name Fitzgerald, and family name Kennedy – and address Ismail Ali as Encik (Mr) Ismail and not as Mr Ali, why can't these Westerners also try to learn something outside their culture? Does this also say something about them?

We have generally adopted geographic names that have been Anglicised for us – Beijing (previously Peking), the capital of China; Xi'an, the city that is rich in history; Shanghai; Guangzhou (previously Canton); and so on and so forth. But come to think of it, we should ask ourselves this: Are they right?

In Chinese, geographic names are made up of characters, each of which has a specific meaning. Beijing is 北京 (*Bei Jing*). *Bei* is 'north' and *jing* is 'capital'. Taken together, they mean 'Northern Capital'. Xi'an is 西安 (*Xi An*) with *xi* meaning 'West' and *an* meaning 'peace'. Similarly,

Shanghai and Guangzhou are each made up of two characters with specific definitions for each. In the case of Shanghai, 上 (*Shang*, or more accurately *Sung*, pronounced like the past participle of 'sing') means 'upper', and *hai*, 'sea'. For Guangzhou, 广 (*Guang*) means 'vast', and 州 (*zhou*) refers to a major administrative division.

While the romanisation or anglicisation is phonetically close to their Chinese names, they are not coherent. The slipshod manner has resulted in some laughable results. A case in point is the name Xi'an, the romanisation of which has led many to pronounce it as 'Sian'! I would argue that the city should be spelt as Xi-An.

Another example is *Kun-Lun Shan* (昆仑山). The character 山 (*shan*) tells us that it is a mountain, and 昆仑 (*Kun Lun*) is its name. But Kun-Lun is made up of two separate characters, each with its own meaning. To me, the proper noun should be spelt as Kun-Lun Shan. But Kunlun Shan appears to be the accepted form now.

However, the non-conformist in me would like to play rebel when it comes to other names and terms. I especially want to find fault with the pin-yin varieties. Earlier, many counted on the Wade-Giles system, which was developed in the mid-19th century, to do the job. It has largely been replaced by *Hanyu Pinyin* (汉语拼音) now. Even the romanisation of the term 'Hanyu Pinyin' is flawed to me. The term has two components – the first is 汉语, which means the Han language and therefore should have been spelt as *Han-yǔ*; the second, 拼音, as *pin-yin*.

For example, Chiang Kai-shek (蒋介石) is usually how the name of the one-time president of China is spelt. But in the Wade-Giles format, it should be 'Chiang Chieh-shih'. But the Pin-yin way spells it out as *Jiǎng Jièshí*, the pronunciation of which is certainly closer to standard Mandarin than the Wade-Giles version. But it fails to convey to the uninstructed that the given name *Jièshí* is made up of two separate characters each with its own meaning. 蒋 (*Chiang* or *Jiǎng*) is the surname or the family name, while 介石 (*Chieh Shih* or *Jiè Shí*) taken together is the given name. In Chinese you cannot say 介 (*Chieh* or *Jiè*) is the middle name and 石 (*Shih* or *Shí*) is the last name, or for that matter, 介 is the first given name and 石 the second given name. The

two components, though each with their own meaning, are meant to supplement the other.

The Wade-Giles and *pin-yin* versions do take into account the surname-given name protocol. But they are not quite correct in one respect. By using lower-case to spell the 'S' in *shih* (also after the hyphen), Wade-Giles implies that *shih* or *shí* is ancillary or complementary to *Jiè* in the given name. In the *pin-yin* version, *Jiè* is lumped in to form *Jièshí*, like what mainland China does today. This implies that it is a word by itself. A case in point is the spelling for Mao Zedong (毛泽东) and Xi Jinping (习近平) in the way they are romanised in China's *pin-yin* format.

As a matter of fact, the anchor word for some Chinese given names is actually the second character, such as with the three Soong sisters. Soong Ai-ling (宋蔼龄), Soong Ching-ling (宋庆龄), and Soong Mei-ling (宋美龄), respectively Sòng Àilíng, Sòng Qīnglíng and Sòng Měilíng in *pin-yin*). The 'common denominator' in their names is in fact 龄 (Ling). If the Wade-Giles is to be followed, then the given names would be ai-Ling, qin-Ling, and mei-Ling!

Thus, I would argue that the correct way to standardise the naming system should be this: Jiăng Jiè-Shí (or Jiang Jie-Shi, if you want to do away with the tonal symbol needs, 蒋介石), Mao Ze-Dong (毛泽东) and Xi Jìn-Píng (习近平).

Or better still, JIANG Jiè-Shí, MAO Ze-Dong and XI Jin-Ping, or even JIANG Jie Shi, MAO Ze Dong and XI Jin Ping – a separate word for each, with the family name in upper case (readers are not wrong in concluding that I am trying to split hairs)!

As for non-person proper nouns, like the great novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三国演义, *Sān Guó Yăn Yì*), logic calls for it to be spelled as *Sān-Guó* (Three Kingdoms), followed by *Yăn-Yì* (The Plays, not really 'Romance'). The hyphens are to show that each pair has to be read and understood as a term separately.

The *pin-yin* in this book generally reflects the author's advocation along this line. (Maybe all the tonal symbols should also be done away

with, since they make typing clumsy for amateurs like me! But without tonal differentiations, many totally unrelated Chinese characters would sound the same when romanised![1] A compromise may be needed. My suggestion is this: when a more exact pronunciation is desired to carry its true meaning, like in *Sān-Guó Yǎn-Yì* above, then the tonal symbols are necessary; however, if it is a name where meaning is not important to listeners, then maybe they can be dispensed with. Like my given name, who cares whether it is the more correct version *Yǒu-Mù*, or the name Yu Book that is registered as my identity in the country where I was born?

Out of respect for tradition, where proper nouns for persons or places are concerned, I will follow those that have already been established by 'authoritative' sources (e.g., Xi Jinping, Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-shek, Tsai Ing-wen, Wang Gungwu, Xi'an, Chang'an, etc.) As for the rest, I shall use my own logic to present them. Readers, please feel free to disagree (experts are not always right, though).

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[1] A case in point is gou without tonal emphasis. It can use to mean 'dog' (狗), or 'enough' (够), 'drain, connect' (沟), or 'purchase' (购), and maybe more, but one needs to pronounce dog as *gǒu*, drain or connect as *gōu*, enough as *gòu* and purchase as *gòu*. They are all different characters in Chinese writing! There are many similar situations. *Yi* can mean more than 100 characters in Chinese! Just to name a few: 'one' (一), 'second' (乙), 'right conduct' (义), 'hundred million' (亿), 'already' (已), 'to discuss' (议), 'native, barbaric' (夷), 'clothes' (衣), 'to heal' (医), 'to rely' (依), 'suitable' (宜), and 'to change' (易)! They sound alike, but they are all different characters. Without tonal emphasis or differentiation, the context for each pin-yin has to be understood, lest it will be quite a task for one to pin it down to a particular Chinese character and vice versa. Wonder why Chinese minds are so complex?

II

CHINESE HISTORY

Chapter 5

Historical Overview

Geographically speaking, we have to thank the Qing Dynasty (清朝,1644-1911), the Manchu (满族, *Măn zú*) ruling class that held power for almost 300 years, for what China is today. Of course, the land mass held by the Yuan Dynasty (元朝, 1271-1368), the ruling class of Mongolian (蒙古族, *Měng-Gǔ zú*) ethnicity, was even larger. The ruling classes of both Yuan and Qing were non-Han (汉). These were not the only two non-Han periods in Chinese history. As far back as the Han Dynasty (漢朝, 206 BCE-220 CE), the *Xiōng-Nú* (匈奴) or Northern Tribes had already begun to intrude into China. Fortunately, the dynasty was strong enough to survive and in fact expanded territorially somewhat.

During the Chin (晉, conventionally spelt as *Jìn*) period (265-420 CE, 155 years), many parts of China fell prey to tribal forces from the north who established polities, like the reign of the *Wǔ Hú* (五胡). There were as many as 16 states ruling the various parts of the country during that period.

Even the heritage of the founding emperor of the Tang (唐) dynasty (618–690 CE, 705–907 CE, 274 years) is questionable. Many scholars believe he was of Pro-Mongolic Xian-Bei (鮮卑 *Xiān-Bēi*) origin (but some think he was only 25 percent *Xiān-Bēi*).

After Tang, China lapsed into another period of political instability, and the areas in the north were ruled successively by non-Han dynasties, most significantly of which is Liao (辽 *Liáo*) – of Khi-Tan (契丹) tribe – which ruled a large land mass in the north from 916 to 1125 (209 years). Even after the founding of Song (宋) (960-1129, 165 years), it had to

share China with Jin (金), of Jur-Chen (女真 *Nǚ-Zhēn*) tribe. Jin existed from 1115 to 1234 (119 years).

There were also civil wars. The first lasted about 250 years, in a period called the Warring States (战国时代 *Zhàn-Guó Shí-Dài*) (475–221 BCE) during the Zhou (周 *Zhōu*) dynasty's long, albeit weak, reign. The second was during the Three Kingdoms period (三国时代 *Sān-Guó Shí-Dài*) (220-265 BCE). Much blood was shed because of the battles and the wars. Many million lost their lives.

No sooner had Sun Yat-sen ushered in a republican government than the warlords began to undermine its stability. And soon Japan invaded. Even fighting the Japanese was not a coherent effort; there was much rivalry between Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (*Kuo-Min Tang* 国民党) government and Mao Zedong's forces.

It can therefore be surmised that China (or at least some parts of it) has been variously ruled by non-Han Chinese for more than 800 years of its existence, and in between there were also civil wars when Chinese fought Chinese. Even today, the US is doing everything possible to make sure that Taiwan does not reunite with the mainland. A unified China is still very much a tall order. Today, there are 56 ethnic groups living in mainland China. Han Chinese account for about 90% of its total population. The major minority ethnic groups are *Zhuang* (壮族), *Hui* (回族), *Manchu* (满族), and *Uyghur* (维吾尔). Everyone is equal, but the Chinese government does give the ethnic minorities some affirmative advantages especially in education and healthcare.

The Han culture is 'magnetic' or suctional. Yuan's Mongols and Qing's Manchus became Sinicised when they ruled China proper. So had many of the northern tribes which lorded over the Han during the various minor dynasties in China's history.

Proud to be Chinese!

A Timeline of China's History

c. 2697-2597 BCE (100 years)	Huang-Di (黃帝) (No accurate historical record)	
c. 2597-2100 BCE (500 years)	Yao (堯), Shuen (舜), Fu Hsi (伏羲) and Shén Nóng 神农[1] (No accurate historical record)	
2100-1600 BCE (500 Years)	Xia (夏朝)	
1600-1100 BCE (500 years)	Shang (商朝)	
1100-221 BCE (879 years)	Zhou Western Zhou (西周, 1100-770 BCE) Eastern Zhou (東周, (770-225 BCE) Including: The Spring and Autumn Period (春秋, *Chun-Qiu*, 770-476 BCE) The Warring States Period (战国时代, *Zhan-Guo Shí-Dai*, 475–221 BCE)	
221-207 BCE (15 years)	Qin (秦朝)	
206 BCE-220 CE (426 years)	Han (漢朝) Western Han (西漢, 206 BCE-8 CE) Eastern Han (東漢, 25-220 CE)	Broken by Xin (9-15 CE)
220-265 CE (45 years)	Three Kingdoms (三国时代, *San-Guo Shí-Dai*)	
265-420 CE (155 years)	Chin (晉朝) Western Chin (西晉, 265-316 CE) Eastern Chin (東晉, 317-420 CE)	
420-589 CE (179 years)	The Southern and Northern Dynasties (南北朝, *Nan-Bei Chao*) Southern Dynasty (南朝 - 前宋, 420–479 CE) Northern Dynasty (北朝, 479-589 CE)	

[1] None of these names are surnames or dynasty names.

581-618 CE (37 years)	Sui (隋朝)	
618-907 CE (289 years)	Tang (唐朝)	
907-960 CE (53 years)	Five Dynasties, Ten Kingdoms (五代十国, *Wu-Dai, Shi-Guo*)	
960-1229 (269 years)	Song (宋朝)	
1279-1368 (89 years)	Yuan (元朝)	
1369-1644 (275 years)	Ming (明朝)	
1644-1911 (267 years)	Qing (清朝)	
1911-1949 (38 years)	Republic of China (中華民國)	
Since 1949	People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国)	

Chapter 6

Huang-Di (黄帝) and Before

Map of tribes and tribal unions in Ancient China[1]

Early evidence of millet cultivation in the Yellow River basin was carbon-dated to about 9,000 years ago, and rice cultivation in the Yangtze River (扬子江 or 长江, *Cháng-Jiāng*) basin occurred some 1,000 years later. With agriculture came an increased population. Pigs and dogs were the earliest domesticated animals in the region, and about 5,000 ago domesticated cattle and sheep arrived from Western Asia.

Bronze artefacts (between 3100 and 2700 BCE) have been found in the upper Yellow River region in eastern Gansu. The *Xia* (夏) and the

[1] Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Shang (商) are perhaps the earliest most definitive dynasties in Chinese history, but before that there must have been organised societies of Huang-Di descendants. Legend has it that China was already under a very enlightened leader called Huang-Di, the Yellow Emperor (*huang*[2] means 'yellow' and *di* means 'emperor') some five thousand years ago (2697/8–2597/8 BCE).

Huang-Di is a deity (神, *shén*) figure to Chinese. He is still worshipped as the originator of the Chinese civilisation and ruler of a centralised Chinese state. Several texts, such as the medical classic *Huáng-Dì Nèi-Jīng* (黄帝内经), and the *Huáng-Dì Sì-Jīng* (黄帝四经), a set of political treatises, were attributed to him. To this day the Yellow Emperor remains a powerful symbol of Chinese nationalism.

[2] Huang may not be his surname. The Yellow River or Huang He is the cradle of Chinese civilisation. He is simply being revered as the 'Father of Huang' or 'Yellow' civilisation.

Chapter 7

Early Dynasties: Xia (夏朝, 2100–1600 BCE) and Shang (商朝, 1600–1100 BCE)

The Xia (*left*) and Shang (*right*) dynasties[1]

After Huang-Di, legends list *Yü* (禹), Yao (堯), *Shuen* (舜), *Fu Hsi* (伏羲) and *Shén Nóng* (神农)[2] as five of China's subsequent leaders; they are generally credited with controlling the floods which often devastated agrarian livelihoods in the Yellow River basin of that era.

In a way the character 夏 (*Xia*), preceded by and taken together with another character 华 (*hua*, or *huá* in *pin-yin*), i.e., 华夏 (*Hua-Xia*), represents Chinese as a race with a common cultural ancestry by the various confederations of the pre-Qin China.

After Xia, it was Shang. Like Xia, Shang's history is hazy; however, the dynasty did leave archaeological evidence about its existence, the

1 Source: Wikimedia Commons

2 Again, none of these names are surnames, the concept of surnames came later.

most famous of which are the oracle bones – the earliest known form of Chinese writing inscribed onto animal bones and turtle shells for divinations. Major discoveries have been made in the city of Anyang (安阳 in Henan), which is believed to be the last capital city of the Shang. Over 20,000 pieces of Chinese writing were discovered. Tens of thousands of artefacts, many of which were in bronze, were unearthed and the workmanship displayed demonstrates it was a highly civilised society. (Given this fact, writing had obviously been developed earlier).

It is said that the last Shang king, Xin (辛), was defeated in battle by King Wu of Zhou (周武王), forcing Xin to commit suicide. His son was kept on by King Wu to rule Shang as a puppet leader. Archaeologists have unearthed a large number of artefacts in a finding called *San-Xing Dui* (三星堆) in Central China (Sichuan). There was indeed a parallel bronze-age civilisation then; however, it mysteriously vanished.

The *San-Xing Dui* (三星堆) discovery

The San-Xing Dui (Three Star mounds or piles) discovery puts paid to the belief that the Yellow River basin was the sole cradle of Chinese civilisation. The artefacts that have been unearthed in Guanghan (广汉), Sichuan, are carbon-dated to be from the 12th to 11th centuries BCE (or more than three thousand years ago), which makes its civilisation contemporaneous to that of the Shang Dynasty's, which was a Bronze Age culture. Chinese archaeologists believe that it belonged to the ancient kingdom of Shu (蜀, not the namesake in the Three Kingdoms period). Geographically, however, they were in the same Sichuan plain, which spread across the upper reaches of the Yang-tze River.

References to the existence of a Shu kingdom that may be dated reliably to such an early period in Chinese historical records are scant. The kingdom is mentioned in *Shi-Ji* (史記) and *Shu-Jing* (书经) as an ally of the Zhou who defeated the Shang. The Shu Kingdom was founded by Can Cong (蠶叢) who was described as having protruding eyes, a feature that is

found in many of the masks and figures of San-Xing Dui. It has therefore been suggested that the large masks with protruding eyes are a representation of Can Cong, but that is just an interpretation.

The bronze objects found included sculptures of humans, bells, axes and animals, such as dragons, snakes, and birds. Others were made of gold or carved out of jade. There was also a large number of clam shells and ivory. The most striking finds were dozens of large bronze masks and heads that carried angular human features with exaggerated almond-shaped eyes and protruding pupils, and large upper ears. Researchers were astonished to find an artistic style that was completely unknown in the history of Chinese art.

The San-Xing Dui culture is indeed a mysterious civilization. The culture had certainly developed a different method of bronze-making from that of the Shang. It is also clear that it was quite an advanced one as well.

The large number of seashells excavated at the ruins came from the Indian Ocean, meaning that they must have been transported from ancient India.

But it vanished out of thin air after this. Was there a huge natural disaster, like an earthquake that befell them? If so, what happened to the bodies of the victims? No traces remain.

Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋节, *Zhōng-Qiū Jié*)

Also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival dates back over 3,000 years (Shang Dynasty). It is held on the 15th day of the eighth moon in the Lunar calendar.

Lanterns of all sizes and shapes are carried and displayed. They are symbolic beacons that light people's path to prosperity and good fortune. Mooncakes typically filled with sweet bean, egg yolk, meat or lotus seed paste are traditionally prepared for this festival.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is based on the legend of *Chang'e* (嫦娥, more correctly Chang-Er), the Moon goddess in Chinese mythology. The story was about a hero named *Hou Yi* (后羿), an excellent archer, and his wife Chang'e. One year, ten suns rose in the sky together, causing great disaster to the people. Hou Yi shot down nine of the suns and left only one to provide light. An immortal admired Hou Yi and sent him the elixir of immortality. Hou Yi let Chang'e keep it, for he did not want to be immortalised alone. However, Peng Meng, one of his apprentices, knew this secret. On the 15th day of the eighth moon, when Hou Yi went hunting, Peng Meng broke into Hou Yi's house and wanted Chang'e to give the elixir to him.

Chang'e refused. She swallowed it and it made her fly into the sky. As she loved her husband, she chose the moon – which was nearest to the Earth then – as her home, instead of the faraway stars.

Hou Yi was devastated. On the 15th day of every eighth moon, he saw the silhouette or grainy image of Chang'e with her jade rabbit on the surface of the Moon. He would bring out her favourite cake as an offering. Soon, Chang'e became the 'goddess' of the Moon, and the custom of praying to the Moon on Mid-Autumn Day was handed down for thousands of years since.

But there is yet another version. After Hou Yi shot down nine of the ten suns, he was pronounced king by the thankful people. However, he soon became conceited and tyrannical. Wanting eternal life, he asked for the elixir from Xi Wang-mu (Queen Mother of the Heavenly West). But his wife, Chang'e, kept it because she did not want Hou Yi to live long and hurt more people. Hou Yi became angry when he discovered that Chang'e had taken the elixir, he shot at his wife as she flee to the moon but missed. People were touched, and that day – 15th day of the eighth moon – was commemorated.

Legends, legends, legends…

Today, Chang'e is the name of China's space programme that sends missions to the Moon. Its second lunar rover *Yutu* (玉兔, Jade Rabbit) is still roving on the dark side of the Moon.

Chapter 8

The Zhou Dynasty (周朝, 1100-221 BCE)

Western Zhou (西周, 1100-770 BCE) and Eastern Zhou (東周, 770-225 BCE)

The Spring and Autumn Period (春秋, Chun-Qiu, 770–476 BCE)

The Warring States Period (战国时代, Zhàn-Guó Shí-dài, 475–221 BCE)

Dates differ from source to source

The Zhou dynasty lasted longer than any other dynasty in Chinese history. However, in reality, the dynasty only managed to keep total control over China until 770 BCE. Until this period, the dynasty was known as the Western Zhou (西周). The feudal system created many fiefdoms and barons became increasingly powerful.

As royal authority waned towards the end of the period, the capital moved eastwards to Luoyang (in Henan), thus ushering in the period known as Eastern Zhou (東周, 770-225 BCE). Although the sovereigns' authority continued to erode, their highly honoured rituals allowed the Zhou kings to stay in power for another 500 years. The early period of Eastern Zhou is called the Spring and Autumn (春秋) era. It was a period when great sages appeared, including the most famous of all – Confucius or Kung-Tze (孔子). Much scholarship was recorded in this period.

But by the middle of the 5th century, states began to fight states, hence the Warring States period. Independent states comprising Yan (燕), Zhao (趙), Han (韩), Wei (魏), Qi (齐), Chu (楚), Qin (秦) rose and fell over the ensuing centuries until the last of the Zhou kings, Nan (赧), was killed by Qin, which unified China in 221 BCE.

Despite all the upheavals, the Eastern Zhou is remembered for its progressiveness in thoughts and is considered to be the golden age of Chinese philosophy. This was the time of the rise of great sages like Kung-Tze and Lao-Tze (老子). The Zhou dynasty also brought great advancements in bronze making and language with the modern writing system emerging towards the end of the dynasty.

Chinese calendar (农历, *Nóng-Lì*)

The Chinese calendar is lunisolar. Although the Gregorian calendar is the standard of our world today, the Nong-Li (agricultural calendar) offers many easy-to-observe advantages. The first day of its 'moon', the night of which carries no moon in the sky, marks the beginning of a lunar month, and on the 15th day, a full moon is all for us to 'see' at night, thanks to the Sun-Earth-Moon alignment of their heavenly trajectories.

And on the 15th day of the eighth 'moon', the Moon appears phenomenally bigger and brighter than the other full Moons of the year. The calendar also allows you to know quite precisely when a season is about to begin.

Nong-Li identifies years, months, and days according to astronomical phenomena and reminds Chinese of festivals and seasons. It also provides the traditional Chinese nomenclature of dates within a year, which people use to select auspicious days for weddings, funerals, moving or starting businesses. The length of a month is also annotated as either long (大, ***dà*** or 'big' for months with 30 days) or short (小, ***xiǎo*** or 'small' for months with 29 days). There are leap months in sexagenary (60-year) cycles to align with the Gregorian calendar.

The traditional Chinese calendar was developed between 771 and 476 BCE, during the Spring and Autumn Period. Solar calendars were used before the Zhou Dynasty period.

Chinese New Year (农历新年 *Nóng-Lì Xīn-Nián* or 春节 *Chūn Jié*)

The history of the Chinese New Year festival can be traced back to more than 4,000 years ago. Ancient Chinese gathered around and celebrated at the end of harvest in autumn. The *Classic of Poetry* (Western Zhou) describes how people celebrated in the 10th month of an ancient solar calendar. The celebration is believed to be one of the prototypes of the Chinese New Year (not the Mid-Autumn Festival).

The first dated celebration can be traced back to the Warring States Period. An exorcistic ritual called *Dà-Nuo* (大儺) was recorded being carried out in Qin at the end of a year to ward off illnesses and misfortunes. But the first mention of the celebration was recorded in the Han dynasty where the celebration evolved into a time for families to get together and for one to pay respects to elders and officials.

Today Chinese New Year is perhaps the most important festival amongst Chinese. Traditionally, the celebration lasts 15 days.

A 'perfect' man

The Duke of Zhou (周公, *Zhōu-Gōng*) was singled out by Kung-Tze as the perfect example of great and enlightened leadership. It is said that the duke's righteousness had played a major role in consolidating the kingdom established by his elder brother King Wu. He acted as a capable and loyal regent for his young nephew King Cheng (周成王). He is also credited with the authorship of *The Scripture of Change* (易經, *I-Jing*), *The Classic of Poetry* (詩, *Shi-Jing*) and *The Rites of Zhou* (周禮, *Zhou-Lẽ*)

The Art of War (孫子兵法, *Sūn-Tze Bīng-Fă*)

This great military treatise was written in the late Spring and Autumn Period. Sun-Tze (孙子) is considered one of history's finest military tacticians and analysts. His work has 13 chapters. Each chapter is devoted to a different set of skills related to warfare and how it applies to military strategy and tactics. It has influenced both Eastern and Western military thinking, business tactics, legal strategy, politics, sports, lifestyles and beyond. It has also been widely translated. Many military planners and corporate leaders swear by it.

Beginning around the 12th century, some Chinese scholars began to doubt the historical existence of Sun-Tze, primarily on the grounds that he was not mentioned in the historical classics. But in 1972, discoveries from two Han tombs in Shandong revealed two separate texts, one attributed to Sun-Tze, corresponding to the known text, and another attributed to Sun Bin (孙膑), which explains and expands upon the former. This discovery showed that much of the historical confusion was due to the fact that there were two texts that could have

been referred to as 'Master Sun's Art of War', not one. The content of the earlier text is about one-third of the chapters of the modern *The Art of War*, and their text matches very closely. It is now generally accepted that the earlier *The Art of War* was completed sometime between 500 and 430 BCE.

Qing-Ming Festival (清明节, *Qing-Ming Jié*)

The Qing-Ming Festival, also known as Tomb-sweeping Day, falls on the 15th day after the Spring Equinox. It is therefore either April 4, or 5 or 6 each year. During Qing Ming, families visit the tombs of their ancestors to clean the gravesites, pray to their ancestors and make ritual offerings.

The festival is said to have originated about 2,500 years ago, during the Spring and Autumn Period, in honour of a nobleman. The stories are a little incredible; nonetheless, the legend and practice live on.

The festival in its present form is credited to Tang's Emperor Xuan (Xuan-Zong). Apparently, Chinese had gone overboard in holding too many extravagant and ostentatiously expensive ceremonies in honour of their ancestors, probably because of Confucius's great filial piety advocations. In 732 CE, Xuan-Zong sought to curb this practice by declaring that such respects should only be formally done once a year, i.e., during the Qing-Ming festival.[1]

Today, Qing-Ming, together with its attendant practices, is observed as an essential cultural element of Chinese in their emphasis on familial ties and filial piety.

[1] Some readers may think the term 'festival' is not quite appropriate for the occasion. Maybe a better term should be 'Commemoration' of "Day of Remembrance"?

Great wisdom from idioms

Chinese idioms offer great wisdom, such as 'a taste of bile' (吃苦, *chī-kǔ*). We Chinese often hear of the term *chī-kǔ*, which literally mean to 'eat or swallow bitterness'. The Chinese language, unlike English, is not grammatically rigid. An 'activity' term can also be used to describe a 'virtue'. I am no expert, but I believe it is one of the virtues that has shaped Chinese DNA for millennia and generations.

Chi-ku means all-out preparedness to slog for the future – not just one's own future, but also the next generation's future, or even the future of the nation. I really do not know how this term originated, but having an interest in Chinese history, I always believed it had to do with an idiom. The origin of this idiom, I suspect, is based on a historical fact that happened during the dying days of the Spring and Autumn Period of Chinese history.

The idiom is *wò xīn cháng dǎn* (卧薪尝胆) or using hard firewood as a bed and tasting bile, as a constant reminder of humiliation once suffered.

In 496 BCE, near the end of the Spring and Autumn Period, He Lu (阖闾), the king of the state of Wu (吴), invaded the state of Yue, but was soundly beaten by the king of Yue, Gou Jian (勾践). He Lu was fatally injured, and in his dying moments urged his son Fu Cha (夫差) to avenge his loss.

After two years of preparation, Fu Cha's army defeated Gou Jian. Gou Jian contemplated suicide, but a trusted minister Wen Zhong (文种) advised against it. The minister suggested instead that Gou Jian offer a bribe to a key but corruptible minister in the Wu court for him to have an audience with the king, so as to pledge his total subserviency.

Wu's key minister, Wu Zi-Xu (伍子胥), was totally against the suggestion, saying that Gou Jian would bide his time and make a comeback. But the Wu king thought Yue was already a spent force and agreed to surrender. Gou Jian brought his wife to serve in Wu and won the trust of Fu Cha.

Three years later, Gou Jian returned to Yue. In his room, he hung the gallbladder of an animal, and every morning, he would bring himself to have a taste of it. He also lived a very simple and exemplary life. After ten years of hard slog, he had rebuilt his army. In the meantime, the king of Wu was going everywhere to exert hegemony. But his people were suffering. Wu had already started to show decline.

In 482 BCE, when Fu Cha was in a battle for supremacy with the state of Chin (晋),[2] Gou Jian launched a surprise attack and dealt a big blow to Wu and later sued for peace. Although it was granted, Gou Jian launched a second attack in 473 BCE and finished Wu. Fu Cha committed suicide.

I have never tasted any gallbladder myself. But I heard it is ultra-bitter in taste. Joe Biden should know this is China's invincible weapon!

The Dragon Boat Festival (端午节, *Duān-Wǔ Jié*)

The Dragon Boat Festival occurs on the fifth day of the fifth moon of the lunar calendar, which is around the late May or June in the Gregorian calendar.

The festival is to commemorate the death of the poet and minister Qu Yuan (屈原, c. 340–278 BCE) of the state of Chǔ (楚) during the Warring States Period of the Zhou Dynasty. When the king decided to ally with the increasingly powerful state of Qin, Qu Yuan was accused of treason and banished for opposing the alliance. During his exile, Qu Yuan wrote many poems. Twenty-eight years later, Qin captured the Chu capital.

[2] 晋 has generally been translated as 'Jin' in most books. I beg to differ, for it can be confused with 金, which is another ruling house in Chinese history.

In despair, Qu Yuan committed suicide by drowning himself in the Mi-Luo River (汨罗江 *Mì-Luó Jiāng*) in Hunan. The locals who admired him raced out in their boats to retrieve his body. This is said to be the origin of dragon boat races. When his body could not be found, they dropped balls of sticky rice wrapped in bamboo leaves into the river so that Qu Yuan could eat them (others believe it was the other way round, that the fish could eat the sticky rice instead of Qu Yuan's body). This mass of glutinous rice (usually wrapped in bamboo leaves) is said to be the origin of *zong-tze* (粽子).

Qu Yuan is regarded as 'China's first patriotic poet' for his social idealism and unbending patriotism.

There are other versions of the origin of the Dragon Boat Festival, however. One is about Wu Zi-Xu, the chancellor of Wu. Apparently, the king of Wu became angry at Wu Zi-Xu after the latter forewarned him of the danger of the beauty[3] sent by a rival king (Gou Jian[4] of Yue) to seduce him. Wu Zi-Xu was forced to commit suicide, with his body thrown into the river. And therefore, the *zong-tze* is to sustain his spirit.

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3 The beauty was the legendary Xī Shī (西施), who is recognised as one of the four great beauties of ancient China (the other three being Wang Zhao Jun (王昭君), Diāo Chán (貂蝉) and Yang Gui-Fei (杨贵妃). It is said that the king's dalliance with Xi Shi led him to neglect the affairs of the state.

4 See earlier story.

Chapter 9

The Qin Dynasty (秦朝, 221–207 BCE)

The Qin dynasty lasted only 15 years, but it had an enormous influence on all dynasties that followed. It was the Qin that first unified China, by defeating the other six major states (Zhao, Han, Wei, Yan, Chu and Qi) of the Warring States.

The leader of the Qin, Ying Zheng (嬴政), gave himself the name Qin Shi-Huang, which literally means 'The First or Founding Emperor of Qin'. After taking the throne, he took the title emperor – instead of the title of king that the Zhou and Shang dynasty leaders had done before him.

The Qin took direct control over their new empire. Direct access to this new massive population allowed the Qin to embark on huge

projects such as the Great Wall of China. Qin Shi-Huang also introduced several landmark reforms, such as the standardisation of weights, measures, currency, and Chinese writing. Qin Shi-Huang expanded his empire southwards, taking in Guangzhou, Fuzhou and Guilin, as well as managing to strike as far south as northern Vietnam.

Despite all these amazing achievements, the one thing that people will always remember Qin Shi-Huang for is the Terracotta Army. Still one of the marvels of the world today, tens of millions flock from all over the world every year to see the grave of the great Qin emperor.

After his death, things quickly unravelled, and a couple of short rules by his offspring and much major unrest later led Liu Bang (劉邦) to usher in a new dynasty, the Han.

The Great Wall of China (长城, *Cháng-Chéng*)

Everybody knows the Great Wall of China (长城, *Cháng-Chéng*), which the Chinese describe as having the length of *wàn-lǐ* (萬里, or 10,000 *li*, with one *li* being about 500 metres). Several stretches were built from as early as the 7th century BCE, but Qin Shi-Huang is credited for its posterity. Little of the Qin wall remains; nonetheless, many successive dynasties continued to extend and maintained the various stretches of the border walls. What we are seeing today are mostly the sections built during the Ming era.

Collectively, they stretch from Liaodong in the east to Lake Lop Nor in the west, from the present-day Sino-Russian border in the north to Tao River in the south, spanning some 21,000 kilometres in total.

The feat was indeed extraordinary, although the engineering involved was not outlandish. Chinese structures, like the Grand Canal, were built for military, political or economic purposes, unlike, say, pyramids which are largely religious in intent. The defensive characteristics of the wall were evident from the

presence of prominent and regularly positioned watchtowers, which also serve as garrison quarters or stations.

The Terracotta Army (兵马俑, *Bīng-Mǎ Yǒng*)

The Terracotta Army (兵马俑, *Bīng-Mǎ Yǒng*) is a form of funerary legacy that was buried with Qin Shi-Huang upon his death in 209 BCE outside Xi'an in Shaanxi.

The figures vary in height according to their roles, the tallest being the generals. Three pits uncovered held more than 8,000

soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses, and 150 cavalry horses.

The construction of the tomb was described by historian Si-Ma Qian (司马迁) in his epic work *Shi-Ji* (史記, Historical Records). Si-ma Qian wrote that Qin Shi-Huang was buried with subterranean palaces, towers, officials, valuable artefacts and wondrous objects. According to this account, 100 flowing rivers were simulated using mercury, and above them the ceiling was decorated with heavenly bodies, below which were the features of the land. High levels of mercury were found in the soil of the tomb mound, giving credence to Si-Ma Qian's account. Later historical accounts suggested that the complex and tomb itself had been looted by a contender for the throne after the death of the first emperor; however, there are indications that the tomb itself may not have been plundered.

Calling a deer, a horse (指鹿為馬 *Zhǐ Lù Wéi Mǎ*)

Shi Ji records that Zhao Gao (赵高, d. 207 BCE), in an attempt to control the Qin government, devised a loyalty test for court officials using a deer and horse. Zhao Gao was contemplating treason but was afraid the other officials would not heed his commands, so he decided to test them first. He brought in a deer and presented it to the emperor but called it a horse. The emperor laughed and said, "Is the chancellor perhaps mistaken, calling a deer a horse?" Then the emperor questioned those around him. Some remained silent, while some, hoping to ingratiate themselves with Zhao, said it was a horse, and others said it was a deer. Zhao Gao secretly arranged for all those who said it was a deer to be brought before the law and had them executed. Thereafter, the officials were all terrified of Zhao. Zhao gained military power as a result.

Zhao Gao, a eunuch, served as a close aide to all three emperors of the Qin Dynasty, and was regarded as having played an instrumental role in the downfall of the dynasty. He began his career under Qin Shi-Huang as a relatively minor official in charge of managing the palace horse-drawn carriages.

In 210 BCE, after Qin Shi-Huang died during a country inspection tour, Zhao Gao and the chancellor secretly changed the emperor's final edict and enthroned someone not in line as the new emperor. Zhao Gao was promoted to manage the daily activities in the imperial palace. He used his position to eliminate political opponents. He framed the chancellor for treason, and had him and his entire family executed, after which he replaced Li as the chancellor and monopolised state power. In 207 BCE, he launched a coup and assassinated the emperor. Later, he was killed on the order of the prince he installed as the third emperor of Qin.

In today's geopolitics, you often see the likes of Zhao Cao in Western politicians and journalists!

Chapter 10

The Han Dynasty (漢朝)

Western Han (西漢, 206 BCE-8 CE), Xin Dynasty (新朝, 9-25 CE), Eastern Han (東漢, 25-220 CE)

Liu Bang (劉邦) became Emperor Gao (高祖, Gao-Zu) of Han. For the 400 or so years of its existence, there was a Xin Dynasty (新朝) in between, with only one emperor, Wang Mang (王莽). This break (9-25 CE) split the Han dynasty into two periods – Western Han before and the Eastern Han after.

Chinese to this day refer to themselves as Han people, and Chinese

characters are referred to as Han characters (汉字).[1] The Han dynasty is known as a golden era in Chinese history with great economic prosperity and advances in the development of the money economy.

Much of the Western Han period of the dynasty was spent fighting and negotiating with the Xiong-Nu, who had conquered much of Mongolia and Manchuria in the north and the Tarim Basin in the northwest. Their chieftain-emperor *Modu Chanyu* (冒顿单于) was most formidable. The Xiong-Nu even successfully invaded what is now the Shanxi province. But by the time of Emperor Wu (漢武帝, *Han Wu-Di*) it was the Xiong-Nu that were being hammered by the Chinese armies, and they were forced to flee to the Gobi Desert in the north. The Han expanded out to the west as well, conquering the lands now known as Xinjiang, and by 51 BCE the Xiong-Nu finally submitted to Han rule.[2]

This was also the time of the imperial envoy Zhang Qian (張騫), a man who can be seen painted on the walls of the Dunhuang Caves (in Gang-su) and who played an important role in securing Xinjiang. He was the first official to bring back verified information about the civilisations that lay to the west of China, and is widely credited with setting up the outposts and embassies that expanded Chinese trade routes into Central Asia, what is now referred to as the Silk Route.

After the brief reign of Wang Mang, the Han regained their dynasty through the new emperor Guang-Wu (光武) and the period known as Eastern Han began. The capital was moved from Chang'an, the modern-day Xi'an, to Luoyang, and the Han began to secure the west of China from their old enemies, the Xiong-Nu, and others.

The Han started to reform the older, more brutal legal system they inherited from Qin and even women were allowed to level charges against men, although they still held a lower standing in society. Buddhism began to flow into China. As with all dynasties in China, Han eventually split into three kingdoms – Wei (魏), Shu (蜀) and Wu (吳).

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1 The Japanese borrowed some Chinese characters into their vocabulary and called it Kanji (漢字)

2 Eighteen years later in 33 BCE, the Han emperor saw it fit to appease the Xiong Nu by marrying off Wang Zhao Zun to a Xiong Nu chieftain.

Si-Mă Qian (司马迁), the father of Chinese historiography

Si-Mă Qian (司马迁, c.145–86 BCE) was a historian of the early Han period. He is considered the father of Chinese histography for his 史記 (*Shǐ-Jì*), a general history of China covering more than 2,000 years beginning from the rise of the legendary Yellow Emperor and the formation of the first Chinese polity to the reigning sovereign of his time, the emperor of Han.

Shi-Ji served as a model for official history-writing for subsequent Chinese dynasties and the Chinese cultural sphere (Korea, Vietnam, Japan) up until the 20th century. Si-Mă Qian's father, Sī-Mă Tán (司马谈), first conceived of writing a complete history of China, but had managed only some preparatory sketches at the time of his death. After inheriting his father's position as imperial court historian, Si-Mă Qian was determined to fulfil his father's dying wish. However, in 99 BCE, he fell victim for speaking out in defence of a general, who was blamed for an unsuccessful campaign against the Xiong-Nu. Instead of death, he chose to be castrated so that he could complete his work. He was a gifted poet and prose writer, and was instrumental in the creation of the Tai-Chu calendar (太初历) which established a framework for later calendars to build on.

Chinese Jews (中国犹太人)

The first Jews to settle down in China probably did so during the Song dynasty, even though some contend that they were already there in the Tang times, which is not surprising, since the Silk Road was very much alive by then.

The Jewish Chinese community still observes a wide range of cultural traditions and religious practices. The first Jews arrived during the 8th century. In the 19th and 20th centuries,

Jewish merchants from around the world also began to trade in Chinese ports, particularly in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Harbin. In the first half of the 20th century, thousands of Jewish refugees escaping from imperial Russia and later the Holocaust arrived in China.

It is said that many Jews in China converted to Islam and became Hui Muslims. Over the centuries, the Kaifeng community came to be virtually indistinguishable from the Hui and Han Chinese population and is therefore no longer recognised by the Chinese government as a separate ethnic community. Since their religious practices are considered to be functionally extinct, they are not eligible for expedited immigration to Israel under the Law of Return unless they explicitly convert.

The Kaifeng Jews are purported to have travelled from Persia to India during the Han period and later migrated from the Muslim-inhabited regions of northwestern China (modern day Gansu province) to Henan province during the early Northern Song period (960-1127).

Many Jewish communities were established in China in the Middle Ages. It was also stated in the manuscripts that there were many Jews in Hangzhou. However, not much was left as evidence of their existence. Strict dietary law made the community uniquely visible from the mainstream Chinese population. The Jews referred to their synagogues as 'The Pure and Truth', which is essentially the same as the term used to refer to Muslim mosques (清真寺, *Qīng-Zhēn sì*).

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), a Ming emperor conferred seven surnames upon the Jews, by which they are identifiable today: *Ai* (艾), *Shi* (石), *Gao* (高), *Jin* (金), *Li* (李), *Zhang* (張), and *Zhao* (趙). Two of these, Jin and Shi, are the equivalent of common Jewish names in the west: Gold and Stone.

The site of a Kaifeng synagogue; a briefing by a descendant; the Torah in a plaque.
Pictures taken by the author in 2010

Chinese Valentine's Day

The *Qi-Xi* (七夕) Festival, also known as the *Qi-Qiao* (七巧) Festival, has been celebrated the seventh day of the seventh moon since the Han dynasty. It is the annual meeting of two lovers, weaver girl *Zhi Nü* (織女) and cowherd *Niu Lang* (牛郎) in Chinese mythology.

Niu Lang was often abused by his sister-in-law. He was eventually kicked out of the house and given only an old ox to work with. One day, the old ox suddenly spoke out, telling Niu Lang that there would be fairies bathing in the spring nearby that night. The fairies would be forced to be marooned and turned earthly if they failed to return to Heaven before dawn broke. And as the old cow had said, Niu Lang saw the beautiful fairies in the spring, and fell in love with one of them, who happened to be the heavenly weaver. In order to make her stay back, he did not return her clothes to her, and this made her turn mortal. They got married and had two children. The Emperor of the Heaven (玉皇大帝, *Yù-Huáng Dà-Dì*, or Jade Emperor) was furious and sent minions to escort Zhi Nü back to heaven. Niu Lang was heartbroken.

The old cow suddenly spoke out again, telling Niu Lang he could take its hide to make it into a flying coat to chase after them. Niu Lang did; unfortunately, the heavenly Queen Mother threw a silver river in the sky to block his way. The love

between Niu Lang and Zhi Nü moved the magpies, so they decided to form a bridge over the silver river for them to cross and meet. The Jade Emperor was so moved by the sight that he allowed the couple to meet on the Magpie Bridge – but only once a year!

Again, another tall tale! But why not?

Chapter 11

The Three Kingdoms Period (三国时代, 220–265 CE)

The Three Kingdoms (三国, *Sān-Guó*) was the tripartite division of China among the dynastic states of Wei (魏, led by Cao Cao, 曹操), Shu (蜀, led by Liu Bei, 刘备) and Wu (吴, led by Sun Quan, 孫權). There was a short-lived state called Yan (燕) on Liaodong Peninsula which lasted from 237 to 238 CE and is sometimes considered as the 'fourth kingdom'.

The period of the Three Kingdoms refers to the period between the establishment of Wei in 220 CE and the conquest of Wu by Western Chin (西晉) in 280 CE. The earlier part of the period, from 184 to 220

CE, was marked by chaotic infighting between warlords in various parts of China during the decline of Eastern Han. The latter part of the era was marked by the conquest of Shu by Wei in 263 CE, the usurpation of Cao by Western Chin in 266 CE, and the conquest of Wu by Western Chin in 280 CE.

The three kingdoms formed when the Han royal house declined. The Han royal house declined when the eunuchs abused the inner royalties, and the officials subverted the government. In 185 CE, powerful warlord Dong Zhuo (董卓) deposed Emperor Shao (汉少帝, *Han Shao-Di*) and enthroned Emperor Xian (汉献帝, *Han Xian-Di*) in 189 CE. He sacked Luoyang and moved the capital to Chang'an in 190 CE; and later Cao Cao placed the emperor under his control in Xu-Chang (许昌) in 196 CE.

The Three Kingdoms period is one of the bloodiest in Chinese history. It is said that millions lost their lives at this time. Nonetheless, technology advanced significantly during this period. Shu chancellor Zhu-Ge Liang (诸葛亮) is said to have invented the wooden ox, which apparently was an early form of the wheelbarrow, and made improvements on the crossbow. Wei engineer Ma Jun invented a hydraulic-powered, mechanical puppet theatre, square-pallet chain pumps for irrigation of gardens, and the ingenious design of a south-pointing chariot, a non-magnetic directional compass[1] operated by differential gears.

Although relatively short, this historical period has been greatly romanticized in the cultures of China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Stories of intrigue, statecraft and battles have been celebrated and dramatised in operas, folk stories, novels, and in more recent times, films, television, and video games – featuring characters like Shu chancellor Zhu-Ge Liang (for his genius) and warriors like Guan Yu (關羽, *Kwán Ýǔ*) (for his virtues). The best known of these is Luo Guang-Zhong's (罗贯) *The*

[1] For an in-depth account of ancient Chinese science and technology, one could usefully refer to Joseph Needham's monumental *Science and Civilisation in China series*.

Romance (or rather, *Theatres*) *of The Three Kingdoms* (三国演义, *Sān-Guó Yǎn-Yì*), written in the Ming era. The authoritative historical record of the era is in fact Chen Shou's *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, whose portrayals of Guan Yu may greatly disappoint his modern-day fans!

The *Shen* (神) of loyalty: 關羽 Guan Yu

There are many portraits and statues of Guan Yu, a general of the Shu state who shared a blood brother relationship with its leader, Liu Bei, and another, Zhang Fei, in the Three Kingdoms period. He was lionised and worshipped as the paradigm of loyalty and righteousness for his *yi* (义, loyalty, righteousness, indelible gratitude to benefactors, sense of belonging to a good cause, etc.). Guan Yu played a significant role in the events leading up to the end of the Han Dynasty and the establishment of Shu. He spared Cao Cao even though he had a chance to slay him when the latter was cornered – as gratitude to Cao Cao for an earlier act of kindness. Hence the reverence that has been accorded to him over generations. Even today, triads usually use him in solemn rituals to swear-in members and inculcate loyalty.

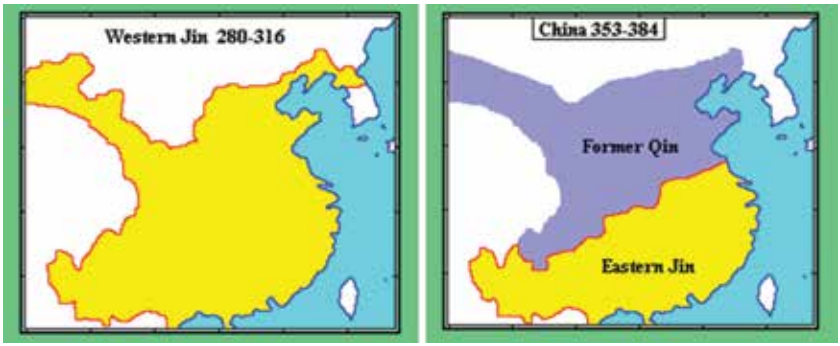
In 219 CE, Liu Bei's ally Sun Quan broke the Sun-Liu alliance and began to conquer the former's territories. Guan Yu was subsequently captured in an ambush by Sun's forces and executed. He is still worshipped by many Chinese today and reverently called 'Emperor Guan' (*Guān-Dì*) or 'Lord Guan' (*Guān-Gōng*) in many temples across the Chinese world.

Guan Yu's tomb in Luoyang

Chapter 12

The Chin Dynasty (晉朝)

The Western Chin Dynasty (西晉, 265–316 CE) and Eastern Chin Dynasty (東晉, 317–420 CE)



China reunited under Chin[1] after Si-Ma Yan (司馬炎) of Wei (魏) conquered Shu (蜀) and Wu (吳). However, this 'Western' Chin was unstable because of internal conflicts amongst the princes and rampant corruption. It was soon rampaged by the Wu-Hu (五胡). The Western Ching capital of Luoyang was ransacked in 311 CE, and Emperor Huai (晋怀帝, *Chin Huai-Di*) was captured. His successor Emperor Min (晋愍帝, *Chin Min-Di*) was also captured in Chang'an in 316 CE, putting an end to the Western Chin.

Wu-Hu is the name given by Chinese historians for the five non-Han peoples who were marauding northern China in Eastern Han. They overthrew the Western Chin and established kingdoms in the 4th and

[1] Not to be confused with the later Jin Dynasty (金朝), which was Jurchen in ethnicity and culture. Hence the unconventional spelling.

5th centuries CE. They five were Xiong-Nu (匈奴), Jie (羯), Xian-Bei (鮮卑), Qiang (羌), and Di (狄). Of these tribal ethnic groups, the Xiong-Nu and Xian-Bei were nomadic peoples from the northern steppes. The ethnic identity of the Xiong-Nu is uncertain, but the Xian-Bei appear to be Mongolic. The Jie, another pastoral people, may have been a branch of the Xiong-Nu, who may have been Yeniseian (Central Siberians). The Di and Qiang were from the highlands of western China. The Qiang were predominantly herdsmen and spoke Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman) languages, while the Di were farmers who may have spoken a Sino-Tibetan or Turkic language.

The Chin court relocated itself to Jian-Kang (modern day Nanjing) and a new dynasty called the Eastern Chin began under Si-Ma Rui (司馬睿) in 317 CE. But Eastern Chin lasted only until 420 CE, when the emperor's power was usurped by his own general Liu Yu (劉裕). He and his son ushered in a short-lived golden era called the Liu-Song (劉宋) Dynasty (or Former Song 前宋, or Song of the Southern Dynasty 南朝宋, 420–479 CE) until Xian-Bei once again conquered northern China.

This 155-year period of Chinese history is generally not well remembered. China was repeatedly rampaged by northern 'barbarians' – and there were as many as 16 different states (十六国) ruling the country variously for that period.

The Sixteen States (十六国 *Shí-Liù Guó*, 304 to 439 CE) was a chaotic period in Chinse history, when northern China fragmented into a series of short-lived states. The majority of these states were founded by Wu-Hu who had launched a series of invasions against Western Chin. However, several of the states were founded by the Han people, and all of the states – whether ruled the by Wu-Hu, Han, or others – took on Han-style dynastic names. The Sixteen States refer to the five Liangs (Former, Latter, Northern, Southern and Western), four Yans (Former, Latter, Northern, and Southern), three Qins (Former, Latter and Western), two Zhaos (Former and Latter), as well as Cheng and Xia. There were several other states in that period as well. Very confusing indeed!

Chapter 13

The Southern and Northern Dynasties (南北朝, 420-589 CE)

Northern and Southern dynasties (386-589 CE)			
Northern dynasties		**Southern dynasties**	
Northern Wei (386-535 CE)		Liu Song (420-479 CE)	
		Southern Qi (479-502 CE)	
Western Wei (535-557 CE)	Eastern Wei (534-550 CE)	Liang (502-557 CE)	
Northern Zhou (557-581 CE)	Northern Qi (550-577 CE)	Chen (557-589 CE)	Western Liang (555-587 CE)

This was also period of great instability in Chinese history. However, despite being a time of political unrest, it was also a time that saw great advancements in many aspects of arts, culture and technology. Daoism and Mahayana Buddhism became wide-spread, and the Han Chinese began mass migration to the south of the Yang-tze River. Many in Min-Nan (闽南, south of the Min River in Fujian-Quanzhou, Xiamen, Changzhou, Chaozhou and even some in Hainan) can trace their family trees to patriarchs in the north. Some contend that the 'official' dialect of that time was the variety that was brought down by these immigrants, and it lives on until today-the Min-Nan dialect.

The Southern Dynasties comprise four different 'dynasties': Song (宋, 420-479 CE), Qi (齊, 479-501 CE), Liang (梁, 502-557 CE), and Chen (陈, 557-589 CE). These lesser or sub-dynasties were set up by generals who seized power but found themselves unable to pass the baton to their offspring. Their capital remained at *Jian-Kang* (建康, modern-day Nanjing).

On the other hand, the Northern Dynasties were largely Sinicised Xian-Bei Mongols.

Chapter 14

The Sui Dynasty (隋朝, 581–618 CE)

China was reunited under Emperor Wen of Sui – a Sinicised Xian-Bei – of the Northern dynasties. The Sui dynasty was one of the shorter dynasties of China. Much was achieved, however. It standardised Chinese currency, expanded the Great Wall, and constructed the Grand Canal that ran from Beijing to Hangzhou, linking the Yellow and Yang-tze Rivers (It is still the largest canal in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage site.) The Sui government also started policies aimed at reducing the rich-poor divide which led to greater agricultural output.

Unfortunately, it did not have the means to continue with all its grandiose ambitions. Eventually it lost its four campaigns against the Goguryeo of Korea and the empire was left in ruins. Eventually, Sui's fate was sealed after an uprising started by a nobleman known as Li Yuan

(李淵), which gave birth to the Tang Dynasty with Li declaring himself Emperor Gao (高祖, Gao-Zu, with *zu* being like *di* or *zong*, meaning 'emperor') of Tang.

The Grand Canal

Totalling 1,776 kilometres, the Grand Canal is the longest in the world. Starting in Beijing, it passes through Tianjin and the provinces of Hebei, Shandong and Jiangsu and Zhejiang to the city of Hangzhou, linking the Yellow River and the Yang-tze River.

The oldest parts date back to the 5th century BCE, but credit for its embarkation goes to the Sui dynasty, when the various sections were first connected. Subsequent dynasties improved and even altered its route. The canal made it easy for grains

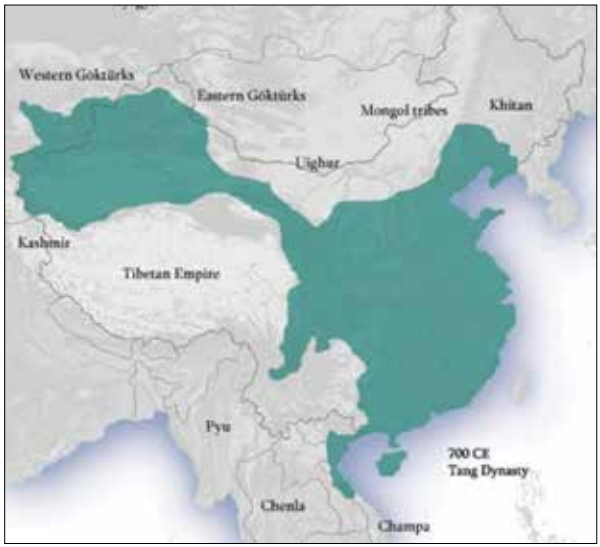
to be transported from the south to the centres of political and military power in north China.

A pound lock system was invented in the 10th century to ensure smooth flows of traffic. It is a double-gate system that allows ships to wait within a gated space while the water could be drained to appropriate levels. The Chinese also built roofed hangars over the space to add protection for the ships.

Even today, the portion south of the Yellow River remains in heavy use by barges carrying bulk materials and containers. The sections of the Grand Canal today in Zhejiang and southern Jiangsu provinces were in large part a creation of *Sui*, a result of the migration of China's core economic and agricultural region away from the Yellow River valley in the north and toward the southern provinces.

Chapter 15

The Tang Dynasty (唐朝, 618–907 CE)



Tang founder Li Yuan's bloodline is believed to be heavily Xian-Bei. He was Sui's governor of Taiyuan. After taking control of Chang'an (modern day Xi'an), Li Yuan made himself the regent to the child emperor, and a year later, proclaimed himself the emperor of a new dynasty – Tang. He is said to claim direct lineage from Lao-Tze!

Religion was to play a major factor in Tang politics with Buddhism and Mystical Daoism being allowed to exist side-by-side. However, Buddhists were persecuted briefly in the 9th century. The Tang recaptured the lands to the west and reopened the old trade routes through Central Asia to the west. The Tang cities were teeming with foreign merchants. China under Tang was not hostile to foreign cultures; this was the golden age of the Silk Road.

The Chinese also took to the seas and had strong naval presence throughout the Persian Gulf, Arabia and northeastern Africa. It was also trading with Japan and Korea to its east. The Tang started to mass produce their ceramics for sale abroad and there was an incredible demand for Chinese goods across the more urbanised world at that time.

There was to be a brief 15-year break in the Tang Dynasty when Wu Ze-Tian rose to power. This was unprecedented in Confucian culture since Wu was a woman. She was the only woman[1] to have ever ruled China. Rather unsurprisingly, she is painted out to be somewhat devious,[2] but what is certain is that she was highly intelligent, rising from a lowly consort to be the empress of a 'new', albeit short-lived, dynasty. She diminished the power of the northwestern nobility, creating a far more representative government for the people.

Perhaps the most successful leader of the Tang dynasty was Emperor Xuan (玄宗 *Xuan-Zong*).[3] He reigned for over 40 years and presided over a period of economic growth to a background of increased humility from the royal court. Xuan-Zong was a progressive for his time. He listened to advisors, and is even credited with the abolition of the death penalty. However, his chancellor Li Lin-Fu's (李林甫) aggressive foreign policy ultimately sowed the seeds of rebellion against him.

The period was also a golden era for the arts and literature. Some 49,000 poems survived until the modern day. This was also the time of China's most famous monk, *Xuan Zang* (玄奘), whose 17-year journey to India is fictionally chronicled and immortalised in the epic Chinese novel *Journey to the West* (西遊記, *Xī-Yóu Jì*) by Wu Cheng-En (吴承恩, Wu Cheng'en). Written about 900 years later, the book created a 'Monkey God' whom many Chinese still worship today.

During the middle of this period, the country also experienced an

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1 Some consider the first woman ruler of China to be Han Empress Lü (吕后 *Lǚ Hòu* 241-180 BC), although technically as Empress Dowager.

2 Some historians are less generous; they consider her to epitomise ruthlessness and cruelty.

3 'Zong' was the honorific used for emperors in the Tang Dynasty.

uprising led by a Tang general of Persian descent – An Lu-Shan (安祿, *Ān Lù-Shān*). An Lu-Shan attempted to bring in *Yān* (燕) rule. The rebellion which began in 755 and spanned the reigns of three Tang emperors inflicted extreme social instability and population loss. One can see that non-Han forces were already strong in China proper, even during the Tang Dynasty.

Things would eventually turn sour for the Tang Dynasty – natural disasters, continual rebellions and attacks from bandits. It eventually led Zhu Quan-Zhong (朱全忠), a salt smuggler turned military governor, to depose Emperor Ai (哀帝, *Ai-Di*) and declare himself emperor of the Latter Liang (梁太祖, *Liang Tai-Zu*). This also ushered in a period that Chinese historians term the Five Dynasties, Ten States (五代十国, *Wǔ-Dài, Shí-Guó*) period.

Tang is noted for technological and engineering advances. Woodblock printing was invented and the first full length printed book, the *Diamond Sutra*, complete with illustrations as well as the text was published in 868 CE. Other notable achievements include the striking clock and the introduction of 'air-conditioning'.

Today, Chinatowns all over the world are still called *Táng-Rén Jiē* (唐人街, people of Tang's streets). Mainstream Han Chinese also commonly call themselves Tang Chinese (唐人), especially in Southeast Asia.

China's first and only woman empress

Wu Ze-Tian (武則天, 624-705 CE) was the de facto ruler of Tang from 665 to 705 CE. She was the empress consort of Gao-Zong and after his death, became empress dowager and ruled through her sons Zhong-Zong and Rui-Zong. She subsequently founded and ruled-most unprecedentedly in Chinese history-as empress of the Wu-Zhou (武周) Dynasty from 690 to 705 CE. She was the only female sovereign in the history of China. Under her 40-year reign, China grew larger, becoming one of the great powers of the world. She was removed from power in a coup and died a few months later.

Empress Wu is considered one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history, expanding the Chinese empire deep into Central Asia, and engaging in a series of wars on the Korean Peninsula. Wu supported Daoism, Buddhism, education and literature. She played a key role in reforming the imperial examination system and encouraging capable officials to uphold good governance. Wu also had a monumental impact upon the creation of the World Heritage site Longmen Grottoes (龙门石窟) and the mysterious Wordless Stone Stele (無字碑) at the Qian-Ling (乾陵) Mausoleum.

***The Journey to the West* (西遊記, *Xī-Yóu Jì*)**

The pilgrimage of Buddhist monk Xuan Zang 玄奘 (602–664 CE) to India to seek *sutras* prompted Wu Cheng-En (吴承恩) to author *The Journey to the West* (西遊記, *Xī-Yóu Jì*) in the 16th century. In the novel, the monk is called Tang San-Zang (唐三藏), and his disciples are Sun Wu-Kong (孫悟空), Zhu Ba-Jie (豬八戒), and Sha Wu-Jing (沙悟淨). Today, Sun Wu-Kong is worshipped as the Monkey God (齊天大聖, *Qí-Tiān Dà-Shèng*, or Heaven's Parallel) in many parts of Chinese world!

There are many explanations about Wu's fantastical narratives on Xuan Zang's journey and disciples. One articulates that the behaviours of the three disciples encapsulate the

'contradictions' in the mental state of the monk as he journeyed along. Given the supernatural abilities of his disciples, did Xuan Zang have to endure those hardships at all?

Again, legends are legends; readers love fantasies and impossibilities, even though they border on the infantile.

The art of *pen-jing* (盆景)

Bonsai (盆栽, 'tray planting') has always been said to be the Japanese art of growing miniature trees in containers. In actual fact, it was developed from the traditional Chinese art form of *pen-jing* (盆景, 'landscape in trays'). The Chinese varieties attempt to display 'wilder', more naturalistic scenes, including elements such as water, rocks or figurines; on the other hand, bonsai typically focuses on a single tree or a group of trees of the same species, with a higher level of aesthetic refinement. It is believed that the art was introduced to Japan during the Tang dynasty.

***Three Hundred Tang Poems* (唐诗三百首)**

The Tang period is considered the golden age of Chinese poetry. This anthology was first complied by Qin (清) scholar Sun Zhu (孫洙), with 305 poems in the volume. For centuries, children memorised poems and used them to learn to read and write. It contains poems by greats like Li Bai (李白), Du Fu (杜甫), Bai Ju-Yi (白居易)[4], Du Mu (杜牧), Li Shang-Yin (李商隐), Liú Cháng-Qīng (刘长卿), Meng Hao-Ran (孟浩然), Wáng Wéi (王维), Wéi Yìng-Wù (韦应物) and many others. The following is perhaps Li Bai's most famous poem:

床前明月光 *Chuáng qián míng yuè guāng*
(Before my bed lies a pool of moonlight)

疑是地上霜 *Yí shì dìshang shuāng*
(I thought this is frost on the ground)

举头望明月 *Jǔ tóu wàng míng yuè*
(I look up and see the bright shining moon)

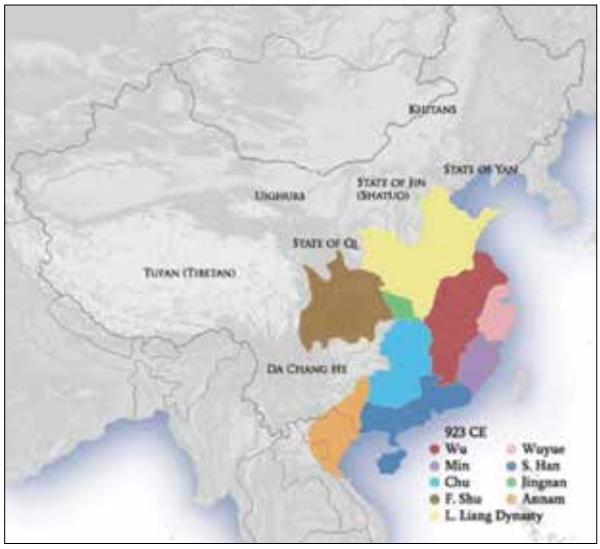
低头思故乡 *Dī tóu sī gù xiāng*
(Bowing my head, I begin to think of home)

Many Min-Nan friends are convinced that the court language of Tang was actually their dialect. Their advice: rhyme the Tang poems in Min-Nan and see how beautiful it sounds. The author is also of Min-Nan stock; he has to declare this lest he gets conflicted!

[4] Highly revered by Japanese scholars. The author had the opportunity to witness pilgrimages from Japan during a visit to his shrine in Henan some years ago.

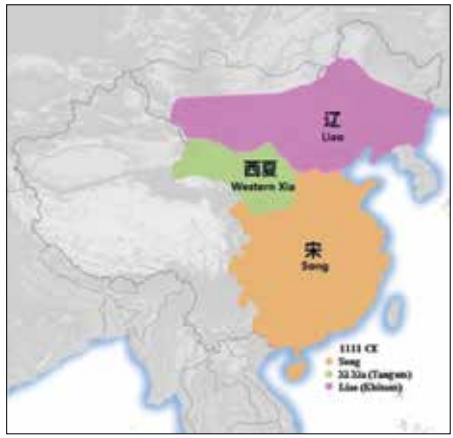
Chapter 16

Five Dynasties, Ten Kingdoms (五代十国, *Wu-Dai, Shi-Guo*, 907-960 CE)



As the Tang Dynasty waned, many states ruled independently. After the dynasty collapsed, several warlords crowned themselves emperor. During the 70-year period, there was near constant warfare between the emerging kingdoms and alliances they formed. All had the ultimate goal of controlling the Central Plain and establishing themselves as Tang's successor. In the north, there were five successive dynasties that rapidly followed each other. While in the south and to the west, ten kingdoms ran concurrently (Latter Liang 後梁, Latter Tang 後唐, Latter Chin 後晉, Latter Han 後漢, etc). It was another period of multiple political divisions in Chinese imperial history.

The last of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms regimes was Northern Han, which held out until Song conquered it in 979 CE. Nonetheless, Song succeeded to subdue those in south China, but those in the north and the west continued to hold out – the Liao (辽) Dynasty remained in China's north (succeeded eventually by Jin (金), while in the northwest, it was Western Xia's (西夏) world. Again, this is a period Han Chinese would want to forget!



Year 1111

Chapter 17

The Song Dynasty (宋朝, 960-1229)

Northern Song and Southern Song

It was not until 975 CE that all of China was unified under the Song Dynasty, but the recurring divisions between the north and the south, and indeed the different regions of the south themselves, would play a major role in creating the regional differences that exist in China to this day.

Song was split into two distinct periods, known as Northern and Southern Song (960-1126 and 1127-1279, respectively). Northern Song ruled until 1126, and had its capital in modern-day Kaifeng. The Southern Song ran from 1127 until 1279, and had its capital in modern day Hangzhou - after it had been forced south of the Yang-tze River by the Jin dynasty (金朝).

The Song were the first government in the world to use paper money. They also were the first known to have used gunpowder, as well

as being the first Chinese government to have a permanent standing navy. This was also the first time a compass was used to tell true North, enabling its use in maritime engagements and orienteering.

Between 907 to 1125, the Liao Dynasty (遼朝) controlled the area to the north of China, the Russian far east and northern Korea. The area to the west of China, incorporating parts or all of the modern-day provinces of Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, was run as the Tangut Empire or the Western Xia (大夏, *Dà Xià*) from 1038 to 1227. The Western Xia would fall to the Mongols, whereas the Liao were brought down by the Jur-Chen (女真, *Nǚ-Zhēn*) people of Manchuria.

The Jur-Chen soldiers of the Jin dynasty were to also bring an end to the period known as Northern Song when they sacked the capital Bian-Jing (汴京, Kaifeng today) and abducted the emperor and many of his court. The ones who survived fled south to Lin'an, where the Southern Song began. Despite the shrinkage of its size, the Southern Song managed to retain control of a large part of China, which included the majority of the population and the fertile land.

With increasing trade by sea, Song raised a permanent navy to protect their interests. This naval technology was advanced for its time; the ships were highly manoeuvrable, faster, and with the ability to launch gunpowder bombs. When the Jin met the Song in battle on the Yang-tze River in 1161, they were crushed by this new modern navy. This is despite the Jin having 7,000 men on 600 warships to the Song's 3,000 on 120.

Despite its technological prowess, the Song's days were numbered. A new enemy from the north had emerged. The Mongols, led by one of history's most fearsome leaders, Genghis Khan, brought the Jin to their knees, forcing them to move their capital from Beijing to Kaifeng. Genghis' successor went on to crush both the Jin and the Western Xia. The Song also recaptured Kaifeng, Luoyang and Chang'an, but the success was short-lived. Genghis' grandson, Kublai, declared the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty in 1271, and by 1279 the Song had been completely conquered.

Yue Fei (岳飛): The symbol of chinese heroism

Yue Fei (岳飛, 1103-1142), a national folk hero, led the Southern Song forces to fight the Jur-Chen-ruled Jin dynasty in northern China. He was sentenced to death under a concocted charge. The name Yue Fei has evolved into a paragon of loyalty in Chinese culture.

Yue Fei was born into a poor tenant farmer's family in Henan. In 1122, Yue Fei joined the army. During his time the government was corrupt, and the northern tribes were constantly invading China. Legend has it that Yue Fei had the four Chinese characters 盡忠報國 (尽忠报国, *jìn zhōng bào guó*) meaning 'serve the country with the utmost loyalty' tattooed across his back.

Yue Fei fought to suppress rebellions by local warlords responsible for looting in northern China. These uprisings had diverted needed resources away from the Song's war against the Jin. Yue participated in defending Kaifeng during the second siege of the city by the Jin in 1127. After Kaifeng fell, he joined an army in Jian-Kang tasked with defending the Yang-tze. This

army prevented the Jur-Chen from advancing to the river in 1129. His rising reputation as a military leader attracted the attention of the Song court. In 1133, Yue Fei was made the general of the largest army near the Central Yang-tze. Between 1134 and 1135, he led a counteroffensive against Qi (齐), a puppet state supported by the Jin, and secured territories that had been conquered by the Jur-Chen. He continued to advance in rank and increased the size of his army as he repeatedly led successful offensives into northern China. Together with several other generals, he secured the survival of the Song Dynasty. The now confident Song army was in a position to recover all of north China from the Jin Dynasty. In 1140, Yue Fei initiated a general counterattack against the Jin armies, defeating one enemy after another until he set up camp within range of the Northern Song dynasty's old capital city, Kaifeng, in preparation for the final assault against the enemy.

But Chancellor Qin Hui (秦桧) ordered Yue Fei to abandon his campaign, and in 1141 Yue Fei was summoned back to the capital. Apparently, Qin Hui and his cohorts had advised Emperor Gao-Zong to recall Yue Fei and sue for peace with the Jur-Chen, drumming fear into the emperor that a defeat might cause the Jur-Chen to release former emperor Qin-Zong, who was being held hostage by Jin to claim the throne. Gao-Zong went ahead with Qin Hui's advice to have Yue Fei executed. After Yue's execution, a prison officer, Wei Shun (隗顺) secretly buried his remains at the Nine-Song-Cong Temple (九曲叢祠) located outside the Song capital.

In 1162, Emperor Xiao-Zong posthumously pardoned and restored Yue Fei's honours. For their part in Yue Fei's death, figures of Qin Hui and his wife were cast in kneeling postures before his tomb in Hangzhou. Qin Hui and his wife are now regarded as the greatest traitors in Chinese history.

Bāo Zhěng (包拯): Chinese history's most righteous justice

Bāo Zhěng, more commonly known as *Bāo-Gōng* (包公), was a legendary justice in the Song Dynasty. Bao Zheng was known for his honesty and uprightness, with actions such as sentencing his own uncle, impeaching an uncle of Emperor Ren-Zong's favourite concubine, and punishing powerful families. He defended peasants and commoners against corruption or injustice.

Bao Zheng today is honoured as the cultural symbol of justice in Chinese society. Dramas on him have enjoyed sustained popularity. In mainstream Chinese mythology, opera or drama, he is often portrayed with a black face and a white crescent shaped birthmark on his forehead. Legend has it that as he was born dark-skinned, Bao Zheng was discarded by his father right after birth. However, his virtuous elder sister-in-law, who just had an infant named Bao Mian (包勉), raised Bao Zheng like her own son. As a result, Bao Zheng would refer to Bao Mian's mother as "sister-in-law mother".

The case of executing Chen Shi-Mei (鍘美案)

Chen Shi-Mei had two children with wife Qin Xiang-Lian, and left them to sit for the imperial examination in the capital. After finishing first, he lied about his marriage and became the emperor's new brother-in-law, leaving Qin and the children to fend for themselves. Years later, a famine forced Qin and her children to move to the capital. She finally found a way to meet Chen, and begged him to at least help his own children. Not only did Chen refuse, but he also sent a servant by the name of Han Qi to kill them in order to hide his secret. Instead, Han helped the family escape and killed himself. Desperate, Qin brought her case to Bao Zheng, who tricked Chen into coming to court to have him arrested. The imperial family tried to intervene, but Bao executed him, nonetheless.

Left: Sculptures inside the Lord Bao Memorial Temple, a tourist attraction in Kaifeng. In this scene, a fearless Bao Zheng takes off his official headgear to challenge the empress dowager in order to execute the prince consort Chen Shi-Mei. *Right*: Lord Bao's shrine in Kaifeng.

***The Water Margin* (水滸傳, *Shuǐ-Hǔ Zhuàn*)[1]**

The great classic *Shui-Hu Zhuan* (translated as *The Water Margin, Outlaws of the Marsh or All Men Are Brothers*) was set in the Northern Song (around 1120) and is about how a group of 108 outlaws gathered at the marsh of Liang-Shan or Mount Liang to rebel against the government. They are said to have later been granted amnesty, and enlisted to resist the nomadic conquest of Liao and other rebels. It has created heroes such as Song Jiang (宋江), Lin Chong (林冲), Wu Song (武松) and Lu Zhi-Shen (鲁智深).

1 These texts, namely 三國演義, 水滸傳, 西游記, and 紅樓夢 (respectively *Romance of the three Kingdoms*, *Water Margin*, *Journey to the West*, and *Dream of Red Chambers*) are generally considered to be the greatest four works (四大名著) in Chinese literature.

The book's authorship is traditionally attributed to Shi Nai-An (施耐, Shi Nai'an, 1296-1372). *The Water Margin* also led to another great spin-off, *Jin Ping Mei* (金瓶梅, *The Plum in the Golden Vase* or *The Golden Lotus*), published under the pseudonym *Lan-ling Xiao-Xiao Sheng* (蘭陵笑笑生) in the latter half of the late Ming era.

There are three protagonists in the novel – the hero Wu Song, his handicapped brother's wife, Pan Jin-Lian (潘金蓮), and her lustful lover Xi-Men Qing (西門慶), a corrupt social climber and merchant. The book depicts Pan as a promiscuous woman and is rich in sexual descriptions, akin to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the West.

Chapter 18

The Yuan Dynasty (元朝, 1279–1368)

The Mongols had been ruling parts of northern China by 1271. It was to rule as Yuan until 1368, and was the first non-Han empire to rule the whole of China. Kublai Khan was not only the emperor of the Yuan Dynasty, but he also led the entire Mongol Empire, reigning supreme over all other khanates, a huge land mass stretching from China in the east and all the way to Hungary in the west.

The Mongols considered themselves superior and placed the Han Chinese in the bottom class of society under Yuan rule. Buddhism was strongly supported during this time, and many temples and monuments were built. However, the Mongols were also open to allowing trade to thrive amongst people of other religions and beliefs. But as time went on, they became more discriminatory towards Muslims and Jews, who were forced to follow Mongol practices.

The fate of the Yuan was to be sealed after natural disasters and famines ravaged the land, coupled with their inability to come up with effective policies and solutions to address them. The Mongols did manage to hang on to the northern part of China – basically Mongolia – as Northern Yuan, even after the Ming emerged victorious. But it was as good as done.

Marco Polo's travelogue: A fake?

Venetian merchant Marco Polo claimed that he had travelled to China and had the good fortune of holding high office in Kublai Khan's court. His travels were recorded by a cellmate when he was imprisoned in Genoa. It is said that he, his father and uncle travelled through the Silk Road to China and returned via the sea route between 1271 and 1295.

The book also claims that Marco Polo was appointed to serve as the khan's foreign emissary, and was sent on missions throughout the empire and South and Southeast Asia, such as the present-day India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Vietnam. He also travelled extensively within China, and saw many things that had previously been unknown to Europeans. The travelogue gives Europeans the first comprehensive look into China, Persia, India, Japan and other Asian countries and cities.

Much scholarship has been devoted to *The Travels of Marco Polo* (c. 1300), a book that described to Europeans the then-mysterious culture and inner workings of the Eastern world. This includes the wealth and breadth of the Mongol Empire and China in the Yuan era. His travel book is said to have inspired Christopher Columbus and others to try to reach Cathay by sea. About 150 copies of *The Travels of Marco Polo* in various languages are known to exist. There are many differences between each.

The Polos meeting Kublai Khan: Too European a background?

Since its publication, some have viewed the book with scepticism. Not much of Chinese cultural practices were described in the book (the dynasty that preceded Yuan was Song, which was quintessentially Chinese). Some doubted whether he even reached China. If he did, Marco (or the actual author) had certainly exaggerated his importance.

No Chinese source mentions Marco Polo at all. However, in the 2010s, a Chinese scholar said a certain Bo Luo was identified in *Yuan-Shi* (元史, *History of Yuan*). Bo Luo was a courtier of the emperor. Hitherto, there is no mention of Marco Polo in other Chinese sources at all. Regardless, do we have to get excited over a travelogue?

Qing-Hua Porcelain (青花瓷)

By the time of the Yuan Dynasty, the art of crafting Qing-Hua porcelain had reached its peak. A piece of genuine Qing-Hua porcelain would fetch an astronomical price. It is a kind of underglaze coloured porcelain, relying on natural cobalt minerals as colouring, and imagery and motifs painted on top of the clay body with a Chinese calligraphy brush.

Qing-Hua porcelain

The Yuan Dynasty, ruled by the Mongols, spanned Europe and Asia and built the basis of a broad and extensive market for the porcelain. The Topkapı Palace in Turkey houses over 10,000 pieces of Chinese porcelain, 40 of which are Qing-Hua. It is considered to be the largest and finest collection of Yuan Dynasty Qing-Hua in the world.

Chapter 19

The Ming Dynasty (明朝, 1369–1644)

China returned to Han rule under the Ming Dynasty. Its founder, Zhu Yuan-Zhang (朱元), declared himself Emperor Hong-Wu (洪武帝, *Hong Wu-Di*). During his reign, the army grew to over a million soldiers, and the port of Nanjing became the largest dockyard in the world. He placed his many sons throughout China, thinking that this would ensure that only the right heir was to succeed him, while the others would be well-taken care of. This legacy proved to be short-lived. His anointed successor was usurped by another prince who clawed his way to becoming the Yong-Le Emperor (永乐帝, *Yong Le-Di*) in 1402. He made Beijing the capital, and also restored the Grand Canal. He used his eunuchs to balance the power of the scholars and one of these eunuchs was to become one of the greatest Chinese explorers of all time, Zheng He (郑和).

Born in Yunnan province to a Hui Muslim family, Zheng He's seven voyages took his armada as far as east Africa. Some believe he even reached Australia. Gavin Menzies in *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* contends that Zheng He reached America before Christopher Columbus did in 1492. Menzies' second book, *1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance*[1], extends the hypothesis to Zheng He discovering the European continent. Few scholars are prepared to take his findings seriously.

After making Beijing the capital, mass construction began in the city, most notably the Forbidden City. Yong-le expanded the empire and spread Chinese culture through woodblock printing. He strengthened the Great Wall.

However, weaker emperors followed. The Renaissance began in Europe. New plants such as chillies entered Sichuan cuisine; the planting of potatoes and corn were also becoming widespread. However, its treasury was almost empty. General Wu San-Gui (吳三桂) opened the gate for the Manchus to march in. This marked the end of the Ming.

'Admiral' Zheng He's (郑和) great fleets to the West Ocean

The Yong-Le Emperor ordered the construction of the maritime fleet in 1403 and commissioned eunuch Zheng He to make expeditions. Altogether seven voyages to the Western Ocean (西洋, *Xi-Yang*) were made between 1405 and 1433 – reaching coastal territories and islands in and around the South China Sea, Calicut on Indian's Malabar Coast, Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, and East Africa. The seventh voyage was made during the reign of Xuan-De Emperor (宣德帝).

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1 See Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002) and *1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance* (New York: William Morrow, 2008).

The expeditionary fleets were heavily militarised and carried great amounts of treasures, which served to project Chinese power and wealth to the known world. They brought back many foreign ambassadors whose kings and rulers were willing to declare themselves tributaries to the greater Chinese world order. Over the course of these voyages, Ming China became the pre-eminent naval power.

Left: Painting of the Yong-Le Emperor. *Right*: Zheng He's fleet

Some 2,868 ships are said to have been built between 1403 to 1419 in the shipyards of Fujian, Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Huguang, Nanjing and Suzhou. However, in 1433, the voyages ceased, and Ming China turned away from the seas. The tributary system of foreign regions gradually broke down as time progressed. It is not exactly known why these voyages ended so abruptly (there are many conspiracy theories on this).

Apparently, after the capital was transferred from Nanjing to Beijing, the south and the seas were given less and less attention from emperors and officials alike. The Hong-Xi Emperor (洪熙帝, 1378-1425) was fiercely against treasure voyages. He ordered their cessation in 1424, but Xuan-De Emperor went against the general court opinion when

he ordered the seventh voyage. After 1433, civil officials succeeded in halting subsequent maritime expeditions. The ships were left to rot and their lumber was sold for fuel in Nanjing.

The Chinese government's conservative anti-trade policies would contribute to the rise of private trade, which led to the emergence and growth of family-led multinational networks. This marked the decline of the Chinese overseas influence.

This period also coincided with the Renaissance (the 14th and 17th centuries), followed by the Industrial Revolution (mid-18th to mid-19th centuries) in Europe. The knowledge gap between China and the West became oceans apart.

Impact on Indonesia…

Zheng He was a Muslim. The island of Java, previously of Hindu-Buddhist religious inclination, turned green. In 1511, Raden Patah swept west from East Java to firmly establish the Demak Kingdom. Raden Patah's father was said to be a Chinese Muslim. It does not take much research to conclude that he was in fact a legacy of Zheng He's voyages in the Malay Archipelago.

Chapter 20

The Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644–1911)

The Qing were the last ruling imperial dynasty of China. Its last emperor was Pu Yi (溥仪). The Qing were formed by the Aisin Gioro clan, a member of the Jur-Chen people who had set up the Later Jin (金) Dynasty some half a millennium earlier. It was not until 1683 that Kang-Xi Emperor completed the conquest of China. The Qiang-Long (乾隆) Emperor extended Qing's control into Central Asia. However, Qing was blind to the rise of the West.

The Chinese under Qing were a passive lot. There were several attempted uprisings, the most famous (or infamous) of which was the Tai-ping Rebellion (太平天國, *Tai-Píng Tian-Guo*) from 1850 to 1864. By then, Christianity had already gained a foothold in China. Its leader Hong Xiu-Quan (洪秀全) even styled himself the younger brother of Jesus Christ. Anti-foreign sentiment led to the terrorising rounds meted out to foreigners by government-supported 'boxers', known as the Boxer

Rebellion (义和团运动, *Yi-He-Tuan Yun-Dong*) from 1899 to 1901. These Chinese fighters were deemed crude savages in the eyes of the West. Subsequent direct foreign intervention dealt a crippling blow to the Manchu rule.

The Opium Wars that ensued enabled foreign powers to impose unequal treaties upon the Chinese. Revolts in Central Asia left millions dead, and despite the Chinese rallying themselves, the First Sino-Japanese War hurt them badly. They lost control over Taiwan and Korea, and things were to get even worse for the Qing when foreign powers decided to invade after the violent Boxer Rebellion.

The government attempted to hold on to power by bringing in sweeping reforms to try to transform the Qing into a modern empire. Two palace-friendly reformers, Kang You-Wei (康有為) and his disciple Liang Qi-Chao (梁啓超), tried hard to introduce reforms – primarily based on the Japanese model through the then-reigning emperor – but their efforts were thwarted by the very conservative dowager empress. Sun Yat-sen, who had the opportunity to experience the American political system first-hand during his stay in Hawai'i, was of a more revolutionary bent. He wanted China to become a modern republic. He was well supported by Chinese all over the world (unfortunately, he was less successful with the foreign governments he tried hard to court, particularly the Japanese, British and American). He attempted to overthrow the Qing court; unfortunately, Sun was not an effective organiser, and had to depend on others to execute several of his ill-conceived plans, which resulted in many being sacrificed in the process. Nonetheless, he did help make China a republic, and is generally revered as the founder of modern China. He was frustrated many a time by ambitious ex-imperial generals-turned-warlords, like Yuan Shi-Kai (袁世凱), who had the audacity to declare himself emperor, but only for a few months. Warlord years followed, and soon after that China was overrun by Japan.

It was too late; the seed of revolution had already been sown. By October 1911, a republic was proclaimed. Pu Yi abdicated on February 12, 1912.

Dream of the Red Chamber (紅樓夢, *Hóng-Lóu Mèng*)

Dream of the Red Chamber is a novel by Cao Xue-Qin (曹雪芹, *Cáo Xuě-Qín*, 1710-1765). It portrays the worldview, aesthetics, lifestyles, and social relations of the 18th-century China. Cao apparently began composing it in the 1740s, and worked on it until his death. It was not published until nearly three decades later. The novel is composed in written vernacular (*bai-hua*). There are lingering questions about its full authorship, however.

Dream of the Red Chamber provides a detailed, episodic record of life in the two branches of the wealthy, aristocratic Jia (賈) clan – the Rong-Guo House (榮國府) and the Ning-Guo House (寧國府) – that reside in large, adjacent family compounds in the capital. The capital, however, is not named, and the first chapter insists that the dynasty is indeterminate. The ancestors of the two families were made nobility and given imperial titles. One of the Jia daughters is made a royal consort, and to receive her, the family constructs the Da-Guan Yuan (大观园, *Dà-Guān Yuán*), a lush, landscaped garden. The novel describes the Jias' wealth and influence, and charts their fall from the height of their prestige. As the carefree adolescent male heir of the family, Jia Bao-Yu (贾宝玉, *Jiă Băo-Yù*) has a special bond with his sickly cousin Lin Dai-Yu (林黛玉, *Lín Dài-*

Yù), who shares his love of music and poetry. Bao-Yu, however, is predestined to marry another cousin Xue Bao-Chai (薛宝钗, *Xuē Bǎo-Chāi*). Bao-Chai's grace and intelligence exemplify an ideal woman, but he lacks an emotional connection to her. The romantic rivalry and friendship among the three characters set against the backdrop of the family's declining fortunes form the central story.

The novel contains nearly 40 major characters, and over 400 others. The novel is also known for the complex portraits of its many women characters. According to Lu Xun (鲁迅), the famed author of *The True Story of Ah Q*, the novel broke every conceivable thought and technique in traditional Chinese fiction; its realistic characterisation presents human characters who are neither wholly good nor wholly bad, but who seem to inhabit part of the real world.

Some believe the story mirrors Cao's very own and, by extension, of the dynasty itself. The novel is about the women he knew in his youth – friends, relatives and servants. At a more profound level, the author explores religious and philosophical questions, and the writing style includes echoes of the plays and novels of the late Ming, as well as poetry from earlier periods.

Chapter 21

The Republic of China (中華民國, 1911–1949)

The Republic of China was formed on January 1, 1912, ending over 4,000 years of imperial rule. Sun Yat-sen (孙逸仙, 孙中山 *Sūn Zhōng-Shān*) became first president of the republic. However, he was not able hold on to power, and soon warlords took over. Nonetheless, he is revered by Chinese as the 'Father of the Nation'.

Sun Yat-sen

After the overthrow of the Qing, the Kuomintang (国民党, *Kuo-Min Tang*) established a government in Guangzhou in 1925, and by 1928, overspending had seen the warlords of the North destroy their own economy. Chang Kai-shek (蔣介石), the leader of Kuomintang, then defeated the warlords.

He moved the government to Nanjing. He also ruthlessly purged the Communists whom he had earlier used for support.

The war with Japan, coupled with fighting against the Chinese Communist Party, eventually led to the Kuomintang losing control in a bloody civil war. Chiang had to retreat to the island of Taiwan.

Wang Jing-Wei (汪精卫): China's 20th Century Qin Hui?

Wang was earlier a close associate of Sun Yat-sen and had contributed to the Revolution. After Sun's death in 1925, Wang engaged in a political struggle with Chiang Kai-shek for control over the Kuomintang (he was a member of the party's left wing). He lost. He accepted an invitation from Japan to form a Japanese-supported puppet government in Nanjing and served as its head of state until he died. He is often regarded as a traitor in China's war of resistance against the Japanese.

His legacy remains controversial among historians. Stephen Leong Mun Yoon, in his book[1], writes extensively of Wang's relationship with Chiang. Apparently, Chiang was also swayed by the need to seek accommodation with Japan during the cruel years of the invasion.

[1] Leong Mun Yoon, Sources, *Agencies and Manifestations of Overseas Chinese Nationalism in Malaya 1937-1941* (Kampar: UTAR Press, 2022).

Chapter 22

People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国, 1949-)

Mao Zedong (毛泽东) ushered in the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. His Great Leap Forward in the 1950s is said to have caused an estimated 40 to 70 million deaths, mainly from starvation. Millions also died due to their social standing, or for opposing his disastrous policies which ravaged the countryside (some think these accusations have been unfairly levelled against Mao, but conditions were so bad in China then that millions would have died regardless). By 1966, Mao embarked on the Cultural Revolution, which turned family members against each other. Students were encouraged to attack their teachers, and anyone that had any foreign connections

was persecuted. This continued until his death in 1976. Nonetheless, Mao had indeed brought some pride to China, and is still revered as one who made China stand up to the West. He welcomed the visit of Richard Nixon, a huge geopolitical milestone that finally led to the People's Republic replacing Taiwan in the United Nations.

A new dawn began with the rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping (邓小平), who transformed China economically with his wide-ranging reforms. China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. Much has been written about the rise of China after that; maybe it is unnecessary to repeat the stories, save for a few things about the new *Xiong-Nus*.

Chapter 23

Taiwan: China's Through and Through

History is always full of twists and turns. The Chinese have always taken for granted that Taiwan is China's. Wu (Three Kingdom Period) soldiers are recorded to have visited the island in 230 CE. They even brought back several thousand natives from there; unfortunately, most did not survive. It is also said that in the 7th century, the Sui dynasty sent three expeditions to the *Liu Qiu* (琉球, Ryukyu) island chain, which in all likelihood also included Taiwan.

The Yuan emperor Kublai Khan also sent officials to the Ryukyu Kingdom to demand loyalty, but the officials ended up in Taiwan and mistook it for Ryukyu. Another expedition was sent in 1297. Even though they found no Chinese there, the presence of pottery from

Zhejiang suggests that Chinese merchants had already visited the island, and some might even have lived there.

By the early 16th century, increasing numbers of Chinese fishermen, traders and pirates were visiting the southwestern part of the island. Some merchants from Fujian were familiar enough with the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan to speak their languages. They referred to Taiwan as *Xiao Dong Dao* (Little Eastern Island). Later that century, Chinese from Fujian's Min-nan region began to settle there. Chinese pirates used it as a base to launch raids. In 1593, Ming started to issue licenses for Chinese junks to trade in Taiwan. A sizeable Chinese population was established by the time the Portuguese and the Dutch arrived in Taiwan.

The Portuguese saw it in 1542, and called it Ilha Formosa, or 'the beautiful island'. And we now call it 宝岛 (*Bǎo Dǎo*) or 'precious island'. It is indeed a beautiful island. But why it had been so neglected, until Chiang Kai-shek was cornered in the mainland and had to find a place to regroup?

As the saying goes, we tend to treat what we already have for granted. And this is also true in nationhood. Geopolitics was a non-issue when the West began to sail out in the 16th century. The Ming thought they had little to learn or worry after Admiral Zheng He undertook his voyages in the 15th century.

Yes, Chinese have always conceived their nation as one that is bound by mountains, rivers, and seas, beyond which are vassal or barbarian states, and for the latter, walls had to be built to keep them out. Taiwan, Hainan and the many islands in its East and South Seas were just land masses that were incidental to its geography.

But 16th-century Japan was already a formidable adversary. They had already begun to modernise their country based on Western models. It coveted Taiwan; ditto the Western powers in the wake of Qing's decline. Yet, the island was left very much alone. Soon, the south of the island was colonised by the Dutch in 17th century, whilst the Spanish built a settlement in the north which lasted until 1642.

Division of Taiwan in the 17th century: Dutch in magenta, Spanish in green and Ming in orange.

Apparently, the Dutch encouraged Chinese to migrate to Taiwan. The Chinese settlers were mainly of Min-Nan and Hak-Ka stock. The Chinese were allowed property rights in a limited area, and the Dutch made efforts to prevent the Chinese from mingling with the natives. In the 1640s, increased population, higher rice prices, and Dutch taxes pressured the Chinese population into violence, which lasted several weeks.

In 1662, Zheng Cheng-Gong (鄭成功 or *Koxinga*, 國姓爺), a Ming loyalist, defeated the Dutch and established a base on the island. His descendants were defeated by the Qing, and Taiwan was finally annexed by the Qing court in 1683.

The Japanese had been trading Chinese products in Taiwan before the Dutch arrived. In 1593, Japanese feudal lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi designed to incorporate Taiwan into his empire. However, it was not until 1616 that the Tokugawa shogunate sent vessels to conquer the island. The attempt was thwarted by a typhoon.

After losing the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, the Qing ceded Taiwan and Penghu to Japan. Taiwan was 'Nipponised', and the island

experienced industrial growth and became a productive rice and sugar-exporting Japanese colony. During the second Sino-Japanese war, it effectively served as a base for Japan to launch invasions into China. As a matter of fact, many of the 'Japanese' soldiers that were sent to Southeast Asia and the Pacific during World War II were Taiwanese.

Following Japan's surrender in 1945, the nationalist government of China regained control of Taiwan. In 1949, it lost control of mainland China, and the Kuomintang government withdrew to Taiwan, vowing to return to China one day. The Kuomintang ruled Taiwan, along with the islands of Kinmen (金門), Wuqiu (烏坵) and Matsu (马祖), which are actually on the mainland side of the Taiwan Strait, as a single-party state until the 1980s.

The Kingdom of Dong Ning (東寧)

Zheng Cheng-Gong was the son of Zheng Zhi-Long (郑芝龙), who was Ming's military commander in Fujian. Zheng spent the first seven years of his life in Japan with his mother and then went to school in Fujian, obtaining a county-level licentiate at the age of 15. Afterwards, he left for Nanjing to study at the Imperial Academy. After China fell to the Manchus, Zheng and his followers declared their loyalty to the Ming, and he was bestowed the title Guo Xing Ye, or Lord of the Imperial surname, from which the title Koxinga is derived. His father declared his loyalty to the Qing in 1646 and lived out the rest of his life under house arrest in Beijing.

Zheng continued the resistance against the Qing from Xiamen, but he was not successful in his many battles. Even though much of Taiwan was ruled by the Dutch, Zheng considered Taiwanese to be subjects. In 1662, with about 25,000 soldiers and sailors, Zheng defeated the Dutch. He established the Kingdom of Dong Ning in Taiwan. The Dutch continued to hold out at Keelung. They decided to ally with the Qing to fight the Zheng forces. They finally withdrew from Taiwan in 1668.

Zheng died in April 1662, and was succeeded by his son Zheng Jing (郑经). Zheng Jing's succession was met with dissension in Taiwan. The

political infighting caused some followers to become disillusioned and many defected to the Qing. To combat population decline, Zheng Jing also promoted migration to Taiwan. Between 1665 and 1669, some 9,000 Min-Nans were brought to Taiwan by Zheng Jing.

The Manchus enacted a sea ban on coastal China to starve out the Zheng forces, until the latter retreated completely from the coast of Fujian in 1669. However, in 1670, Zheng was able to sign a trade agreement with the British East India Company.

Zheng was raised with a Confucian education and had a very rigid concept of his being, i.e., a Han Chinese. He simply had a strong hatred for the Manchus. He never gave up his aspirations to recover the mainland for Ming. But the Qing was too entrenched in the mainland. The Kangxi Emperor also considered all the Fujianese living in Taiwan to be Chinese and, therefore, subjects of Qing.

Zheng staged attacks on Qing forces from time to time. He did make some headway in the 1670s, but the tide soon turned against him, and the Dong Ning forces were defeated in 1680. In 1683, Dong Ning's 13-year-old ruler Zheng Ke-Shuang (郑克塽) surrendered to the Qing court.

Under Qing

In 1684, Kangxi allowed a permanent military establishment to be set up in Penghu and Taiwan – as a prefecture under Fujian. But much of Taiwan was inhabited by natives who were a law unto themselves. The Qing initially forbade mainlanders from moving to Taiwan, and sent most of the Fujianese living there back to the mainland. Only about 30,000 remained, and with a couple of hundred in Penghu, '8,000' Aboriginal people, and about 10,000 troops, the official population of Taiwan was said to be 50,000!

In due course, shortage of manpower compelled local officials to solicit migrants from the mainland, despite restrictions by the imperial court. But the government continued to believe that Taiwan was unable to support too large a population. It banned migrants from bringing

their families so that settlers would not root themselves in Taiwan. Be that as it may, starting in 1771, the Qing had no choice but to relax restrictions on cross-strait migration, as the earlier policies were simply unenforceable. Tens of thousands would migrate from Fujian and Guangdong every year after that.

Thanks to opium, Qing China was already in a pathetic state when it entered the 19th century. In 1874, Japan invaded the Aboriginal territory in southern Taiwan, in what is now called the Mu-Dan Incident (八瑤灣事件). For six months Japanese soldiers occupied southern Taiwan, arguing that it was not part of the Qing dynasty. The result was the payment of an indemnity by the Qing in return for the withdrawal of the Japanese army.

Qing officials knew that Japan coveted Taiwan. Its imperial commissioner for Taiwan, Shen Bao-Zhen (沈葆楨), obtained permission to subjugate the Aboriginal people and populate it with Chinese settlers. Mountain roads were built to make the region more accessible, and the Aboriginal people were brought into formal submission to the Qing. Agencies for recruiting settlers were even established on the coastal mainland and in Hong Kong.

The Sino-French War broke on in 1883 and the French occupied Keelung in northern Taiwan, but they were repelled in 1885. In 1887, Taiwan gained provincial status. Taipei was developed and it became the province's capital in 1893. By the end of the Qing period, the western plains were fully developed as farmland with about 2.5 million Chinese settlers. The mountainous areas were still largely inhabited by the Aboriginal people.

The First Opium War (1839–42)

The British had long decided it no longer wanted to trade with the Chinese on their terms, and in 1840 they were already eyeing Taiwan, given its strategic and commercial value. In 1841, during the First Opium War, the British tried to capture Keelung but failed. Because of the deeds of some Aboriginal people, to whom Qing authorities could

not deliver law and order, the Americans regarded the Qing court inept – one that was incapable of fulfilling international obligations – and openly advocated for Japan to control Korea, Taiwan, and Ryukyu.

The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95)

On the eve of the First Sino-Japanese War, about 45 percent of the island was administered under direct Qing administration, while the Aboriginal people lightly populated the rest. In a population of around 2.5 million, about 2.3 million were Han and the remaining 200,000 were classified as members of various Indigenous tribes.

As part of the settlement for losing the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing court ceded the islands of Taiwan and Penghu to Japan on April 17, 1895. The loss of Taiwan would become a rallying point for the Chinese nationalist movement in the years that followed.

The period of Japanese rule in Taiwan can be divided into three periods under which different policies were prevalent: military suppression (1895–1915); *dōka* (同化) or assimilation (1915-1937); and *kōminka* (皇民化) or Japanisation (1937-45). A separate policy for the Aboriginal people was implemented.

Japan's assimilation efforts

It is said that Japan had wanted to introduce the *dōka* policy from the outset. Conceptually, this colonial ideal sought to implant Japan's 'superior' culture on the islanders. However, the colonial authorities encountered violent opposition in much of Taiwan. The colonial authority had no choice but to rely on military force to maintain order. Between 200,000 and 300,000 people fled Taiwan in 1895. The majority had no means to leave and had to become Japanese citizens.

Nonetheless, uprisings by Chinese nationalists continued unabated. Japanese reprisals became more and more brutal. Many Taiwanese were slaughtered. Tired of the unrest, some Taiwanese leaders advocated assimilation. An attempt to fully Japanise the Taiwanese people was

made during the *kōminka* period. This was also the period when Japan needed people to run its war machine. It met with some success.

Education

Primary schools began to teach Japanese language and culture, Classical Chinese, Confucian ethics, and practical subjects like science. Classical Chinese was included as part of the effort to win over Taiwanese upper-class parents, but the emphasis was on Japanese language and ethics. Japanese children attended their own separate schools. Few Taiwanese attended secondary school. Universal education was deemed undesirable during the early years. However, the gentry was urged to promote 'new learning' – a fusion of neo-Confucianism and Meiji-style education. The hope was that through selective education of the brightest Taiwanese, a new generation of leaders responsive to Japanisation would emerge. However, there was still much segregation between Taiwanese and Japanese students in the education system until much later. By 1922, some 2,000 Taiwanese were enrolled in educational institutions in Japan. The number increased to 7,000 by 1942.

Japanisation

As Japan embarked on full-scale war with China in 1937, it implemented the *kōminka* phase – a Japanisation effort to instil the 'Japanese spirit' in the Taiwanese, and to ensure that they would remain imperial subjects of the emperor even when the war was with China. As part of *kōminka* policies, Chinese language sections in newspapers and classical Chinese in the school curriculum were removed, and China and Taiwan's history were also erased from the educational curriculum. Chinese language use was discouraged, which reportedly increased the percentage of Japanese speakers. A name-changing campaign was launched in 1940 to replace Chinese names with Japanese ones. Characteristics of Taiwanese culture considered 'un-Japanese', or undesirable were replaced. Taiwanese opera, puppet

plays, fireworks, and burning gold and silver paper foil at temples were banned. Chinese clothing, betel-nut chewing, and noisiness were discouraged in public. The Taiwanese were encouraged to pray at Shinto shrines. Some officials were ordered to remove religious idols and artefacts from native places of worship.

The plight of the Aboriginal people

The Japanese administration followed the Qing classification of the Aboriginal people into acculturated, (*shufan*), semi-acculturated (*huafan*), and non-acculturated (*shengfan*). Acculturated Aboriginal people were treated the same as Chinese and lost their Aboriginal status. Han Chinese and *shufan* were both treated as natives of Taiwan by the Japanese. Below them were the semi-acculturated and non-acculturated 'barbarians' who lived outside normal administrative units, and upon whom government laws could not quite reach. According to the *Sōtokufu* (Office of the Governor-General), although the mountain Aboriginal people were technically humans in biological and social terms, they were deemed sub-human.

An incident in 1930 that resulted in the death of 900 Aboriginal people caused the government to take a more conciliatory stance towards the Aborigines. During WW2, the government tried to assimilate them as loyal subjects. The early years of Japanese rule mostly were spent fighting Chinese insurgents, and the government being more conciliatory towards the Aboriginal people. Later, the Japanese government implemented stricter and more coercive policies, and even restricted the Aboriginal people's living spaces. They were relocated to the foothills and attempts were made to turn them into subsistence farmers.

Aboriginal resistance to the heavy-handed Japanese policies of acculturation and pacification lasted up until the early 1930s. Indigenous rebellions had resulted in the deaths of many Japanese. Many Aboriginal villages had also been destroyed. The last major aboriginal rebellion occurred in 1930 when the Seediq people, angry over their treatment

while labouring in camphor extraction, launched a headhunting do. Some 350 students, 134 Japanese, and two Han Chinese were killed in the attack.

Japan as colonial masters

Japanese commoners started arriving in Taiwan in 1896. The number was initially small due to poor infrastructure, instability and fear of disease. Later, as more Japanese settled in Taiwan, some settlers came to view the island as their homeland. There was concern that Japanese children born in the tropical climate of Taiwan would not be able to understand Japan. In the 1910s, primary schools conducted trips to Japan to nurture their Japanese identity and to prevent Taiwanisation. Out of necessity, Japanese police officers were encouraged to learn the local variants of Min-Nan and Hak-Ka. By the late 1930s, Japanese people made up about 5.4 percent of Taiwan's total population, but owned 20-25 percent of the cultivated land, which was also of higher quality. They also owned the majority of large land holdings. The Japanese government assisted them in acquiring land, and coerced Chinese landowners to sell to Japanese enterprises. Japanese sugar companies owned 8.2 percent of arable land.

Under the Japanese colonial government, an island wide system of transportation and communications, as well as facilities for travel between Japan and Taiwan, was developed. Construction of large-scale irrigation facilities and power plants followed. Agricultural development was the primary emphasis of Japanese colonisation in Taiwan. The objective was for Taiwan to provide Japan with food and raw materials. All modern and large enterprises were owned by the Japanese.

By 1905, the island had electric power supplied by waterpower in Sun Moon Lake. Taiwan was considered the second-most developed region of East Asia (after Japan). Of course, WWII also took a huge toll on Taiwan.

World War II

Taiwanese were initially recruited as civilian interpreters, transporters, labourers, and other non-combatant positions. In 1942, the Special Volunteer System was implemented, allowing even Aboriginal people to be recruited as part of the Japanese army. Military conscription started in 1945. From 1937 to 1945, over 200,000 Taiwanese were employed by the Japanese military. Some were incentivised by the attractive salary, which was double what they could earn in Taiwan. Some joined out of patriotism to Japan and felt that working in the military was an honour.

As Japan embarked on full-scale war with China in 1937, it expanded Taiwan's industrial capacity to manufacture war materials. The imperial navy also operated heavily outside of Taiwan. Taiwan was used as a launchpad for the invasion of Guangdong in late 1938, and for the occupation of Hainan in February 1939. A joint planning and logistical centre was established in Taiwan to assist Japan's southward advance after the bombing of the Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Taiwan served as a base for Japanese naval and air attacks on the island of Luzon. As the war turned against Japan in 1943, Taiwan suffered due to the Allies' submarine attacks on Japanese shipping. In the latter part of 1944, Taiwan's industries, ports, and military facilities were bombed in US air raids. An estimated 16,000 to 30,000 civilians died in the bombing.

Comfort women

Between 1,000 and 2,000 Taiwanese women were part of the comfort women system. Aboriginal women served Japanese military personnel in the mountainous region of Taiwan. Han Taiwanese women from low-income families were also part of the comfort women system.

End of Japanese rule

After Japan's surrender, the Taiwanese ex-Japanese soldiers were abandoned by Japan and left to their own devices. No transportation back to Taiwan or Japan was provided. Many of them met with

difficulties in mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan. In the Cairo Declaration of 1943, the Allied Powers declared the return of Taiwan (including the Pescadores) to the Republic of China. Unfortunately, the Cairo Declaration was never signed or ratified. In 1945, Japan unconditionally surrendered and ended its rule in Taiwan. On October 26, the government of the Republic of China declared that Taiwan had become a province of China.

At the end of the war, there were almost 350,000 Japanese civilians living in Taiwan. Offspring of intermarriage were considered Japanese if their Taiwanese mother chose Japanese citizenship, or if their Taiwanese father did not apply for ROC citizenship. As many as half the Japanese who left Taiwan after 1945 were born in Taiwan. The KMT government did not engage in widespread acts of revenge or push for their immediate removal, although many Taiwanese were quick to seize or attempt to occupy property they believed were unfairly obtained in previous decades. Japanese assets were collected, and the nationalist government retained most of the properties for government use. A survey found that 180,000 Japanese civilians wished to leave for Japan, while 140,000 wished to stay. An order for the deportation of Japanese civilians was issued in January 1946. In the end, the vast majority left.

Republic of China

During the immediate post-war period, the KMT was quite repressive, leading to local discontent. Anti-mainlander violence flared on February 28, 1947, and during the ensuing crackdown, tens of thousands of people were killed or arrested. This '228' incident became a taboo topic for the entire martial law era.

When Mao Zedong's Communist army gained complete control of Mainland China in 1949, two million refugees, predominantly from the nationalist government, military, and business community, fled to Taiwan. Chiang Kai-Shek established a provisional ROC capital in Taipei. Under nationalist rule, the mainlanders dominated the government and civil services.

The KMT government also moved the entire gold reserve from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan and used this to back the newly issued New Taiwan dollar to stabilise the new currency and put a stop to hyperinflation. KMT authorities implemented a far-reaching and highly successful land reform programme during the 1950s. From 1950 to 1965, Taiwan received a lot of economic and military aid from the US. Chiang Ching-Kuo (the son of Chiang Kai-Shek) started to build a strong export-driven economy. Tremendous prosperity on the island was accompanied by economic and social stability. Taiwan's phenomenal economic development earned it a spot as one of the Four Asian Tigers.

Political reforms

Chiang Kai-Shek died in April 1975. Chiang Ching-Kuo, hitherto much feared, gradually loosened political controls. When the Democratic Progressive Party was established as the first opposition party in 1986, Chiang did not act against its leaders. In the following year, Chiang ended martial law and allowed family visits to mainland China. Chiang selected Lee Teng-Hui, a Taiwan born technocrat to be his vice president. The move followed other reforms giving more power to native born citizens and calmed anti-KMT sentiments.

Lee became president after Chiang Ching-Kuo died in 1988, and he transferred more government authority to locally born citizens, and Taiwan began the process of Taiwanization. All this would not have been of great concern to China if its present leaders stick to one fact that has already been recognised internationally, i.e., Taiwan is a part of China. It is free to practise whatever political model its people choose, so long as it is not being used by the West and their allies to destroy China. Unfortunately, the DPP government is doing just that. How disgraceful!

III

More Than a Century of Humiliation

Chapter 24

A Streak of Losses and Humiliations

China was already becoming insular after the Ming Emperor Xuan-De discontinued Zheng He's expeditions after 1433. And Europe was rejuvenating itself with the Renaissance. Qian-Long's arrogance and complacency laid the foundation for China's rapid decline, both technologically and scientifically. And the Chinese population was largely ignorant of what was already happening in the West. Soon Britain found an easy weapon to subdue China. And that weapon was opium.

China was no match for British warships, cannons and muskets. Starting from the Boxer uprising until the Japanese invasion of the country, it was a pathetic mess.

The Boxer Uprising by the Eight-Nation Alliance (1899-1901)

The Boxer Uprising was an armed insurrection against increasing foreign intervention, including Christian missionary work in China towards the end of the Qing dynasty. The ruling Manchu court was ambivalent about the movement. However, after a siege of the Legations by the Boxers, a 20,000-strong Eight-Nation Alliance (八国联军) consisting of American, Austro-Hungarian, British, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Russian forces was organised to lift the siege. They whacked the Qing Imperial Army in Tianjin and went on to plunder Beijing, then summarily executed those suspected of being Boxers. The Boxer Protocol of September 7, 1901, saw the execution of government officials who had supported the Boxers, the provision for foreign troops to be stationed in Beijing, and the payment of indemnity

of 450 million taels of silver – about USD10 billion at 2018 silver prices and more than the government's annual tax revenue at that time – over the course of the next 39 years to the eight nations involved.

Many of us were led to believe the Boxers were a bunch of ugly Chinamen going around the country looking for foreigners and Chinese Christians to slaughter. But weren't they Chinese patriots in their own way, albeit misguided in some respects – like believing in their impenetrability to firearms and their anger towards Christianity?

'Let's carve up China!'

The First Opium War (1839–42)

There were two opium wars. The first was fought between China and Britain and the second, by Britain and France against China.

In the first, British traders had been illegally exporting opium, mainly from India to China, since the 18th century. The trade exploded from 1820, resulting in widespread addiction and causing serious social and economic disruptions in China. In 1839, the Chinese government confiscated and destroyed some 20,000 chests (about 1,400 tons) of opium that were warehoused at Guangzhou by British merchants. In the same year, some drunken British sailors killed a Chinese villager. The British government refused to turn the accused men over to the Chinese courts. Hostilities broke out. The British conducted several campaigns against the inferior Qing forces, which finally ended with the former's capture of Nanjing.

Under the Treaty of Nanjing, China had to pay Britain a large indemnity, cede Hong Kong Island to the British, and increase the number of treaty ports where the British could trade and reside to five. Other Western countries quickly demanded and were given similar privileges.

The Treaty of Nanjing and cessation of Hong Kong

The Second Opium War (1856-60)

While the Qing government was trying to quell the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64), the British took the opportunity to look for new concessions. Over a relatively minor incident in 1856, a British warship sailed up the Pearl River and began to bombard Guangzhou. In December, angry Chinese in the city burned a foreign warehouse and hostilities escalated. The French decided to join the British, using the 1856 murder of a French missionary in the interior as an excuse. They quickly captured Guangzhou. Upon their reaching Tianjin, the Chinese were forced into negotiations.

The treaties of Tianjin, signed in June 1858, saw more trade, travel and residence concessions to the foreign powers, including the freedom of movement for Christian missionaries. In further negotiations in Shanghai later that year, the importation of opium was legalised.

However, the Chinese subsequently refused to ratify the treaties, and the two allies resumed hostilities. In August 1860, a larger force of warships of British and French troops captured Beijing, then plundered

and burned down the *Yuan-Ming* Garden (Summer Palace). China had no choice but to sign the Beijing Convention, in which they agreed not only to observe the treaties of Tianjin, but also to cede the southern portion of the Kowloon Peninsula to the British.

The plundering and burning of the Summer Palace

First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95)

The war marked the emergence of Japan as a major world power. The war grew out of conflict over Korea, which had long been China's vassal state. Its strategic location opposite the Japanese islands and its natural resources of coal and iron were of interest to Japan. In 1875, Japan forced Korea to open itself to foreign – i.e., Japanese – trade and to declare itself independent from China. Japan was welcomed by Korea's more radical modernising forces, while China continued to sponsor the conservative officials gathered around the royal family. In 1884, a group of pro-Japanese reformers attempted to overthrow the Korean government, but Chinese troops under Yuan Shi-Kai came to their rescue. Both sides signed a convention to withdraw troops from Korea.

But In 1894, Kim Ok-Kyun, a pro-Japanese Korean leader, was lured to Shanghai and murdered. His body was then put aboard a Chinese warship and sent back to Korea, where it was quartered and displayed as a warning to other rebels. The Japanese government and public were outraged. The situation was made more tense later in the year, when a rebellion broke out in Korea, and the Chinese government, at the request of the Korean king, sent troops to help to disperse the rebels. The Japanese considered this a violation of the convention agreed upon

earlier, and duly sent in 8,000 troops to Korea. When the Chinese tried to reinforce their own troops, the Japanese sank the British steamer which was carrying the reinforcements, further aggravating tensions.

War was finally declared on August 1, 1894. Japanese troops scored quick and overwhelming victories on both land and sea. By March 1895, the Japanese had successfully invaded Shandong province and Manchuria. They blockaded the sea approaches to Beijing. The Chinese sued for peace.

In a treaty, China recognised the independence of Korea and ceded Taiwan, some adjoining islands, and Liaodong Peninsula. China also agreed to pay a large indemnity and to give Japan trading privileges on Chinese territory. This treaty was later modified under the combined intercession of Russia, France, and Germany, which forced Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China.

China's defeat encouraged Western powers to make further demands of the Chinese government. It also hastened the demise of the Qing dynasty.

The Second Sino-Japanese War (1931–1945, part of WWII)

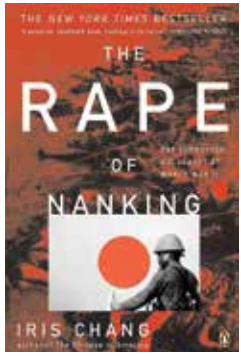
In 1931, Japan detonated a small bomb close to a railway line owned by Japan near Mukden (now Shenyang) to create an excuse to stage a full invasion. This incident led to the occupation of Manchuria, where

Japan established a puppet state called Manchukuo (满州国), where the Qing court's last Emperor Pu Yi was installed.

Six years later, Japan again cooked up a somewhat similar pretext to wage war against China. A Japanese soldier was found missing from his unit opposite Wan-Ping, a town southwest of Beijing, and the Japanese commander demanded the right to search the town for him. This was refused, and when the Chinese army fired on the Japanese army, all hell broke loose (the Japanese soldier later returned to his lines). This is the Marco Polo Bridge incident (or the 7-7 incident because it happened on July 7), which many historians regard as the actual beginning of the second Sino-Japanese War, or the start of Pacific theatre of World War II.

Following this incident, the Japanese captured Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing. Widespread atrocities were committed by the Japanese army, the most horrendous of which were described by Iris Chang in *The Rape of Nanking*.[1] After failing to stop the Japanese in the Battle of Wuhan, the Chinese relocated its government to Chongqing.

With some Soviet help, China was able to put up strong resistance against the Japanese offensives. The war had reached a stalemate by 1939, after the Chinese scored victories in Changsha and Guangxi. The Japanese were also unable to defeat the Chinese Communist forces in Shaanxi. But the Japanese ultimately succeeded in the year-long battle to occupy Nanning, which effectively cut off the last sea access to the wartime capital of Chongqing.



The Rape of Nanking by Iris Chang

While Japan ruled the large cities, they lacked sufficient manpower to control China's vast countryside. In November 1939, Chinese nationalist forces launched a large-scale winter offensive, and in August 1940, Chinese Communist forces started a counteroffensive in central China. The US Flying Tigers

[1] Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)

also lent support. However, Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 sealed its fate. The US declared war. After the two atom bombs were dropped, Japan formally surrendered on September 2, 1945.

The Second Sino-Japanese War accounted for the loss about 15 million military and civilian lives in China. Some put the figure even higher.

Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia (1941–1945, during WWII)

Conflict in this theatre began when Japan invaded French Indochina in September 1940. It simultaneously attacked Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya and Singapore in early December 1941. However, Thailand chose to ally itself with Japan.

The Allies suffered many defeats in the first half of the war. Two major British warships, the *HMS Repulse* and the *HMS Prince of Wales*, were sunk by a Japanese air attack off the coast of Malaya. Japanese forces overran Malaya by the end of January 1942. The Allied forces in Singapore, under the command of Lieutenant General Arthur Percival, surrendered to the Japanese on February 15, 1942. About 130,000 Allied troops became prisoners of war. The fall of Singapore was the largest surrender in British military history.

The Chinese living in Malaya suffered particularly from the Japanese occupation: some 100,000 were killed (Japan actually favoured the Malays; many Malay elites were made sword-carrying officers under the Japanese administration; some were even encouraged to massacre rural Chinese).

The Japanese were less successful in its Indian Ocean raids, but it did force the British fleet to relocate from British Ceylon to Mombasa in Kenya in 1942.

Japan occupied the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) from March 1942 until after the end of the war in September 1945. Japan overran the entire colony in less than three months. Initially, most Indonesians

welcomed the Japanese as liberators from their Dutch colonial masters. The sentiment changed after several million Indonesians were made into forced labourers. Hundreds of thousands were sent away from Java to the outer islands, and as far as Burma and Siam.

Of those taken off Java, no more than 70,000 survived the war. Four million people died in the Dutch East Indies as a result of famine and forced labour during the Japanese occupation, including 30,000 European civilian internees.

During the 1944-45 period, the Allied troops largely bypassed the Dutch East Indies and as such, much of the colony was still under occupation at the time of Japan's surrender in August 1945. The occupation led to the end of Dutch colonial rule in December 1949. It is believed many ethnic Chinese suffered under Japanese rule.

Left: The 'Tiger of Malaya', General Tomoyuki Yamashita. *Right*: Japanese atrocities in Malaya

The West's early image of China and the Chinese

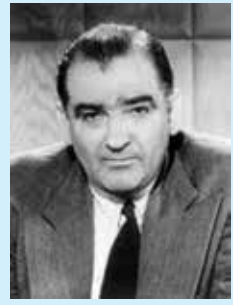
'The man with a ridiculous pigtail!'

The Chinese had already been humiliated in their own countries for almost three hundred years. Wearing a pigtail was a symbol of subserviency to the Manchu court. Slowly it also came to be accepted even by the high officials of Han descent; it was a way of life. But it was the perfect focus of Western cartoonists' creativity. For decades, it was the symbol of Chinese evilness, ugliness, lowliness and what-have-you.

This was followed by the Mao suits in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which became a symbol of Chinese isolationism. Fortunately, China has become strong, and wearing Mao suits no longer raises eyebrows. It is even a fashion statement!

McCarthyism

Joseph McCarthy, a charismatic US senator, was an anti-Soviet crusader. A Red Scare, which was already in place under President Harry Truman, was brought to the fore in 1950, with McCarthy spearheading the witch-hunt campaign.



Joseph McCarthy

When McCarthy started, he and his allies paid no attention to Chinese Americans. He only blamed George Marshall for "losing" China. Then came the Korean War. General Douglas MacArthur's huge army was subdued by Chinese forces. The humiliation was unbearable. China and the Chinese became American's new enemies.

When China entered the Korean War on the side of North Korea, Chinese American communities suddenly attracted public attention in unwelcome ways. Chinese Americans were "numbed with fear" and had to wrestle with the feeling that "being Chinese is itself a crime." Even children felt the need to prove their loyalty in school. Pro-Kuomintang thugs often beat up local Chinese who were perceived to be supporters or sympathisers of Mao's China. In one incident, some 15 of these 'supporters' and 'sympathisers' were singled out for liquidation. A reward of USD5,000 was offered to anyone willing to do the job (these goons remind me today of Mike Pompeo's China advisors, like Miles Yu Mao-Chun and author Gordon Chang, amongst many others). It is said that the Kuomintang supporters soon discovered that their previous collusion with federal officials to persecute community leftists won them no reprieve from investigation themselves. How ironic!

The Chinese had to lower their heads and tiptoe their way around to earn a living. And in the eyes of many Chinese today, McCarthyism is synonymous with the persecution of Chinese in the 1950s in America, even though there were villains other than McCarthy. President Truman was certainly one of them.

Chapter 25

When Did China Lag Behind the West?

Yes, China brought to the world four great inventions – paper, printing, gunpowder and the compass – yet, China was behind the West in science and technology for many centuries.

Paper

In the early days of the 2nd century CE, a court official named Cai Lun made paper from bark, rags, wheat stalks and other materials. It was relatively cheap, light, thin, durable and more suitable for brush writing. At the beginning of the 3rd century, the paper-making process first spread to Korea and then to Japan. It reached the Arab world during the Tang Dynasty, and Europe in the 12th century.

Printing

The first book with a verifiable date of printing appeared in China in 868 CE, or nearly 600 years before it happened in Europe. During the Tang Dynasty, this technology was gradually introduced to Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Yet block printing had its drawbacks. All the boards became useless after the printing was done and a single mistake in carving could ruin a whole block.

Between 1041 to 1048, during the Song Dynasty, a man named Bi Sheng (毕升) carved individual characters on identical pieces of fine clay, which he hardened by a slow baking process, resulting in pieces of movable type. When the printing was finished, the pieces of type were put away for future use. This technology then spread to Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Europe. German Johannes Gutenberg invented the

movable-type printing press sometime between 1440 to 1448.

Gunpowder

Gunpowder was invented in China sometime during the first millennium CE. The earliest possible reference to gunpowder appeared in 142 CE, during the Eastern Han, when Wei Bo-Yang (魏伯阳) wrote about a substance with gunpowder-like properties. He described a mixture of three powders that would "fly and dance" violently. While it was almost certainly not their intention to create a weapon of war, Taoist alchemists continued to play a major role in gunpowder development due to their experiments with sulphur and saltpeter in their search for eternal life and ways to transmute one material into another.

The next reference to gunpowder occurred during the Jìn dynasty. Another Daoist philosopher by the name of Ge Hong (葛洪) wrote down the ingredients of gunpowder in his surviving works. Tang was credited to some extent, but the more definitive result should be attributed to the Song Dynasty. Knowledge of gunpowder spread rapidly throughout Asia and Europe, possibly as a result of the Mongol conquests during the 13th century.

Compass

While mining ores, people chanced upon a natural magnetite that attracted iron and pointed fixedly north. After constant improvement, the round compass came into being. Joseph Needham credited Shen Kuo in the Song Dynasty for the knowledge in the latter's writing in 1086, which puts it about 100 years earlier than the compass first recorded in Europe.

Needham, a British biochemist, historian, and sinologist, had spent many years traveling to China. He wrote much about the history of science and technology in China. He had painstakingly documented many inventions and innovations that had apparently originated in China. And here is the famous Needham question: Why had China

been overtaken by the West in science and technology, despite their earlier successes? In Needham's words, "Why did modern science, the mathematisation of hypotheses about Nature, with all its implications for advanced technology, take its meteoric rise only in the West at the time of Galileo?" and why it had not developed in Chinese civilisation, which in preceding centuries, "was much more efficient" than the Occident in applying natural knowledge to practical needs?

Explanations can take volumes. The cold truth is, there was a long period of dormancy in science and technology until it got reawakened after Mao came to power. Yes, Chinese should feel proud that paper, the printing press, gunpowder and the compass first appeared in China centuries before they did in other civilisations. Some argue that the world's first industrial revolution actually took place in China's Song Dynasty. But does it matter?

Unfortunately, science and technology in China remained almost dormant for almost 600 years – after the Ming decided to ground their great fleet. But come to think of it, little of the body of fundamental scientific theories – like Archimedes' principle, Pythagoras's theorem, Newtonian physics and calculus, Mendeleev's periodic table, etc – can be attributed to Chinese.

Going back to Archimedes, he discovered 'buoyancy' and formulated a theory and an equation. Chinese had been doing it for years, but never came up with an empirical formula. China's achievements over a millennium had always been experience-based; the West was very much experiment-based. The emphasis of virtues, rites and rote scholarship in Confucianism, of mysticism in Daoism, and of anti-materialism, served to retard scientific and technological creativity. Science took a backseat, even though their smiths continued to tinker and achieved breakthroughs in technological innovations. If they could build ships that sailed the high seas, obviously they would have understood the practical aspects of Archimedes' principle. Ditto the lunar calendar, which required them to understand the motion of the Sun, the Earth and the Moon, or their management of floods and water irrigation.

While the West forged ahead after the Renaissance at the beginning the 14th century, China stood quite still. The Qing emperors were enjoying their feudalistic lordship over their subjects and when George Macartney dropped by in 1792, Qian Long was still in his slumber.

IV

The Arduous Journey Ahead

Chapter 26

Great Leap Forward: This Time for Real

'Let China sleep. For when she wakes, the world will tremble.'

– Napoleon Bonaparte[1]

Mao Zedong made China stand up. The country exploded its own atom bomb. But the country was dirt poor. His Great Leap Forward campaign set the nation further back. Few overseas Chinese were proud of China. It had become a country of blue ants, whose only worldly possession was perhaps an antiquated bicycle. Nonetheless, China remained the ancestral land to overseas Chinese. Prime Minister Zhou Enlai was also hugely admired. And a melting pot of Confucianism, Daiosm (both philosophical and mystical) and Buddhism continued to sustain the Chineseness in them, even if many had become Christians.

Deng Xiaoping was rehabilitated in the nick of time to save China. His visit to Singapore in November 1978 must have jolted him. He was determined to transform China. By the time he relinquished his role as the paramount leader in November 1989, China had already become a substantial economy. His successors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, continued to develop China, but corruption had also become widespread. Extreme capitalism was the order of the day, and the rich-poor divide was most alarming. Bo Xilai, a potential successor to Hu, was involved in a huge scandal and was later found guilty.

Xi Jinping was voted in in 2012. He lost no time in launching a serious anti-corruption campaign. The slogan 'China Dream' (中国梦,

[1] This line is often attributed to the French emperor. No scholar, however, is certain that he had actually said it.

Zhōng-Guó Mèng) was no political gimmick; it encapsulated his mission to bring great rejuvenation to the Chinese nation (中华民族伟大复兴, *Zhōng-Huá-Mín-Zú Wěi-Dà Fù-Xīng*). He introduced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, which saw China investing in more than 150 countries and international organisations.

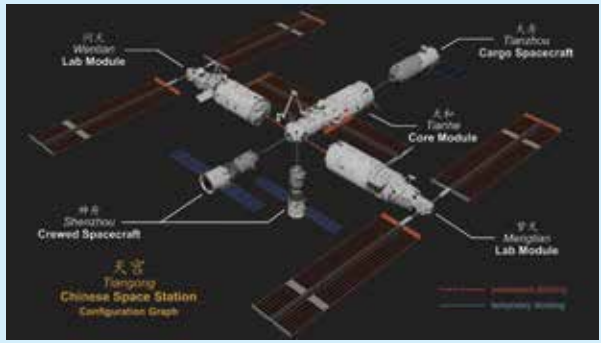
Xi had no intention of falling into a Thucydides trap with the United States, as author Graham Allison appears to think inevitable, i.e., China shaping itself to replace the US as the number one power in the world. In fact, he was building China along the Confucian concept of good governance. And he believed in globalisation and free trade, which has turned out to be his Achilles' heel now on the chips availability front. The US, which was the very champion of free trade, is now the most protectionist country in the world. Not only that, but it is also using the US dollar as a weapon to squeeze the rest of the world.

The success of the BRI and the equitable approach China has shown to the non-G7 world, not to mention the way it has contained the pandemic in the country, has made the US extremely nervous. The American fear of the loss of its hegemony, hence Joe Biden's all-out effort to retard China with hoodlums, has made China realise that they cannot count on anybody except themselves. They have to be scientifically and technologically very self-reliant.

Solidly in power and supported by seasoned technocrats and able diplomats, Xi has changed the world's perception of China, despite the relentless efforts by the West and its allies' media to demonise it. The recent actions of Saudi Arabia and Brazil are testimony to the seismic change taking place today. Chinese are taking to science and technology like a fish to water now that their cultural blinkers and baggage have been removed. There is no looking back. Hopefully the world will benefit from its brand of governance and diplomatic wisdom.

Space technology

On November 29, 2022, the Shenzhou (神舟, 'Divine Vessel') 15 was launched, and China completed its Tiangong (天宫, 'Sky Palace') space station, becoming only the third nation to do so. Tiangong is entirely built and run by China. The successful opening of the station reinforces the country's policy of self-reliance in the wake of the US' 'China exclusion' policy in science and technology.



Shujianyang/Wikimedia

China's space station is the culmination of three decades of work. It measures 55 metres long and comprises three modules. The core module can accommodate six astronauts (taikonauts to Chinese). Together with the two experiment modules, the station has a total space of 110 cubic metres, which is about one-fifth the size of the International Space Station. The station also has an external robotic arm, which allows astronauts to do experiments outside the station, and three ports for resupply vehicles and manned spacecraft to dock.

The Chinese space station is slated to stay in orbit for 15 years – manned by six-month stay crews in two missions annually. China has an open invitation for other nations to collaborate on experiments aboard the Tiangong.

China is planning to launch a new space telescope called Xuntian in December 2023. This telescope will map stars and supermassive black holes among other projects, with a resolution about the same as the Hubble Space Telescope, but with a wider view. The telescope will periodically dock with the station for maintenance.

The country also has plans to launch multiple missions to Mars and nearby comets and asteroids, with the goal of bringing samples back to Earth. And perhaps most notably, China has announced plans to build a joint Moon base with Russia – though no timeline for this mission has been set.

China's robotic lunar rover Yutu (玉兔), which formed part of the Chinese Chang'e 3 (嫦娥三号) mission reached the Moon's surface on December 14, 2013. After some initial operational difficulties, Yutu recovered and operated for a total of 31 months, well beyond its original expected lifespan of three months.

Chang'e 4 (嫦娥四号) achieved soft-landing on the far side of the Moon on January 3, 2019. Its robotic rover Yutu-2 was unleashed.

High-speed train

The first railways in China were built in the late 19th century, after extensive railway networks were already in place in Europe, North America, India and Japan, thanks to China's lack of industrialisation and the sceptical attitude of the Qing government.

The first railroad in China opened in Shanghai in July 1876. It was built without approval from the Qing government and was dismantled a year later. Their rails and rolling stock were later shipped to Taiwan.

The first railway to endure was initially a 10-kilometre line from Tangshan to Xugezhuang built in 1881 to transport coal. The line was extended to Tianjin in 1888 and Shanghaiguan and Suizhong in 1894. This railway was backed by the powerful Li Hong-Zhang, who overcame objections from conservative ministers. To secure the support of Empress Dowager Cixi for the construction, Li resorted to importing a small train set from Germany and built a two-kilometre line from her residence in Zhongnanhai to her dining hall in Beihai. The dowager empress, however, was concerned that the locomotive's noise would disturb the fengshui of the imperial city, so she promptly commanded the train to be pulled by eunuchs instead!

Finally in 1904, the Qing government permitted local provinces to organise their own railway companies. From 1904 to 1907, 15 provincial governments formed their own railway building companies, and raised funds by selling shares to citizens and levying taxes. The Beijing-Zhangjiakou line was the first railway to be designed and built indigenously. The chief engineer was Zhan Tian-You (詹天佑), who is known as the 'Father of China's Railways'. Several followed.

In May 1911, the Qing government sought to nationalise these locally controlled railway companies and pledge their railway

concessions to foreign banks in exchange for loans. The nationalisation order provoked fierce public opposition, leading to the Railway Protection Movement which contributed to the outbreak of the Xin-Hai Revolution (辛亥革命), which eventually toppled the Qing dynasty.

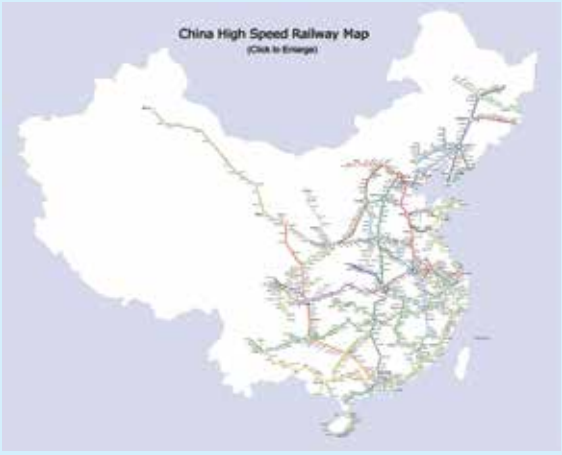
Today, China's high-speed rail (HSR) network accounts for two-thirds of the world's railway lines, with a total length of 42,000 kilometres by the end of 2022. The HSR network encompasses rail lines with a design speed of 200 to 350 kilometres per hour.

Chinese designed Fu-Xing train departing Beijing's Chao-Yang station

The Beijing-Guangzhou line, at 2,298 kilometres, is the world's longest HSR line in operation. The Shanghai Maglev is the world's first high-speed commercial magnetic levitation line, whose trains run at a top speed of 430 kilometres per hour. In 2020, China started testing a maglev prototype that is said to be capable of running at 600 kilometres per hour and planned a 2025 launch date.

There are concerns – mainly from outside China – over the costs, debts and profitability of HSRs, which are understandable from commercial angles. However, China's planning perspective is far longer and wider than those from the

conventional schools. A 2019 World Bank study also appeared to support this perspective, and even estimated the rate of economic return of China's HSR network to be at eight percent, which is well above the opportunity cost of capital in China for major long-term infrastructure investments.



Operational network, as of January 2023

Infrastructure

Highways and bridges

By the end of 2020, the total length of China's expressway network, the National Trunk Highway System (中国国家干线公路系统, *Zhōng-Guó Guó-Jiā Gàn-Xiàn Gōng-Lù Xì-Tǒng*) reached 168,000 kilometres – the world's largest expressway system by length. China plans to increase this to 461,000 km by 2035.

Today, China boasts eight of the ten highest bridges, and seven of the ten longest cable-stayed bridges worldwide. China also tops the world in the total length and number of highway

bridges and tunnels in service and under construction. The number of highway bridges in China reached around 912,800 by the end of 2020, and the total length surpassed 66.28 million linear meters.

China announced the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) in October 2018, which is the world's longest cross-sea bridge. The 55 km-long bridge connects China's southern mainland province of Guangdong with the country's two special administrative regions, Hong Kong and Macau.

Honghe Bridge of the Hezhou-Gaolan Port Highway on the Pearl River

Roads

Total: 45.2 million km (as of 2020)

Paved: 4.578 million km, including 168,000 km of expressways

Waterways

Total: 27,700 km (2020)

Airports

According to a white paper, China has 238 certified civil airports throughout the country. Hailed as the 'new gateway' to China, Beijing's new Daxing International Airport has seen its total passenger throughput exceed 10 million a year after it began

operating. The airport was built in less than five years, and officially opened to flights on Sept 25, 2019.

In addition to its capacity of building large airports, core technologies in improving massive estuaries and lengthy waterways have given China around 127,000 kilometres of navigable inland waterways, sending it to the front ranks of the world.

Total airports: 507 (2013)

With paved runways: 463 (2017)

Registered air carriers: 56 (2015)

Ports and terminals

China's major seaports include Dalian, Ningbo, Qingdao, Qinhuangdao, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Tianjin, and has several river ports, including Guangzhou in the Pear River Delta. Its container ports include Dalian (with a throughput of 8,760,000 TEU as of 2019), Guangzhou (23,236,200 TEU), Ningbo (27,530,000 TEU), Qingdao (21,010,000 TEU), Shanghai (43,303,000 TEU), Shenzhen (25,770,000 TEU), and Tianjin (17,264,000 TEU) (2019). All seven of these are among the ten largest container ports in the world.

Its main terminals for liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports are Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shandong, Shanghai, Tangshan, and Zhejiang.

Electricity

The average electricity production of China, from April 1986 to December 2022, is 167,888 gigawatt hours (GWh). The data reached an all-time high of 824,800 GWh in August 2022, and a record low of 35,650 GWh in April 1986. Generating capacity by source in 2019:

Coal:	1,040,630 MW	51.8%
Hydro	327,750 MW	16.3%
Wind	209,150 MW	10.4%
Solar	204,180 MW	10.2%
Natural gas	90,240 MW	4.5%
Nuclear	48,740 MW	2.4%
Other thermal	33,340 MW	1.7%
Other hydro	30,290 MW	1.5%
Biomass	23,610 MW	1.2%

Communications

As of 2020, China had a staggering 1.72 billion cell phones, or 119 per 100 residents, and 181.908 million fixed line telephones, or 13 per 100 residents. Seventy percent of the country was connected to the Internet, with 987 million users. By the end of 2022, the number of 5G base stations in China amounted to 2.31 million, some 60 percent of the world's total. According to forecasts, the number of base stations was projected to reach over six million by 2024. Huawei is the leading company in this industry, followed by ZTE.

Water

More than 140 million people in northern China have directly benefited from the massive South-to-North Water Diversion Project, that pumps water from major rivers in the south to the drought-prone north. The project has diverted 46 billion cubic meters of water to arid areas in the north through its middle and eastern routes. The project has provided water to some 280 counties of more than 40 large and middle-sized cities, easing water shortage in the north.

The project supplied over 6.4 billion cubic meters of water along the middle and eastern routes for ecological use, effectively curbing the decline in groundwater level and land subsidence.

The South-to-North Water Diversion Project has three routes. The middle route, the most prominent of the three due to its role in feeding water to the nation's capital, starts from the Danjiangkou Reservoir in Central China's Hubei province, and runs across Henan and Hebei before reaching Beijing and Tianjin. It began supplying water in December 2014.

The eastern route began operations in November 2013, transferring water from East China's Jiangsu province to feed areas including Tianjin and Shandong. The western route is in the planning stage and is yet to be built.

Chapter 27

The Perception Hurdles

Even though many of the things people use in their everyday life carry a 'made in China' product origin line, the perception that China is a poor Third World country still holds. Ask an average Joe in Australia, and chances are that he has not heard of the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, China landing a craft on Mars, nor that its space station is now orbiting the Earth. Until Meng Wan-Zhou was detained upon arrival at Vancouver Airport in December 2018, I am pretty sure that this average Joe also doesn't know his Wi-Fi router carries a Huawei logo. Before the current trade tensions, roughly one-third of Australia's exports went to China. Yet, this average Joe will tell you China is a big bad wolf. Has he visited China? No.

This is not peculiar to Australia; this ignorance is everywhere – right from the US heartland to Narendra Modi's India. In the Nancy-and-Ted (former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senator Ted Cruz) world of America, the only China they know is their Chinatowns, the dragon dance, or the noisy tourists from China they see in downtown malls. Many don't even realise the gadgets they pick up from the local DIY outlets are from China, save that they appear to be very inexpensive compared to those from yesteryear. Otherwise, China is the yellow peril that CNN and Fox News are constantly calling out: the genocides in Xinjiang (when perhaps three quarters of America do not know where on Earth it is), the suppression of democracy in Hong Kong, the risk posed by Huawei, and the theft of American knowledge by Chinese scholars and students in American universities, etc. Already they are adding Tibet to their lists of 'concerns'.

There is a common denominator in this demonisation of China: the news media. I have already written much about its mercenariness

but suffice it to say it is getting worse by the day and the paranoia has begun to cascade down to non-Western reporters and journalists, who have, advertently or inadvertently, become a tool of the politically and financially powerful anti-China forces in the US, Australia and Europe.

Several who write for the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *CNN*, or host for Al Jazeera, for example, are Chinese, ethnically. You can also discern subtle scepticism – borne more out of political biases than objective reporting – from the *South China Morning Post*, CNA and *The Straits Times* from time to time. CNA's Beijing correspondent still refers to the weather balloon that was shot down by America's Air Force as a 'spy' balloon, even when America has already become too embarrassed to describe it as one!

Left: The remains of Summer Palace today. *Right*: The opium addicts of yesteryear

Anti-China zeal

During his presidency, Bill Clinton was already conscious of the need for America to contain China. He didn't give China an easy ticket to join the WTO. By Barack Obama's time, that awareness had already been cemented; his Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement was an obvious attempt to marginalise China. But the world at large was still a little benign about China's re-emergence. Everybody was happy that household goods that were once considered 'once-in-a-lifetime' treats had become totally affordable. And Chinese tourists were filling up their hotels and swarming their souvenir shops. And although many may not like it, the value of their homes had shot up, thanks to the influx of wealthy Chinese who bought houses in their neighbourhoods

for their school-going children, or park their money.

Even then, there was a live-and-let-live atmosphere – until Donald Trump came around. Trump is a through-and-through zero-sum businessman. He entered politics not because he had a strong ideological inclination. He did so to prove that he could run America the way he ran his business, a business which we in Asia would describe as one that has 'ten shit tanks but with only nine covers'. Nonetheless, American press loves superficialities. *The Apprentice* series that he starred in became the K-pop of the mentally-shallow class there. What he saw during his official visit to China must have frightened him. China had to be stopped!

Trump's global perspective is narrow. He focused on trade, and he felt America could bring China to its knees. Nonetheless, the leaders of the UK, Canada, Japan and Australia were happy to echo him. The Five Eyes alliance was an intelligence-sharing vehicle between five English-speaking countries – the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – which evolved during the Cold War to keep an eye on the world in general and the Soviet Union in particular. How handy that it is now being used against China! But New Zealand is not fully committed to this cause. Never mind, they had a ready replacement: Japan. And to ringfence China, they invited India along too.

Overnight, the Chinese government was demonised as the evil 'Chinese Communist Party'. And soon, protesters-turned-rioters surfaced in Hong Kong to fight for democracy, and a Uyghur genocide badge was pinned on China.

Many in China had thought Joe Biden would be voice of reason when he became president. Alas, how disappointed they are now. Biden is in fact more Trump than Trump. He is now a Sinophobe by any yardstick. He knew he couldn't do much harm to China in the area of trade. He is not only rallying the Five Eyes, AUKUS (US, UK, Australia and) and the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, with the US, Australia, India, and Japan) to contain China on the military front, he has also succeeded in roping in South Korea and the Netherlands to halt China on the technological front. With both sides of Congress all

too keen to outdo one another in demonising China, several bills have also been passed to that effect. I believe all of us have read enough about his actions to either agree or disagree with this description of him and there is no need for me to elaborate further. Biden's hoodlum strategy has certainly stalled China's chip needs which are critical in its ability to help usher in the world's Fourth Industrial Revolution.

But it may be good to reflect a little on history.

First, the British...

The British and Germans have an intimate knowledge of China and the Chinese, thanks to their 19th century gunboat diplomacy in China. However, they are now fighting head over heels to please Biden. The British and Irish ought to take note: the South Asians are returning to rule them, with Rishi Sunak as UK prime minister, Humza Yousaf as Scotland's first minister, and Leo Varadkar as Ireland's taioseach. I flew into Birmingham Airport not too long ago; I thought I was flying into an India of the 22nd century (I hope my South Asian friends take this as a compliment!). I understand ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson is also one-quarter Turk.

Biden is making every attempt to provoke China in the South China Sea, and Sunak wants to show Biden that he is whiter than Whites. Now the members of this new hoodlum, including new recruit the Philippines, would from time to time gather to stage military and naval exercises in the waters east of China to remind it of the power of gunboat diplomacy. But this is the 21st century. They have forgotten that their *HMS Repulse* and *HMS Prince of Wales* were sunk by Japan without much ado. Can their *HMS Queen Elizabeth* and its flotilla loitering right in China's front yard stand a chance if it decided to test its DF-21D missiles on them?

Second, the Japanese...

The terror that was inflicted by the Japanese army in China and Southeast Asia, especially to their Chinese populations, is still vividly

remembered by some who are still alive today. China was in a sorry state for more than 100 years before Mao took over in 1949. The Manchu government was totally inept, and the country was constantly ravaged by natural disasters. The warlords and the Kuomintang were happy to see the country burnt while they fought for territories and looted the masses. Whereas in Japan, the Meiji Restoration had already propelled the nation to be on par with the Western powers in terms of sophistication.

The Japanese had a grand design to rule East and Southeast Asia and even Australia under their Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere ambition. In their process of invading China, they began to cultivate a contempt for the Chinese-borne out of the filth they saw in Chinese lives. To the Japanese, Chinese were sub-human, hence the slaughter without conscience.

And America...

To the US, the tens of thousands who died at their hands – the Afghans, Syrians, Libyans, etc., in the Middle East, and the Vietnamese and Laotians in Indochina – and the millions they caused local regimes/dictatorships to exterminate in Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan, Central and South America and Africa, all in the name of fighting Communist dominos,[1] are just inconvenient statistics in their zeal to uphold their concept of 'good' to the world.

And Down Under...

For years there was a White Australian policy, until it was formally dismantled by the Gough Whitlam administration in 1973. Successive governments have been friendly, until Scott Morrison came into power. Morrison did not lend himself as an attack dog at the beginning, even

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[1] See Vincent Bevins', *The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2020).

though several members of his cabinet were already making strong anti-China statements from time to time. Things came to a boil when Biden came to power, and Morrison was happy to lend a bigger hand to help the US president contain China, even to the extent of cancelling a submarine deal with France to buy nuclear ones from the US and UK consortium.

Morrison lost the May 2022 election and Labor's Anthony Albanese is now the prime minister. Australia has always been a willing partner to the UK and the US – during the First and Second World Wars, the Vietnam War, and more recently the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq – one would not expect any drastic change in the country's pro-US stances. However, from his recent actions, Albanese does appear to have some common sense, for why should Australia continue to spite China when one-third of its goods are shipped there? Albanese and state leaders like Daniel Andrews are not stupid, but they are riding an American tiger (or an alligator?) and must know how and when to dismount, lest they suffer the fate of Whitlam.

And day in day out, you still read and watch incredulous stories spun by China-hating journalists like Peter Hartcher and John Garnaut, and politicians like Peter Dutton!

...and lastly, the QUAD

In Modi's India, it is all about tall poppies. *How can China be more successful than us?* The most formidable institutions in the world are headed by Indians – Google, Microsoft, Pepsi, Harvard Business School, and even the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore, which was founded by Chinese. *We were the first Asians to reach the Martian orbit. How can China be more advanced than us?* China has already moved on, yet in Modi's India, their image of China is not different from that of Americans: blue ants and sweatshops. I hope more Indians will visit China. Seeing is believing.

I remember when I was in Sixth Form, many of our science textbooks were from India. When I was doing my engineering degree,

we knew many of the pioneers of our *Keretapi Tanah Melayu* (Malaysia's railway authority) came from the Indian Railway.

And there was the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), during which China's Zhou Enlai and India's Jawaharlal Nehru were together at the forefront to resist "imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as stand against great power and bloc politics." India is also a member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa); its non-aligned mindset should be beyond question.

The contrast between China and India in terms of leadership delivery has aggravated Modi's complex and made him move closer to the US during the last couple of years. It is therefore not surprising that India was willing to become a founding member of the QUAD hoodlums, despite its BRICS membership.

Many scholars contend that India was never a nation until it gained independence from the British. A nation as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary is "a country, especially when thought of as a large group of people living in one area with their own government, language, traditions, etc." Elsewhere, it is defined as "a large body of people, associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own." To a hair-splitter like me, India is not a nation in the strictest sense of the word. It is a country of many peoples – in terms of religion, culture, language, history and what-have-you. In the Tang Dynasty, circa 600 to 900 CE, there was already a strong bond between China and 'India'. The glue of this bond, as we all know, was Buddhism. I honestly believe most Indians today do not think that historical foundation is significant enough for posterity.

How does the rest of the world see China today?

Far away in Africa and Central America, the China and Chinese they notice or understand come in the form of images of quiet and hardworking technicians putting up infrastructure in their towns

or running the mines in their outback. The West is saying that the Chinese are there to strip Africa's resources and plant a debt trap. Yes, the minerals are being mined and stacked at ports waiting for shipment to China. But do the Chinese exploit Africans like the colonial powers did? Remember how cruel King Leopold II of Belgium was to the Congolese? And the number of slaves that ended up in America's cotton fields?

China's doors are wide open; armchair detractors should go there to take a look of the country themselves, instead of blindly listening to Western and pro-West media.

Waking up China...

Samuel Huntington talks about the looming clash of civilisations.[2] His argument is based on the incompatibility that he sees in many aspects of the cultures of the nine distinct civilisations that he mapped out. I suppose he was more alarmed about the widening of the value gap between the Judeo-Christian West and the Islamic world than the rest. That was the prevailing concern then; for Islam was increasingly being seen as a new world destabilising force. The emergence of China was not apparent then.

However, after the ascension of Obama, the pivot was shifted to a rising China. Only two civilisations are in danger of clashes – the West, led by the US, and China. That need to check China became Trump's political capital. And instead of rationalising the whole need, Biden went on to build on it. He wants to outdo Trump, lest he becomes a one-term president.

The clarion call has been issued. At one corner is the US' brand of evangelism, and at the corner is the reluctant China, guided by its Before-Christ, principally Confucian, philosophy.

Had Trump and Biden not burnt the dragon's whiskers, China

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[2] See Samuel Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

would have been content to just plod on to fulfil its *xiao-kang* (小康, 'moderately comfortable') ambition. Since time immemorial, save the century of humiliation in the 1800s to 1900s, China had always been an advanced nation of its time, but it had never wanted to go beyond the Himalayas in its southwest, the Steppes and deserts in its west and north, and the seas in its east. It was an agricultural nation! People have to till the land! It built the Great Wall to deter the constant threat posed by the Mongols and the central Asian tribes. If the Chinese had had the Western mindset, many parts of Southeast Asia, Australia and East Africa would have been colonies for a long time. The 300 years after the Ming dynasty were an aberration in China's nature to better themselves.

Now China realises it needs more than its formidability in supply chains to do so. It cannot count on anyone anymore. It has to build its own capabilities in microchips, advanced jet engines, military technology, and space exploration, among others. The US is going all-out to choke China on all these fronts, particularly with chip supplies. But it fails to understand this basic reality: many of the scientists and engineers in chip-making industries, from machines to design to production, are ethnically Chinese. Now that China has made up its mind to be self-sufficient in this field, it is only a matter of time before this DNA returns to China and helps make it number one in this technology.

Ditto on military capabilities. The way the US is rallying its partners to demonstrate their naval power right at China's doorstep – all in the name of navigational freedom and 'protecting' Taiwan – forces China to invest in defence and space capabilities and to strengthen its resolve to take back Taiwan. Had the West and Japan not been encouraging Taiwan to go independent, China would have been happy to allow it to prosper under the one-country-two-systems arrangement. And Hong Kong would not have had to pass those laws to ward off Western hypocrisy.

America is seeing a Chinese ghost everywhere it goes. It is gripped by hallucinations. And this has made its China policy totally incoherent. So far, only Canada, the UK, Japan, Australia and some minion countries in Europe are happy to become America's blood brothers. Much of the rest of the world is paying lip service. They simply must

think where the food on the family table is going to come from.

While Trump's focus was on trade and technology, Biden's is all-out blockades. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is like an ant on a hot plate – right behind Wang Yi everywhere the latter went. But he is not achieving much of what Biden has asked. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman looked ill at ease in China, despite her formidable reputation. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin looks just as clumsy; he simply does not know basic protocols. A case in point is their visit to ASEAN countries. There is a cultural wisdom in these countries, having lived side-by-side with China for hundreds of years. America has never paid much attention to them, and now it is trying to woo them to its cause or mission. These countries have millions of people of Chinese descent in their midst. They are loyal to their respective countries, but many are also proud of the civilisation they belong to. And they know only a strong China can help them to stand tall.

It is time for the leaders in the West, Japan and India to realise the world has changed. In this Internet world, no lies can stand for long. America's hegemony is going to be a thing of the past. No ideology can last forever, and neither can any doctrine. To the Chinese, nothing is set in concrete. The *yin* and *yang* forces are at work all the time. The *I-Ching* (*Scripture* or *Sutra of Change*) has for millennia advocated the constant need for one to adapt-when the situation arises. And the concept of crisis is written in these two characters: 危机 (*wei-ji*), literally risk-opportunity. The Western paradigm tends to be linear, but for the Chinese it is multi-dimensional. In the West, you can change the government, but not the policy; in China, you cannot change the government, but they can change the policy!

The world economy has largely been a zero-sum game in the past – one country gains at the expense of the other, or vice versa. The Chinese believe in win-win, which they have abundantly demonstrated since joining the WTO.

The West can never change China, neither is China interested to change the West or the rest of the world, as it has declared time and again. What you are seeing in China today is just the emergence

of another Confucian dynasty in Chinese history. Its rulers are not emperors; they emerged through a multi-layered filter – from village functionaries to city bureaucrats to provincial and finally national decision-makers. The 'emperor' is simply the hardest driven, the *crème de la crème*, of the lot. And most importantly, Xi is not vulnerable to short- or even long-term political pressures or threats, from both within the country or outside. He has cemented his place.

Thanks to the failure of the Soviet Union, Communism has always been thought of as an evil system which the masses will naturally reject when they are liberated, like what has happened with East Germany. This has also held true in hitherto satellite states of the Soviet Union in west and northwest Europe. However, the chances of that happening to China are nil. If the West understands the two characters that define Communism in Chinese, namely 共产 (*gòng chǎn*), taken together, the term simply means 'produce together (for the greater good of society)'. Who can fault that sense of mission?

Japan understands Confucianism, and much of its people's lives also revolves around this ethos. Chinese forgive but do not forget. If Japan can own up to their World War II guilt and make it a point to live with China without playing the US card, then the future of the region is certainly assured, thanks to East Asia's great strengths in STEM. South Korea is a very strong part of this equation, and its unification with North Korea should be genuinely encouraged.

If Modi can shake off his pseudo-sainthood and humble himself to learn a little from China and the Indians in Singapore, then Indians can also look forward to a better life faster. It is now lulled by the West's constant pats on their back. *The Economist*'s praises are shallow; you need to transform your country and society, and that's long-haul. Who else can show you the way? Think about it. Deluding yourself and acting beyond your paygrade is the surest way to fall flat.

The West has their niche. Its universities will continue to be the incubators of great scientific ideas and breakthroughs. But the US is in a precarious position. Biden says he protects Asians, but perception is everything. The Chinese simply don't feel safe in America and

many parts of the Western world today. The US needs to reconcile itself to the fact that it is no longer able, or that it is even necessary, to contain China. It should just behave like a gentleman in an affluent neighbourhood – someone the world looks up to for knowledge and wisdom!

As for the rest of the world, be yourself. You don't have to join or attach yourself to any alliance or coalition. Slavery and subservience are things of the past, and nobody can exploit your resources anymore. You want? You pay. Some may still harbour delusions about themselves, about their faith, about their race, or about their destiny, no one is going to give two hoots what they think – if they don't work hard enough to earn them.

V

New Existential Threats

Chapter 28

China, A Threat to the West?

No Designs on the World

China was not a unified state until *Qin Shi-Huang* (秦始皇, 259-210 BCE) declared himself the first emperor, after he had conquered all of the other warring states. But the Chinese have been proud of their common culture since time immemorial. They always consider themselves the children of the Yellow Emperor, a legendary figure who is said to have ushered in China's civilisation some 5,000 years ago.

But much of China was, save the silk that was coveted, not known to the Western world-until Marco Polo bragged about his visit and influence on the court of Kublai Khan (I personally am not convinced that he had been there, since there was no record of his stint in Chinese history during that period). Before the *Sui-Tang* (隋-唐) era, China was largely an insular culture, even at the height of its great literary roll-out during the Spring and Autumn Period (春秋 *Chun-Qiu*, 771-476 BCE). It was very much a 'middle kingdom' to its people, meaning that anything outside was regarded as peripheral. Regardless, the philosophies that sprang out of the period have influenced the way the Chinese conduct themselves as a culture since then. The first sections of the Great Wall of China – to defend against northern and central Asian tribes – is said to have been built at that time. Qin Shi-Huang joined them up.

During the Sui-Tang period (581-907 CE, thanks to the eagerness to learn more about Buddhism, China began to

look out in earnest, even though there were already monks like Fa Sien (法顯, trav. 319-413 CE) and Xuan Zang (玄奘, trav. 629-645 CE). Yi Jing (義淨) did it during the Tang era proper (671-695 CE).

The Song Dynasty (宋朝, 960-1279) was particularly prolific in terms of inventions. One British scholar even contended that that was where the world's first industrial revolution actually began.[1] But the dynasty was very weak militarily and had to bear the brunt of many invasions from the neighbouring tribes.

During the Yuan Dynasty (元朝, 1279-1368), Kublai Khan extended his conquest as far as Hungary, but that had very little to do with the Chinese way of life. At this time, China was largely a foreign occupation. It could not last long, given the nationalistic nature of Han Chinese.

The Ming Dynasty (明朝, 1368-1644) emperors had the opportunity to make China top dog of the world during their era. Unfortunately, the opportunity was squandered and within 100 years, China had lost its skill in making great ocean-going ships. On top of that, thanks to the Muslim Admiral Zheng He, China helped Islamise Southeast Asia, which hitherto was very much Hindu-Buddhist in culture.

The Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644-1912) represented Chinese complacency at its worst. While Japan understood the prowess of Western technology, Qing's pseudo-scholar emperors blew their chances. False belief in its superiority made China a laughingstock. Great humiliation followed until Mao Zedong came along.

China's weakness prompted two vassal states – Korea and Vietnam, which were largely contemptuous of China after it was weakened by foreign forces – to do away with Chinese

[1] John M Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

characters in their writing. While the Koreans had developed their unique form, Vietnam chose to romanise Chinese to suit their local *lingua franca*.

What can we conclude from the last two millennia of China's history? The answer cannot be more obvious – a people that has no territorial designs upon others, even though they have the ability and opportunity to do so.

Seriously, is China a threat to the West? It is, but only in a cultural dimension. It has demonstrated to the world a few things: (i) it is able to hold itself back when it is about to fall off a deep cliff; (ii) it is able to transform a nation of 1.4 billion people from a Third World country to the world's largest economy (in terms of PPP) within a generation; (iii) it has become scientifically and technologically on par with the hegemon of the world within a short timespan; (iv) its form of governance is not inferior to the model that is being preached by the West; (v) it treats the peoples of the world as equals; and (vi) everyone can mutually benefit and have a better tomorrow if they collaborate.

Yet, the US and its allies like Japan are hell-bent on making China their mortal enemy! So, is China a threat to the West? The answer is obvious to most thinking people. But let me spell it out nonetheless: it is the imaginary fear that a 'yellow race' will replace them as the undisputed lords of the world.

The US knows that there is no way they can win a war with China, not because it is militarily inferior, but because it will come up against a very determined people. The Ukraine conflict has strengthened the US' conviction that a proxy war is the best way to retard China, making Taiwan the perfect Ukraine.

Chapter 29

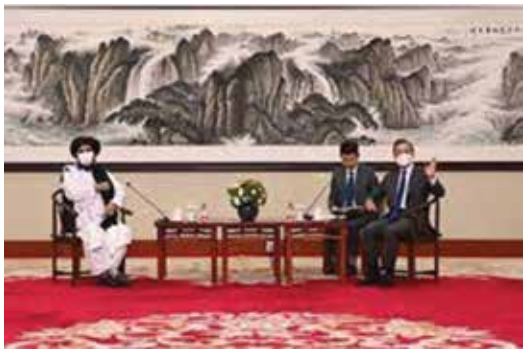
A Wounded Lion: Very Dangerous Indeed

The US is a country that is deeply divided – between Democrats and Republicans, between Whites and other races, and between extreme wealth and abject poverty. Its very foundation is indeed at risk of crumbling. Its cities and infrastructure are decaying. Its finances are in deep sinkholes. An important pillar of the economy, namely, Chinese talent, are having second thoughts about their future in America. A pandemic is still ravaging. Even a former president has been arraigned to face criminal charges Yet, it keeps looking back to whack China, just because it is pacing behind in the run.

Just another Black life!

The 'way-of-nature' forward

Look at the picture below. Maybe it can offer us some wisdom. Few had heard of the Taliban, despite the fact that not even the mighty Soviet Union could subdue them – until September 11, 2001. Afghanistan was blamed for the al-Qaeda terror. The country was duly invaded. At that time, the world was on America's side.



No tuxedo?

However, after spending a trillion US dollars and sacrificing some 2,500 American lives in Afghanistan, America is now calling it quits. The Taliban have always been thought of as a bunch of medieval Islamic fighters who are incapable of institutionalised governance. That may be so, but they are certainly not idiots. They must have thought very deeply about their future before they made this trip to China, a country that the West had already branded anti-Islam.

I wrote the following blog when I read that the US basketball team was defeated in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. It was their first loss since 2004. Of course, America did go on to collect the greatest number of medals. To me, it spoke volumes of the state of that country. The writing was on the wall.

What does Tokyo Olympics 2020 say about America?[1]

July 24, 2021 was the first day of Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Naturally, I was enthused over the roll-out of the events and anxiously kept tabs on the medal count for the day. At the end of the day, I noticed that the US had failed to win even a single medal. I didn't think much of it then, since it was the

[1] First published in my blog on July 26, 2021. https://yubooklim.blogspot.com/2021/07/what-does-tokyo-olympics-2020-say-about.html

first day, until I saw the following headline on *CNN*: 'US fails to win medal on first day of Summer Olympics for the first time in nearly 50 years.'

Then I woke up on the morning of July 26 to read 'USA Basketball defeated in first Olympic loss since 2004'.

Sure, the US will certainly emerge as the top dog in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. But these two pictures also speak volumes of the state of America today!

Donald Trump and Joe Biden can scream until their throats explode that America is number one, or is going to be back as number one, but I for one am totally convinced these are not coincidental incidents, but a precursor of what is already on the way – America's decline, albeit a long-drawn-out one.

My wife and I were fortunate enough to be able to tour the entire breadth of the United States just months before the outbreak of Covid-19. We used to like America. There was so much to learn from them. But the America we saw during our trip was no longer the America we thought we knew. Its country towns and national parks are still very breath-taking, but its cities are a far cry from what they used to be. Not only did we not seem to see the 'wow' factor in its people, but we were also totally saddened by the degree of homelessness we saw in downtown San Francisco.

Much of this downward trend is self-inflicted.

Sure, the world was shocked by the September 11 terror attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001. But the sympathy America received from the world soon faded. First you had the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, followed by interventions in Syria and Libya, then sabotage in Venezuela and what-have-you. America has been too consumed by its self-righteousness and the interests of its military-industrial complex. It has revived its 1960s ultra-anti-Communist doctrine, during which its CIA went round the world to topple governments (or as some call it, the 'Jakarta method').

But despite possessing formidable intellectuality at so many levels, the US hardly bothers to define and build its nationhood. It thinks its love and championing of 'freedom and democracy' alone can rule the world. A nation is defined by the cohesiveness of its people. The American society lacks homogeneity in terms of its racial make-up. It is a country with hundreds of different ethnicities. Whites are dominant, but Blacks are also numerically strong and, as all know, because of their history in the country, they will not hesitate to stage unrests each time they feel they are being bullied. Hispanics and Asians, though significant in number, are meeker, and the latter, especially, tend to suffer the brunt of the underclass anger felt by the Blacks.

Let's be realistic on this fact: all of us are racists; it is a question of degree. But we keep our prejudices to ourselves. Our prejudices are usually not anchored on assumptions that we are superior to another race, but rather, as a reaction to hard-to-believe or hard-to-accept behaviour exhibited by individuals or groups of another race. Many call it stereotyping.

But the racism as practised by Whites like Donald Trump is different. They think they are superior and are therefore entitled to be deferred to by lesser non-Whites. Of course, there are Whites who genuinely believe in racial equality but,

by and large, some superiority complex is always evident even amongst them.

There has been no serious attempt in the US to bridge this superiority-inferiority gap. Lip service is often offered, but this is quite hollow in nation-building. Only a culturally integrated approach based on shared beliefs or philosophy can make this work, which is not possible under the racial and religious mix of the American society today. The Blacks also do not have champions to rally their community to develop a culture that is worthy of sustainability and respect through education, behavioural change, etc. Hispanic politicians like Ted Cruz think they are as white as Whites.

Secondly, much of the American transformation in the past was driven by its open arms welcoming of talents from all over the world. The Whites dominated this phenomenon before the advent of ICT. However, things have changed a great deal since then. Much of Wall Street is still White or Jew, but the productive forces in ICT and the digital economy today are very Asian-driven – the Chinese from Greater China and Southeast Asia, the Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis from South Asia, as well as the Japanese and Koreans. The Chinese are particularly good in applications, which translate into markets and money for the ICT and digital economies, which help them to scale even higher planes in product research and innovation. Starting with Trump's anti-China-ism and Biden's continuation of playing to the home gallery, many Chinese who want to make the US their home are beginning to have second thoughts. Some exoduses will happen; this will certainly create an intellectual and entrepreneurial vacuum which will hard to fill for a long time.

I take pride in the fact that I read widely, not only from the mainstream media, but also from social media, academic journals, professional publications (and even writings from not

very credible organisations). But I hold dear to this belief: keep an open mind about what you read or see.

Many from the American and Western intelligential world are world-class in thought and concepts. They know exactly what is ailing America and often voice their concerns. However, politicians in America and their sycophants in Europe, the QUAD/Five Eyes fraternity and many Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan and even Singapore, choose to be blind and deaf to the realities, and continue to subscribe to the Cold War mentality that Trump and Biden are preaching. Many of these politicians and their sycophants were educated in the best universities, yet they continue to help Biden spew lies about China on issues like democracy in Hong Kong and genocides in Xinjiang. In this ICT age, nothing can be hidden. No one has come up with evidence, which is most fundamental in science, law and what-have-you.

Hong Kong was under British colonial governance for almost 100 years. Which governor gave Hong Kong the democracy that the West has been preaching? I was reading an article written by a Nepalese Gurkha some days ago. Did Britain help these Nepalese after they served their purpose? Hong Kong is just a convenient ground for the West to sabotage China; their concern has nothing to do with democracy. The unfortunate part is that the successive chief executives of the Hong Kong Administrative Region have failed to address two things – the need to re-educate youth that they are Chinese and not British, and the need to solve housing problems.

Next is the genocide and forced labour claims in Xinjiang. Can any one of us believe that America and the West care about the Muslims there? Come on…

In his life, Trump has never done an honourable piece of business. Do read his niece's book[2] to know who this man really is. Biden's record may be cleaner; but he has never played a role which he has to be held accountable for. You may not like Xi Jinping, but he certainly had to slog hard all his life – from administrating villages, to managing hundreds of millions at city and provincial levels, to becoming what he is today. And the people in the politburo are there not because they have great university degrees, or are scions of great fortunes, or because their fathers are so-and-so. In China they must work like crazy to earn their stripes.

In America, all you need is to be able to articulate or debate well; it doesn't matter whether you have substance or not. You have a blondie like Nancy Pelosi (she is not blonde, though) who speaks as if she has forgotten to bring her brain along, and people like Mike Pompeo, who has a Harvard MBA, but openly admits he can lie and lie. So, what, he says? Yet people like Jimmy Lai and Joshua Wong will travel all the way to worship them. And you have pseudo-scholars like Peter Navarro who can generate fictitious bibliographies. And I suppose there is no need for me to single out America's minions in Canada, Europe, Australia and many parts of Asia for this citation.

What is disturbing to ethnic Chinese like me is America's newfound paranoia against China and by extension Chinese. Nations are like participants in a perpetual marathon. Over a specific span of time, you will see a leader, followed by close pacers, the bulk of also-rans and, finally, a bunch of laggards. In the past, you had great civilisations in Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, India and China. Some have disappeared; others are just a pale shade of their former selves today.

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[2] Mary L Trump, *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

Then came the colonialists in the 1500s, and the British became the undisputed leader until the end of World War II. Now the US is leading the pack. But this spoilt brat has a problem. He thought no one could possibly or should overtake him. All of a sudden, he realises someone is pacing very closely behind him. That someone is the 'old hack' he used to take pity on. 'How dare he!' he roars. Instead of pulling himself together to keep ahead, this brat slows to pick stones to throw at the old man. He also rallies his goons to floor the old man. But this old man, having survived the last 5,000 years, is only interested to keep running!

I read questions and answers posted on Quora frequently. Much of the world is still suspicious about China and the Chinese. This is a failure on the part of China to tell its stories.

Readers may want to read a recent book written by Chris Kantha called *China, China, Chyyna!*[3] To many in the West, I am sure he will be regarded as a China apologist. But he really writes things that the West should know about China. He also highlights its failure in its inability to do a good international PR job. This deficiency has been highlighted by many, significantly by Singapore's Kishore Mahbubani, and even by yours truly in several of my earlier postings.

[3] Chris Kanthan, *China, China, Chyyna!: Greatest Disruption to American Century* (Chris Kanthan, 2021).

Chapter 30

The New *Xiong-Nus* and the New *Qin Huis*

The new *Xiong-Nus*

We all know the Western world, especially US politicians, are going all-out to retard China. They have come up with all sorts of hoodlum policies and practices to achieve their mission. They are able to count on their media to continuously sling mud at China. Some of it has stuck. Fortunately, thanks to the Internet, people are less vulnerable to swallowing misinformation and disinformation hook, line and sinker.

The Chip 4 Alliance

The US passed the CHIPS and Science Act in August 2022, and want its allies to side with it to strangulate China. Initially, Biden wanted to corner South Korea, Japan and Taiwan into becoming his blood brothers. But now he has also arm-twisted the Netherlands – whose ASML's EVU and EDV machines are totally indispensable in chip production – into the fold.

Will this alliance produce substantive changes in the semiconductor supply chain? In essence, the CHIPS Act:

- Bars "US persons," including US citizens and permanent residents, from supporting the "development or production" of advanced chips at Chinese factories without a license;
- Limits export of manufacturing equipment that can support production in the most advanced technology nodes; and

- Limits export of the most advanced logic chips, IP and EDA to China should these products or IP support semiconductor production in the most advanced technology nodes.

This is perhaps the first time that the US has implemented export controls against a foreign nation that has extended to individuals, and provision of services by individuals. TSMC has caved in and has started to build plants in the US.

China is indeed struggling. Imagine, the champion of free trade is now devising all sorts of tools to stop itself and starve other countries of free trade with China? But do not underestimate the Chinese!

Corrupt media and delusional leaders

Before China became the 'undisputed' threat of the US and its allies, the media had generally been quite sanguine when reporting on China and its developments. *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Fortune*, *The Times*, and several other news outlets were very well regarded. Their facts and figures were well researched, and leaders depended on the opinions of their editors and journalists for pointers.

They are no longer credible! They have adopted a new stance: Everything about China is or must be bad. Together with the *BBC*, *CNN*, *Fox News*, these dailies and journals are now falling head over heels to do their political masters' bidding. Let us not forget that the US is – through the CIA, the National Endowment for Democracy, FBI and other national security apparatuses – spending billions to do you-know-what on China. Who are the beneficiaries of Uncle Sam's generosity? No matter what China does or explains, the matter will always be distorted to plant doubt in readers' minds.

Some examples:

- On Covid-19 management:
  - When China locked down the country: *It is so inhumane!*
  - When it opened up: *1.5 million will die!*
  - Source of the virus: *China, China, China!*
- On the weather balloon incident:
  - *It was a spy balloon!*
- On Saudi-Iran reconciliation meeting in China:
  - *China's hidden agenda!*
- On Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet:
  - *Anti-democratic, genocide, forced labour and religious intolerance!*
- On Taiwan:
  - *China seeks to change the status quo!*
- On the South China Sea:
  - *China bullies its neighbours!*
- On the Belt and Road Initiative:
  - *Debt trap!*

The extent of Western media degeneration is unbelievable. Thanks to veteran journalist Seymour Hersh, everyone knows who was behind the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage. But have any of these papers or publications said anything, save to point fingers at Russia when the news first broke? Was it not obvious that the US was the principal culprit, especially when Biden had bragged about his intention months before? They should also do some soul-searching on the Ukraine crisis. How much disinformation have they helped to generate – on the background leading to the crisis, on the true character of the Ukrainian leaders, and on the truth on the battlefields? Someone once coined a term for them: *presstitues*. How appropriate!

Few American politicians are cause-driven. The Democrats and Republicans are at each other's throats. And the support for each is about 50-50. To differentiate, they need a bogeyman, and China fits the bill right now (some 85 percent of Americans have been conditioned

to think China is a big bad wolf.) If you are a candidate, to strike a marginal advantage over your opponent, you need to be seen to be harder on China.

Few American politicians have been to China. Their knowledge of the history of China is practically nil. Every image of theirs about China is refracted through their American-centric lenses. To many, Chinese are still a bunch of Maoists always looking for ideas to steal or things to copy. Europeans are generally much more aware of the civilisational strengths of Chinese; unfortunately, they have become vassals to US political dictates and are forced to subscribe to the Americans' brand of delusion.

Most unfortunate of all are the young Chinese journalists who are now working in pro-West publications and TV news channels. The overzealousness they display in trying to show that they are whiter than the Whites is in fact more shocking and disgraceful. They seem to be ashamed of the fact that they are ethnically Chinese.

Many older folks in Chinese communities all over the world still retain anti-mainland bias. The trauma of their families having to flee the mainland when the Communists took over in 1949 and when the country was subject to the Red Guards' madness still remains vivid to this day. The country remained pathetic for a couple of decades. Even after China had opened up, few would associate themselves with the type of 'Chineseness' they saw from mainland Chinese. Xi has brought China to a new plane. But this bias is still present. Maybe it is a form of dissociative or identity disorder that many are still unwilling to get rid of?

The new *Qin Huis*[1]

You can understand the West's design. However, there are so many willing *Qin Huis* amongst Chinese who are prepared to do their bidding. Very sad indeed!

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[1] 秦桧, the most infamous traitor in Chinese history.

The roots of *Tsai Ing-wen-osis*'[2] in Taiwan

The natives of Taiwan were left very much to their own devices until Zheng Cheng-Gong (鄭成功 or *Koxinga*), a driven defender of the Ming, established a base in Taiwan to fight the Qing. Many Min-Nan Fujianese and Hak-Kas in the province started to migrate to the island (explaining why most Taiwanese speak the Min-Nan dialect, and why there are many native Hak-Kas there; the latter had already formed a big *tu-lou* (土楼) community in Changzhou in Fujian then).

The First Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1894 following a dispute over the sovereignty of Korea. China was defeated and ceded the island of Taiwan and Penghu to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The Japanese colonial government gave inhabitants two years to choose whether to accept as Japanese subjects or leave Taiwan. Less than 10,000 out of a population of about 2.5 million left Taiwan.

There were some early resistance and insurgency, but beginning with the fourth governor-general, Viscount Kodama Gentaro, and several more enlightened successors, the Taiwanese generally succumbed to Japanese benevolence and accepted the rule of their colonial masters. Many, in fact, made great fortunes – like Tsai's forebears – during Japanese lordship over China, especially in the northeast, where Manchukuo was created. As a matter of fact, many of the Japanese soldiers that were rampaging Southeast Asia during World War II were Taiwanese.

Taiwan was returned to China after WWII. Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang fled to the island in the wake of Mao Zedong's onslaught in the mainland. Some one million mainlanders

[2] The author has taken the liberty to use the suffix '-osis' which he understands is used to describe neurological conditions, which seems to be appropriate here.

followed Chiang to Taiwan and settled mostly around the Taipei precincts.

Chiang Kai-shek and his son Ching-kuo unleased the White Terror against all perceived Communists and sympathisers soon after. The KMT had already killed some 18,000 Taiwanese civilians in response to an uprising known as the 228 Incident several years earlier. It is estimated that some 3,000 to 4,000 civilians were executed during the White Terror. The KMT government was also suspected of carrying out extrajudicial killings against exiles in other countries.

Many Taiwanese cannot forget these purges, hence the general hatred against mainlanders. Even though they practise much of Chinese folklore beliefs, few outside Taipei are particularly proud or knowledgeable of China's post-Qing history.

Chiang Ching-kuo groomed Lee Teng-hui as his successor, who had strong Japanese heritage and loyalty. Lee started the pro-independence move, albeit subtly at first. The Democratic Progressive Party, an essentially pro-independence party, began to gain popularity, and Chen Shiu-bin became its first president. Chen was a rascal. Taiwan reverted to KMT, and Ma Yin-jiu was elected president. Ma advocated good cross-strait relations, and the 1992 Consensus was born. As Taiwan became more and more prosperous, looking up to the US-for its brand of freedom and lifestyles-became fashionable. They voted in Tsai Ing-wen in 2016. Her performance was largely lacklustre, and she was about to lose its second term bid when protesters took to the streets in Hong Kong. She was re-elected.

She began a policy of antagonising China. The whole world knows that the US is now trying to retard China at all costs, yet she would go all out to court America, hence the present tense *cross-strait relationship* ('brother against brother' situation) and

the US' dubious stance to defend Taiwan at all costs. Chinese all over the world just cannot understand why she hates China so much.

But if one is to examine her character more closely, one would be able to understand her actions. She is a single woman, born into a wealthy family, but largely neglected for her lack of excellence when young. Lee Teng Hui cared for her and groomed her to high office. The authenticity of her PhD from the London School of Economics is suspect. She has been 'exposed', and her self-denial inclination cements her negativity towards people whom she believes are against her (I am playing psychologist here). She is likely to go down in Chinese history as the greatest traitor since Qing Hui.

A video has been going round to say that many of the leaders in Taiwan today, including Tsai Ing-wen, are in fact of Japanese descent. A more scholarly presentation, however, says this is not true.

***Fa-Lun Gong* (法輪功)**

In every city today, you will encounter followers of Fa-Lun-gong overzealously handing out brochures and fliers. They are all about the 'crimes' committed by the Communist Party of China – e.g., the CPC 'policy' of harvesting organs. Most Fa-Lun Gong members look innocent enough; its more prominent champions, in fact, come off as elitist. Fa-Lun Gong was founded by a certain Li Hong-Zhi (李洪志) in China in the early 1990s. It has its global headquarters in a 427-acre compound in Deerpark, New York, called the Dragon Springs Temple. They have a dance troupe called *Shen Yun*, which goes round the world to perform, and a newspaper called *The Epoch Times*.

The original intention of Fa-Lun Gong – the promotion of *qi-gong* and meditation and moral philosophy – was totally laudable. Practitioners believe that through a process of moral cultivation, one can achieve *dao* and obtain special powers and a level of divinity. But it soon turned political.

Li believes aliens walk the Earth, and that modern science and race-mixing are part of their ploy to overtake humanity. He has also reportedly said that he can walk through walls and make himself invisible. Li says that he is a being who has come to help humankind from the destruction it will face as the result of rampant evil. His spiritual authority within the practice is absolute, yet Fa-Lun Gong practitioners have little to no contact with him, except through the study of his teachings. Former Fa-Lun Gong practitioners say that life in Dragon Springs is tightly controlled by Li, that internet access is restricted, the use of medicines discouraged, and arranged relationships are the norm. Some also sign up in the hope that they could stay in the US for good.

It is not difficult to see who is financing the movement (and Li's royal lifestyle). With Chinese like Li around, China does not need enemies. So much for modern day messiahs and prophets.

VI

Proud to Be Chinese

Chapter 31

Some 'Inconvenient' Facts

A simple fact...

These are the World Health Organization (WHO) Covid-19 death statistics as of February 28, 2023:

	Population	Covid-19 deaths
China	1.4 billion	119,865
United States	332 million	1,109,145

This on its own should make any ethnic Chinese proud of what China has done for its people!

Homo Sapiens reaching China 100,000 years ago...

The following information was extracted from Silvana Condemi and François Savatier's *A Pocket History of Human Evolution*.[1] Contrary to earlier belief that *Homo sapiens* left Africa some 60,000 years ago, Condemi and Savatier argue that the latest research shows that the migration actually reached China more than 100,000 years ago.

We know the 'out of Africa' timeline has been revised many times. We have to leave it to the experts to sort the facts out. Given the capability of modern science, this should not be a tall order.

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[1] Silvana Condemi and François Savatier, *A Pocket History of Human Evolution: How We Became Sapiens* (New York: The Experiment, 2019).

Figure 13

Sapiens's migration out of Africa

The scientific consensus is that *Homo sapiens* left Africa about 60,000 years ago. However, the latest research shows that earlier migrations took place, one reaching China more than 100,000 years ago and another reaching Australia more than 65,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens* entered preglacial Europe, Siberia, and northeastern Asia around 45,000 years ago, which shows that they needed time to grow accustomed to the cold.

In sport, it is not only in the Olympics that China excels. There are many world class sportsmen and sportswomen, like Yao Ming (basketball), Lin Dan (badminton), Li Na (tennis), Sun Yang (swimming), Deng Ya-Ping (table tennis), Lang Ping (volleyball), Fu Ming-Xia (diving), just to name a few.

Even in the Mathematics and Science Olympiads, the winning teams could be American or Canadian or from other Western countries, but look carefully and you will see many of the members are boys and girls of Chinese descent (even wonder why Chinese boys and girls are so good in mathematics? Is it because of their IQs? Or the Chinese language?).[2]

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[2] The author believes both are contributing factors. Chinese are very adept at Science and Mathematics. As a language, Chinese is most facilitating in counting. (Try 9x3=27 in Chinese (*jiu san er shi qi*) and compare it with other languages.) As for the high IQ (Intelligence Quotient) angle, much of it is genetic and some, environmental. We generally use IQ to measure braininess. World Population Review tabulates average IQ by countries. Japan and Taiwan are neck-to-neck at 106.5, followed by Singapore at 105.9. Hong Kong stands at 105.4 and China, 104.1. The cold truth is that each race has its own genetic constitution, and homogeneity varies. The Caucasian countries average around 100.

Winners of the 60th International Mathematical Olympiad, 2019

In music, there are simply too many to cite. But Lang Lang's piano recitals will make every White think he is one of their own!

We know that environmental factors like geography, climate, food, and other resource realities play a part in IQ formation, and while there is little one can do on the genetic aspects, since change through Darwinian evolution takes generations to emerge, none is more important than the will to excel. Cultural and religious practices and prejudices often rein back a race or a society's rightful potential, and few leaders are visionary enough to overcome them. Singapore is one of the great exceptions. It is a very cosmopolitan society. If it did not have leaders to steer it to outperform socio-economically, its average IQ today will probably be in the region of 90. But it is 106 today! On the other hand, America (now 97) and many countries in Europe are likely to see their average IQ regressing in the coming years, since there is so much immigration from regions where average IQs are pretty low. (The UK's figure has already dipped below 100.) Average IQs amongst East Asians are likely to plateau around the 105 level for many years to come; however, the figures for the South and West Asian countries, particularly India (now 76), are likely to climb further north in due course. (The average IQ for Israeli is surprisingly low (92). I thought it should read 120! (LOL!))

Condemi's new Out-of-Africa timeline may explain the high average IQ scored by East Asians!

Lang Lang

But this begs the question: why there are so few Chinese CEOs in Fortune 500 Companies, save for those which are Chinese? I am happy to offer a couple of explanations (or excuses):

- Our mother tongue is made up of individual words, each to be pronounced clearly and separately. English, which the world now considers the international *lingua franca*, is spoken or read non-singularly, even if there is more than one syllable in a word. Chinese who pick up English later in their formal education or career tend to read English sentences the way they read Chinese, hence the disconnect and rigidity. They also tend to rhyme like the way they read Chinese poetries or essays, hence the 'infantilised' tone.
- Chinese are by culture self-effacing (Confucianism!). When you hear Chinese experts talk on CGTN fora, you feel like giving up on them. They tend to labour sentences with irrelevant phrases like "You know…" or "You understand…" or "How should I say…" etc. Very irritating indeed! (Look at how Indian intellectuals speak. How eloquent and at ease they can be!) Chinese children who are brought up in Western environments are generally spared of that shackle, but many in our part of the world are still handicapped by this cultural neglect, especially during their formative years. Parents, please take note!
- The innate sense of wanting to break out on their own is very strong with Chinese. In other words, many are born

entrepreneurs. They would start their own enterprise when an opportunity beckons.

Without Chinese scientists and developers, many of the Western ICT giants will cry!

Qian Xue-Sen (钱学森): The father of China's nuclear and space technology

Qian Xue-Sen (1911-2009) is perhaps the greatest scientist China produced in the last century. During the Red Scare in the 1950s, the US government accused him of Communist sympathies, and despite protests by his colleagues in Caltech, he was stripped of his security clearance. He wanted to return to China, but he was made to spend five years under house arrest instead. He was released in 1955 in exchange for American pilots captured during the Korean War. He left the United States in September 1955.

Upon his return, he helped lead the development of China's ballistic missile and space programmes. He is recognised as one of the founding fathers of the Two Bombs, One Satellite miracle.

Qian was born in Shanghai but with ancestral roots in Hangzhou. He received a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the National Chiao Tung University (now

Shanghai Jiaotong University) in 1934. He was later admitted to Tsinghua University and earned a Boxer Indemnity scholarship to study in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for a Master's programme in mechanical engineering. He went on to California Institute of Technology to do his doctorate. He became fascinated with rocketry in Caltech.

During World War II, Qian worked on the Manhattan Project, which led to America successfully developing the first atomic bomb. In 1943, Qian and two other members of their rocketry group drafted the first document to use the name Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), originally a proposal to the US Army for developing missiles in response to Germany's V2 rockets.

In 1945, as an army colonel with a security clearance, Qian was sent to Germany to investigate laboratories and recruit German scientists to join the American missile programme.

Qian is generally regarded as an undisputed genius whose work provided an enormous impetus to advances in high-speed aerodynamics and jet propulsion. During this time, he worked on designing an intercontinental space plane, which was the precursor to America's Space Shuttle.

By the early 1940s, US Army Intelligence already suspected that Qian was a communist, but his security clearance was not suspended until prior to the Korean War.

Qian became the subject of five years of secret diplomacy and negotiation between the US and China. During this time, he lived under constant surveillance, with the permission to teach without any classified research duties. Qian left for China in September 1955.

Secretary of the Navy Dan A Kimball, who had tried for several years to keep Qian in the US, once said: "It was the stupidest thing this country ever did. He was no more a communist than I was, and we forced him to go."

Upon his return, Qian began a remarkably successful career in rocket science, boosted by the reputation he garnered for his past achievements as well as Chinese state support for his nuclear research.

China's poverty alleviation efforts[3]

'Life is much better than before'

More than 800 impoverished counties and close to 100 million poor rural residents have been lifted out of poverty, and, among them, some 10 million poverty-stricken people have been relocated from inhospitable areas.

Development can only be achieved when external and internal forces are combined. China did just that. Efforts are made to ensure that relocated residents can settle down, find jobs, earn money and lead better lives. These villages now enjoy improved ecology, renovated homes, better transport infrastructure, and thriving industries.

Industry is of fundamental importance to increasing people's incomes and China's rural vitalisation. Villages established collectively owned rural culture and tourism 'agritainment' companies to earn incomes.

By leveraging villages' unique natural conditions for certain produces, villagers develop planting industries and promote good management practices to bring higher quality developments.

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[3] Excerpts taken from Liu Ning, Liu Jieyan, Ebulayi, Zhong Wenxing and Liu Dong, 'China Makes Notable Achievements in Poverty Alleviation, Brings Better Lives to Its People', *People's Daily Online*, November 11, 2022. http://en.people.cn/n3/2022/1111/c90000-10170214.html

"I never expected that a rural woman like me could become a workshop director at a winery," said one in a relocated village in Ningxia, where grapes are now being planted. She used to live in an extremely impoverished mountainous area in Ningxia. Back then, she and her husband often had to carry water buckets through the night along rocky, winding trails in the mountains and had to wait for half an hour to load a bucket of water.

'The children will have a better tomorrow'

A children's choir called Ma Lan Hua from mountainous areas in north China's Hebei Province sang the Olympic Anthem in Greek at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games in February 2022, showcasing the amazing confidence and happiness of Chinese children in the new era.

All the 44 children in the choir are from rural families in Fuping county, Baoding city of Hebei, 14 of whom are from registered poor households. For most of them, it was the first time they had left their hometown to see the outside world.

“The ‘Bird’s Nest’ is so huge and spectacular! I told myself to sing the song well to the whole world,” said Xi Qing-Ru, an 11-year-old member of the choir.

Deep in Fuping’s Tai-Hang Mountains, which has little arable land, was once a severely impoverished county. Nearly half of its population was plagued by poverty in 2012.

Since then, the county developed six major industries such as edible mushrooms, fruits and traditional Chinese medicine ingredients. They have increased the incomes of local residents. The edible mushroom industry, for example, started from scratch and thrived in just six years. The county has built 102 mushroom industrial parks, covering a total area of 21,000 mu of land and 140 administrative villages. Over 15,000 households are engaged in the industry, giving poverty-stricken households an extra income of over 20,000 yuan annually on average.

Fuping built 39 relocation sites accommodating over 30,000 registered poor people. 207 industrial parks were built, bringing job opportunities for many of the relocated residents.

The county also built 13 boarding schools in rural areas and upgraded 93 schools that were in poor condition, ensuring that children received an education.

In February 2020, the county was lifted out of poverty. The per capita disposable income of rural residents in the country went up to 12,342 yuan in 2021, 3.7 times that in 2012.

The key to a country's governance is improving its people's lives. The common prosperity China is working to achieve is for everyone, and it is also about the enrichment of people's lives in both the material and non-material sense.

Three years ago, Xi Qing-Ru and her family bid farewell to their old, dilapidated dwelling and moved to a spacious new home. "The old home was more than 10 km away from school, whereas the new one is within spitting distance of our new home now. Besides, there is also the favourable policy of 'two exemptions and one subsidy'. This refers to exemption from miscellaneous fees and textbook fees, and subsidised living expenses for resident students, which ensures that children can get compulsory education," explained Xi Jin-Hai, Xi Qing-Ru's father.

"I want to be a music teacher in the future to teach more children in mountainous areas to sing and let them feel the happiness that music brings, like I do," said Xi Qing-Ru, who has made up her mind to embark on a musical path after returning home from Beijing.

Xi Qing-Ru plays the violin

The world outside was once too distant for the villagers in mountainous areas, but today, Xi Qing-Ru and her fellow villagers have reached out to the outside world with the help of music.

VII

Migration, Settlement and Assimilation

Chapter 32

Chinese All Over the World

There are over 50 million people who are ethnically Chinese all over the world. Below is a table of countries whose Chinese population exceeds one million. Chinese account for 75 percent of Singapore's population. Malaysia has about 7.8 million Chinese, representing more than a fifth of its population. Thailand's figure is about 10 million, or about 14 percent of its population. The true figures could be more, for many Chinese have nativised themselves. There are more than five million Chinese in the United States.

Regions with significant populations	
Thailand	9,392,792 (2012)
Malaysia	6,712,200 (2021)
United States	5,400,000 (2019)
Indonesia	2,832,510 (2010)
Singapore	2,675,521 (2020)
Myanmar	1,725,794 (2011)
Canada	1,715,770 (2021)
Australia	1,390,639 (2021)
Philippines	1,350,000 (2013)
South Korea	1,070,566 (2018)

The Chinese people have a long history of migrating overseas, as far back as the 10th century (beginning of the Song Dynasty). During the Ming dynasty, Zheng He brought many to the 'South Seas'.

In the 19th century, when colonialism was at its height and China was pathetic, the great Chinese diaspora began. Many colonies lacked a large pool of labourers. Many Hok-Kien chose to work in Southeast Asia (where they had earlier links starting from the Imperial Chinese era), as did the Cantonese. Guangdong was another source for many of the economic migrants.

The 1840s saw thousands braving the journey to the gold mountains in America, Australia and even New Zealand in search of gold, despite the known dangers and hardship. From 1863 to 1869, roughly 15,000 workers went to the US to help build the transcontinental railroad there.

Unfortunately, their efforts were hardly recognised or appreciated. In the Truman years, the Chinese had often been depicted as Fu Manchu types or sub-humans to be bullied or kicked around.

Left: Christopher Lee as the sinister Dr Fu Manchu. *Right*: Chinese as sub-humans

Chinese patriotism outside China

When China was invaded by Japan, overseas Chinese like Tan Kah-Kee (Ch'en Chia-Keng) helped to raise millions for the war cause. Many also volunteered to fight or work as military support personnel in China. Many lost their live for the motherland (祖國, *zǔ guó*).

There are Chinese schools all over the world, most of them funded by the local Chinese community. Also, bereavement services are still being offered by local clans and associations, some of which are still being organised along the dialect group line.

Chinese patriotism will always sprout out when China comes under attack. Most Chinese outside China are proud of their heritage, and many like me, are also proud of China's re-emergence. We are citizens of our adopted country, and we know our loyalty must lie there. However, if a benevolent China comes under the West's attack, we will certainly want to do our part to help the motherland.

Chinese diasporas in the wake of China's Rise[1]

Earlier waves

The mighty Ming armada

The Chinese began to settle down in Southeast Asia as early as the 1400s, when the Muslim Admiral Zheng He of the Ming court made epic voyages down south. Several in his entourages remained behind to transform the political landscapes in the Malay Archipelago. Lynn Pan has chronicled this very extensively; however, Arab records say that the Chinese were already migrating and settling down in faraway lands in the 7th, 8th and 10th centuries. Wang Gungwu, the doyen of academic authorities on China history and culture, says Chinese have lived in the Indonesian Archipelago since at least the 13th century.[2]

One historical fact that many Indonesians today are not aware of is the ethnic origin of their national hero, Trenggana. He was the son of the founder of the Demak Dynasty in East Java, a Chinese Muslim named Cek Kok Po who adopted the name Raden Patah. It was Trenggana who in 1521 started to expand

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1 First published in my blog on August 19, 2021. https://yubooklim.blogspot.com/2021/08/chinese-diasporas-in-wake-of-dragons.html

2 Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (New York: Kodansha, 1990); Wang Gungwu, *A Short History of the Nanyang Chinese* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1959).

his reign westwards. Java turned green after that.[3] Former President Abdurrahman Wahid, popularly known as Gus Dur (1940-2009), could also trace his lineage to a Chinese Muslim missionary in Fujian. There are also claims that the Malacca sultanate's *Hang Tuah* and *Hang Jebat*[4] were also Chinese; however, I am in no position to verify.

The Demak expansion, thanks to Admiral Zheng He

Borobudur, a 7th-century Mahayana Buddhist temple in Central Java

I dare argue that it was Admiral Zheng He who helped Islamise the whole Malay Archipelago, which together with the great Khmer Empire (9th-15th century) was hitherto Hindu-Buddhist.

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3 See Paul Michel Munoz, *Early Kingdoms of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula* (Singapore: Didier Millet, 2006).

4 Hang should be pronounced as English 'hung'.

Abject poverty: The driving force

But the big wave came only when abject poverty began to overwhelm China in the dying days of the Qing dynasty, especially in the southern provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi and the island of Hainan. Hunger forced them to seek new lives in the South Sea (南洋 *Nan-yang*), which was not too far down the coast. The more adventurous ones braved the oceans and sailed further.

The 1840s saw thousands brave the journey to America, Australia and even New Zealand in search of gold, despite the treacherous waters. Apparently, in 1861, almost 40,000 or 3.3 percent of the Australian population had been born in China! From 1863 to 1869, roughly 15,000 workers went to America to help build the transcontinental railroad there. And in World War I, some 14,000 labourers signed up to serve the British and French forces.

Left: Chinese gold diggers in California. *Right*: Building the cross-continental railroad in the US

Left: Modern day gold panners (the author's grandchildren!) in Ballarat, Australia. *Right*: A largely forgotten Chinese temple north of Queensland. Apparently Chinese introduced groundnuts to the region

Author in Arrow Town, one of the first Chinese settlements in New Zealand

Many made good, especially in the South Sea – Malaya, sub-continental Southeast Asia, Dutch Indonesia, even Portuguese East Timur. And they continued to look to the Qing court for recognition. They remained 'Chinese' in every aspect of their social life.

Adaptation to local realities

After a generation or two, some became totally assimilated to their adopted land, especially those who settled down in the Philippines and Siam. Filipino national hero José Rizal's (1861-1896) ancestry could be traced to Fujian. King Rama I (1737-1809) was partly Chinese, as was his predecessor, King Taksin

(1734-1782), whose Chinese father hailed from Chaozhou.

The Indonesian Chinese went through a more tumultuous time, often at the mercy of the Dutch colonial government. Chinese in the then-Malaya (which included Singapore) felt more welcome, albeit in the midst of the simmering discontent about their hold of the economy. Singapore has become a country that is predominantly Chinese, but thick with Western observances.

In the South Sea, Chineseness stays strong…

However, after the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in China, many threw away their lot for Sun Yat-Sen (孫逸仙/孫中山/孫文). When Malaya was invaded by Japan, many local Chinese, after seeing the ineptitude of the Chiang Kai-shek regime in China, became resistance fighters and converted to Communist causes. When the British returned, they tried unsuccessfully to bring them into the fold, and this resulted in the declaration of the Emergency (1948-1960) which forced them to go underground. Many young men and women packed up to return to China. However, the bulk remained, since China was no longer a motherland.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, this phenomenon was only visible in Indonesia when many chose to return in the wake of Suharto's purge. But today, save for some pockets where there are still underlying lurking hostilities towards ethnic Chinese, Indonesian Chinese are generally happy where they are. They are proud to be Indonesian and in their Independence Day celebrations, even those who have since migrated to Australia and elsewhere would make it a point to gather at their respective embassies or consulates to pledge loyalty to the nation.

The inevitability of Anglicisation

This was not the case in the US, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe. Early Chinese settlers were largely marginalised

or suppressed by the Whites, not only socially but in an institutionalised manner. In the US, there was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882; in Canada, the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923; in Australia, the Immigration Restriction Act of 1902 (more commonly known as the White Australia Policy); and in New Zealand, the Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881.

Few could grow roots under these institutionalised situations, many therefore packed their bags and returned to China. Those who remained slowly became anglicised. In Australia, I often ran into people with Chinese surnames and upon inquiry they confirmed their great- or great-great-grandfathers were Chinese. But few had anything more to offer other than this fact.

No new waves, but dribs and drabs to the West

Taiwan from the 1960s

After China came under Communist rule, Taiwan actually became a favourite choice for Chinese-educated Southeast Asian Chinese who wanted to further their studies. Going to China was not an option; few Chinese dared to openly associate themselves with the 'motherland' in the wake of anti-Communist stances taken by countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. However, many Taiwanese themselves were also looking to migrate to America, especially those who had followed Chiang Kai-Shek to the island, and those who wanted to do postgraduate degrees.

From Southeast Asia after the 1960s

Suharto's New Order after he came to power in Indonesia in 1966 did prompt some ethnic Chinese there to return to China. However, most remained and became assimilated. However, they did retain their culture albeit on a low-key basis, until Gus Dur became the president, when he was happy for Chinese to practise their traditions.

Malaysia's ethnic Chinese population could roughly be divided into the English-educated and the Chinese-educated. Siblings in the same family would end up in different medium schools. Some, like this author, had the benefit of both – primary education in Chinese and secondary and beyond, English.

From young, we already understood the need to live harmoniously with our schoolmates. Then came the racial riot in May 1969. We became acutely conscious of our racial origin. The affirmative policy that followed was hurting. We realised we were about to become second-class citizens.

We lay low and kept to our books. Fortunately, the economy picked up, thanks to Japan's industrialisation. American and European money was also pouring in. Nonetheless, many had already begun to contemplate migration, the favourite destinations being Australia and New Zealand. Others just drove across the Causeway. Jobs were plentiful in Singapore and Malaysians were very welcomed. But going to destinations like Australia was not a piece of cake. A coffin-maker, or a nurse, or a hairdresser stood a better chance of getting admitted than a trained engineer!

A story about a friend…

In 1974, I had a colleague who was hell-bent on migrating to Australia. He had a first-class honours degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of New South Wales. Even though he had been officially offered a place to do his postgraduate studies in his alma mater, the High Commission in Kuala Lumpur would not issue him a visa. Out of desperation, he camped out at the High Commissioner's official residence. At the first instance when he saw the High Commissioner's wife emerging, he rushed to approach her. He was literally on his knees. He finally got his visa!

Moving forward, this friend of mine, who has long settled down in Sydney, did not live up to his dreams. Much of his life was spent as a junior engineer in one of the state's utility authorities. He has since retired and has to count on pension to sustain his very modest lifestyle. He has two children, both of whom are totally ignorant of things Chinese. I do not believe he is happy with his circumstances.

Elsewhere…

In Melbourne I often met Malaysian Chinese who had *'jumped ship*' and stayed illegally to earn a living. They knew the score. Upon their exit, their passports would be stamped 'No entry allowed for *x* years.' The unlucky ones who got caught faced swift deportation.

Ditto many who went to the US, Canada, and Europe – especially the UK – under similar circumstances. They are living under the radar, but what if McCarthyism 2.0 intensifies? A distant relative and his wife jumped ship more than 40 years ago. They are now living in a predominantly Chinese quarter of San Francisco. They possess no green card, but strangely, their children were able to attend Yale. Another friend disappeared suddenly but wrote to me months later to say that he had landed himself a job in London's Chinatown. I am sure many readers do have comparable stories to share.

The bulk of immigrants are of course legal. They did their tertiary education in these countries and were happy to return to settle there. There is also a group who were disillusioned with their existing environments and were looking for greener pastures.

This propensity to take chances to change the status quo leads to something I have always wanted to say about us Chinese in general. In most societies, people who are plagued by poverty or calamities would usually be resigned to their fate

and continue to stay put. Not Chinese. They would uproot and move on.

I was intrigued by what Silvana Condemi and François Savatier wrote in *A Pocket History of Human Evolution*.[5] They say that scientific consensus is that *Homo sapiens* left Africa about 60,000 years ago. However, the latest research shows that earlier migrations took place, one reaching China more than 100,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens* only entered preglacial Europe, Siberia and northeastern Asia around 45,000 years ago.

People moved to look for food in those days. Were these 100,000-year-old *Homo sapiens* the forebears of Chinese today? If so, does it say something about our DNA? The branch that was heading to China obviously did not wait to be 'pitied' or 'saved' or for food to run out.

***Hua-Jiao* (华侨) and *Hua-Ee* (华裔): Splitting hairs?**

Wang Gungwu makes it a point to distinguish between *Hua-jiao* and *Hua-ee*. I began to appreciate his philosophy in making this distinction. I should not call myself a *Hua-jiao* anymore, since the term would imply that my motherland was still China. Being a Malaysian, my future was with this country. I should instead call myself a *Hua-ee* – someone whose heritage is Chinese but living in an adopted country.

Except for the diehards, most *Hua-ee* did not hold any great affinity for the China then. The China of the 1960s was turned upside down by the Cultural Revolution. News flowing back from relatives in China gave a very pathetic account of lives there.

Achievements by its ping-pong team, however, remained a

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[5] Silvana Condemi and François Savatier, *A Pocket History of Human Evolution: How We Became Sapiens* (New York: The Experiment, 2019).

source of immense pride to us. The 'ping-pong diplomacy' was played out, which paved the way for Richard Nixon to visit China in 1972. Even then, everything about China was largely doctrinaire and Maoist. There was not much to be proud of really, until Deng Xiaoping got rehabilitated. The rest is history.

It was not until the late 2010s that I began to realise the China I used to frown upon had changed. It had become a nation that the world would henceforth hold in awe. Then I began to turn to the writings of Wang Gungwu to understand the background leading to the re-emergence of China.

The West's demonisation of China: A new awakening

Millions of Hong Kongers are said to qualify for a British National (Overseas) or BN(O) visa, and there is also Biden's offer of a "safe haven" to Hong Kong residents in the US. These were dished out by the UK and the US for only one purpose: to spite China. It has nothing to do with their 'care', 'love' or 'concern' for Hong Kongers. These were political decisions of Boris Johnson and Joe Biden, not something that is popularly supported because there was a real calamity coming out of that island. Simply put, this is lip service, devoid of any heartfelt touch.

How many Hong Kongers will take up these offers? My guess is that only the hardcore 'yellow bananas' will. Once the fundamental issues of Hong Kongers' unhappiness are addressed, namely, poor housing availability and affordability for wage earners, as well as the lack of pride in Chineseness amongst the young (because of years of indoctrination in the education system), Hong Kongers will surely come around to accept that they are in fact Chinese.

With the type of Sinophobia that is playing out in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia, which were the traditional destinations for those who want to seek a new life, migration has now come to a crawl.

Putting up a brave front out of the status quo

To the author, the waves of Chinese immigration over the last 200 years are an aberration in Chinese anthropology. Be that as it may, there are already at least 50 million ethnic Chinese outside China.

The Chinese in Southeast Asia are already in their third, fourth or even fifth generations. They are generally loyal to their country but are proud of their Chinese roots. Perhaps 70 percent of the top 20 richest men in Malaysia and Singapore are Chinese, so are many tycoons in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. And many are extremely philanthropic – greats like Malaysia's Robert Kuok and Jeffrey Cheah, Thailand's Dhanin Chearavanont (Chia Kok-Min), Tahir (Ang Tjoen-Ming), the Philippines' Henry Sy Sr, and Singapore's Laurence Lien and Lee Seng-Tee, and many others. The professional classes of these societies are thick with Chinese doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, IT experts, etc. Many of them are world-class. Most of the successful small and medium enterprises are owned by them too.

With the re-emergence of China, these diasporas have generally adopted a new worldview about China. They can be more openly proud of China, even though they may not be entirely comfortable with the political system there. They no longer have to worry about natives' perceptions of the Chinese, from being spat-upon coolies on one extreme to exploiters of their land on the other.

I cannot say this for the first-generation immigrants in the Western world, however.

The new Chinese Sin-Keh[6] in the West

They had crossed the Rubicon and there was no way they could turn history back. Many have become reasonably comfortable in their adopted country – decent job, decent house, decent car, and decent what-have-you. Some have made great fortunes, like David Teoh and wife of TPG Telecom fame in Australia. Many have achieved national or international recognition professionally. But their numbers are few and far between. By and large, there is always a glass ceiling, in politics and in corporate offices.

With the way the Western politicians are demonising China now, impact on local Chinese is definitely going to be profound, even though these politicians insist they are not targeting China or the Chinese. They are just being hypocritical in declaring this. This is likely going to create a sense of identity loss and even inferiority complex amongst the next gens.

And this worries me. Most of them were born or brought up young in their parents' newly adopted country. Few got to know much about China or the Chinese during their formative years. Learning Chinese in a foreign land where few speak the language is a dreadful effort to many. Many parents are therefore content to leave them to their own circle of friends or devices. And some grow up to become quite ashamed of their heritage in the process.

Besides these next gens, there is also another ashamed-to-be-Chinese source. These are mainly young students heading to the US to do their advanced degrees. They are usually state-sponsored scholars and have come from very humble backgrounds. This would be their first time out to a great new world. They are like Grandma Liu (刘老老) visiting the grand mansion (大观园) in the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红

6 New arrivals.

楼梦), or convent girls going to Hollywood, or Alice getting lost in Wonderland, or Cinderella meeting a prince.

Thus, many would succumb to the so-called Patricia Hearst[7] syndrome. Generally, they have no compunction in buying into views which are anti-Mainland China and against their very own heritage. They write venomously about China for the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, they supply fake research reports to Western think-tanks, or be anchors for Al Jazeera. So on and so forth.

A New Trend in the Making?

Chinese in the Western world, even if there is no anti-Asian racism, will slowly melt in the big multicultural pot. They may marry an Asian, but who knows-when it comes to the next generation, and the following?

Even in majority-Chinese Singapore, HSBC Bank is now running an advertisement featuring a Chinese woman getting married to a South Asian and the news was well received by her parents in China. They represent the sophisticated elites of the two societies.

The HSBCE way: Born in China and India, married in London, settling down in Singapore? And producing Olympiad champions in mathematics and other sciences?

[7] The granddaughter of tycoon William Randolph Hearst, who was kidnapped by, then joined the Symbionese Liberation Army.

To me, this is perfectly fine. As long as there is no racism. Genetic strengthening through DNA exchanges is always good for the future of humanity, isn't it?

Chinese vs Chinese: Christianity the seed of it?

Let us reflect a little. It is a fact that many of our next gens are quite intolerant of Chinese cultural practices and traditions. Not only do they appear archaic, but they also contradict what monotheisms preach. I would like to put forward a thesis that many may find uncomfortable.

Old China had traditionally been a Daoist society. On philosophy and wisdom, they could count on sages like Kung-Tze (孔子), Meng-Tze (孟子), Lao-Tze (老子), Sun-Tze (孙子) and many others. Buddhism got a big boost under the Tang (唐) emperors and became the state religion after that. Despite this, Islam and even Judaism were tolerated.

However, Christianity was made illegal during the Ming (明) dynasty. The religion was thought utterly strange and incomprehensible to the Chinese. During the dying days of the Qing dynasty, the Jesuits were able to establish an enclave in Macau. They introduced Western science, astronomy and cartography, but as we all know, their primary mission was to bring Catholicism to China. They were able to convert several who were close to the imperial court. Soon the Protestants followed. By the 1840s, China had become their primary destination. They set up schools and hospitals but achieved few mass conversions. It was not until the Taiping Rebellion (太平之亂, 1850-1864), when Hong Xiu-Quan (洪秀全), who called himself the younger brother of Jesus Christ, established the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (太平天国) in Nanjing that Christianity became widely followed. At its height, it ruled over about 30 million people. It was eventually put down by the Qing army with a death toll of between 20 and 30 million countrywide.

It is said that Yung Wing (容闳 *Róng Hóng*, 1828-1912) was the first Chinese student to graduate from an American university, Yale College. After finishing his studies, Yung returned to China and worked with Western missionaries as an interpreter. He first gravitated to the Taiping rebels, but in 1863 turned around and was dispatched by the all-powerful Zeng Guo-Fan (曾国藩) to the United States to buy machinery necessary for opening an arsenal in China. He persuaded the Qing court to send young Chinese to America to study Western science and engineering. With the government's eventual approval, he organised what came to be known as the Chinese Educational Mission, which saw 120 young Chinese students sent to study in the US beginning in 1872. The Educational Mission was disbanded in 1881, but many of the students later returned to China and made significant contributions to China's civil services, engineering and the sciences. Yung and most of these students were amongst the first to become intellectual Christians, which is just natural, given the decadence and the feudalism they personally had to endure at that time.

But soon foreign missionaries became a prime target of attack and murder by Boxers in 1900. The fortune of Christianity in China took a great turn when many early leaders of the Chinese Republic converted, the most prominent of whom was none other than Sun Yat-sen. In 1915 Sun married Soong Ching-ling (宋庆龄), whose father was the American-educated Methodist minister Charlie Soong (宋嘉澍), who had made a fortune in banking and in printing Bibles. He was followed by Chiang Kai-shek, who took the hand of a younger Soong sister. Christianity in China has never looked back since then.

The earlier Chinese hostility to the missionaries was based on the fact that Western Christianity was utterly strange and incomprehensible to the Chinese. The Boxer Uprising was in large part a reaction against the spread of the religion in China.

Why have I deviated to talk about Christianity?

Following the decline of China, the elites in China began to consider the Confucian or Rú (儒) school of thoughts as archaic. Practices in Daoism (道教) and Buddhism (佛教) were deemed superstitious. Only Christianity could save China.

Today, maybe as many as 20 percent of the Chinese diaspora is Christian, the rest practise a blend of Daoism and Buddhism and the Confucian or Rú traditions as their guiding faith. But maybe 70 percent or more of the next gens in the West, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, are Christian or pro-Christian.

While many amongst Chinese Christians understand the distinction between religion and culture, some literally treat them as inseparable. To be a Christian, you have to cleanse yourself of anything deemed 'traditional Chineseness', aka superstitions, in the conduct of your life. And anything about Mainland China is no-no Communism. This mindset is now deeply etched, particularly the younger ones, in the West, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Have we wondered why overseas Japanese are so proud of their heritage? Some may be Christians, but they still pay respects to their Zen temples. And how many Chinese Christians will pick up joss sticks to honour their departed loves ones?

To rebuild the civilisational pride in them is a tall order, but without it, China will always face 'subtle sabotage' from their own kind in the Western world, or in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. They are convinced of the evil of China and are more than happy to help destroy 'Communist' China.

Need for realignment and how can China help?

With the national security law (Law on Safeguarding National Security) in place, Hong Kong has finally nipped the 'not proud

to be Chinese' cancer (of its detractors and saboteurs) in the bud. With the right leadership, a new sense of belonging will surely grow. The pro-West organisations are quick to realise their folly and have started to disband.

However, the pro-Independence leaders in Taiwan are still blind to the inevitability of history. As long as they are in power, they remain the cancer in the Chinese souls. With the ignominious exit of the US forces in Afghanistan, let us hope a lesson can be learned by these leaders in Taiwan.

China can serve its *Hua-ee* by projecting a strong but gentle image. I am extremely impressed with its performance in the Tokyo Olympics 2020. Besides the medals its athletics won in their traditional turfs of table tennis, badminton, gymnastics, and diving, they have made headway into fencing (Sun Yi-Wen) and track and field (Su Bing-Tian). Such feats exude a great deal of freshness in the minds of the *Hua-ee* young.

Sun Yi-Wen

The need for deep reflection

I call on all Chinese to make an effort to understand their roots. I am not asking them to be disloyal to the country of their adoption. I just want to say that spirituality is not incompatible with our culture. The fact that China can remain distinctively Chinese is because of the sustenance of its 3,000 years (or more) of cultural practices. No other civilisation has come close

to this. Be proud even if you cannot help to sustain it, but do not sabotage it, consciously or unconsciously.

Parents amongst diasporas have had a key role to play in this. Do not just leave the things to the devices of your children.

Communication is challenging when most of Chinese diasporas in the Western world have already lost proficiency of the Chinese language. China, please take note: the means to win the hearts and minds of *Hua-ees* is through English, English, English!

English is the only language most *Hua-ees* know. The uniqueness of China's history, the philosophies expounded by its sages, and the contributions it has made in science, art and literature should be conveyed in good English. Illustrations should be done with great taste. Those moral stories that have been handed down generation after generation are often poorly depicted. They may suit traditional taste buds, but they can look very infantile or ridiculous to those who are brought up in the Western or pseudo-Western worlds.

The late Lim Goh Tong erected a temple in honour of a hometown deity in Genting Highlands. He commissioned artisans in Fujian to specifically carve out a series of granite tablets to exemplify filial piety. One of the tables depicted a son offering his arm to mosquitoes so that they would not bite his mother. How silly?

The translations in museums and cultural sites all over China are also another case in point. They should be totally redone.

The new good warriors

Good stories will prompt the young to trace their roots. And discover Confucianism. Few Next Gens outside China watch *CGTN* channels or read *China Daily*. Apps like TikTok are the way to go to win them back.

Lai Yue Qian

I love to tune in to listen to this Taiwanese scholar-thinker, Lai Yue-qian (赖岳谦). Lai specialises in cross-strait issues between China and Taiwan. He is a regular guest commentator at *CGTN*. He also podcasts his analyses on world affairs via Facebook's video links. His thoughts are incisive. He strongly believes in the unification of Taiwan. I wish all he says can be translated for the Western-educated Chinese. Any Chinese would certainly be proud of him.

VIII

Arts and Culture

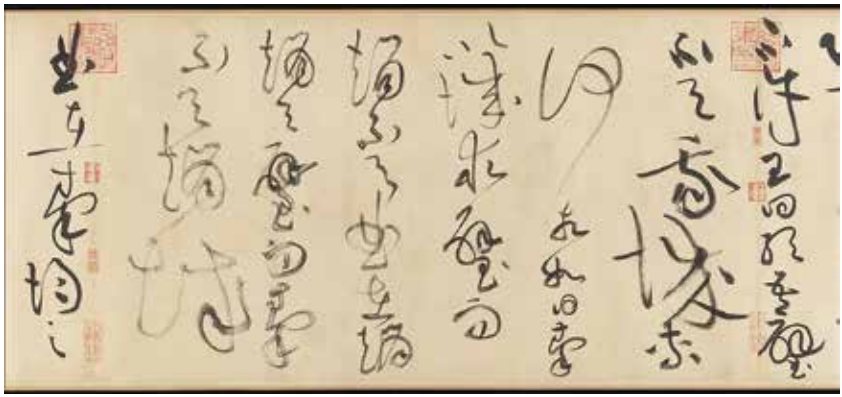
Chapter 33

Paintings and Calligraphy

Chinese painting (**中国画** *Zhōng-Guó huà*) is one of the oldest continuous artistic traditions in the world. Traditional painting involves essentially the same techniques as calligraphy, and is done with a brush dipped in black ink or coloured pigments. As with calligraphy, the most popular materials on which paintings are made are paper and silk.

Huang Bin-Hong, Yellow Mountain (1955)
Realised price: RMB345 million (USD50.6 million)
China Guardian Spring Auctions 2017

Su Shi, Wood and Rock (1037-1101)
Realised price: HKD463 million (USD59.7 million)
Christie's Hong Kong, November 26, 2018



Huang Ting-Jian, Di Zhu Ming (1045-1105)
Realised price: RMB436.8 million (USD62.8 million)
Poly Auction, Beijing, June 3, 2010

Chapter 34

Porcelain

Porcelain is a Chinese invention and is so synonymous with the country that it is still called 'china' in everyday English usage.

A Ming dynasty blue-and-white porcelain dish with a dragon

Later Chinese ceramics, even those of the finest quality, were made on an industrial scale, thus few names of individual potters were recorded. Many of the most important kiln workshops were owned by or reserved for the emperor, and large quantities were exported. Chinese ceramics have had an enormous influence on other ceramic traditions in East Asia, the Islamic world and Europe.

The Chinese tradition recognises two primary categories of ceramics: high-fired (**瓷**, *cí*) and low-fired (**陶**, *táo*). Jingdezhen or Jiangxi porcelain (**景德镇陶瓷**) is said to have produce pottery as early as the 6th century. By the 14th century, it became the largest centre of production of Chinese porcelain, and remains so to this day. Jingdezhen is close to the best quality deposits of petuntse, or porcelain stone, in

China. Its best-known high quality porcelain wares are the Qing-bai (Song and Yuan) and the blue and white varieties from the 1330s, and the *famille* colours under the Qing dynasty.

Imperial Yang-Cai ruby-ground with carved openwork 'phoenix scene' revolving vase, Qian-Long
Realised price: RMB265.6 million (USD41.5 million)
Poly Auction, Beijing, June 10, 2021

Chapter 35

Tea Culture

Chinese tea culture (**中国茶文化**, *Zhōng-Guó-Chá wén-huà*) includes all facets of tea – physical as well as spiritual. It consists of the history of tea cultivation, brewing, serving techniques, methods of consumption, arts, and the tea ceremony. The spirit of the tea ceremony is the core of tea culture – a heavenly connotation of harmony, peace, happiness and truthfulness. It started in the Tang Dynasty. There are six basic types of Chinese tea: green, white, yellow, red, oolong and dark tea (*pu'er*).

Green tea

Green tea is the most common type of tea consumed in China. It is non-fermented. The top 10 great teas of China include the green tea varieties *Lung-Ching* (**龙井**) in Hangzhou, *Pi-Lou* (**碧螺**) in Suzhou, Jiangsu, *Mao-Feng* (**毛峰**) in Huangshan, Anhui, and *Lu-An kua-bien* (**六安瓜片**) in Lu'an, Anhui.

Yellow tea

Yellow tea is like green tea but exposed to heaping procedure. Its complicated and laborious production process makes it a quite rare

find. *Jun-Shan yin-zhen* (君山银针) in Yueyang, Hunan qualifies is listed as one of the top 10 teas in China.

White tea

White tea undergoes minor processing. It is from a specific variety of tea plant and in China is more medicinal than a mere beverage. It is harvested primarily in Fujian. *Bai-Hao yin-zhen* (白毫银针, 'white tip silver needle') from Fuding, Ningde, Fujian is its representative in China's top 10.

Red tea

Red tea (or black tea in Europe) is fully fermented and produces a dark brew. Its star is the *Qi Men grade* (祁门红茶) from Huangshan, Anhui.

Oolong

Oolong is grown in Fujian, Guangdong and Taiwan. Two Oolongs rank amongst the top 10 in China, *An-Xi Tie-Guan-Yin* (安溪铁观音) from Anxi, Quanzhou, Fujian, and *Da Hong-Pao* (大红袍) from Wuyishan, Fujian.

Dark tea

Dark tea is a post-fermented tea. *Pu'er* is its best and its leaves are from old tea trees in Yunnan and processed using two different methods: *shu* (熟, cooked), and *shen* (生, raw).

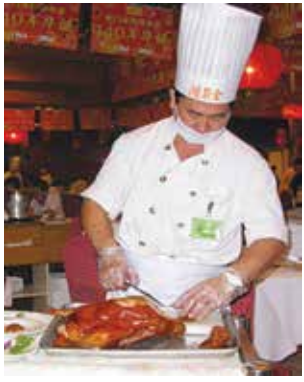
Chapter 36

Cuisines

Chopsticks and woks are synonymous with Chinese food and cooking. Rice, soy sauce, noodles and tofu are too. Chinese cuisine is highly diverse and most frequently categorised into provincial divisions, although these classifications consist of many more styles. The four great traditions in Chinese cuisine are Chuan (**川菜**), Lu (**魯菜**), Yue (**粵菜**), and Huaiyang (淮揚菜), representing cuisines of West, North, South, and East China, respectively. The modern eight cuisines of China are Anhui (徽菜; *Huī-cài*), Guangdong (粵菜; *Yuè-cài*), Fujian (闽菜; *Mǐn-cài*), Hunan (湘菜; *Xiāng-cài*), Jiangsu (苏菜; *Sū-cài*), Shangdong (鲁菜; *Lǔ-cài*), Sichuan (川菜; *Chuān-cài*), and Zhejiang (浙菜; *Zhè-cài*) cuisines.

Colour, scent and taste are the three traditional aspects used to describe Chinese food, as well as the meaning, appearance, and nutritional value. Cooking should be appraised with respect to the ingredients used, knife work, cooking time, and seasoning.

Earlier imperial royal and noble preferences also played a role in the evolution of Chinese cuisine. And because of external interactions, ingredients and cooking techniques from other cultures have been integrated into Chinese cuisines over time.



A chef slicing Peking duck, eaten by rolling pieces of duck with scallion, cucumber and sweet bean sauce using steamed pancakes

Chapter 37

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese medicine (commonly abbreviated as TCM) is said to be based on such texts as *Huáng Dì Nèi-jīng* (黄帝内经, *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*), and *Běn-Cǎo Gang-mù* (本草綱目, *Compendium of Materia Medica*) compiled by Li Shi-Zhen (李时珍) in the 16th century. It was an encyclopedic work, and includes various forms of herbal medicine, acupuncture, cupping therapy, *tui-na* (muscle-kneading), orthopedic techniques, *qi-gong* exercises and dietary practices, among others. One of the basic tenets of TCM is that vital energy, or *qi* (气), circulates through the body's meridian network. Many of these concepts and practices are deemed by Western medicine as pseudoscientific. Nonetheless, they are now being researched in the Western medical tradition and some 'wonders' have surfaced, especially in preventive medicine, and at the recuperative stage after Western surgeries are carried out.

To believers, TCM is grounded in an 'all-embracing order of things' – a total alignment of the elements of the universe, society, the human body and its cycle of birth, growth and death, and other forms of life. Everything must be balanced seasonally and directionally – heat and cold, wet and dry, light and darkness, etc. Nevertheless, its somewhat unregulated training and practices are vulnerable to self-deception and dogmatism.

Chapter 38

Martial Arts

Chinese martial arts, generally called *gong-fu* (功夫) or *wǔ-shù* (武術), developed over centuries. The fighting styles are often classified according to 'houses' that are inspired by old Chinese philosophies, religions and legends, the most famous of which is the *Shao-Lin-quan* (少林拳), championed by a Buddhist monastery order. Styles that focus on internal qi while others concentrate on improving muscle and cardiovascular fitness.

The genesis of Chinese martial arts has been attributed to the need for self-defence, hunting and military expeditions. According to legend, Chinese martial arts originated during the Xia Dynasty (夏朝) some 4,000 years ago. The earliest references to Chinese martial arts are found in the Spring and Autumn Annals (春秋; *Chūnqiū*) from the 5th century BCE, where a hand-to-hand combat theory, one that integrates notions of 'hard' and 'soft' techniques, is mentioned.

Shao-Lin Martial Arts

The Shao-Lin school of martial arts has been around for about 1500 years. It encompasses discipline, perseverance, hardship, simplicity, humility and many virtues that are beyond most of us. Many of its gallant acts are legendary. The author has visited one of its schools in Henan. You see kids clad in thin robes, some as young as five years old, practising – in rigid formations and under the watchful eyes of their seniors – Shao-Lin kung-fu in the early hours of winter mornings. The author actually felt for them. How could their parents allow them to endure such a training regime? And we sure love to watch when they show off their skills on stage!

But to the more conservative minds in the West, the boys in the picture can look pretty intimidating – the shaved heads, bare shoulders, peasant-type grey and earth-colour robes, and the bring-it-on gestures. They evoke glimpses of boxers during the dying days of the Manchu era in China, where foreigners were the principal targets. Would they want to send the children to learn Shaolin kung-fu the way they send their children to taekwondo or karate schools in their neighbourhoods?

A Shao-Lin kung-fu display in a European city.

Maybe it is time for the masters of the Shaolin schools of martial arts should do a re-think. Why are taekwondo and karate schools doing seemingly so well in the West? The author has two grandsons in Melbourne who have been attending taekwondo classes near their home even before they started school. Both are wearing black belts now. He used to take them to their classes – twice a week, and or three-quarters of an hour each session. The sessions were more for basic self-defence exercises than anything else. These martial arts schools or studios do have classes for those who want to pick up the more combative skills. Everyone is happy and does not feel intimidated in any way.

To make Shao-Lin gain better acceptance outside East Asian communities, the first thing they should do is to do away with the 'uniform' they are usually identified with, especially of the yellow colour variety (Yellow Peril fears!). The rest can follow.

Chinese martial arts have spawned a school of literature – *wu-xia* novels (武侠小说, *wu-xia xiǎo-shuō*). These works have a great following amongst the young. The martial skills described in these novels are usually outlandish and even have ridiculous physics; nonetheless, the tales of love, loyalty and revenge, behavioural portrayals, and historical relevance are extremely gripping, hence their popularity. One who went by the pen name Jin Yong wrote several 'classics' which have even been translated into other languages. Jin Yong was in fact a Hong Konger whose real name was Louis Cha Leung-yung.

IX

General Facts and Figures

Chapter 39

Some Useful Information

Political and bureaucratic system and structure

China has 23 provinces, four directly administered municipalities (Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai and Tianjin), and five autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang). There are two special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau). Taiwan is still being separately ruled.

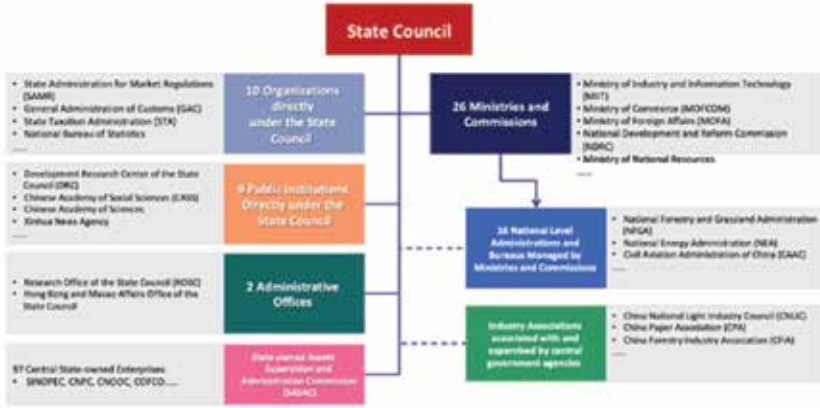
Politically, elections in China occur under a single-party political system. Elections occur only at the local level, not the national level.

Members of the People's Congresses at the county level are elected by voters. These county-level People's Congresses have the responsibility of oversight of local government. They also elect members to the Provincial (or Municipal in the case of Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai and Tianjin) People's Congresses. These Provincial People's Congresses, in turn, elect members to the National People's Congress that meets each year in March in Beijing.

The ruling CPC committee at each level plays a large role in the selection of appropriate candidates for election to the local congress and to the higher levels. Nonetheless, competency is key. Party secretaries are the most powerful people at every political level. By the time a person reaches that position in the provincial or national level, he or she would have gone through many hard knocks to lead.

The general secretary of CPC, who is elected by the National People's Congress every five years, holds ultimate power and authority over state and government. The incumbent will also serve as the head of state or president of the country. The offices of general secretary, president, and chairman of the Central Military Commission have been held simultaneously by one individual since 1993.

On the bureaucratic front, the premier is the head of the government. He or she presides over the State Council composed of four vice premiers. Below them are the ministers and commissions and other authorities.



The power structure can be confusing to the uninitiated. At each local office level, there will always be two sets of leadership – operational (provincial governor, city mayor, general manager) and policy (party secretary). The latter are certainly more powerful.

Land area and population

China has a land area of 9.3 million square kilometres, with a population of 1.4 billion people. The average life expectancy is 77.72 years.

Ethnicity

China is composed of 91.6 percent Han Chinese, 1.3 percent Zhuang, and 7.1 percent others (Hui, Manchu, Uighur, Miao, Yi, Tujia, Tibetan, Mongol, Dong, Buyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh, Dai, etc). The Chinese government officially recognises 56 ethnic groups.

Languages and dialects

While Han writing is the same, there are countless dialects spoken, each unique to its locality. Mandarin or *Pu-tong Hua* (based on the Beijing dialect) is spoken nationwide. Other major ones are Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Min-Bei (Fuzhou), Min-Nan (Hok-Kien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, and Hak-ka dialects. Some languages and dialects are deemed 'official' in their respective regions – Zhuang in Guangxi, Yue in Guangdong, Mongolian in Inner Mongolia, Uighur and Kyrgyz in Xinjiang, and Tibetan in Tibet.

Religions

While 52.2 percent of the Chinese population is unaffiliated with any religion, 18.2 percent are Buddhists, 5.1 percent are Christians, 1.8 percent are Muslims, and 21.9 percent practise folk religions. Other religions include Hinduism (< 0.1 percent), Judaism (< 0.1 percent), and others (0.7 percent, including Daoism).

Education

China has a literacy rate of 96.7 percent. There are over 3,000 colleges and universities. Twelve universities in the mainland and Hong Kong are placed in the top 100 of the Times Higher Education global ranking.

The 2021 figures show a student enrolment of 44.3 million. In 2019, Chinese universities produced almost 50,000 PhDs in STEM fields, while the US universities produced about 34,000. The gap is expected to widen even more.

Military

	China	United States
Active personnel	2 million	4 million
Air		
Aircraft total	3,284	13,300
	China	**United States**
Fighter	1,199	1,914
Transports	288	962
Aerial tankers	4	568
Land		
Tanks	4,950	5,500
Armoured vehicles	174,300	303,553
Mobile road projectors	3.145	1,716
Sea		
Fleet strength	730	484
Aircraft carriers	2 + 1	11
Heli carriers	3	9
Submarines	78	68
Destroyers	50	92
Frigates	43	0
Corvettes	72	22

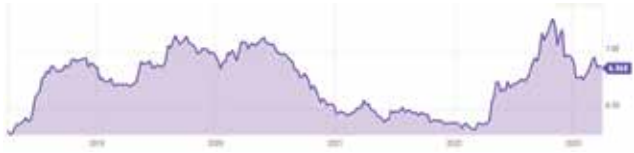
It is also believed China leads in missile technology, especially on the hypersonic front.

Economy

As of 2022, China has a GDP of USD18.3 trillion, with a PPP of USD30.1 trillion. Tax revenue is 12.6 percent of GDP, and debt is 76.9 percent of GDP. China is now the world's first or second largest economy, depending on which metrics are used. China is the world's largest exporter of goods, and the world's second largest importer. China has seen a huge boom in its middle class in the past few years

as it diversifies its economy. China has also made massive strides in developing and employing renewable clean energy sources.

The yuan versus the US dollar:



Labour force

China has a working population of 780 million, with an unemployment rate of 5.5 percent, as of 2022. China has largely eliminated absolute poverty nationwide. In 2011, China set its new poverty line at RMB2,300 (approximately USD400).

Trade

Total exports were valued at USD3.59 trillion in 2022,[1] representing 15 percent of the world's total. China manufactures virtually everything under the sun. Once a bicycle economy, it now produces a third of all motor vehicles in the world – 26.1 million out of 79.1 million. China's total imports for 2022 were valued at USD2.72 trillion.

Resources

China has many resources, but because it exports so much to the world, it has to import a huge amount of oil and gas, and minerals.

Geography

China shares borders with fourteen neighbouring countries. In order of share border length: Mongolia (4,630 km), Russia (Northeast 4,133

[1] If the value of the exports is adjusted to US productivity, the author suspects it may be much higher!

km and Northwest 46 km), India (2,659 km), Myanmar (2,129 km), Kazakhstan (1,352 km), Nepal (1,389 km), North Korea (1,352 km), Vietnam (1,297 km), Kyrgyzstan (1,063 km), Tajikistan (477 km), Bhutan (477 km), Laos (475 km), Pakistan (438 km), and Afghanistan (91 km).

A great part of the country is mountainous. Its principal ranges are the Tian Shan, the Kun-Lun chain, and the Trans-Himalaya. The Gobi Desert lies to the north. China-proper consists of three great river systems: the Yellow River (Huang He, 5,464 km), the Yang-Tze River (扬子江) (Chang Jiang, which is the third-longest river in the world at 6,300 km), and the Pearl River (Zhu Jiang, 2,197 km). It has an extensive coastline facing the Pacific Ocean.

As much as 54.7 percent of China's land is classified as agricultural, with arable land at 11.3 percent, permanent crops at 1.6 percent and permanent pastures at 41.8 percent). Forests cover 22.3 percent of the country.

Geographically, it is perhaps the most diverse country in the world – fertile plains, deserts, magnificent mountains, subtropical forests, mighty rivers, freezing winters, most sophisticated cities and bare-bone villages, and what-have-you.

China's physiography[2]

China is diverse. Scholars have drawn up all sorts of maps to define it in many ways, besides demarcating it provincially in terms nationalities, languages and dialects, religions and cultures, cuisines, etc. Travellers can immediately discern differences as they cross regions customs and habits, economic and social activties, fauna and flora, etc.

[2] Readers might say that I am confusing them with unconventional spellings for some geographical names. Streamlining them according to the nomenclature I was trying to advocate earlier is really beyond me. Nonetheless, I will try to stick to my way!

RW McColl has drawn up nine distinct physiographic regions for China: North China Plain, Yang-Tze Valley, Loess Plateau, Sichuan Basin, South Coast, Southwest Uplands, Northeast China (Manchuria), Tibet and Qinghai, and Northwest China (Xinjiang).

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* uses different names for some, but the physiographic intentions are the same. None, however, offers a clear map.

An unidentified source offers the following and lists 16 descriptions instead: Taklimakan Desert, East China Sea, South China Sea, Mount Everest, Tian Mountains, Turfan Depression, Mekong River, North China Plain, Yellow River, Plateau of Tibet, Himalaya Mountains, Yellow Sea, Yang-Tze River, Gobi Desert, Yunnan Plateau, and Sichuan Basin. However, the basis is questionable.

North China Plain

Marked H above, the North China Plain is where the country's earliest agricultural societies as well as dynasties were formed. The Yellow and the Huai rivers brought down enormous sedimentary deposits. It is vulnerable to flooding and dust storms are common. It has been a densely populated area. The North China Plain has the highest proportion of land under cultivation of any region in China.

Yang-Tze Valley

The Yang-Tze River (M above) has been the centre of economic life, bringing trade and influences from distant places. Summers tend to be hot, humid, and rainy along the river, while winters are brief but cold. There are large numbers of people who spend their entire lives on small or medium boats, making a living moving goods and people via the numerous lakes, canals, and rivers of the entire Yang-Tze Valley.

Loess Plateau

The vast plateau of some 400,000 square kilometres is between the North China Plain and the desert of the West. In the north the Great Wall forms the boundary, while the southern limit is the Qin Mountains in Shaanxi.

The loess is particularly susceptible to erosion by water, and ravines and gorges crisscross the plateau. While loess is rich in calcium and thus fertile, the overall aridity of the region, coupled with the fact that loess does not hold water, makes traditional methods of irrigation and farming useless and impractical.

As in the past, key cities like Xi'an and Lanzhou in the Loess Plateau are those that facilitate trade and transport to and from eastern China and the North China Plain. Oil is a major

resource in Gansu. The Qin-Ling (秦岭) Mountains in Shaanxi province are the greatest chain of mountains east of the Plateau of Tibet. The elevation of the mountains varies from 900 to 3,000 metres.

Sichuan Basin

The large Sichuan Basin is divided into two parts, Chengdu, and Chongqing. High and difficult mountains surround the basin. Earlier primary access to eastern China was via the Yang-Tze River, which traverses the breathtaking Three Gorges. This geographic setting creates a mild climate. Extremely fertile soils are derived from old lake sediments. Sichuan has always been known for its tea, silk, flowers, medicinal herbs, and diverse wildlife, including pandas, deer, and tigers. Tourism is also crucial to Sichuan's economy, and it is the panda heartland.

Southeast Coast

It is perhaps the most affluent part of China, where many of the China's great cities are. The influence of the Pacific Ocean as well as access thereto make the area distinctive. The ocean's warm current creates milder winter temperatures than in the interior. In addition, the nearby mountains Huang Shan (黄山) and Wu-Yi Shan (武夷山) are favourable for crops other than aquaculture (rice, shrimp, ducks, and so on), which is prominent in the lowlands.

Southwest Uplands

This region comprises the northern part of Yunnan and the western part of Guizhou. Both Yunnan and Guizhou are famous for their canyonlike valleys and precipitous mountains. Because it is close to the tropical cyclones of the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, it has abundant rainfall (often causing erosion or denuded slopes). This location and terrain create numerous distinctive local 'niches' that often are self-sufficient,

which in turn support an abundance of distinct ethnic groups, many of which also live in the neighbouring countries of Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, and even Thailand. This region first came into the Chinese sphere during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368).

Northeast (Manchuria)

To the southeast of the Northeast Plain is a series of ranges collectively known as the Chang-Bai Shan (长白山). In some parts the scenery is characterised by rugged peaks and precipitous cliffs. The highest peak is the volcanic cone of Bai-Tou Shan (白头山) (2,744 metres), which has a beautiful crater lake at its snow-covered summit. As one of the major forest areas of China, the region is the source of many valuable furs and famous medicinal herbs. The dominant physical feature of this region is its winter cold and ice. Equally distinctive and important are its two extensive wetlands-the northernmost associated with the Songari River and the southern with the Liao River. Nevertheless, its basic natural resources of iron ore and coal have made it economically vital to the rest of China. The lands of Manchuria were not open to Han settlement until the dynasty's end in 1911.

Qinghai and the Tibetan Plateau

Altitude, which can average 4,000 meters, best defines the physical environment of the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau. The border ranges of the plateau (the Kun-Lun Mountains (昆仑山) and the Himalayas are even higher, with individual peaks rising to heights of 7,000 to 8,000 metres or more. The plateau's eastern and southern periphery is the source of many of the world's great rivers, including the Yang-Tze, Yellow River, Mekong, Salween, Indus, and Brahmaputra. Only in the low valleys, chiefly along the Brahmaputra valley, are there centres of human settlement.

Because of the region's adjacence to India and central Asia, the people, economies, and even religion of Qinghai and Tibet are distinctly different from those of China in the east. Even Mongolia had closer cultural links to this region than did China proper. Animal husbandry and nomadism are traditional ways of life. Until the 1950s, one out of every five Tibetans was a Buddhist nun or monk. Monasteries have been at the centre of society since at least the eighth century.

Northwest China (Xinjiang)

Xinjiang is a landscape of deserts, mountains, and oases. Most of the region is dominated by the Tarim Basin, which is filled mostly by the formidable Taklamakan desert and rimmed by high mountains – the Kun-Lun Shan to the south, the Karakorum to the west, and the Tian Shan to the north. The alpine beauty of the Tian Shan separates the Tarim Basin from the smaller Junggar Basin, which is characterised by more moisture and grass.

The inhabitants of the Junggar Basin have a long association with various Mongol peoples, but they are more pastoral than nomadic. Xinjiang was an important historic link along the Silk Roads. The peoples living along oases around the rim of the Tarim Basin had closer ties to Persia and the Islamic influences of the Middle East. The Uighurs, Xinjiang's largest minority, are predominantly Muslim and Turkic in ethnicity and language.

Xinjiang is rich in oil. The Taklamakan is too barren for agriculture but is often used as a nuclear test site. Despite the fact that the railroad does not extend very far west into the province, tourism is gaining in this remote region of spectacular scenery with a wealth of archaeological treasures, including Buddhist cave temples, ruined cities and fortresses, petroglyphs, and 4,000-year-old mummies.

Epilogue

For Prosperous Democratic Autocracy: An Oxymoron?

To those who have no affinity for China, or who feel that China is nothing but an obnoxious totalitarian regime, democratic autocracy must be an oxymoron term to them. How can democracy and autocracy co-exist? Are they not diametrically opposite? Sure, that is what we have been led to believe all this while.

If China is such a monstrous state, how could tens of millions play deep-pocket tourists to all corners of the world every year? How could 90 percent of the population be happy with their government, based on surveys done not by their own political apparatuses but by Western think-tanks? How could it progress so fast within the last 20 years? In the face of these facts, if you are still not convinced that China is doing something very right, then you must not go beyond this line to read the following, especially if you are Chinese ethnically.

Indeed, China's concept of for-posterity democratic autocracy or autocratic democracy can hardly be adaptable by any country or nation, hence its alienness to many. It is the final product of a millennia-long brewing, infusion and filtration – feudalism, Rú teachings, fear of Dào retributions, civil wars, 'barbarian' invasions, more than a century of Western and Japanese bullying and humiliation, and in the last one 100 years, Sun Yat-sen's three principles of people-centric governance, Mao's classless utopianism, and the present reality of the West's blatant intent to kick China to where it was 100 years ago.

This distilled product is often described in China's announcements and may appear rhetorical to many – if they do not want to see the truth.

American political scientist Graham Allison thinks the world is now facing a Thucydides trap where two big powers – one existing and the other emerging – are fighting for supremacy. Many disagree, including

me. It is an inevitability that is perceived by the US, certainly not by China. China has no interest to replace the US anywhere. It simply wants to give its people a better tomorrow.

In the case of Taiwan, where the West are using it as a clear example of China's aggression, the truth is simply this. It just wants Taiwan – where the demography is no different from that of the mainland's – to return to its fold under a one-country-two-systems framework. This one-China fact is even recognised by the US itself over its communiques.

To deter the new *Xiong-Nu*, China must have a level of military and technology that is no inferior to that of the US. Externally, China does not believe in intervening in any country's internal affairs. People in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Venezuela, or even in some of the banana regimes in Africa, must sort things out by themselves – through education and exposure to the outside world. Period.

China knows its concept of governance is not exportable. There is a prerequisite for this form of governance to happen. The society's culture must be enabling. The first word that is likely to come to many readers' mind is perhaps 'subservience'. Subservience may be the very nature of the people in this type of society – pretty low intellect, and passive and blind to leaders who lead by force, fear or with 'divine' or religious calling cards.

Is that true? It is certainly not a new political philosophy. Lee Kuan Yew led Singapore for many years with exactly this form of statecraft. And Singaporeans are amongst the smartest people, even by the First World standards. East Asians Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese – are culturally ripe for this political system to take root. However, many have succumbed to the Western concept of democracy and there is hardly any possibility that countries like South Korea or Japan can reverse gears now.

The philosophy behind a 'mission' of this nature must be genuine. Leaders and citizens make decisions based on the long-term interests of future generations, not just the next four or five years of a leader's political mandate. The execution takes into the need for sustainable

policies that can benefit not only the present, but also the future generations and they centre around the economy, environment and society, ensuring that the welfare of generations is not compromised by the actions of the present generation. Transparency, accountability and participation are all parts and parcels of the governance process.

This may sound all very utopian. But China is indeed practising it. When Xi Jinping took his oath to begin his third term in office, he swore to uphold the Constitution and rule of law, and sustain China as a strong, democratic, harmonious, modern, socialist and beautiful nation. What Xi said may sound rhetorical to many. But he is indeed leading the country to achieve these goals.

Militarily, China is a country that is being encircled by the US and its allies now. And on the technological front, the latter are strangulating China with chipmaking machines. China must fend for itself. Without the resolve – with its very own system – China will surely yield under another era of Western suppression. The US, hitherto a beacon of hope, has bastardised democracy and free trade. And it still believes that liberal, but chaotic democracy is a supermodel that the world must follow. God bless America.

About the Author

Lim Yu Book was born in 1949 and had his primary education in Chinese. After that, it was English all the way to university. The first few years of his career were spent in quasi-government organisations. His first private sector boss was the late Tan Sri Lim Goh Tong of Genting fame. He says Lim made him think 'unconventionally'. Yu Book eventually moved on to 'gather moss', and finally retired as the executive chairman of a Singapore-based plantation house in early 2010s – but was soon invited to helm a charitable organisation that is devoted to supporting good causes in education and healthcare.

Mr and Mrs Lim love to travel, and they are always looking for places to enrich their knowledge about the world. Their two children, Shen-Yang and Monica have accomplished much themselves, in medicine and music respectively. He has five grandchildren – Kaeden and Maxel in Melbourne, and Ryan, Isaac and Marcus in Kuala Lumpur.

Yu Book authored *Strategic Management in Malaysia, Concepts and Illustrations* (Malaysian Institute of Management, 2000), and *China's Arduous Journey to Earn Its Place, From Mr Q to President Xi Jinping* in 2022. He writes regularly at yubooklim.blogspot.com.

Yu Book is a Fellow of the ASEAN Academy of Engineering and Technology.

Before Donald Trump declared trade war on China, most Chinese were happy to accept the US as the *lǎo-dà* (老大)—not exactly the 'big boss' in its usual intended meaning, but more a status accorded to someone out of an air of resignation and light contempt. Since he wants to be number one, let him be! But we know his true colours!

China was not quite perturbed by Trump's trade war. They knew who the ultimate losers would be. But the fact that the coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan killed Chinese self-confidence. All fingers were pointing at China and many Chinese, including the author, felt guilty about the pandemic because of the love for wildlife meats and the belief in their medicinal values.

And Western leaders like Australia's Scott Morrison's insistence that China be investigated like a criminal inflamed Chinese all over the world. Although the source of the virus has yet to be fully established, it has become increasingly clear that there might be something more sinister to its origin. China may not be the 'culprit' after all! Whatever happened in China in the first instance was certainly not a result of incompetence. The way the Chinese managed the pandemic saved millions, a fact that few in the Western world would acknowledge with admiration.

Many Chinese thought Joe Biden would be a more enlightened US president. Alas, their hope soon went down the drain. Biden is one who does not believe in his own words. He says one thing, but does the opposite as soon as he walks out of the room. And he and his team are determined to retard China at all costs. Besides their traditional vassals, they have also roped in Japan, Korea, the Philippines and India to press ahead.

This has also caused civilisationalism to flare up amongst Chinese all over the world. We are not nationalist in that sese, since most of us are loyal citizens of our adopted countries. Fortunately, China has long been guided by its history. Even though they were happy to acknowledge the US as the *lao-da*, they knew that this *lao-da* could hardly be trusted. And they are now militarily ready!

A mentor of the author, the late Tan Sri Frank W K Tsao, once said, 'Don't trust the Americans'. That was in the early 2000s. How wise this man was!

Many Chinese still continue to look up to the West or suffer an inferiority complex for being Chinese. This is perfectly understandable since they (like the author) live a predominantly Western-influenced world where its brand of democracy has long been accepted. But given the anti-China and anti-Chinese stances that are now being perpetrated by the US and its allies, is it not time for them to wake up and know about our history, culture and above all, resilience?

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