

CHRISTIANITY IN THE REINVENTION OF CHINA

ARCHBISHOP ROWAN WILLIAMS REFLECTS ON CHINESE CIVIL SOCIETY

NUMERICAL EXPANSION in Chinese Christianity in the last couple of decades has occurred at an unprecedented rate. A rate which continues to surprise and alarm some of those observing it. It's surprising partly because of the ambiguous history of Christianity in China, a history marked both by a high level of cultural and political engagement by the Jesuits in the 17th century, and by a very unashamed alliance with foreign interference and colonial power in the 19th century. In spite of that, China is moving towards having the largest Christian population in the world. A safe guess would be 50-80 million Protestants in China today.



Christianity in China: more complex than a field ripe for conversion

Picture: Chinafotopress

Cultural Fascination

We're not only dealing with numerical expansion, but also cultural fascination. Considerable numbers of Chinese working in academic religious studies and social studies have become intrigued by, and sympathetic to, the Christian tradition, and particularly the interweaving of theology and culture in the history of Western Europe.

This has generated the beginnings of a theological and philosophical set of enterprises within institutions of higher education, sometimes referred to as Sino-Christian theology. When I visited the Chinese

Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing I was astonished at the high level of sophistication with which the history of Western Christianity and its concepts were discussed.

Party attitudes

Very gradually, the attitude of the government and the Party towards religion has shifted. Religion is no longer something which must be abolished as soon as possible. It is, at the very least, a phenomenon which is there for the foreseeable future. The Party has to learn to live with religion and religion has to learn to live with the Party.

In recent years much of the talk has been about

Household Revolution

Jason Tower

investigates the homeowner backlash against developers and the implications for local democracy

Page 4



Youth Culture

Duncan Hewitt

explores the weird and wonderful networks of modern China's "indie" youth culture (left)

Page 8

Changing Chongqing

Alex Needham

reports on the many contrasts and the searing heat of one of China's most dynamic cities

Page 14

GBCC Projects

Catch up on the GBCC's latest projects including the June launch of the Death Penalty project

Pages 12 and 13

China's aspirations to be a harmonious society. Those aspirations include religious harmony and the harmony of religious groups, not only with one another, but with China's overall aims and social and political goals.

People ask "is there religious freedom in China". On my visit we were assured at every turn that religious freedom is guaranteed. We were also told, that what religious freedom means is not always what the West might understand. Whilst there may not be systematic persecution of Christians or churches, or indeed other religious bodies apart from certain designated sects, there is a situation of endemic uncertainty about what religious bodies may expect from the government. Regional governments may decide to make an example of local Christian groups and registered churches.



The Archbishop at Chaoyang Church in Beijing

Reinventing China

The reinvention of China means that long process by which China is reconfiguring its role in the world, re-imagining the possibilities within its own social framework and political structures, working out notions of citizenship and reshaping its economy. There are, at least, three areas in which the Chinese polity is moving slowly with some sense of genuine uncertainty in this process of reinvention. And in these three areas the issue of the treatment of religion, in general, and Christianity, in particular are focal.

Religious registration

It has been said of China that the Party decides policy and the state translates it into legislative practice and guarantees, protects or forbids activities of a whole range of social interaction. The Party franchises, legitimises activities. This means that there are questions about the independence and professional identity of the judiciary, for example. There are issues about voluntary organisations, the NGO principle, and there are issues about religious association. Within that model of Party and state, it is perfectly intelligible that the notion of an unregistered, unfranchised religious body is, politically, deeply offensive and difficult. If a religious body

chooses to form a regular association outside the structures of party and state it becomes something which compromises political unity, which has been for centuries a major neuralgic concern for the Chinese people. Unity matters. Unity is guaranteed by the Party through the state. So, religious bodies that don't seek a franchise at the state level are not just a practical problem but also an ideological problem.

The flourishing of Chinese Christianity has depended on religious-free enterprise, on large numbers of small, semi-independent churches, growing in the countryside, but also among the professionals in many cities. The state-approved Christian network has not been able to keep up with that energy and expansion, although it is itself expanding at an impressive rate.

Unregistered churches regard the Christian establishment as fatally compromised, controlled by spineless liberal theologians who have capitulated to Marxist ideology. Unregistered churches are regarded by the leadership of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and China Christian Council as irresponsible sectarians committed to occult, mysterious, dangerous, and disruptive activities. If, to put it rather crudely, the unregistered churches regard the Three-Self Patriotic Movement as simply a subdivision of the Party, the rhetoric of some in the leadership of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement suggests that they regard unregistered churches as not far from sectarian bodies like Falun Gong.

The existence of unregistered religious bodies is a focal ideological problem and the resolution of that is not to be sought simply by a counter-rhetoric about religious freedom but by a general set of questions about how China moves towards being a more pluralist society. These questions are bound up with the future of legal institutions and NGO culture, both developing at an extraordinary rate.

Regional variations

One of the disturbing and deeply problematic facts about China in the last few years has been the rise in the number of people from the regions who want to see central government exercise more control and direction over regional government, so that regional abuses can be corrected by appeal to a more dependable authority. There have been public demonstrations and there is a rising tide of dissatisfaction about a situation, in which, regional government often appears to be virtually unaccountable.

Clamp downs on religious practice are patchy and rather arbitrary in character. They vary from region to region and from time to time. The 2004-5 regulations on religious affairs give regional authority a high level of responsibility in this area, therefore, you might say, providing the tools to suppress or attack certain religious

bodies, unregistered religious bodies when it suits them.

There is a general problem about regional or national government in China illustrated and sharpened up by reflection on the situation of religion within that context. Where is the Court of Appeal against arbitrary local action?

International interaction

In the self-understanding of the official Protestant Church in China, the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, a central place is occupied by the idea that this is a church wholly Chinese, in its understanding, administration and operational autonomy. The relations between China and the Vatican have been bitter precisely because the Vatican is seen as a power intervening from outside.

The global economy means that old models of national sovereignty no longer work. But here, in relation to the church the issue is focused, and sharpened. What sort of relationships are possible and appropriate between Christian communities within China and Christian communities throughout the world? In the 1950s the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was set up as a post-denominational Christian body, a body in which all previous denominational missions were absorbed. Therefore, it is set up on the assumption that it does not have structural links, let alone obligations to any Christian institution or body anywhere else in the world. The problem here is not the global economy and nation-states as much as the fact that an isolated and under-resourced national Christian body will sooner or later face challenges about the adequacy and resourcefulness, for example, of its training operations. One of the things, which took us to China was an invitation to discuss with theological educators possible and appropriate forms of international cooperation in theological education.

Volunteer society

In Shanghai, at the beginning of our visit, I had the great pleasure and privilege of spending the morning with a local NGO, connected with environmental matters. I spoke to a number of young professional people, spreading the word about environmental education to their contemporaries and to school children in the region. They were hugely enthusiastic and a great inspiration. At the end of the session, they said “we would have liked you to tell us a bit about Christianity, because

Christianity is something that motivates people to do things like the things we’re doing”. As our visit unfolded, that kind of conversation was reproduced more than once. After the collapse of a strongly isolationist and top-down system, post-Cultural Revolution, after the reconstruction that followed, many Chinese people seem to have become aware of a void of motivation. What is it that makes you positively work for a society where the less advantaged are fairly treated, where there is a commitment to the common good that goes beyond what is simply enforced by law? A great many Chinese people have said Christianity is one of the major engines for

social motivation and we need ways of drawing that energy into the social enterprise.

The challenge is to create a more responsible society in which the volunteer principle is more readily accepted. At a time when non-governmental organisations are burgeoning everywhere in China in the most extraordinary and creative way, it is clear that there is a sense that the state is not and will never be a universal provider and, therefore, a passive citizen body is something to be left behind. People have to be motivated to take responsibility for the common life.

Some people involved in those NGOs have religious motivation, some don’t, but the point is that the role of socially morally motivated philosophy in a changing society like China is potentially enormous. Issues of rule by regulation, top-down assumption, and appeal against local abuse and collaboration and

cooperation with foreign resources need to be addressed. As China moves away from the assumptions about the Party’s omni-competence and omni-presence towards a situation in which civil society becomes a clearer, more visible reality, then issues in relation to religious bodies as well as other bodies will have to be grasped.

Conclusions

China is well on the way to becoming the most heavily Christianly populated country on the globe. Is this going to be just an accident, a contingent matter of demographics; is it going to be a bare fact that there are quite a lot of individuals who profess Christian principles; or are there ways in which the Christian witness can contribute to China’s rethinking of itself? A great deal of what we heard and saw in China suggested that there was considerable potential for the latter.

Rowan Williams is the Archbishop of Canterbury. He made a formal visit to China in October 2006. This article is an extract from a talk given at Chatham House in April 2007.

Picture: Chinafotopress



Volunteers litter pick at Namtso lake, Tibet

HOUSEHOLDER'S REVOLUTION

JASON TOWER INVESTIGATES INCREASINGLY ACTIVE HOMEOWNERS

ZHANG PENG LEANED, shocked, against the rail looking down from the second floor as his neighbours below struggled to gain control over the microphone. Three individuals dressed in black sprang out from the back of the auditorium, one of them landing a solid right hook to the chin of Liu Deqin, the election moderator. The nine candidates and forty odd residents erupted in chaos as two police officers restrained the election moderator while two additional officers ushered the attackers out of the building. Fifty-five year old Peng Zhangpo picked up her young grandson exclaiming "this is more chaotic than the Cultural Revolution!" As the police attempted to restore control, the outgoing deputy chair grabbed the ballot box and along with two election committee officials fled to the safety of a sedan parked outside. With the ballot box safely stowed away, candidates, election officials, lawyers and NGO workers met in a coffee house three blocks away to plan moving the counting and tabulation of the ballots to a neutral site.



Protests against developers at Beijing House Expo

Picture: Chinafotopress

Raising the stakes

What was at stake in this election that would bring sixty plus Chinese citizens to blows, and attract the attention of so many lawyers, NGO workers and journalists? Times Manor, a community of around 600 homes and close to 1500 residents was in the process of electing the second-term board members of its homeowners committee. During the election campaign, several candidates said they were in favour of changing the community's property management company. Opponents opted not to participate, and to obstruct the election. The elections attracted much more attention than elections to the district level People's Congress and the local Resident's Committee, on paper the lowest level of official grassroots governance. Of those at the Homeowners Committee election only one reported having voted in the Resident's Committee election.

The academic Benedict Anderson argued that murders of parliamentary candidates indicated reforms in governance – at a minimum it demonstrated that positions were important enough to kill for. It further indicated that the elections themselves were meaningful – if the results could be easily cooked, there would be no need to murder unwanted candidates. While there are no

authoritative statistics on how widespread violence is within homeowners committees, according to the Chinese publication *Quan Heng* violence has occurred in over 60 communities in Beijing between 2003 and 2006. Both candidates and elected board members have been attacked by knife-wielding thugs, had electricity and water shut off or sabotaged, or received death threats.

A housing revolution

What are these committees doing? What is at stake? Why would residents focus their concerns here rather than on official government elections?

Prior to 1979 the only way to obtain housing was through one's *danwei*, or work unit. It allocated houses to its employees on the basis of status and length of employment. The market played no role. Similarly, issues of community management and maintenance were the responsibility of the *danwei*. On a practical level there was very little that an employee needed to do in terms of managing his property. As Deng Xiaoping began to consolidate power, and China entered the post-Mao era, urban housing along with many other features of Chinese life, underwent a revolution.

In 1979, three years after the death of Chairman Mao, with the financial backing of a Hong Kong investor, the PRC developed its first commercial housing project. Nestled just over 100 kilometres from Hong Kong in Guangzhou's city centre, the three hundred plus housing units that make up East Lake New Village were the first homes in three decades to be sold on the market to private owners. Chinese citizens that had done well during the early reform years could now buy housing on a semi-open, but horrendously under-regulated market.

The complete lack of a regulatory framework led to major problems. In many parts of the country not only were developers not required to consider issues such as provision of individual power or water meters, the regulations that were in place were rarely enforced. In neighbouring communities developed between 1989 and 1995 in Chengdu known as the Five Gardens Communities, residents were not provided with drinkable water, the temporary electricity used for construction was not converted to permanent electricity, and the developers retained control of all of the communal assets. Just a year after moving in, residents found cracked walls, broken pipes, and even structural defects to the exterior walls of the buildings. To make matters worse, the property management companies charged with maintaining the new property were doing little more than collecting fees. In Ziyu Shanzhuang, a late 1990s Beijing development, these ran as high as 2400 Chinese yuan (260 dollars) per unit per month, slightly more than Beijing average income that year.

For others their homes were never even constructed in the first place. As demand for commercial housing outpaced supply, homes were sold up to 18 months before they are built. Developers and property sales companies exploited loopholes in the regulations to prevent this. Many developers run out of funds before communities can be completed, leaving residents with only a concrete foundation or without promised communal assets. Official statistics for Guangzhou place the number of “*lanweilou*” or “unfinishable” housing projects at 132. Most housing projects in Guangzhou range from 1000 to 5000 units. This means that over 100,000 purchasers have been affected in just this one city.

Violent reaction

China’s urban homeowners are not taking these issues lightly. Since the mid-90s increasingly large groups of residents have mobilised to press developers, property management companies and local officials to live up to their promises.

In most cases residents have been frustrated. Only as communities began to get violent did the government begin to regulate the behaviour of developers and property management companies. In the Five Garden Communities, neighbourhood activists were attacked with knives after pressuring the developers to deal with basic infrastructural issues such as running water. After these incidents the local government set up a committee charged with working with residents to resolve issues left behind by the property developers.

Government failure, homeowner action

Local government’s inability to resolve problems led residents to find ways to take matters into their own

hands. From 1994 onwards, groups of residents began organising autonomously into homeowners associations, electing a small number of homeowners to a Homeowner’s Committee. The committees spread rapidly through the 1990s. In 1996 they were awarded a legal status, although not a formal permit for autonomous organisation. Only in 2003 with the implementation of the Property Management Regulations by the State Council, were residents finally given limited space to self-organise into Homeowners Associations. These associations rapidly became the focal point of community activism throughout China.

Lack of legal status impedes groups from taking legal action against developers or property management companies, but the relative lack of interference in their affairs, and their growing ability to affect changes to community governance has made these organisations increasingly attractive to individuals with political aspirations, and private residents interested in improving the management of their communities. It is difficult to ignore the ways in which local governments, property managers and corrupt homeowners are co-opting these organisations but the number of popularly elected homeowners committees operating with relative independence is now estimated at over 1000 nationwide.

Many of these organisations are firing their developer-appointed property management companies and hiring their own, or even taking over responsibility



Contesting banners placed on the front of the community hall at Times Manor (Top) “Boycott illegal elections conducted without government sponsorship;” and “Participate in the Homeowner’s Committee elections, make every vote count!”

themselves. At Times Manor a small number of residents with ties to the property developer had tried to block moves by the homeowner’s committee to replace the property management company. The company’s guards were often found asleep, rubbish was not removed, and simple maintenance tasks not performed. Residents reported security guards breaking into vehicles and the company had torn down election notices and other documents posted on the community bulletin board.

Dramatic developments

These changes have major implications. Citizens are no longer sitting passively by as developers and bureaucrats make decisions for them. In June 2007 in a Guangzhou community over 100 homeowners organised to stop the local government's Urban Planning Department from making arbitrary changes to the community plan which would virtually eliminate the community's common grounds. In Beijing, over 400 residents in neighbouring communities organised to block a government plan to replace a local park with a rubbish dump. Meanwhile in Chongqing, a city-wide coalition of more than 50 Homeowners Committees drafted a new law on community management giving committees a wide range of new rights. Submitted to delegates of the local People's Congress, official sources indicate that these issues were being brought into consideration as the city began drafting new property management regulations.



A group of residents in the city of Chengdu organise to protest the discovery that the property developer had sold each housing unit multiple times. The graffiti on the wall reads "We want our homes; each home has been sold several times!"

Citizens are learning the meaning of democracy. While most homeowners committees rely on the leadership abilities of dynamic individuals, or what community governance expert Shu Kexin refers to as "the George Washingtons of China's new communities," they are also drafting articles of association and structuring their community governance to include divisions of power and other checks and balances.

Important limitations

While these changes are cause for optimism for the future of civil society and democracy, there are important limitations. First, many citizens have difficulty accepting majority rule when they are not in the majority. One resident of Times Manor said in an interview that true democracy should mean that "no action is taken until all members of the community have reached a unanimous decision." Second, many committees withhold information from citizens when they find the truth inconvenient. One Chengdu community failed to inform residents that the two property management companies that residents had to

chase from had close ties to the committee chair. Third, local governments have observed the popularity of these organisations and limited their ability to conduct free elections. Often, Neighbourhood Committees, the lowest level of local governance, co-opt resident's efforts to organise Homeowners Committees, and meddle with elections. In Times Manor the government is currently attempting to void the results of the recent election and organise a new ballot without the participation of the newly-elected committee members.

A middle class movement

Perhaps most importantly these organisations demonstrate that the middle class is no longer satisfied with just reaping the monetary benefits of economic development, and has now shifted to making broader demands about the way their communities are governed. Since 2003, these demands have begun to aggregate at the city level in major urban areas. In Beijing, Chengdu, Chongqing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, city-wide associations of homeowner committees are pushing for major changes not only at the micro-level, but also to legislation. In the lead up to China's new Property Law in 2007, which recognised that private property should receive the same protection and have the same status as government owned property, each of these organisations held a series of events whereby citizens could learn about government proposals, offer suggestions for changes, and in many cases communicate directly with policymakers who were often invited, or perhaps more accurately pressured to participate in these events.

For over three years the Chinese government has been campaigning for the development of a harmonious society, hoping that its citizens will avoid asserting additional pressure on the state. Community organisation has left many Chinese communities in chaos as residents fight for their rights against developers, property management companies and local government bureaucrats. Oddly, at the end of this struggle the Chinese government might just get what it wants – harmony in the community. Yet the form it takes may be entirely different from what the Party expects. For the first time in Chinese history, the building blocks of society may become entirely private spaces governed democratically by Chinese citizens. While it is still far too early to tell how Chinese communities will ultimately develop, it is certain that changes with serious implications for the foundation of Chinese society are taking place. As the director of the Homeowner's Committee at Times Manor put it "I am lucky to have been elected to this position, as many people do not realise it yet, but these committees are training grounds for the future of governance in China."

Jason Tower is a Political Scientist at the University of Michigan and currently a visiting fellow at Peking University



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

School
Of
East Asian
Studies.

Postgraduate Degrees in Chinese Studies.

Available by Distance Learning and on campus:

- MSc in Chinese Language, Business and International Relations*
- MSc in Chinese Business and International Relations

Also available (on campus only):

- MA in Chinese Studies
- MSc in East Asian Business
- MSc in the Political Economy of East Asia

*If you wish to focus on learning Chinese, you can choose to take just the language modules from the DL degrees.

The School of East Asian Studies (SEAS) is at the forefront of developing degrees for professionals who wish to work within a specifically Chinese or broadly East Asian context. These degrees—which can be pursued either at Sheffield or via Distance Learning from anywhere in the world—prepare you to meet this challenge.

For further information:

School of East Asian Studies
The University of Sheffield
Sheffield S10 2TN, United Kingdom
www.seas.ac.uk

On campus degrees:

Tel: + 44 (0) 114 222 8401

Email: seas@sheffield.ac.uk

Distance Learning degrees:

Tel: +44 (0) 114 222 8428

Email: seas.dlc@sheffield.ac.uk

www.seas.ac.uk

RURAL RESETTLEMENT

CALUM MACLEOD VISITS A VILLAGE RESISTING LAND EXPROPRIATION

FIREWORKS THUNDERED OFF the walls of Phoenix Mountain and lit up the stone alleys and stilt houses above the River Wu in February, part of New Year's celebrations that go back 1,700 years here.

This year's festival was the last for the old town. Most of Gongtan was to disappear beneath the Wu's waters in June when the river gorge is flooded for a dam and hydropower project.

"I didn't set off any firecrackers this year," says retired miner Ran Daifa, 57. "I was unhappy in my heart."

In the weeks since the gloom in Gongtan (pop. 21,000) has lifted a bit. Through guile, resolve and faith in a petition system that dates back to China's emperors, townspeople appear to have forced authorities to sweeten the compensation to residents who must move from their homes next month.

Seizing land

It would be a rare victory. Chinese authorities have confiscated land from millions of peasants for development. Along the Yangtze River, the government has forced 1.2 million people to relocate as part of the Three Gorges Dam project. About 150,000 more must move by the time it is complete in 2008.

Seizures of land have sparked anger across China's countryside. In 2005, the government reported 87,000 mass protests, many linked to land expropriation. Protests and violent clashes over property confiscation were partly behind the national parliament's recent passage of modest new protections for private property.

Acceptance

In recent years, Gongtan has become a magnet for savvy backpackers and culturally conscious Chinese tourists. A rare slice of imperial-age river life in a nation swept by change. Heavy timbers anchor wood-and-stone *ganlan*-style houses, some of which date to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Lanterns illuminate slab-stone alleyways and wood latticework that trims many of the homes.

Unlike residents of other doomed towns, most Gongtan residents accepted the fate of their town when they learned in 2004 that it would be submerged by a new dam. "It's a shame to lose our old houses and culture, but we support the project. The country needs electricity," says Zhou Wei, 37, a teacher.



A woman with a picture of her house in Guilin village taken before she was forced to move as part of the Three Gorges Dam project

Picture:Chinafotopress

Protest

What infuriated residents was local officials presenting a take-it-or-leave-it financial package and not consulting them. Authorities offered each household the equivalent of \$3 to \$6 per square foot for their houses, plus \$40 in moving expenses and a \$250 rent allowance.

In the first of several protests, more than 200 townspeople gathered beside the river in January 2006. They dipped their thumbs in ink, placed thumbprints and signatures on a document naming representatives they had selected to talk with the government. By December, residents still had no response from local authorities, and placed three of their own candidates alongside official candidates in district elections.

Gongtan hair salon owner, Ran Jingsong, says he was the leading vote-getter, but "the government refused to appoint me." Instead, he got a warning from the local party boss not to take part in any more protest activities. People in Gongtan demonstrated again in January and February. The protests were peaceful, but anger showed. They hung a banner vowing to "oppose until death forcible relocation."

Petition

Some in the town argued that officials in the central government would be more compassionate. "The top leaders in Beijing are good, but our local leaders are corrupt," says Luo Yixiong, a mother of two. So in February, residents met in secret and asked Luo and four others to travel 1,500 miles to Beijing. The five, chosen for their ability to articulate arguments and speak formal Mandarin, set off on a three-day journey to the capital.

In Beijing, they joined hundreds of other

petitioners outside the State Council Letters and Visits Bureau. The office is a modern-day version of the system of last resort installed centuries ago by Chinese emperors to rectify injustice. Their presence was risky, bound to enrage officials back in Gongtan. And while petitioning is legal, only a tiny number of petitions succeed. In addition, petitioners are often rounded up by police who hunt for them in the cheap Beijing hostels where many spend the night. The Gongtan group stayed in the home of a friend to avoid being arrested before they could present their case.

Back home, local officials organised a joyless New Year's celebration and tried to persuade townspeople to sign compensation contracts. Earthmovers to be used for demolition were parked ominously by the river. Residents sat silently through speeches by party officials, who played taped applause over loudspeakers. "It's all fake," resident Lu Xianhui said at the time. "They bussed in song-and-dance acts to persuade us to sign contracts, but the real people of Gongtan won't sign."

Central inspection

In April Gongtan got a sign that its pleas had been heard. Provincial inspection teams arrived, dispatched by Chongqing province authorities, contacted by the petitions bureau in Beijing. A county boss came by with a new offer: \$11 a square foot in compensation, plus 10 times the original moving fees and rental allowance. "Their attitude is much better than our local Gongtan officials," resident Ran Jingbo says. "They want us all to move out completely by the end of (April), so they are trying to meet our demands."

Kevin J. O'Brien, University of California, Berkley, wrote in a recent *China Quarterly* that the persistence of ordinary Chinese sometimes pays off. "Unlawful fees are revoked, illegal land grabs are reversed, and corrupt cadres are dismissed. But more often than not ... petitioners' representatives meet repression."

Some in Gongtan are not confident. Luo, the mother who went to Beijing, says county police have warned her against further "illegal activities." "I still don't believe in our government," she says. 300 residents protested again in April outside local government offices, demanding apologies and written contracts.

Gongtan's activism rankles local Youyang county leaders. Zhang Chunming, a county official who has worked on the town's move, says Gongtan residents have rejected the same relocation packages offered to other people living along the River Wu. "Only a quarter of Gongtan's people have signed the government contract, and we are already past the March 5 deadline to start moving the town," Zhang says. "They think they are different because Gongtan is called 'Chongqing's No. 1 cultural and historical town.' But historical value is intangible. Their requests for extra money will be endless, and they should accept what they have been offered."

Jason Tower, a China scholar at the University of Michigan, says Gongtan has already beaten the odds. Chinese academics studying the petition system have concluded that only one in 500 petitions succeeds. He says "It's extremely rare to win a petition case, or even to get a reply."

Calum MacLeod is China correspondent for USA Today

Cruickshanks

凯律师事务所

Solicitor-Advocates, Privy Council Agents

Sir Peter Blake House, 10 Sherlock Mews, London W1U 6DR

We are centrally located, 5 minutes walk from Baker Street station, serving international clients including Chinese clients. We specialise in:

- ... **Residential and commercial property**
- ... Lease extensions and Freehold Purchase
- ... Company commercial, banking
- ... Litigation work, debt recovery
- ... Intellectual Property, Trade Mark registration
- ... Immigration

Please visit our website at www.lawco.co.uk and

Contact us at: Tel (00 44) **20 7487 4468 x2**, Fax: (00 44) 20 7487 5466,

Email: email@lawco.co.uk

THE GREAT BRITAIN- CHINA CENTRE

DEATH PENALTY PROJECT LAUNCH

In late June the GBCC's second EU funded death penalty project "Moving the debate forward" was launched ...

China remains, amongst the 62 "actively retentionist" countries and is the country with the highest number of death penalty executions each year. One Chinese academic has estimated as many as 8,000 executions a year. Recent developments in China, such as the Supreme People's Court taking back all review of death penalty cases from 1 January 2007, and the requirement that second instance hearings of capital crimes must now be an open trial, show the Chinese government is taking concerns about the use of the death penalty seriously.

The seminar

The Global Survey on Death Penalty Reform and Experience-Learning from Asia seminar marked the launch of the three year, EIDHR-funded "Moving the Debate Forward: China's use of the Death Penalty" project. The seminar was attended by leading experts from the European Union, Asia and China including senior representation from the Supreme People's Court, the National People's Congress Legislative Affairs Commission, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the EU and top academics. Two days of in-depth debate and engagement on the primary issues facing China and Asia on the death penalty followed. A general acceptance of the benefits of restriction, if not abolition, underpinned most arguments, a significant change in the tenor from previous debates.

The seminar was opened by Professor Ma Kechang, a pioneer in the development of Chinese criminal law. He praised the return of the right of review to the Supreme People's Court and the effect that has already had in the reduction in executions since the start of the year. Further speeches included Grand Judges Liu Jiachen and Xiong Xuanguo of the Supreme People's Court speaking of the necessity of reform and

Facts and Figures

- ... Public reports show China carried out 3,400 executions in 2004. The real figure is believed to be higher. One Chinese academic estimates 8,000 p.a.
- ... In 1977 only 16 countries had abolished the death penalty. By 2004 84 had. 120 countries never use the death penalty
- ... 68 crimes are listed in China's criminal law as carrying the death penalty. 28 of these are non-violent crimes



welcoming the project's contribution to the debate.

Over the course of the two days experts delivered a series of speeches, followed by responses and discussion sessions to an eminent audience including Chief Justices of the Supreme People's Court. Professor Zhao, in his analysis of China's current situation, talked about a step by step reduction in numbers subject to the death penalty, stimulating debate on the number of crimes currently eligible for the death penalty and particularly the issue of the death penalty and non-violent crimes. He expressed hope that the project will mobilise people, across China and lead to national change. The challenge now remains to take this informed and reasoned debate out into Chinese civil society.

Next steps

In a themed workshop with a group of thirty senior legislators will be held in Beijing where further discussions will focus on the international trend toward abolition and the legal processes behind those developments. The project will continue with case study research and a survey on public opinion and the death penalty through the autumn and winter 2007-8. The results of this groundbreaking research will be assessed next Spring. Alongside the project will run a series of public forums to stimulate further debate on the death penalty. Other activities including a Europe study tour will culminate in the establishment of a Death Penalty Research Centre, legislative proposals and a final high level seminar at the project's conclusion in 2009.

THE GBCC ROUND-UP...

WANG YINGFAN AT THE GBCC

On the 16th July the GBCC was delighted to host the eminent Mr Wang Yingfan, Vice Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the National People's Congress of China and former Chinese Ambassador to the UN. His talk, supported by the 48 Group, Chatham House and China Policy Institute and the FPC was entitled "Thoughts on Chinese diplomacy." He spoke on four major issues currently facing the Chinese state, including Africa and the environment before answering questions from the audience.



Wang Yingfan with Chair Ben Chapman MP at the GBCC

ERADICATING TORTURE

Human rights training for police will be the focus of the next project activity in the EIDHR-funded Cutting Torture in China project, managed by the GBCC. Over 60 police officers, most of whom will be directors of criminal investigation bureaus, with responsibility for the conduct of investigations in their bureaus and with the authority to promote good practice and develop new guidelines will attend three day training sessions in Dalian in August. Training will focus on eradicating torture and forced confessions by emphasising positive and practical responses to the requirements of international law and instruments for the protection of detainees.

ARRIVAL OF THE IP JUDGES

The GBCC's judicial management training programme is about to enter its tenth providing specialised training to up and coming members of China's judiciary. The 9th year judges, specialising in administrative law, have now completed their exams and placement programme (including shadowing a High Court judge at the Royal Courts of Justice and work experience at barristers' chambers. After working on their dissertations they return to China in mid-August. The 10th group of six judges will arrive in London at the end of the month to attend four weeks of English training before the start of the SOAS academic year. The main focus of study for next year's judges is Intellectual Property law.



Mr Li (second right) is pictured with Lord McNally

DEVELOPING DEVOLUTION

Between the 30th of June and 5th of July, Mr Li Fei, Vice Chairman of the Committee for the Basic Law of Hong Kong and Macao of the National People's Congress led a delegation to the UK. The delegation examined current provisions and evolving trends of devolution in the UK. As well as calls on academic experts they met MPs from the Westminster Parliament, Civil Servants working on devolution and visited the Royal Courts of Justice. Their visit also included appointments at the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff and meetings with the Welsh Executive. Following their research visit the delegation returned to China to continue work that will ultimately lead to the reform of the Hong Kong and Macau basic law.

TACKLING CORRUPTION

Professor He Zengke and his team from the China Centre for Comparative Politics and Economics (CCCPE) visited the UK between the 15th and 25th of July as part of a project to formulate a recommendation to central government for new regulations to tackle corruption. Visits to academics, NGOs, legal practitioners and government agencies provided the delegation with an outline of the current state of anti-corruption work in the UK along with the proposals for improvement.

NEW CHINESE AMBASSADOR

GBCC President, Lord Howe, Chairman, Peter Batey and several Executive Committee members welcomed HE Mme Fu Ying as Chinese Ambassador to the UK at a lunch on 28 June. The lunch was an opportunity to hear from the Ambassador her thoughts on Sino-British relations and the areas for development between our two countries, and for the GBCC to introduce its work and role in the bilateral relationship. The lunch was sponsored by Vermilion Partners.

IN A WORLD OF THEIR OWN

DUNCAN HEWITT DELVES INTO THE BIZARRE WORLD OF COSPLAY

OUTSIDE AN OLD brick warehouse, a policeman looked on in bewilderment at the array of young people straggling down the street and into the courtyard. There was spiky hair, dyed hair, outsize sunglasses, a young woman with a pair of animal ears attached to her head... In the courtyard, two young women and a young man, clad in loose-fitting shiny grey outfits, were entwined in a complex-looking contemporary dance performance; a crowd of students, and a few parents with young children, looked on. Inside the building, its walls stripped down to the bare brick, rough-hewn ceiling beams exposed, young people



Cosplay enthusiasts at a festival in Shanghai

Picture: Duncan Hewitt

wandered among rows of stalls: there were people selling ethnic fabrics and bags, home-made T-shirts, walls of arty photographs. In one corner, several giggling teenagers were having their faces painted; not far away, a young man was selling an array of foreign style and design magazines... Nearby, a young woman, her green-dyed hair shaved in a punk-style Mohican, with a spiked dog collar round her neck and heavily-tattooed arms, rifled through stack of home-made CDs for a customer. From the warehouse space on the floor above came the faint strains of a rock band tuning up.

New networks

It could have been Camden Lock on a Saturday afternoon – but this was Shanghai, on a weekend in April this year, when an old warehouse in a run-down neighbourhood near the city's Suzhou Creek was temporarily converted into the venue for the 'Neo-spring festival.' It was the brainchild of four young people – founders of a website called Neocha. According to one of them, a 25 year old Shanghai electronic musician and DJ who goes by the name of B6, the aim of both the website and the carnival was to provide space for the growing number of young people in China interested in expressing themselves creatively; to make contacts, form networks, exchange ideas. Within a few months, more than a thousand people from around the country – artists, fashion designers, writers, musicians of all kinds – were displaying their works on the Neocha website. According to B6, such people are at the forefront of China's new 'indie' culture. One of his co-founders, American Jon Lombardo, explains: "This is a type of DIY culture – it's almost as though some people in

China are going through their own hippy era, wanting to create everything for themselves. And the internet provides a perfect platform for this."

Artistic expression

One NeoCha user is Wu Jun, a 32 year old musician who, for the past two years, has organised Shanghai's first alternative music festival, Rockit. He says it's inevitable that there should be a greater desire for self-expression among today's young generation: "These days a lot of parents are more affluent, and if they can afford it they encourage their kids to develop creative hobbies – they're much more likely to let them study art than in the past for example." China's one-child policy also means that families tend to cherish their children's abilities more than in the past. Wu Jun sees the results in his studio – "there are more bands these days, the quality is better – and the age of the kids is younger and younger." But the one child policy, and the increasingly competitive nature of society, also means many young people are under great pressure from their families to do well at school; China's education system, with its emphasis on preparing for stringent exams, only adds to the demands – and to the desire of many young people to seek diversions and an escape from the pressure.

Whatever the motivation, all around China, more young people are indulging in their own interests and creating their own worlds – often far removed from those of their elders or mainstream society. The internet has helped. Fans of Korean pop music take part in online forums or fans of a particular star exchange gossip and trivia. It can seem banal – but allows for the creation of networks of people with shared interests – with striking

results. It's evident in the massive mobilisation of young fans in support of contestants in some of the 'Pop Idol' style reality TV shows which have filled China's airwaves over the past couple of years.

The fan phenomenon

On a warm summer evening, outside the studios of Oriental Television in Shanghai, where the final of one such 'star search' programme was being filmed, I met a group of young women who were fans of one of the contestants. They arranged to meet here every time an episode of the programme was filmed, they said, even if they didn't have tickets for the show, in the hope of getting an autograph or a glimpse of their idol. Listening to their cheerful banter, I assumed they must be old friends. "Not at all," said one of the girls, "we met through an internet forum at the beginning of this series." This 'fan phenomenon' reached its high point in 2005, when millions of people voted for the finalists of Hunan Satellite TV's "Supergirls" singing contest - eventually won by the tomboyish Li Yuchun.

This may not be radical or obviously political, but it reflects a growing determination of many young people to pursue their interests. Indeed, the level of organisation demonstrated by fans - who tried to drum up support for their favourite contestants by canvassing not only online but on the streets of some Chinese cities - is believed to have alarmed the government, leading to tighter rules on the management of shows with viewer voting.

Cosplay, confusing?

Some of China's new youth tribes can seem confusing - and on occasions downright alarming - to members of the older generation. 'Easy' and his friends would worry some. An amiable 23 year-old from Guangzhou, with long crimped hair and a pierced nose, he spends much of his spare time onstage, dressed in motorbike leathers or paramilitary uniforms, sometimes clutching a large machine gun, occasionally dressed up as a Japanese samurai warrior; his face painted ghostly white, invariably surrounded by men and women in blue, orange or pink wigs, carrying huge swords and axes. Easy is a devotee of Cosplay ('costume play'), a type of performance originating in Japan, in which fans act out the roles of characters from their favourite cartoon strips and computer games. Cosplay festivals are now a regular feature in many major Chinese cities, attracting fans and participants from across the country. It's a world where the more fantastical the story, the better. As Easy puts it, "it's a chance to make the most of your imagination - you can put all the pressures and problems of daily life to one side and forget about everything. I call it the

'psychological suicide cure' - sometimes I'm Spiderman, sometimes I'm a woman - it really releases a lot of pressure," he adds with a grin. "All young people nowadays like to express themselves," he says. "They want to show their creativity, to perform - often they feel they have talent, but at school or college they don't normally get a chance to express this."

Keeping up with the kids

A few years back, such interests would have been dismissed as the radical fringes of society, but these days the Chinese authorities often seem to be falling over themselves to keep up with such trends. Hangzhou recently hosted the China International Cartoon and Animation Festival, backed by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, with the aim of promoting the development of home-grown animation in China. In part it may simply reflect an official desire to counter the influence of Japanese popular culture on the young generation, and to communicate with them in their own 'language' - hence the recent wave of 'manga'-style animated films and cartoon books on patriotic themes such as the heroism of Communist troops during the Long March and the Anti-Japanese war. The authorities clearly also see the animation industry as a potential money-spinner. Still, the sight of senior government officials sitting on a grandstand outside Hangzhou's Great Hall of the People watching



Young fans gather to try and catch a glimpse of Li Yuchun

Picture: Chinafotopress

an opening procession featuring Cosplay warriors in blue wigs waving sci-fi style weapons suggests that youth tastes are becoming influential.

Some in China's mainstream media explicitly admit as much. "Young people are our most important audience," says a strategist at the Shanghai Media Group, which runs the city's TV stations. The importance of young people, and their greater spending power, to advertisers, means that "if a programme doesn't have any young viewers we probably wouldn't do it." It's led to a visible shift in programme style, with

**Chinese punks**

Picture: Calum MacLeod

a new emphasis on ‘interactive’ audience participation: viewers are now encouraged to send text messages with their comments – however facetious – which scroll across the screen during everything from English Premier League football matches to TV dramas.

Commercial interests have been quick to embrace the ‘creative markets.’ The organisers of Shanghai’s Neospring carnival, launched by trendy Guangzhou youth magazine, *City Pictorial* last year have been invited to cities around the country, and their events often attract ten thousand people a day. New youth stars such as Li Yuchun, the winner of the 2005 Supergirls contest, have become so popular that China’s post office even issued a set of stamps in her honour.

Indeed a survey by the prominent polling company Horizon underlined the power of the young generation. It showed that in many urban families, children and teenagers dominate conversations, talking twice as much as their parents, and leaving their grandparents overawed with their knowledge,

confidence and understanding of new technology.

The DIY mentality

Whether China’s young people really have the power, or the will, to exert their influence on serious social issues is a question which has yet to be answered. Some observers still see much of the new youth culture as escapist, and easily manipulated by commercial or political interests. But others see the increasing focus of many young people on their personal concerns as political in itself – a sign that they are more aware of individual rights. Some young people do seem to have translated their wish to organise and participate in communities of their own choosing into social activism. “I want to work with oppressed groups in society,” said one young law student I met, who was working as a volunteer at a gay cultural festival. Others have thrown themselves into environmental activism – staff at Greenpeace China say they have been surprised at the level of environmental consciousness among young people. Students at some universities, for example, have demanded that their colleges stop using brands of paper suspected of coming from illegally logged forests. These young activists are undoubtedly still in the minority – but the potential of the young generation’s “DIY” mentality should not be underestimated.

Duncan Hewitt is former BBC China correspondent. He now writes for Newsweek and other publications from Shanghai. His book on contemporary China, “Getting Rich First: Life in a changing China” was published by Chatto and Windus in May



The magazine that gives you Asia in the time it takes for lunch

CLIMATE CHANGE

JOHN ASHTON ASSESSES A STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

“CHINA DOESN'T CARE about climate change, so why should we”: so goes one argument in the UK. Such a view is both wrong and dangerous. The Chinese are well aware of the challenges an unstable climate poses. They know that climate security and energy security are two sides of a pivotal dilemma we all share: we all need to keep growing our economies and this requires energy, much of which will continue to come from fossil fuels. But our common dependence on fossil fuels destabilises the climate, threatening the conditions necessary for continued growth and stability, and makes us vulnerable, as consumer economies, to rising dependence on potentially uncertain supplies of imported oil and gas.

All countries, including China, need to resolve this dilemma. Success will depend on investment. The International Energy Agency says that the world will spend \$21 trillion on energy infrastructure by 2030. China expects to deploy \$2 trillion of that between now and 2020. The challenge is to ensure this investment gives us energy security and economic development, while delivering a global transition to a low carbon energy system, that is taking emissions out of three sectors: electricity, transport and heating. That means governments and the private sector working together in the biggest public private partnership ever devised.

Europe can play a crucial role in driving this global transition. The far-reaching and ambitious package of decisions taken at the Spring European Council this year aims to take emissions out of the power sector by 2020. All new fossil power plants should by then be equipped with carbon capture and storage (CCS). This is a clear signal for others, including China, that for European government, industry and society, building a low carbon society is not just a possibility, it is a necessity. And far from crippling our economies, those who lead the inevitable global transition to low carbon will achieve enormous competitive advantage.

A global transition

China needs to be part of the global transition to low carbon. If it is not then that transition will not succeed and China's own economy will be exposed to serious damage. This will require frameworks that enable China to move to low carbon in ways that are consistent with its other goals, including developmental.

In other words, the choices China makes for energy security need to be the same as those necessary to deliver a transition to low carbon. The cost of low carbon choices in China - what US commentator Tom Friedman calls the “China price” - needs to be not significantly



Coal: China's major energy dilemma

Picture:Chinafotopress

higher than the cost of meeting China's energy needs as effectively as possible.

Achieving this will be challenging but entirely possible. Our experience in the UK is showing that we can reduce emissions rapidly without damaging the economy. In fact, in most areas, the demands of energy security and climate security reinforce each other. This is obviously true in the case of energy efficiency and renewables. China has shown some real determination to reduce the energy intensity of its economy.

A particular challenge will be coal, and the need to move as quickly as possible to the application of CCS with all new plants. China is currently installing more than two GW of new coal fired capacity every week. The carbon lock-in from these plants alone poses a real threat to China's economy. But China needs the additional cost of CCS, and the associated energy penalty, to come down as far and as fast as possible. A global push on CCS, building on the EU's initiative, is the answer.

Well designed measures to stimulate two-way trade and investment in low-carbon technologies, goods and services would make it cheaper for customers in the EU and China to make energy efficient, low carbon choices and commercial benefits for our companies, since our combined scale gives us the opportunity to set global technology standards. These benefits will only arise with cooperation at a strategic level, with coherence across a wide range of policy areas including trade, investment, energy, technology and climate.

It will of course be for China's policymakers to decide on the aims and content of China's energy law. But investors are keen to hear a clear signal about the direction in which China intends to go, in the short, medium and long term. That signal should point towards a future for the Chinese economy that integrates energy security and climate security.

John Ashton is UK Special Representative for Climate Change

POWER AND THE PEOPLE

KERRY BROWN ANALYSES THE MOST PEOPLE INFLUENTIAL IN CHINA

Who runs China? Or, more accurately, who runs China this year? Are they different to those that ran China last year and the year before? This is the question the Chatham House/Open Democracy China Power List seeks to answer. It is the first list issued on China that deals specifically with power and influence. There have been long running China Rich Lists and an Asian Power list but never specifically a China Power list.

In April, I, with the help of veteran China journalists John Gittings, Wily Lam, Frank Ching, and Jasper Becker, Chinese think tanks, arts and business contacts, placed on the Open Democracy website, in conjunction with Chatham House, a provisional list of 50 figures I felt had influence in modern China. The draft list contained figures that split into five camps – politics, commerce/economics, intellectual, social and cultural.

The list had, of course, the major political figures: Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, Zeng Qinghong, Wu Yi. It had writers like Wang Shuo and directors such as Zhang Yimou. It had entrepreneurs like Jack Ma Yun of Ali Baba, and China's wealthiest woman of 2007, Zhang Yin. It had media figures like Li Yuchun who won the Supergirl competition on Chinese TV in 2005 and intellectuals like Hu Shuli, editor of the magazine, *Cajing*. It had the basketball star, Yao Ming, the President of Taiwan, Chen Shuibian, George W Bush, and the leader of the Falungong, Li Hongzhi.

On its release, the list was covered by papers and blogs in the US, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan and, most pleasingly, think tanks in Beijing. After nearly three months online, gathering comments, and votes, the list closed. The final 2007 China Power list will be released in the autumn, with an event at Chatham House.

Who runs China?

So who runs China in 2007, and where does power lie? According to the online feedback, politicians and entrepreneurs rule the roost. But by way and afar the most popular choice, at least in terms of votes, was the leader of the Falungong, Li Hongzhi. Almost a decade after his followers gathered in Beijing, and surrounded the central leadership compound in Zhongnanhai, followed by a savage government counterattack, the cult leader retains a passionate following. Everybody might be busy making money, but there is still a spiritual



Who is replacing Mao?

Picture: Chinafotopress

hunger that the Falungong, and other groups, satisfy.

Hu Jintao was widely judged the most powerful politician – although there was support for Chen Shuibian at least in terms of his indirect ability to influence China from Taiwan. Of the entrepreneurs, Hong Konger Li Kaishing came out top – befitting the world's 8th richest man according to Forbes, and a formidable philanthropist on the Mainland. On the whole, intellectual figures, like academics Hu Angang and economists Wu Jianling, garnered little support. Cultural figures such as Zhang Yimou and Taiwanese star Jay Chou did reasonably well, helped by Chou's appearance in Zhang's latest blockbuster. There were no speakers in the forum for Gong Li.

What the list shows is that the bottom line, at least in 2007, is that politics is still in command. In the UK, and the US, money can buy you most things, including power. China, is slightly different. Local entrepreneurs got less support than outsiders like Bill Gates, who came in the top ten.

Now this exercise is established, we hope to run the same next year, trying to plot who is in, and who out. By then, the 17th Party Congress later this year will have given some clues to those in pole position in the 5th Generation leadership. The Olympics, perhaps, will bring a new group of sports stars to contend and no doubt some new kids on the entrepreneurial block. But barring disaster or act of God, it is likely that Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao will figure strongly. And, by the looks of it, Canadian based Li Hongzhi.

Kerry Brown is Associate Fellow at Chatham House dealing with China. He is the author of "Struggling Giant: China in the 21st Century" just published by Anthem Press.

CHONGQING, CHONGQING!

ALEX NEEDHAM AND DENIS LEJEUNE STEP OUT IN CHINA'S WEST

CHONGQING – ARGUABLY the fastest-growing city in the world. But not many people outside China have heard of it. So what is this sprawling municipality of 31 million in south-west China really like?

We had heard the worst about Chongqing before we arrived: heavy pollution, the absence of the sun (the Consulate still provides complimentary light boxes to staff to stave off Seasonal Affective Disorder) and the spiciness of the food were the main themes. But we came with a sense of adventure to discover the “real” China, off the beaten track, and far from the prosperous coastal towns of the East. We were not disappointed.

The city is booming. Ten years ago, one of the tallest buildings in Chongqing was the 35-metre Liberation Tower, built in 1912 to commemorate the death of Sun Yat-sen. Today it is dwarfed by the Central Business District. Maps of the city are updated every 3 months, so fast is the pace of change. According to the Director of the Municipal Urban Planning Bureau 80 urban planning projects are approved *per day* and the city is expanding by more than 30km² per year. From the South bank of the Yangtze River the city looks like a kind of Chinese Manhattan – with some imagination.

The rapid growth stems largely from the government's 1997 decision to carve Chongqing and a surrounding area of 83,000 km² out of Sichuan province and create a municipality directly under the control of Beijing. The aim: to kick-start the economy of the under-developed West. An estimated 500,000 rural migrants move to the city each year to benefit from the growth, many of them displaced by the construction of the nearby Three Gorges Dam and Reservoir.

FACTS:

Population (municipality): 31 million

Population (Chongqing city): 8 million

Urbanisation rate: 45.2% of the municipality's population is classed as urban. This is predicted to rise to 52% by 2010.

Local GDP 2006: RMB 348.620 billion (up 12.2% on 2005)

Annual net income of urban residents 2006: RMB 19,215 (up 15.5% on 2005).

Real estate investment in 2006: RMB 245.184 billion (up 24.9% on 2005)

Infrastructure investment: By 2010, the government plans to spend \$23 billion on 105 major infrastructure projects, including 33 bridges, 8 highways, 9 railways, a light rail network, container port and airport terminal.

Major UK companies present in Chongqing: BP, HSBC, Standard Chartered, Scottish and Newcastle, amongst others.

Retaining tradition

Despite these changes, Chongqing retains a small-town feel. Some old quarters of the city remain intact – for the time being at least – clinging to hillsides arranged around steep stone stairs on the central peninsula between the Yangtze and Jialing rivers. The sense of change and progress, along with the juxtaposition of urban rich and rural poor makes Chongqing fascinating. On the central shopping street, past the glitzy shop fronts of Armani and Versace, a woman is selling two live turtles attached to either end of a length of rope. Another man sells crickets in tiny wicker cages strapped to his back. The city's unique “bang bang” men (rural migrants who eke out a living with a length of bamboo, transporting loads of up to 100kg balanced on each end) wait for business on every street corner.



Old and new together

In the public spaces Chongqing locals play mahjong, dance with neighbours, sing opera or play the *erhu*. And then there's the food. Chongqing is famous for its hotpot: a bubbling soup of tongue-numbing chillis and Sichuan pepper into which you dip and cook meat, fish or vegetables. Locals say that Chongqing's humid climate creates lots of humidity in the body. The hotpot's fiery spices make you sweat profusely and therefore release this unwanted moisture. Interesting theory.

The pollution is not nearly as bad as we were led to expect. The city *is* often shrouded in a grey fog – but this seems more to do with its geographic location (surrounded by mountains and at the confluence of two major rivers) than anything else. The government claims Chongqing enjoys 260 “blue sky days” per year. During our first week here, it was impossible to tell what time of day it was – the sky was just a permanent grey. Now the watery sun has finally come out and the city is beginning to live up to its reputation as one of China's “furnace cities” with temperatures consistently over 40 degrees C.

The UK has had a diplomatic presence in Chongqing since 2000, covering Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou, as well as Chongqing municipality. The region is a microcosm of the socio-economic, environmental and political issues facing China today and an exciting place to be as Beijing's “Develop the West” policies gather pace. You may not have heard much about Chongqing – that is set to change.

Alex Needham is Consul (Bilateral Relations), British Consulate-General, Chongqing. Denis Lejeune is a writer.

A FAREWELL SONG:

REVIEWED BY NICHOLAS SMITH OF THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL CHORUS

Much guff has been written about music in China recently, so *A Farewell Song* comes as a breath of fresh air, capturing the sounds, atmosphere and very real plight of traditional Chinese music in a society where music, like other forms of theatre, is being firmly transformed into a consumer product with no meaning past that of a status symbol.

A Farewell Song is a documentary focusing on a group of retired professional musicians who, rather than diminuendo into obscurity, create arrangements of traditional Chinese tunes with a modern feel and an orchestral sound in an attempt to take on the prevailing apathy of the Chinese public. It's a curious idea – 40 years of state sponsorship of music in China produced orchestras with guaranteed salaries and jobs for life along with the consequent arrogance, decay in performance standards and alienation of the public – but each of the musicians featured in this documentary is an experienced virtuoso and as well placed as anyone to win the hearts and minds of the Chinese for the music of their own country. These performers also clearly enjoy what they do. In a country where music is the slave of politics, this is far from the norm. Unfortunately, their efforts to create a new repertoire and sound are abruptly curtailed by the sudden death of Chen Dawei, the composer who has been creating the group's arrangements. The next step for the band is to give him a rousing send-off, monks and all, which they do with great aplomb in the concert hall of the Shanghai Music Conservatory. The documentary is cut together with solos performed by the various members of the band, serving both to introduce the sounds of the main Chinese traditional instruments and acquaint us with some of the highlights of the Chinese traditional repertoire.

A Farewell Song is a treasure house of quintessentially Chinese moments – Chen Dawei's mock-scolding of his cheeky son, the frank admissions of physical frailty of flautist Luo Shoucheng's old neighbours, stories of rigging downstairs flats as a stage and bombs landing in woks during concerts, the airport send-off of an only child. One can imagine the rehearsal and recording studio banter taking place in other parts of the world, but the delicacy and good manners of these talented sons of Shanghai makes it sparkle. The subtitles are well done in each situation, capturing the spirit of the moment; not an easy task given the musicians tendency to understatement.



The glimpses we are afforded of the players private lives give their story real human depth. Many of them suffered genuine hardship, as musicians were alternately persecuted and ignored during the Mao years. Weng Zhenfa (the group's Sheng player) is unusual among musicians of his age-group for encouraging his daughter to learn an instrument, but tellingly she plays a western instrument and studies in Germany – a country where musicians command some respect and can make a decent wage. A number of the group wonder whether traditional Chinese music will survive their generation, and the reminiscences of some of the players make it clear that traditional Chinese music is on the way out. “We played a lot for the leaders” and “the foreigners like it” are two of the most telling comments in the whole documentary. An art form that functions only as aural wallpaper at political meetings or roast duck dinners is surely in its death throes.

A Farewell Song is a beautifully crafted documentary full of insights into Chinese traditional music. My hope is the Chinese will watch it themselves.

The International Festival Chorus (IFC) is a not-for-profit volunteer group, founded in 2002 by Beijing-based British conductor Nicholas Smith and singers James Baer and Nancy Fraser, to help promote international understanding by helping China recreate a tradition of performing choral music from across the world to the highest international standards. IFC has established a reputation for international-quality choral performances that are recognised highlights of the cultural and social life in both Beijing and Shanghai.

For further details of their concerts and outreach programmes please go to www.beijingifc.org or www.ifcshanghai.org.

More details of a Farewell Song are available at <http://www.lpfilm.net/afarewellsong.html>



APPCG NEWS



CHINA IMPACT: THE WESTMINSTER HEARINGS ON CHINA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPACT ON THE UK

The remainder of the series of hearings organised in conjunction with the China Media Centre at Westminster University has taken place and were extremely well-received. On 25 April the third Hearing, on 'Urbanisation, Consumption and Harmony' took place and the guest speakers were Xin Chunying, Vice Chairwoman of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the NPC, Lu Mai from the Development Research Centre and Theodore Zeldin, President of the Oxford Muse. The hearing was chaired by Peter Luff, Chairman of the Trade & Industry Select Committee. Workshops accompanying the main speakers covered topics including social innovation and the new cities, how UK businesses can add value to goods manufactured in China and the welfare state.

23 May saw discussions taking place under the banner 'Corporate Governance, Corporate Context' with talks and questions chaired by Stephen Timms, then Chief Secretary to the Treasury and speakers Wang Zhaoxing, from the Banking Regulatory Commission, Prof Peter Nolan, Chinese Big Business Programme based at Cambridge University. Among the workshop topics were the extent of the private sector, corporate governance, local politics and China's financial system.



The Final Hearing

Finally, on 6 June, we played host to Alan Johnson, then Secretary of State for Education and speakers Liu Mingkang, Chairman of the China Banking Regulatory Commission, Hu Shuli, Editor of *Caijing* and Sir William Ehrman, British Ambassador to China. Workshops covered were education, research and development and science.

OTHER APPCG EVENTS...



Sir William Ehrman speaking at the Westminster Hearings. He had addressed the Group on the challenges facing UK-China relations the day before on the 19th of June.

Sir William Ehrman

We were delighted to welcome the British Ambassador to China Sir William Ehrman who, as well as giving a talk as a guest speaker at the Hearings on 20 June, spoke to the Group separately the day before. He talked from an obviously well-informed perspective on the challenges facing China and relations with the UK.

Will Hutton

On 3 July the author and broadcaster and Chief Executive of the Work Foundation Will Hutton came in to meet the Group and talk about his new book *The Writing on the Wall: China and the West in the 21st Century*. In a lively discussion Will outlined his thesis that China's growth is built on an unsustainable model with impossibly high levels of export growth plus state-driven capital accumulation and cheap labour. With very low productivity, he argued, unless there was major reform of the financial institutions China was set for a bumpy ride.



15 Belgrave Square
London
SW1X 8PS
Phone: 0207 2356696
Fax: 0207 2456885
E-mail: contact@gbcc.org.uk
www.gbcc.org.uk

Editors:

Will Taylor

Orlando Edwards

Natalie Hewitt

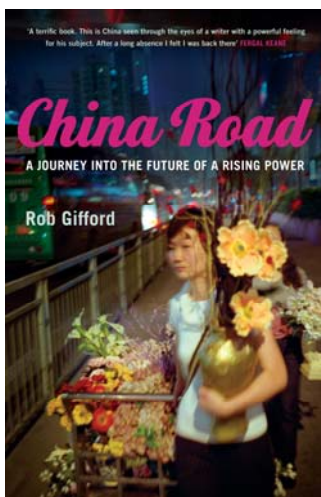
The GBCC and APPCG

The **Great Britain-China Centre** promotes understanding between the UK and China and is the leading UK body in the development of non-governmental relations. We deliver projects and exchange programmes to encourage best practice in legal reform, good governance and sustainable development. We also work to develop close relations between parliaments in China and the UK. Our close relationships with Chinese ministries and educational establishments are based on over 30 years of engagement and we are the trusted partner of both sides in a wide range of exchanges.

The **All Party Parliamentary China Group** is the parliamentary body dedicated to playing its part in deepening and widening the UK's relationship with China and specifically with the National People's Congress and to hold a dialogue with the Chinese Ambassador in London. With around 440 members from both houses, the group is one of the largest of its kind and regularly holds meetings at which speakers are invited to talk on topical matters and to engage in discussion with members of the Houses of Parliament. Members of the group regularly receive and entertain distinguished visitors from China and exchange delegations with their Chinese counterparts. Within the main group is a Hong Kong Committee.

The views of contributors to China Review should not be taken as representing those of the Great Britain-China Centre or the All Party Parliamentary China Group. If you have any comments or contributions for the Review please contact william.taylor@gbcc.org.uk

CHINA BOOKS JUST OUT...



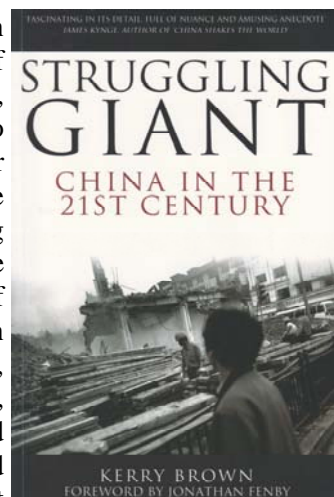
CHINA ROAD is as informative as it is delightful. Gifford describes his road journey across China along its main artery, route 312, through the lives of an extraordinary array of colourful people. His meetings with factory owners, evangelical salesmen and a peasant Christian congregation portray a nation of "slowly empowered individuals" but this promise is tempered by some

shocking encounters: the brutal attitudes of the family planning nurses, the horrific treatment of Henan Aids victims and the sad story of the karaoke girl. This is a highly readable book about an ambitious hardworking nation on the move. Lucidly written Gifford does an excellent job of explaining some of the many contradictions that make modern China. His insightful observations present a strong case for why the Chinese deserve to succeed. "We want to live" says Mr Li. "In Zhangye right now we are just *shengcun*, we are just surviving. We want to *shenghuo*, we want to live!"

"China Road: A Journey into the Future of a Rising Power"
by Rob Gifford. Bloomsbury, £12.99, ISBN 0747588929, 352 pages

KERRY BROWN has drawn on his wide experience of China as a student, businessman and diplomat to map out two futures for China, one stable and one not, in his book **Struggling Giant**. Brown uses the distance between a vision of China in 2026 as an established superpower, economically dominant, prosperous and environmentally friendly and a government that has lost

control of an increasingly unstable economy, society and environment to map out the major challenges facing China today. The impact of China's development on the world economic system, its environment, the likelihood of future stability and even unity are addressed alongside an assessment of the future of the one party system. These issues are vital, not just for the next twenty years of China's development, but for that of the world. One of Brown's themes is bemoaning the lack of mainstream western knowledge of China. This book attempts to go some way toward tackling that gap.



"Struggling Giant: China in the 21st Century"
By Kerry Brown, Anthem Press, ISBN 9781843312789, 200 pages