

ISSUE 1 | FEBRUARY 2021

NEWSLETTER



CHINA CENTRE



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Letter from the Director

Greetings and Happy Year of the Ox!

It has been quite a year, and certainly one of many great challenges, hardships, and changes. At this time last year, it would have been hard to imagine we would be in the world we are now. It is now just as equally hard to know exactly what the coming year will bring. All the same, here at the University of Oxford's China Centre we have been working hard to ensure that the centre continues to provide a space of intellectual community for those studying, researching, or simply interested in China, both within the university and more broadly. Granted, the move online has not been without its difficulties and growing pains, but at the same time it has made it possible to bring together speakers and audiences on a global scale. We have maintained a robust schedule of events and talks, and the breadth and depth of scholarship on China that is currently being produced across a plethora of disciplines has truly been a thing to behold. We have also had much cause for celebration in the accomplishments of our faculty, students, alumni, and friends.



This is our first newsletter from the China Centre, and we are looking forward to making it a bi-annual feature. Our goal is to use this newsletter as an opportunity share with you what we have been doing and highlight some the amazing work being done by our scholars, students, and friends. I hope that this offers a chance for you to know us better.

We would also like to involve you. Please do [sign up](#) for our mailing list for information on upcoming events or, alternately, follow us on [Facebook](#). And if you are an Oxford alum, do please [reach out to us](#). In future newsletters we hope to showcase the accomplishments of alumni who have studied or have been involved with China, and we would love to hear from you.

We look forward to continuing to bring you a wealth of speakers and events and hope that at some point not too distant we will be able to resume holding events in person. In the not too distant future, we have plans in the works for a number of exciting new online offerings and will endeavour to continue providing offerings to the global audience who have joined us for our events. Do look out in the coming months for further announcements.

Wherever you may be, I do sincerely hope that this year brings you a smooth wind in your sails.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd Hall'.

Todd Hall
Director of the China Centre

Legacy and Future

A Note from Tian Yuan Tan, Shaw Professor of Chinese



The Chair of Chinese at the University of Oxford is one of the oldest endowed professorships in Chinese studies globally, with its history extending back to the 1870s. It dates from the appointment of James Legge as Professor of Chinese in 1876 and university records show an endowment, supported by “Trustees of a sum of £3,003 which has been subscribed by persons interested in promoting the study of Chinese,” accepted by Convocation on 5 December 1879. In the early 1990s, it was renamed the Shaw Professorship in recognition of the generosity of Sir Run Run Shaw for his benefaction of £3,000,000 to the University for the further development of Chinese Studies at Oxford.

The legacy left by previous occupants of the Chair, all specialists in pre-modern Chinese studies, is invaluable. Legge, through his pioneering translations, introduced nineteenth-century readers to the world of Chinese classics. In the century and a half that followed, subsequent holders of the professorship, including David Hawkes, Piet van der Loon, and Glen Dudbridge FBA, to name just a few, continued in contributing to the understanding of Chinese culture through their translations, bibliographical surveys of Chinese texts, and critical studies on various aspects of traditional China. In so doing, they expanded our knowledge of China by moving beyond the few selected canonical sources to include a much broader range of historical, literary, religious, and popular texts as subjects of study.

I am deeply honoured to be appointed to such a historic and prestigious position. I also feel a strong sense of duty to uphold this legacy that we are fortunate to inherit here in Oxford, while embracing the new opportunities and challenges presented to us in the rapidly growing field of Chinese studies today.



My nine predecessors in this post each have their own distinctive areas of specialities, but one may observe that they all share a common characteristic that, in my opinion, defines a key feature of the sinological tradition in Oxford: an uncompromising emphasis on text reading and on understanding pre-modern China through the mastery of primary source materials.

Oxford is one of the very few universities outside Asia that continues to teach its undergraduates both classical and modern Chinese concurrently in their first year. This is essential. We want to train students who will be conversant in both classical and modern Chinese, knowledgeable about both traditional China and contemporary Chinese society, and most importantly, to understand the links between the old and the new. We also have an impressive collection of Chinese books in the Bodleian, dating back to the seventeenth century. It would be excellent if we could encourage more researchers and also our students to make full use of these primary sources and rare materials.

At the same time, recent developments in humanities research may give us new ideas in exploring potential ways to enhance our strong text-based research tradition with other complementary approaches. One example is digital humanities, which may sound like a “new” mode of scholarship, but in fact Oxford has long been developing digital tools, methods and resources for research in the humanities since the 1970s. Some of my reflections on ways to incorporate different modes and methods of research are embodied in my current research project “TEXTCOURT: Linking the Textual Worlds of Chinese Court Theater, ca. 1600-1800” funded by the European Research Council. Together with my project team in Oxford and in collaboration with international research partners, we are exploring the potentials of digitally-assisted close reading in our study of court performance texts and their connections with other Chinese literary genres, material and visual cultures, as well as cross-cultural links with foreign records (See page 9).

An Interview with Rosemary Foot

Professor Rosemary Foot is a Research Associate at the China Centre. She is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Oxford's Department of Politics and International Relations, and Emeritus Fellow of St Antony's College.

So, tell us, what have you been working on recently?

My latest book came out in the middle of 2020 (See page 10). Much of my research time since then has been taken up with explaining why I wrote the book, what were the main research findings, and how a focus on China and the UN speaks to larger questions in International Relations. These include questions such as "how is China shaping international organisations from within," if at all, "does China represent a challenge to liberal dimensions of global order?" I have been busy promoting it across a variety of forums (see [link 1](#), [link 2](#), and [link 3](#)). I've also been working on new papers that, to some extent, build on my interest in China and human protection. The idea behind my recent work is that we need to keep complicating the ways in which we understand the global ordering process in periods that are often described as ones of significant order transition.

Those are all big questions. Is China a challenge to liberal dimensions of Global order in settings like the UN?

The short answer is "yes." China's view is that the management of international peace and security, the core UN goal, is best promoted via strong, domestically stable states that focus on economic development. Low levels of development are seen as the root cause of conflict from Beijing's perspective and to get successful development requires the state to play the guiding role. China goes on from there to argue that development should be viewed as a foundational right from which other rights might then flow; civil society actors – where they can't be cut out of the process entirely – should be guided by the government in power; the government in power, at times of crisis and conflict, should be in the driving seat in determining what it might require from the UN and other members of the "international community," and so on. These ideas challenge a UN position that has come to regard the protection of civilians in armed conflict as well as protection of peoples from mass atrocity crimes as a core obligation. In the last two decades or more the UN has adopted a broader

conception of security that acknowledges that internal breakdowns of a state's security, as well as large-scale violence directed at individuals, pose threats to international peace and security.



Has China been successful in promoting this view?

The results have been mixed. For example, China managed to gain support within the UN's Human Rights Council for two

resolutions it put forward and which raised the profile of development as a right. However, it was forced to compromise on some of the language and to reintroduce clauses on the universality and indivisibility of rights. Beijing also succeeded in cutting the budget for some human rights posts in UN peace operations and at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, but [compromised](#) on the numbers of posts that were shed. Though Beijing may well seek to diminish a UN focus on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, it is difficult to reverse a commitment that UN Secretaries-General among others have described as a core UN obligation. However, there is no doubt that China has become a more influential actor within the UN setting.

Where do you think things are headed?

That depends on the attentiveness and level of concern of others. China is the second largest contributor to both the UN's overall budget as well as the peace operations budget. Beijing has become active in shaping UN resolutions, presidential statements and the like. It is now more willing to use its veto or threaten to use its veto. It has support within the UN since several other states are concerned about elements of UN behaviour that they regard as intrusive. Were China to further expand its influence, this could lead to a UN that would ever more firmly emerge as an inter-state governance mechanism. In these circumstances, we would likely see a narrowing of the UN Security Council agenda. In places where it is agreed the UN should operate, the individual governments that require assistance would be afforded a larger role to decide on priorities, with the international community acting as an enabler of the government in power. Overall, it would represent a more minimalist, state-based conception of global order than has been promoted at the UN for the last two decades.

An Interview with Jérôme Doyon

Dr Jérôme Doyon, Departmental Lecturer of Contemporary Chinese Studies at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, works on Chinese domestic politics, in particular the Party-State apparatus, elite politics, political youth organizations, and the management of ethno-religious minorities.

What do you do at the Oxford China Centre?

I joined the Oxford China Centre in 2018. The China Centre hosts academics from two departments, the Faculty of Oriental Studies and the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies. I am a Departmental Lecturer in Contemporary Chinese Studies at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies. Since 2018, I have been co-organising the China Centre Seminar Series, as well as actively engaged in teaching in the MPhil in Modern China Studies Programme and the MSC in Contemporary China Studies Programme (jointly run by the Faculty of Oriental Studies and the Oxford Global and Area Studies).

Can you tell us about your research work at the China Centre?

My research focuses on Chinese domestic politics and political economy. Three of my recent publications illustrate well my interest in elite politics and state-business relations more specifically.

I published last year [‘The Strength of a Weak Organization: The Communist Youth League as a Path to Power in Post-Mao China’](#) published in *The China Quarterly*, in which I explore the role played by the Communist Youth League in the recruitment of party-state leaders in contemporary China. While one of the largest political organizations in the world, with more than 80 million members, its functioning is badly understood. It lacks autonomy and coherence, yet it is seen as the cradle for one of the main factions within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Against factional explanations (Tuanpai), I argue that the rise of CYL-affiliated cadres in the party-state hierarchy is a by-product of the organization's weakness. Various central and local CCP leaders have used the League to promote their protégés. For years, there was no incentive to dismantle this promotion path. However,

in his bid to consolidate his power, Xi has weakened this channel so it may not be used by potential rivals. I also co-authored with Dr Franziska Keller the article ‘Knowing the Wrong Cadre? Networks and Promotions in the Chinese Party-State’ published by Political Studies. In this study, we examine how ties formed among Chinese party-state officials influence their career. Our research design provides a strong proxy to account for personal ties: attendance of an exclusive and intensive Central Party School training program for officials. We take advantage of the exogenous assignment to cohorts in this program to

establish a causal link between informal connections and promotions. We find that the effect of personal ties depends on whether the official is connected to the leader who dominates the promotion process or to the one who only influences it through information control. Connections to the latter decrease the promotion probability, likely because these officials are closely monitored by their superiors and more powerful rivals.

In line with the very recent in state-business relations, I wrote a short article for the *Institut Montaigne* on how [‘The Chinese Communist Party Targets the Private Sector’](#). I explore how the Chinese Communist Party expands its reach in the country's private sector. In recent years, we have seen a burgeoning of party cells in private companies, including foreign ones. However, this is only part of the story as a qualitative shift in the party's penetration of the sector is now occurring. While party cells have so far mainly played a secondary function in private businesses, providing training programmes or social gatherings for employees, new regulations give them a “leading role” in hiring decisions, pushing for the establishment of party-led Human Resources structures. As part of the development of a “Modern enterprise system with Chinese characteristics” under Xi Jinping, this development blurs traditional distinctions between private and public and means for the party to influence the inner workings of private companies.



Rana Mitter to Receive the 2020 Norton Medicott Medal Awarded by The Historical Association

Rana Mitter Will Receive The 2020 Norton Medicott Medal Awarded By The Historical Association (HA) For Outstanding Services And Current Contributions To History.

The Historical Association said: “The Medicott Award is named after a distinguished past president of The Historical Association, Professor W.N. Medicott. Nominations are made by individual members of the Association, branch officers and members of council for the Executive to decide at their annual autumn meeting. The criteria state that ‘it is important to choose recipients whose distinction is already apparent and can be made readily apparent to the general public as well as to members of the Association.’ It is quite clear that Professor Mitter meets all these criteria.

Professor Mitter will receive the Medicott Medal this summer at the HA annual awards evening and will provide that evening’s key address. The date will be confirmed soon, and places are available to all HA members free of charge. Please email info@history.org.uk to register your interest in attending.

“It’s an immense honour to be awarded the Medicott Medal, which has been held by such a wide range of distinguished historians. I’m particularly pleased that Chinese history has been noted this year – at a time when the rise of China means that that country will have an impact on all of our lives, it’s more and more important for us to have a clear sense of the historical forces that have shaped it.”

-Rana Mitter



Rana Mitter Recognised for His Work on China in this Year’s Queen’s Birthday Honours

The former director of the University of Oxford China Centre, Rana Mitter, has been appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to education. Professor Mitter’s research focuses on the political and cultural history of China, including past and present Chinese policy.

On hearing the news, Professor Mitter responded: “China is becoming increasingly important in the public life of the UK. It’s been immensely fulfilling to help bring the work of the Oxford’s China Studies community to a wider audience through the China Centre and other forms of engagement. I’m honoured to have been awarded an OBE for my part in that process.”

Rana Mitter, Former Director of the China Centre, is Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China, and a Fellow of St Cross College.

J.P. Park Awarded The Charles Rufus Morey Book Award of The College Art Association

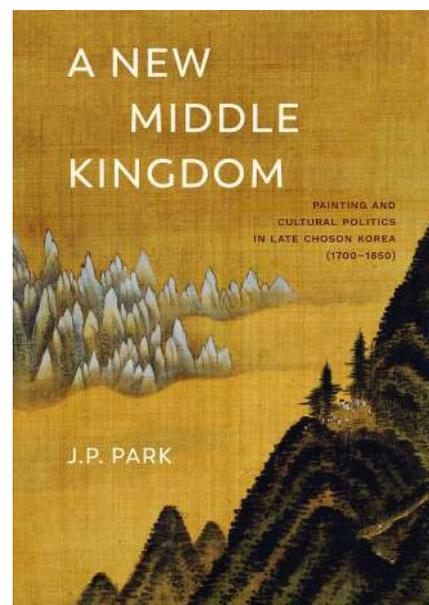
The Charles Rufus Morey Book Award, named in honor of one of the founding members of CAA and first teachers of art history in the United States, was established in 1953. This award honors an especially distinguished book in the history of art, published in the English language.



J.P. Park, Associate Professor in History of Art, Fellow of Lincoln College, is a winner of the Charles Rufu Morey Book Award in 2020.

J.P. Park's *A New Middle Kingdom: Painting and Cultural Politics in Late Chosŏn Korea (1700– 1850)* published by University of Washington Press, in 2018, marks a milestone in the scholarship of the history of Korean art and the arts of modern East Asia more generally. Challenging long-held nationalistic generalizations about late Chosŏn dynasty art, Park breaks ground by placing the new visual program of true-view landscape and genre painting in its social context, connecting it to interregional artistic and cultural dialogue between Korea and her neighbors China and Japan. This deeply learned, impeccably produced, lucidly written, and eminently

readable book surveys Korean painting from a period of unprecedented economic prosperity, deftly positioning it within debates about national sovereignty, social order, and class identity. With a focus on changing conventions for landscape and genre painting, Park tackles topics of broad interest and significance, such as the relationship between art and “everyday” life, visual culture and literature, travel and personhood. Park makes the convincing case that painting in the late Chosŏn dynasty has much to teach us about the history of art in China, Japan, and Europe, expanding our entrenched understanding of vectors of “influence” to illuminate the active resignification of sources, theories, and motifs in a rapidly changing world. Daring in his approach to questions of method, Park analyzes paintings for what they actively obscure as much as for what they manifestly show. By reading these images against the grain, and with diplomatic yet persuasive prose, he expands our understanding of what pictorial “evidence” may reveal, thereby opening up the study of Korean art to new audiences and offering productive avenues for cross-cultural comparison and exchange.



Excavating Prehistoric China in Present-Day Project

Excavating Prehistoric China in Present-Day Sweden: Unlocking Forgotten Treasures in the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (MFEA), Stockholm

PI: Anke Hein (Oxford), Co-PIs: Ole Stilborg (University of Stockholm), Andrew Womack (Furman University)

In the 1920s Swedish geologist Johan Gunnar Andersson undertook the first systematic archaeological investigations in northwestern China, focusing on Neolithic and Bronze Age sites. Based on ceramic typology and stratigraphy, Andersson created the first cultural chronology for northwestern China. Surprisingly, the collections in Stockholm have received little attention since the 1940s. The present project aims to shine a light on these long-forgotten collections and open them for researchers and the public.



By analyzing ceramic production, and especially paste recipes that can be tied to particular communities of practice and specific geological formations, we can map connections between groups living and interacting in northwest China and beyond. Our results will in turn shed light on the development of networks that potentially linked key regions of Central Asia and northern China, revealing the complex social interactions that directly underlay critical technology transfers and in turn the growth of the earliest Chinese states. A first publication of preliminary results from the project can be found here: Hein, Anke, and Ole Stilborg. 2019. Ceramic production techniques and principles of raw material selection in prehistoric northwest China: a preliminary view based on material from the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 23:104-115. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352409X18305728>

TEXTCOURT: Linking the Textual Worlds of Chinese Court Theater, ca. 1600-1800

Launched on 1 October 2019, TEXTCOURT: Linking the Textual Worlds of Chinese Court Theater, ca. 1600-1800 is a five-year research project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 819953). The project's Principal Investigator is [Tian Yuan Tan](#), Shaw Professor of Chinese in the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Court theatre was a core part of Chinese court and performance culture for centuries, yet its texts have never been amply studied. Chinese court drama thus remains a 'closed' textual world, neglected in literary history. To re-link these textual worlds, this project will build the first digital archive of court drama scripts and related foreign records. Centring on the textual database, the project aims to establish links among the textual worlds of Chinese court drama, following these main lines of inquiry: Were court drama texts only found in the palaces or also elsewhere? What additional or different data can we retrieve from foreign records, and what does this tell us about the intercultural reception of performance and visual cultures? How do we fully exploit and utilise the rich information about Chinese court drama embedded in these texts, and more importantly, make the collected data accessible both to future researchers and to the general reader?

The project will produce the first textual studies of Chinese court drama, including a court drama textual database, a series of monographs and publications on extended text-based research topics, and an anthology of English translations for the general reader. These outputs will remedy the lack of textual studies on Chinese court drama, contributing towards our understanding of Chinese theatre history and world court cultures. The methodology the project develops to study a large corpus of authorless texts could be applied to other Chinese genres such as folk tales and dialect songs.

For more information about the project, visit <https://textcourt.web.ox.ac.uk/>. You can also follow the project on [Twitter @TEXTCOURT_ERC](#).



The China, Law and Development Project



“China, Law and Development” (CLD) is a five-year, ERC-funded research project (2019-2023) led by Professor Matthew Erie. The team comprises scholars from law, anthropology, sociology, political science and development studies and includes post-doctoral researchers: Dr Ha Hai Do, Dr Miriam Driessen and Dr Irna Hofman.

The world as we know it is undergoing deep transformation: globalisation, disruption, reglobalisation, and COVID-19 and states’ responses. Global supply chains are being rerouted, people’s movement is being suspended and there are shifts in state alliances. All these changes have led to debates over policies regarding health, security, freedom and privacy. Within this context, the CLD project focuses on China’s approach to transnational governance – an order that is contingent, in part, on law. Specifically, the project is analysing Chinese approaches to ‘law and development’ in recipient or host states in emerging economies, that is, the role of law in cross-border, macro-regional, and global development. CLD provides neutral academic analysis on one of the most important questions of the twenty-first century: what does China’s role in the law and development field today mean for the world?

By generating empirical data on the two-way interaction between Chinese investors adapting to different regulatory environments in host nations and host nations adjusting to the new norm of Chinese outbound capital (investment, loans, aid), the project is analysing the implications of China’s cross-border commercial activity at two levels: on the legal and regulatory systems of host states and in international commercial law.

Case studies and complementary mini-studies are being carried out in a number of countries. The studies cover a wide range of legal fields including trade and investment, construction, environmental, labour, land, dispute resolution, and law and technology. CLD conducts cross-country comparative analysis to better understand the overall implications of China’s legal footprint in the Global South.

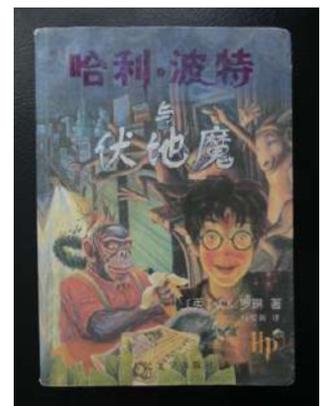
For more information, see <https://cld.web.ox.ac.uk/home>

Understanding Authenticity in China’s Cultural Heritage Project

A project lead by Dr Anke Hein (Oxford) and Dr Christopher Foster (SOAS)

In this project, we explore the construction of “authenticity,” and its consequences, in relation to China’s cultural heritage - those objects, texts, and intangible practices concerned with China’s past. How do standards for authenticity change in time, space, and between various object- or text-types, and why? Who arbitrates what counts as authentic, and from where does that authority stem? Who made forgeries, how did they circulate, and what was their economic effect? How has forgery been used to contest ownership of the past, to enact political protest, or push intellectual programs? How do current anxieties over authenticity impact the management of China’s cultural heritage today? The present project is interested in not only conceptual issues, but also in the practical ramifications they have for work done in cultural heritage management, museums, antiquities trade, collecting, and of course academic research.

The project commenced during the 2019-20 academic year with a targeted network that has brought together scholars in various fields from Oxford and other local universities, together with stakeholders from various other cultural heritage organizations, museums, libraries, auction houses, and law firms, to hold roundtable meetings and other discussions about authenticity in China. This current 2020-21 academic year, we have initiated a seminar series with virtual talks that reach a broader, global audience. On 16-20 March 2021, we look forward to holding a larger international conference on this topic, hosted virtually at Oxford, that brings together experts to discuss “authenticity” and China, in respect to (1) art and material culture; (2) texts and manuscripts; (3) museums, collections, and displays; and (4) cultural heritage management. We warmly welcome any interested colleague to contact us at understandingauthenticity@gmail.com and join our mailing list, to learn of and participate in future events.



Digital Resource 'The Mao Era in Objects' Website

Objects were of crucial importance during the Mao Era. Think of the famous Little Red Book, propaganda posters or colorful Mao badges. These have become synonymous with life in China after the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. Besides such well-known examples, there were of course many more objects that profoundly shaped how people experienced the first three decades of Chinese Communist Party governance, including enamel washbasins, furniture, radios, wristwatches, bicycles, money, textiles, many kinds of print publications, and much more.

'The Mao Era in Objects' is a new digital resource created by Jennifer Altehenger, Jessica Rawson Fellow in Modern Asian History and Associate Professor of Chinese History, who works on the material history of the People's Republic of China. It aims at educators, students, and anyone interested in the history of modern China and can be accessed at <https://maoeraobjects.ac.uk>. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK and built by King's College Digital Lab, the website offers more than twenty interactive biographies of famous and more obscure objects of China's Mao period (1949-1976), and also includes a range of primary sources from photos and propaganda posters to translated newspaper articles, memoirs, videos and other materials. Please do get in touch if you have any questions about the resource.



Featured Books

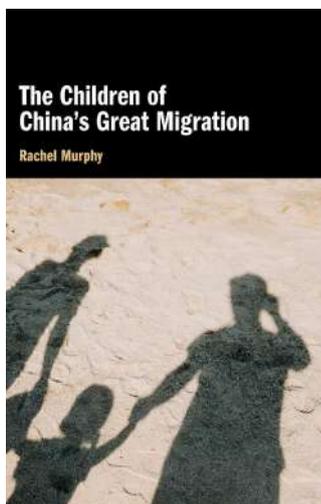
Rachel Murphy

The Children of China's Great Migration
Cambridge University Press, 2020

Rachel Murphy's latest book explores the impact of this great migration on childhood and on family relationships in China. The book's unique approach involved interviewing 'left-behind' children who lived in the landlocked eastern provinces of Anhui and Jiangxi over a period of five years, thereby bringing children's voices into conversations about national strategies for capital accumulation in a wider context of global market integration. Rachel also interviewed the children's caregivers, as well as migrant parents and rural teachers.

The book further explores children's experiences of reconfigured gendered and intergenerational family relationships, refracted through a lens of gender and family culture. For instance, children whose mothers had migrated could feel especially let down natural caregivers had 'dumped' them.

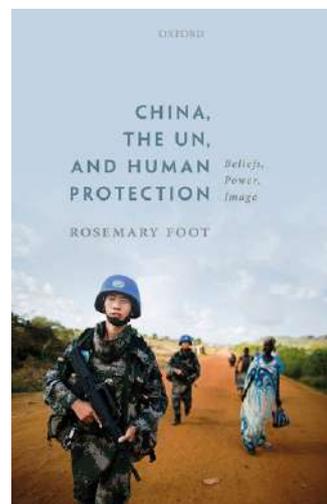
Children of home-alone fathers and lone-migrant mothers recognised that their parents faced social censure because gender norms prescribed a breadwinner father. Meanwhile, children in skipped generation families negotiated relationships made complex by tensions between migrants and grandparent caregivers. Many children in skipped generation families also visited their migrant parents during the summer holidays, though few saw much beyond the room where their parents stayed.



Rosemary Foot

China, the UN, and Human Protection
Oxford University Press, 2020

Over a relatively short period of time, Beijing moved from passive involvement with the UN to active engagement. How are we to make sense of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) embrace of the UN, and what does its engagement mean in larger terms? Is it a 'supporter' that takes its fair share of responsibilities, or a 'spoiler' that seeks to transform the UN's contribution to world order? Certainly, it is difficult to label it a 'shirker' in the last decade or more, given Beijing's apparent appreciation of the UN, its provision of public goods to the organization, and its stated desire to offer 'Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind'. This study traces questions such as these, interrogating the value of such categorization through direct focus on Beijing's involvement in one of the most contentious areas of UN activity—human protection—contentious because the norm of human protection tips the balance away from the UN's Westphalian state-based profile, towards the provision of greater protection for the security of individuals and their individual liberties. The argument that follows shows that, as an ever-more crucial actor within the United Nations, Beijing's rhetoric and some of its practices are playing an increasingly important role in determining how this norm is articulated and interpreted. At stake in the questions this book tackles is both how we understand the PRC as a participant in shaping global order, and the future of some of the core norms that constitute global order.



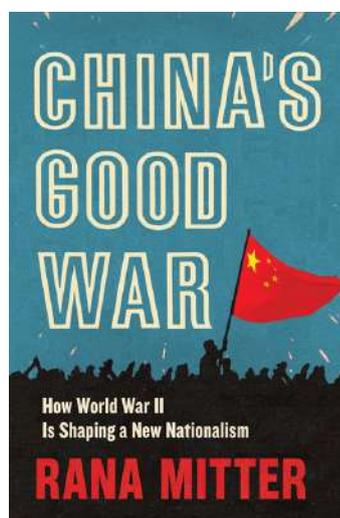
Rana Mitter

China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism
Harvard University Press, 2020

For most of its history, the People's Republic of China limited public discussion of the war against Japan. It was an experience of victimization— and one that saw Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek fighting for the same goals. But now, as China grows more powerful, the meaning of the war is changing. Rana Mitter argues that China's reassessment of the World War II years is central to its newfound confidence abroad and to mounting nationalism at home.

China's Good War begins with the academics who shepherded the once-taboo subject into wider discourse. Encouraged by reforms under Deng Xiaoping, they researched the Guomindang war effort, collaboration with the Japanese and China's role in forming the post-1945 global order. But interest in the war would not stay confined to scholarly journals. Today public sites of memory— including museums, movies and television shows, street art, popular writing, and social media—define the war as a founding myth for an ascendant China. Wartime China emerges as victor rather than victim.

The shifting story has nurtured a number of new views. One rehabilitates Chiang Kai-shek's war efforts, minimizing the bloody conflicts between him and Mao and aiming to heal the wounds of the Cultural Revolution.

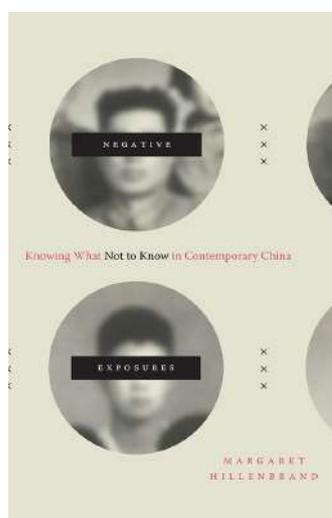


Margaret Hillenbrand

Negative Exposures, Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China
Duke University Press, 2020

When nations decide to disown their troubled pasts, how does this strategic disavowal harden into social fact? In *Negative Exposures*, Margaret Hillenbrand investigates the erasure of key aspects of such momentous events as the Nanjing Massacre, the Cultural Revolution, and the Tiananmen Square protests from the Chinese historical consciousness, not due to amnesia or censorship but through the operations of public secrecy. Knowing what *not* to know, she argues, has many stakeholders, willing and otherwise, who keep quiet to protect themselves or their families out of shame, pragmatism, or the palliative effects of silence. Hillenbrand shows how secrecy works as a powerful structuring force in Chinese society, one hiding in plain sight, and identifies aesthetic artifacts that serve as modes of reckoning against this phenomenon.

She analyses the proliferation of photo-forms — remediations of well-known photographs of troubling historical events rendered in such media as paint, celluloid, fabric, digital imagery, and tattoos—as imaginative spaces in which the shadows of secrecy are provocatively outlined.



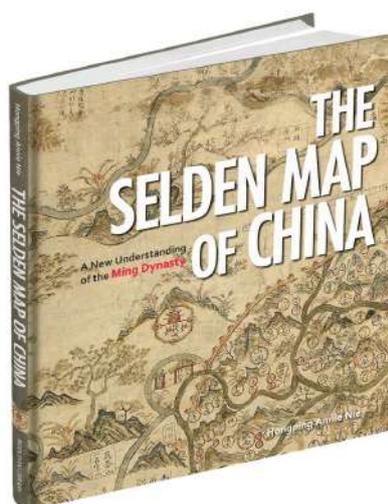
Hongping Annie Nie

The Selden Map of China: A New Understanding of the Ming Dynasty
The Bodleian Library, 2019

Dating from the seventeenth century at the height of the Ming Dynasty, the Selden Map of China reveals a country very different from popular conceptions of the time, looking not inward to the Asian landmass but outward to the sea. Discovered in the stacks of the Bodleian Library, this beautifully decorative map of China is in fact a seafaring chart showing Ming Dynasty trade routes. It is the earliest surviving example of Chinese merchant cartography and is evidence that Ming China was outward-looking, capitalistic and vibrant.

Exploring the commercial aims of the Ming Dynasty, the port city of Quanzhou and its connections with the voyages of the early traveller Zheng He, this book describes the historical background of the era in which the map was used. It also includes an analysis of the skills and techniques involved in Chinese map-making and the significance of the compass bearings, scale and ratios found on the map, all of which combine to represent a breakthrough in cartographic techniques.

The enthralling story revealed by this extraordinary artefact is central to an understanding of the long history of China's relationship with the sea and with the wider world.

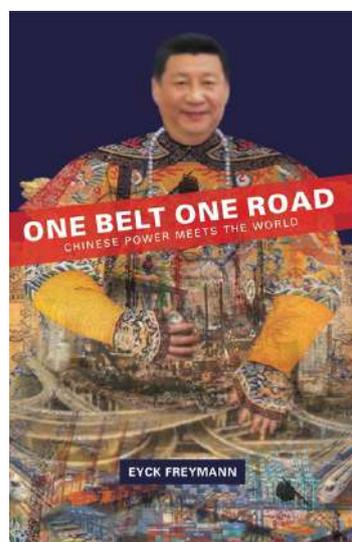


Eyck Freymann

One Belt One Road: Chinese Power Meets the World
Harvard University Press, 2020

In 2013, Chinese leader Xi Jinping announced a campaign for national rejuvenation. The One Belt One Road initiative, or OBOR, has become the largest infrastructure program in history. Nearly every Chinese province, city, major business, bank, and university have been mobilized to serve it, spending hundreds of billions of dollars overseas building ports and railroads, laying fiber cables, and launching satellites. Using a trove of Chinese sources, author Eyck Freymann argues these infrastructure projects are a sideshow. OBOR is primarily a campaign to restore an ancient model in which foreign emissaries paid tribute to the Chinese emperor, offering gifts in exchange for political patronage. Xi sees himself as a sort of modern-day emperor, determined to restore China's past greatness.

Many experts assume that Xi's nakedly neo-imperial scheme couldn't possibly work. Freymann shows how wrong they are. China isn't preying on victims, Freymann argues. It's attracting willing partners—including Western allies—from Latin America to Southeast Asia to the Persian Gulf. Even in countries where OBOR megaprojects fail, Freymann finds that political leaders still want closer ties with China.



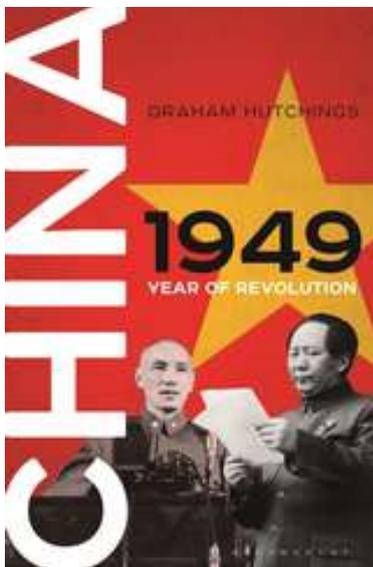
Featured Books

Graham Hutchings

China 1949: Year of Revolution
Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021

The events of 1949 in China reverberated across the world and throughout the rest of the century. That tumultuous year saw the dramatic collapse of Chiang Kai-shek's 'pro-Western' Nationalist government, overthrown by Mao Zedong and his communist armies, and the foundation of the People's Republic of China.

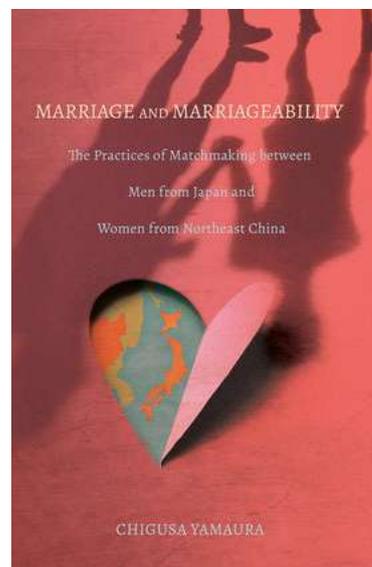
China 1949 follows the huge military forces that tramped across the country, the exile of once-powerful leaders and the alarm of the foreign powers watching on. The well-known figures of the Revolution are all here. But so are lesser known military and political leaders along with a host of 'ordinary' Chinese citizens and foreigners caught in the maelstrom. They include the often neglected but crucial role played by the 'Guangxi faction' within Chiang's own regime, the fate of a country woman who fled her village carrying her baby to avoid the fighting, a prominent Shanghai business man and a schoolboy from Nanyang, ordered by his teachers to trek south with his classmates in search of safety. Shadowing both the leaders and the people of China in 1949, Hutchings reveals the lived experiences, aftermath and consequences of this pivotal year -- one in which careers were made and ruined, and popular hopes for a 'new China' contrasted with fears that it would change the country forever.



Chigusa Yamaura

Marriage and Marriageability: The Practices of Matchmaking between Men from Japan and Women from Northeast China
Cornell University Press, 2020

How do the Japanese men and Chinese women who participate in cross-border matchmaking—individuals whose only interaction is often just one brief meeting—come to see one another as potential marriage partners? Motivated by this question, Chigusa Yamaura traces the practices of Sino-Japanese matchmaking from transnational marriage agencies in Tokyo to branch offices and language schools in China, from initial meetings to marriage, the visa application processes, and beyond to marital life in Japan. Engaging issues of colonial history, local norms, and the very ability to conceive of another or oneself as marriageable, *Marriage and Marriageability* rethinks cross-border marriage not only as a form of gendered migration, but also as a set of practices that constructs marriageable partners and imaginable marriages. Yamaura shows that instead of desiring different others, these transnational marital relations are based on the tactical deployment of socially and historically created conceptions of proximity between Japan and northeast China. Far from seeking to escape local practices, participants in these marriages actively seek to avoid transgressing local norms. By doing so on a transnational scale, they paradoxically reaffirm and attempt to remain within the boundaries of local marital ideologies.

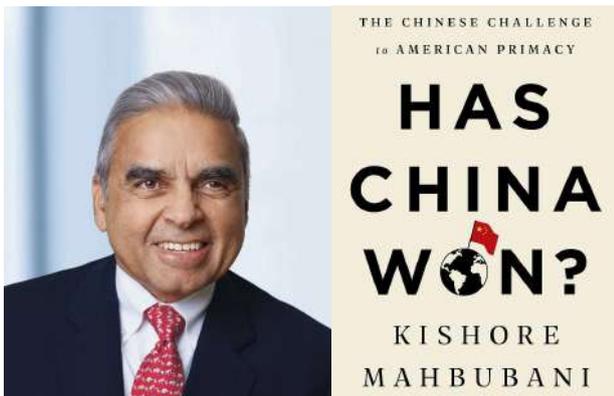


Events and Talks

Baillie Gifford Distinguished Speakers Series

The China Centre Distinguished Speakers Series regularly invites internationally well-known speakers from around the world give lectures to our student body as well as to the wider China studie community in Oxford. The most recent speakers were Kishore Mahbubani and Lan Yan.

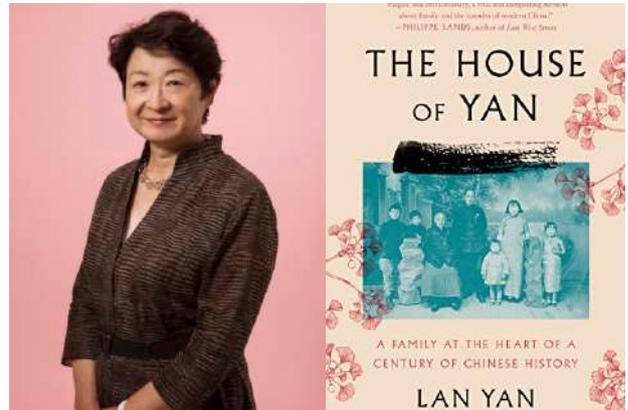
Kishore Mahbubani



A veteran diplomat, student of philosophy, and author of eight books, Kishore Mahbubani is currently a Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Mahbubani is also a former President of the UN Security Council (Jan 2001, May 2002) and the Founding Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (2004-2017). Kishore Mahbubani spoke about the major geopolitical contest between the US and China that will shake the world over the next few decades. He focused on the deep structural forces driving this contest, the mistakes made by both sides and potential solutions. He also discussed the implications and options for other regions and countries, including ASEAN and Singapore. Kishore Mahbubani's talk was based on his new book *Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to America's Primacy* (PublicAffairs, 2020).



Lan Yan



Author Lan Yan spoke about her fascinating family history, discussed in *The House of Yan: A Family at the Heart of a Century of Chinese History* (HarperCollins, 2020). The history of the Yan family is inseparable from the history of China over the last century. One of the most influential businesswomen of China today, Lan Yan grew up in the company of the country's powerful elite, including Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and other top leaders. Her grandfather, Yan Baohang, originally a nationalist and close to Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, Soong May-ling, later joined the communists and worked as a secret agent for Zhou Enlai during World War II. Lan's parents were diplomats, and her father, Yan Mingfu, was Mao's personal Russian translator. In spite of their elevated status, the Yan's family life was turned upside down by the Cultural Revolution. In recounting her family history, Lan Yan brings to life a century of Chinese history from the last emperor to present day, including the Cultural Revolution which tore her childhood apart. The little girl serves up an intimate account of the history of contemporary China.



The China Centre runs several seminar series on diverse topics related to China during term time open to members of the University and the broader public. If you are interested in receiving information on upcoming events, please sign up for our newsletter at information@chinese.ox.ac.uk

The China Centre Seminar Series

The China Centre Seminar Series is a weekly seminar series, run jointly by members of the Faculty of Oriental Studies and the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies. It covers a range of subjects relating to China, from past to present. Subjects include history, sociology, anthropology, politics, art and technology.

The most recent speaker was

Camille Boullenois from Australian National University. Camille Boullenois is a sociologist and China expert trained at Sciences Po, Oxford, and the Australian National University, works as a consultant at Sinolytics in Berlin. She spoke on the topic 'Poverty Alleviation in China: The Rise of State-sponsored Corporate Paternalism'. Since taking office, president Xi Jinping's government has granted massive funding to what has become China's strongest poverty-reduction campaign ever. Based on the study of detailed budgets in eight rural counties, as well as ethnographic and interview data in a ninth county, Camille Boullenois explored how poverty alleviation programmes shape the distribution of power and resources in rural China. She argued that, the Chinese approach to rural poverty alleviation highlights the emergence of a state-sponsored corporate paternalism that strengthens local hierarchies of wealth and power.



The International Relations of China Seminar Series

The International Relations of China Seminar Series explores contemporary international relations between China and the rest of the world. Areas discussed include foreign policy, security and the economy. There are four lectures each term, hosted by the Director, **Professor Todd Hall**.

The most recent seminar was 'Few Strings Attached: Why Countries Join the Belt and Road Initiative' by Professor M. Taylor Fravel from MIT. Although the motives for China's



development of the Belt and Road Initiative have been well studied, scholars have yet to examine why states seek to join in the first place. This talk sought to fill this gap by focusing on the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that states sign with China to formally join BRI. Based on analysis of these MOUs, it is argued that, overall, the costs for joining the BRI are low but the potential benefits are high. Thus, most states should join the BRI unless they view the costs as higher or the benefits as lower. Specifically, Professor Fravel suggests that democracies and states with close security ties to the United States should be less likely to join because they view joining a Chinese-led initiative as more costly. Professor Fravel and his team's statistical analysis using a new data set of BRI MOUs provides empirical support for this argument. M. Taylor Fravel is the Arthur and Ruth Sloan Professor of Political Science and Director of the Security Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The International History of East Asia Seminar Series

The International History of East Asia seminar Series is a weekly seminar series covers international and transnational history of East and Southeast Asia, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The convenors are graduate students and early career researchers.

The most recent seminar in this series was 'Legitimated Rule through Minority Liberation: China's Incorporation of Muslim Minorities as Presented at Bandung' by **Ariane Ekinci**,

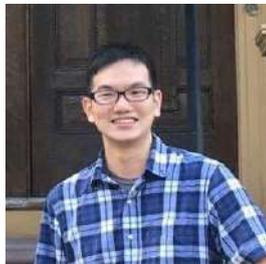


University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the new nation incorporated the historical borderland of Xinjiang, and declared all inhabitants within Chinese subjects. Most sedentary Turkic Muslims officially became ethnic Uyghur minority Chinese nationals. This talk explored how exactly the PRC intended to incorporate Muslim minorities from the fringes of the new nation and how the PRC pitch itself as the legitimate government of its Muslim minorities to majority-Muslim nations, specifically at the Asian-African Conference at Bandung of 1955.

The Digital Tools for Sinology and Beyond Series

The China Centre also hosts the newly launched Talk Series on Digital Tools for Sinology and Beyond run by the project “TEXTCOURT: Linking the Textual Worlds of Chinese Court Theater, ca. 1600-1800” funded by the European Research Council. The goal of this virtual talk series is to bring together various Sinologists and other digital researchers to consider how computational methods can be used to generate new research questions. This series is also meant to provide a platform for scholars across various fields to share their own experience, evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of digitally inflected work, as well as to brainstorm how digital tools may support future research.

The first speaker **Yuan-Heng Mao**, a PhD candidate at Harvard University, gave a presentation entitled ‘Exploring Social Relations in History: A Case of Yuan Literati’.



Book Talks

The China Centre holds regular Book Talks, inviting prominent authors to talk about their research work and findings. Most recently, Rosemary Foot, author of *China, the UN, and Human Protection: Beliefs, Power, Image* (Oxford University Press, 2020) spoke jointly with Rana Mitter, author of *China’s Good War: How World War II is Shaping a New Nationalism* (Harvard University Press, 2020).

Other recent book talks include Bill Hayton on his new book *The Invention of China* (Yale University Press, 2020), Eyck Freymann on his book *One Belt One Road: Chinese Power Meets the World* (Harvard University Press, 2020) in conversation with Rana Mitter, Graham Hutchings on *China 1949: Year of*



Revolution (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), and Rachel Murphy on *The Children of China’s Great Migration* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Upcoming book talks include Luke Patey, *How China Loses: The Pushback against Chinese Global Ambitions* (Oxford University Press, 2021), Michael Pembroke, *America in Retreat: The Decline of US Leadership from WW2 to Covid-19* (Oneworld, 2021), and Andrea Ghiselli, *Protecting China’s Interests Overseas: Securitization and Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

The Mandarin Forum

The Mandarin Forum is a platform for academic exchange among China scholars who are comfortable with Mandarin as medium of communication. It is run biweekly (four talks in each academic term) by **Dr Annie Hongping Nie**. The sessions cover historical subjects and contemporary issues relating to China. The speakers are academics from the UK, China and Japan. The sessions are conducted in Mandarin but the Q&A can be done in both English and Mandarin.

The most recent talk was ‘Bureaucracy and Political Mobilisation in China’s State Governance’ by **Xianglin Xu** from Peking University. Xianglin Xu received his PhD from the University of California



at Irvine. He is currently Boya Professor, Director of the Centre for Chinese Government and Governance, and Chair of the Academic Committee, the School of Government, Peking University. He is the author of *Social Transformation and State Governance in China: Theory, Path and Policy Process* published by Springer Singapore in 2020.

His lecture explored the bureaucratic system and political mobilisation in China’s modern state governance. Focusing on the structure of state governance, it analyses the operation of bureaucracy and political mobilisation at the level of local governments, highlighting the role the Party’s political movements plays in the structure of the state power and the possible dilemma it may cause.

News from the Bodleian Library

**Mamtimyn Sunuodula, Head of East Asia Section,
Bodleian Libraries**

We greet the lucky year of the Ox with a number of exciting new developments at the Bodleian Libraries' Chinese Section. Following are some highlights from recent months:

1. A book upside down: the first Chinese book in Oxford

Oxford University's first Chinese book which was bought in 1604, has appeared for the first time in the University's online catalog SOLO: <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/permalink/f/89vilt/>

The book is an incomplete copy of an annotated edition of 《四書》 (Four Books) covering only part of 《論語》 (Anelects) and 《孟子》 (Mengcius), edited by late Ming dynasty scholar Su Xun. The book was published in 1573 in Jianyang in northern Fujian. It was of inferior print quality with erroneous characters in both the title and the text and printed on cheap paper, an indication that the book was intended for popular consumption rather than scholarly purposes. The book contains an inscription written by Sir Thomas Bodley, who founded the Bodleian Library in 1602, giving 1604 as the date of purchase and the name of the donor. But the inscription was written on the verso of the back cover while the book was held upside. Clearly, Sir Thomas did not know the Chinese language and nobody else on the British Isles did at the time and for at least another two centuries. No other known copy of this edition survived today, the Bodleian copy survives perhaps for the very reason that it was not used at all for more than two centuries and no one was able to tell its inferior quality and intended purpose.



Bodleian Library continued acquiring Chinese books in subsequent centuries and now holds over ten thousand volumes of Chinese antiquarian books currently housed in Weston Library. Thanks to a generous donation from Chung Hon Dak Foundation, these books are now being

systematically digitized and preserved. More than a thousand titles in full-text are accessible to anyone around world from Digital Bodleian: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>

2. Essential resource for studying modern China

Most students of Chinese before the advent of the digital research tools would be familiar with the venerated six volume index to modern Chinese periodical literature, 《中國近代期刊篇目彙錄》。Compiled by Shanghai Library, which holds the most comprehensive collection of modern Chinese periodicals, it was considered as one of the essential reference tools for studying modern Chinese history. Now not only the index is available online, the whole collection of over twenty thousand pre-1949 Chinese periodicals have been digitized and is made available for researchers and students in Oxford. Separately, we are trialling access to a collection of 120,000 Chinese book titles published between 1800-1949 until the end of April and in the process of negotiating interlibrary loan access to post 1949 periodical articles from Shanghai Library. For further information on this and other online Chinese resources, please visit our website at: <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ccl/e-resources> , or email Chinese.Librarian@bodleian.ox.ac.uk to recommend new resources or for queries.

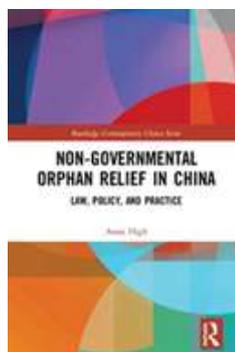
3. From Allegro to SOLO: improving access to Chinese collection

The successful migration and integration of the entire 200,000 plus Chinese catalogue records from the separate in-house Allegro system into the standard Bodleian Library management system, now enables readers to discovery all our Chinese collections in one place in SOLO. The immediate benefits for our readers include:

- All Chinese material (including rare books and electronic resources) can be discovered and accessed via SOLO
- The database can be searched in simplified or traditional Chinese characters, in or pin yin.
- Bodleian books can be requested seamlessly using the request function in SOLO
- Lending material in KB Chen Library can be borrowed using the self-issue machine
- Chinese material can be integrated in online reading lists in ORLO
- Streamlined ordering and processing of Chinese material speeding up the process for our readers and saving valuable staff time and resources for the Library.

Aнна High Wins The 2020 ALSA Distinguished Book Award

The 2020 ALSA Distinguished Book Award Committee has unanimously decided to award the 2020 ALSA Distinguished Book Award to Anna High, for her book *Non-Governmental Orphan Relief in China: Law, Policy, and Practice* (Routledge, 2019).



Anna High completed her DPhil in Socio-legal Studies in 2012 under the supervision of Professor Fernanda Pirie of the CSLS and Professor Rachel Murphy of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies. A review of the book has been published in the [Asian Journal of Law and Society](#).

Using field studies and in-depth interviews across rural and urban China, the book presents a socio-legal analysis of non-state organised care for some of China's most vulnerable children. It describes the context in which abandonment occurs and the care provided to children unlikely to be adopted because of their disability. It also explores the various faith groups and humanitarian workers providing this care in private orphanages and foster homes in response to perceived deficiencies in the state orphanage system, in the context of a broader societal shift from 'welfare statism' to 'welfare pluralism'.

Eyck Freymann published his book with Harvard University Press

Eyck Freymann, a doctoral candidate in Area Studies (China) at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, supervised by Professor Rana Mitter and Professor Paul Irwin Crookes, published his book *One Belt One Road: Chinese Power Meets the World* with Harvard University Press in 2020. (See page 12).

His research examines why democratic countries engage with China's One Belt One Road initiative, and how Chinese mega-projects influence their domestic politics. Eyck holds an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, where he was a Henry Scholar; an AM in Asian Studies from Harvard University where he won the Joseph Fletcher prize for top thesis in Asian studies; and an AB in East Asian History with highest honors, also from Harvard.



Johanna Costigan published an essay in the Los Angeles Review of Books

Johanna Costigan published an essay on Los Angeles Review of Books China Channel entitled *Who Controls the Future: Contested Memories of WWII on the Chinese Internet*. It is based on her thesis for MSc in Contemporary China Studies at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies supervised by Dr Annie Hongping Nie.



The title of the thesis is *Memory-Making of China's War of Resistance Against Japan on the Chinese Internet: A Study of Museum Visitors' Douban Diaries*. It examines how users of the social media platform Douban respond to public and private war museums in China, arguing that their skepticism toward the state narrative poses an ontological security threat for the Chinese government. Please click the link for more information: <https://chinachannel.org/2020/10/30/ww2-douban/>



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