

CHINESE CULTURAL GROUP MERTON

SUMMER 2014 ISSUE

1st July 2014



Cicada & Bamboo-ZHAO SHAOÁNG, 1905-1998 (China)

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Welcome to an exciting Summer issue: life in chaotic Kunming, the decline of the Hakka dialect in Mauritius, the history of Human Energy by a long-standing teacher of Wing Chun and Human Energy, Chinese checkers, symbols, herbs and cuisine, a look at Chinese films and a forthcoming exhibition of the Ming treasures which will whet the appetite for a profound knowledge of Chinese culture.

Word from the Chair - Sissi Wong

Who doesn't enjoy this time of the year when Wimbledon is hustling and bustling filled with strawberries and cream, pink bubbly in plastic glasses and those happy tennis fans coming from all corners of the world again. I do hope you absorbed the most from this joyful atmosphere (xi chi) and are proud that our group, if you ever thought about it, in geographical terms, is the nearest Chinese group on earth to the All England Lawn Tennis Club.

Feet on the ground, first I would like you to join me in giving a big thank you to the Wimbledon Guild for their continued support in providing not only the venue, but also an annual grant which is the only way of sustaining our group.

To be able to run the group meetings smoothly, we are grateful that we have a few dedicated core members who attend our gatherings, come rain or shine, and also contribute their time and effort to help ensure the events run smoothly. I am sure you know their faces. We must not forget Helen Marti who, although she is a part-time staff member of the Guild, is working voluntarily for our group producing a very high standard newsletter/magazine which is a time consuming task. Furthermore, Ivy, our treasurer, has never failed to show up to collect the fees and produce professional statements for our group. Sadly, Ivy has expressed her intention to step down from her role and I wish to take this opportunity to thank her on the group's behalf. At the same time, I ask you to consider volunteering for this work.

Despite the gradual decline in the membership numbers, attendance is in fact on the way up. This may be due to our investment in the art session and the regular Taiji teaching classes. I do hope you appreciate and find our programme interesting. Thank you to those who brought their friends along to our meetings and I hope they enjoyed them and would like to continue coming. Let us carry on beating the drum for our group.

Like the true British and Chinese cultures, we too promote a multi-cultural approach and our group is open and most willing to adapt, accept new ideas and change. We welcome your comments, suggestions and any new information that will help us to improve and run our group better for everyone.

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Paul Hider 海德

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Life in China - Article #10

Countryside people - “Wild and welcome chaos”



My first five years in China were spent in countryside towns, working with “Voluntary Service Overseas”. These were not exactly mud hut villages, but you could certainly catch a horse and cart to the shops, and tractors would chug down the high street. Students might walk an hour to school through the mountains and any local spotting a foreign face had something to tell their friends. My last seven years have been spent in Kunming which, despite a population of 6.5 million was ranked, until very recently, as a third tier city in China – not even in the top 50. The contrast between urban and rural areas in China is vast, not just in terms of infrastructure or poverty levels, but in the customs and mindset of the inhabitants. Visitors to Kunming often remark on how unsophisticated the city feels, despite being the Provincial Capital of Yunnan. Horse and carts are now banned from the streets, but there are still signs up to remind people. Bus and rail stations are surrounded by hordes of flip-flopped families carrying huge plastic sacks to take back home and city roads get congested with minivans bumped up on the pavements selling local produce. This all becomes particularly evident on National Holidays, when countryside folk flock to the city to see the bright lights and skyscrapers, while city dwellers flock to the countryside for fresh air and local food.

I sometimes drive to work and sometimes take the bus. The former is like a ride on the bumper cars. Rules are there to be broken. You frequently find motorbikes heading your way on the wrong side of the road or cars stopping dead in the road without warning and for no apparent reason. My Chinese wife insists that most of the erratic driving is by “countryside people”, who don’t know the rules of the city roads and are used to doing U-turns wherever and whenever they like. (In China, owners of expensive cars have to pay for damage to owners of cheaper cars in the event of an accident and I’m sure some owners of old bangers take advantage of this!). But on the bus my heart lifts when I see a large group of countrysiders jumping on board, with huge sacks of grain or live chickens in hand. They are noisy, their clothes are half-worn out and they often smell! But they are just so happy. They shout to each other, laughing and joking, they care for each other’s children and they never complain about their lot. The city locals, dressed smartly and carrying fake Chanel handbags, look at them in disgust and murmur complaints. But to me – as an ex-countryside dweller myself – they bring a wild and welcome element of chaos to the sometimes predictable and pretentious lifestyles here.

Is the Hakka dialect dying? By Jacques K. Lee

Jacques K. Lee cogitates on the decline of the Hakka dialect and its consequences caused by cultural, political and economical marginalization in Mauritius.

In some countries where there are so few Hakka-speaking Chinese left, such as in Mauritius, the future of our dialect is predictable. In the Fifties and Sixties, when Chinese of my generation were growing up, we spoke Creole, the lingua franca of this country, among our friends: at school, at play and in the streets. But at home our parents spoke to us only in Hakka, so that we didn't become fan kwee (foreign devils).

Some parents were so worried about their children becoming fan kwee that they sent them to China. More precisely, to our ancestral villages in Meixian, Guangdong province. They believed that only there would they receive a Chinese upbringing and education and be inculcated in tong sinn.

The meaning of tong sinn is well understood by Hakka children but not so easy to explain to non-Chinese speakers. It's an all-encompassing word meaning several things, such as: having a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and mentality, speaking the language, respect for parents and obedience to the elders.

In Mauritius, being sent to China was also a common threat by some parents to get their children to do as they were told. 'If you don't behave like a Chinese, we'll send you to China.' Many were put on the boat to China; some were only toddlers.

The intention of these parents was for their offspring to spend just a few years in Meixian but many of these children never saw their parents again or not for several decades. Those who went before World War II got stuck in China after the outbreak of the war and those who went after 1945 were unable to leave due to the civil war and later because of the Cultural Revolution.

The next generation of Chinese parents, born in Mauritius, were less strict with their children regarding speaking Chinese at home. Some of these parents, although they understood Hakka, didn't themselves speak it as their main language.

With the first generation of Chinese from Meixian dying and the current one dwindling as they emigrate to countries such as Canada and Australia, the number of regular Hakka speakers among a Chinese population of some 20,000 is perhaps fewer than 5,000. Hardly enough to keep the language going.

Strangely enough, as Hakka is losing the battle, Mandarin is gaining popularity among some students, not just Chinese but as many non-Chinese ones, as is the case in the UK. There are now also thousands of young Chinese immigrant contract workers in Mauritius. However, as they are from different parts of China and therefore speak different dialects, Mandarin is becoming more important out of necessity. Sadly it is inevitable that the next generation of Chinese on this island will not be speaking the dialect of their ancestors.

In the rest of the world, however, the outlook for the Hakka dialect is more optimistic. Where there are large Hakka communities, the language is even flourishing. There are some 90-100 million Hakka speakers worldwide. In Taiwan, for example, we're so numerous that television news is also broadcast in the Hakka dialect.

Other encouraging signs as far as the survival of this dialect is concerned include the creation of an official romanization of the Meixian Hakka dialect by the Guangdong Provincial Education Department. The capital of this province, Guangzhou, with a population of over four million, is regarded as the heart of the Hakka people or the Hakka capital.

There is now at least one Hakka language dictionary, by C F Lau, ISBN 962-201-750-9. The number of films and CDs in Hakka is also increasing all the time whilst books in other languages are being translated into Hakka, such as the popular children's book, *Le Petit Prince*.

This is the last in this series of articles on Hakka Chinese.

History of Human Energy by Austin Goh

Austin Goh is a dedicated and well-respected energy practitioner and teacher in human energy and chi practices. His autobiography, "My Journey - Memoir of a True Master" is now available in Amazon Kindle and <http://shopsifu.com> www.austingoh.com



The art of human energy treatment has been passed down for centuries through the Chinese masters. In China today energy treatment plays a key part in modern treatment practices and is becoming increasingly recognised in the west, however here there is a barrier of scepticism surrounding alternative practices. I am committed to working with the scientific community to document the significant physical changes produced by energy treatment. Hopefully this will help to convince the sceptics that energy treatment does actually work.

Chi kung exercises were developed by Taoists over

2,500 years ago. They all have a common purpose which is to attempt to transform the natural energy of chi, found throughout the universe, into a form which can be of good use to boost the human body for a long and healthy life.

This energy can be absorbed from the outside, compressed, stored, and used in different ways within the body. Soft exercises are practised to move chi around the body in order to clear energy blockages. The free flow of chi to all internal tissues and organs will promote good health.

As there have been so many types of chi kung exercises developed over the years I found it confusing and no one can practise all of it. Some consist of too many complicated movements, techniques which might take ten lifetimes to learn. I therefore decided to refine the chi kung training programme in order to make it easier to understand and so that you can learn it in a more accessible way.

I call it the Human Energy Training Programme.

Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without. (Confucius -551-479 BC)



Chinese Checkers by Alex Roney

This is a board game played by 2-6 players based on a strategic race on a star shaped board. The modern game is called Halma. Despite its name, it did not originate in China but in Germany. In 1892 it was marketed in the US as "Hop Ching Checkers" - and this became Chinese Checkers! It is not to be confused with Chinese Chess - which is another game altogether...

So now you know !!

王之渙 (唐)

五言絕句

登鶴雀樓

白日依山盡 黃河入海流
欲窮千里目 更上一層樓

Wang Zhihuan (Tang dynasty AD618-907)

Five-character-quatrain

At Heron Lodge

Mountains cover the white sun,
And oceans drain the golden river.
But you widen your view three hundred miles,
By going up one flight of stairs.

Szechuan Cuisine (川菜) by Sissi Wong

Bang Bang Chicken 棒棒雞 (cold dish)

Sesame-paste sauce: (you can make it in advance)

1 tbsp brown sugar

2 tbsp warm water (to dissolve the sugar)

1 tbsp malt vinegar (rice vinegar)

1 tbsp light soy sauce

1 tbsp sesame oil

2 tbsp sesame paste or smooth peanut butter



Serves 4

For authentic restaurant taste you will need MSG, Szechuan peppercorn oil and chilli oil.

Mix all above ingredients together until they form into a single cream consistency.

4 chicken thighs (with bones)

2 ginger slices (1mm) (same function as bay leaves)

1 litre of water

1 large or 2 small cucumbers (choose slim ones)

1. In a pot, put the ginger in 1 litre of water and bring to the boil. When boiling, put the chicken in and cook for 12 minutes. Switch off the gas and then let it steep for 5 more minutes. Remove the chicken and let it cool. Retain the water for making soup , sauces, etc.
2. Cut the cucumber into large matchsticks.
3. Tear the meat from the bones into smaller pieces about the size of a small finger. Bang the cooked chicken with an empty wine bottle or a rolling pin to tenderise it.

To serve, lay the cucumber on a dish and pile the chicken on top, then pour the sesame paste sauce on top of the chicken.



10 Chinese medicinal plants you can find in your garden - by Sissi Wong

It is well known that the Chinese use almost everything in our planet for their medicines, however I would like to show you a few plants that we can find in our garden. This information is provided to you mainly for your interest and is not intended to encourage you to try.

plant found in many gardens, and widely cultivated for its abundant, fragrant flowers in Spring. The flowers are used to stimulate the menstrual flow and to treat constipation. It is to be used with caution in cases of pregnancy.

1/10-Cheiranthus cheiri L (桂竹香 Guizhuxiang)

Also known as wallflower, it is a popular ornamental

http://libproject.hkbu.edu.hk/was40/detail?lang=en&channelid=1288&searchword=herb_id=D00864

What Next? By Eugene Byrne

First of all, the British Museum has a must-see exhibition from 18th September 2014 to 5th January 2015, *Fifty Years that Changed China*, the all-important Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644). That apart, our Committee has recently decided, reasonably enough, that after the course of 23 talks on history to 1949, completed last year, we should have a break from history and that probably members would now prefer to know more about modern China.

The huge ongoing changes in life in China occupy much of the media, but it's difficult to pull all of it together to fit into a coherent programme. Undoubtedly the best format is the personal reminiscence: Maureen Bird's recent account of her childhood under the Japanese occupation was a splendid and fascinating example, but still that was some years ago. So if anyone can introduce a speaker who has been there more recently, please do let Helen Marti know, 020 8286 9372.

Meanwhile we're embarking on a short examination of modern Chinese film, with a showing of the multi award-winning *Rickshaw Boy* from Lao She's novel, in four instalments to fit into our timetable. When I was studying in Beijing in 1969 I used to see Mao-period films, fearful black-and white productions, third-rate in every respect. A leading actress was Mao's widow Jian Qing, one of the Gang of Four who were prominent in the Cultural Revolution: she was later tried and received a prison sentence but committed suicide during a release for medical treatment. But meanwhile the Beijing Film Academy, founded in 1950, survived the Cultural Revolution and began to produce outstanding students, notably



Emperor Xizong (1605-1627) - Ming Dynasty
http://www.china.org.cn/top10/2011-09/02/content_23343011_8.htm

the famous Fifth Generation, led by such as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige, and others who produced great films such as *Rickshaw Boy*. That story should be very interesting, perhaps in next year's programme.

Copies of these films aren't easy to obtain and that places a burden on the indefatigable Helen Marti, but I hope to be able to help her with that in future. Meanwhile our most popular activity, the Tai Chi exercises organised by Alex Roney continue to attract. If you have any ideas, comments or suggestions on all this I'm sure the Committee would be glad to have them, via Helen.



The Committee will arrange a group visit to the British Museum on 7th October 2014. For further information on the *Fifty Years that Changed China* exhibition:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/ming.aspx

For Chinese film enthusiasts: A Century of Chinese Cinema runs at BFI Southbank from June-October 2014
<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/century-chinese-cinema-introduction>

The Kingston Rotary Dragon Boat Challenge - 20th July 2014 from 10.00 to 16.00 hrs

The annual Rotary Dragon Boat Challenge takes place at [Canbury Gardens](#) - Kingston upon Thames.

CCGM PROGRAMME: July-December 2014

All meetings are conducted in English for anyone interested in Chinese culture at Drake House, 44 St George's Road, London SW19 4ED on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, beginning with 45 minutes of Taiji Qigong Shibashi exercises followed by a talk or activity. £3.00 per session (Tea & refreshments included). Leonie Tarratt will continue with Taiji Qigong exercises once a month and lead a specific type of Taiji for treatment or prevention of arthritis, back pain, diabetes, and a special variation for over 55's. The programme is subject to change.

£5.00 for annual membership from 1st April to 31st March. **Please note that from September, the meetings will start at a new time from 3.00-5.00 pm.**

Date	Time	Programme	Speaker
1st July	3.30-5.30 pm	AGM Rickshaw Boy 骆驼祥子 (DVD Part 2)	Sissi Wong Eugene Byrne
15th July	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Rickshaw Boy 骆驼祥子 (DVD Part 3)	Leonie Tarratt Eugene Byrne
August - Closed for the Summer break			
2nd September	3.00-5.00 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Mid Autumn Festival Celebration	Leonie Tarratt Sissi Wong
16th September	3.00-5.00 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Chinese Art	Leonie Tarratt Dong Yang
7th October	TBC	British Museum Visit: Ming - 50 Years that changed China (Contact Helen for more details.)	Sissi Wong
21st October	3.00-5.00 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Mahjong	Leonie Tarratt Helen and Vincent Chiew
4th November	3.00-5.00 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Chinese Art- Chinese designs for Christmas cards.	Dong Yang
18th November	3.00-5.00 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Sun Yat Sen	Leonie Tarratt Eugene Byrne
2nd December	3.00-5.00 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi The Wonders of Korea: Korea is a country with an extraordinary past, a vibrant present and a promising future. We take a look at Korea's past art treasures, and at its modernisation in shipping, IT and construction.	Alex Roney Matthew Jackson
16th December	3.00-5.00 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Christmas Celebration with Carol Singing	

Mythology and Symbolism of Cicada by Helen Marti

In the previous article on The Four Gentlemen in Summer 2013 issue, the bamboo is said to represent the summer season in Chinese art. Bamboo is a Chinese symbol for longevity because of its durability, strength, flexibility and resilience.

The cicada is considered a summer insect in Japan and China as it usually goes under the soil during winter, and emerges out of it and flies into the sky during summer which signifies rebirth. As the cicada is one of the longest living insects, living up to 20 years, it's regarded as a Chinese symbol for longevity or immortality. The Chinese placed jade objects in their tombs as early as the Neolithic period (about 4000 BC). During the Han Dynasty, cicadas made of jade were placed on the corpse's tongue before burial as it may have stood for resurrection after death. Jade has been highly regarded for its protective powers in this life and the afterlife, and the Chinese believed that, after death, it preserved the corpse. In Taoism the cicada is the symbol of the hsien or soul disengaging itself from the body at death. Due to the 'rebirth' aspect of the cicada, one would wear a jade cicada as a Feng Shui protector when one is undergoing a big change in one's life.

Ancient Chinese people regarded the cicada as a symbol for noble and unsullied qualities due to its exposure to the nature world. That's why an ancient scholar would express his nobility by comparing himself to a cicada. In China, the phrase "to shed off the golden cicada skin"(金蝉脱壳, pinyin: jīnchán tuōqiào) is the poetic description of the tactic of using deception to escape danger, specifically of using decoys (leaving the old shell) to fool enemies. It became one of the 36 classic Chinese stratagems. As



they have a unique loud and buzzing sound, the cicadas would usually warn a farmer of a pending bad storm. This is because they 'cry out' by making a distinctive noise when a bad storm is coming, even if the storm is still two days away. They are nature's natural weather forecasters. According to Feng Shui experts, wearing a cicada would offer protection against back stabbing and danger.

Many people around the world regularly eat cicadas. They are known to have been eaten in Ancient Greece as well as China, Malaysia, Burma, Latin America, and the Congo. Female cicadas are prized for being meatier. Shells of cicadas are used in the traditional medicines of China.

https://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/asia/j/jade_cicada.aspx

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicada>

<http://characters.cultural-china.com/173.html>

<http://sanaakosirickylee.wordpress.com/2012/02/27/cicada-a-symbol-of-good-rebirth-change-and-protection-against-bad-luck/>

<http://www.artvalue.com/auctionresult--zhao-shaoang-1905-1998-china-cicada-and-bamboo-3826735.htm>

Chinese Cultural Group Merton

We welcome your contributions and feedback, and would love to hear from you about Chinese culture, history, food and contemporary events. Please email to chineseculturalgroup@gmail.com or contact Helen Marti relating to any queries on Chinese activities and programme updates.

Check <http://issuu.com/ccgm/docs> for our archive file.

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For more information, contact

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