



## Canada-China Friendship Society®

Ottawa Chapter  
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Founded 1976

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### March Newsletter

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### **Chinese Cultural Treasures to be shown for the first and only time in North America at the Canadian Museum of Civilization**

The Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) will be presenting a major exhibition of *Treasures from China* direct from the Chinese National Museum in Beijing for 24 weeks starting May 11, 2007. A release from the CMC states that “The National Museum of China (NMC) houses some of the finest artefacts of human civilization, illuminating the rich history and achievements of the Chinese people. More than 100 treasured pieces were selected by the NMC and will be displayed in a major exhibition that will visit only one venue in the world: the Canadian Museum of Civilization. *Treasures from China* will offer Canadians a privileged insight into the splendour of Chinese civilization and its lasting history. Visitors will also learn how to better understand, interpret and appreciate Chinese art and fine crafts.”



“The exhibition features 120 magnificent artefacts. Due in part to their national and cultural significance, most of the artefacts have never before been shown outside the People’s Republic of China. The exhibition features a dazzling array of materials and styles, reflecting the depth of the country’s artistic genius and the breadth of its social and cultural history. Included are jade carvings and lacquerware; paintings and calligraphy; silk textiles; and objects created from bronze, gold and silver. Ceramics play a particularly important role in the exhibition, providing a common thread across the millennia. Among the treasures are a beautiful bronze *zun* (wine vessel) with dragon and tiger decoration from the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BC), and a spectacular pottery horse and groom - *see above figure from the Tang dynasty (616-907)*.

Sweeping in its scope, the exhibition traces China's remarkable development through the ancient, dynastic and imperial periods, and places the artefacts in their historical context."

## **Cultural exchange, mutual understanding**

The Canadian Museum of Civilization also announced that *Treasures from China* is part of an exchange with the National Museum of China. For its part, the CMC will create a special exhibition showcasing the treasures of Canada's First People's. That exhibition will be shown in Beijing in 2008 when the city welcomes the world to the Summer Olympics.

## **An Interview with Dr. Ban Seng Hoe, Asia Curator, CMC**

by Irene K. Ip

The sinuous architecture of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) results in a serpentine corridor—white and sleek—linking the offices in the Administration Building. A long walk through this corridor ends at the office of the Museum's Curator of Asian Studies, Dr. Ban Seng Hoe. Inside, a totally different prospect greets the eye: piles of files and books spill from the shelves onto desktops and the floor, evidence of many projects on the go and the accumulation of Dr. Hoe's more than 30 years toil in the national museum. Yet, in spite of so much work still to be done, Dr. Hoe has made himself available for an interview about the project that occupies most of his time these days, the upcoming *Treasures from China*.

To be the only museum in the world (outside the People's Republic of China) to land this exhibition was a remarkable feat and Dr. Hoe explained it as "an important episode toward the realization of the longer term goal of broad cultural exchange." The mandate of the CMC is shaped by Canada's policy of multiculturalism. As a national museum, it is concerned with the origins of Canadians, both natives and immigrants, and in educating them all about the various cultures that comprise our diverse population. The end goal is to help Canadians to understand each other's ways, and cultural exchanges help to achieve this objective.

The cultural exchange between the CMC and the National Museum of China (NMC) is part of a Cultural Agreement signed just over two years ago by leaders of the Canadian and Chinese governments, and a product of the tireless efforts of Dr. Victor Rabinovitch, President and CEO of the CMC, and his counterpart, Dr. Pan Zhenzhou, the former Director of the NMC. It involves both scholars and administrators, giving them a chance to get to know and learn from each other. Shortly before the negotiations began, the Chinese government had approved a major renovation of the NMC, resulting in the removal of many of the artefacts from public viewing from April 2005 to December 2007. Thus, an opportunity for an exchange of exhibitions was created. It was agreed that the NMC would make a selection of treasures to lend CMC and that Canada would lend NMC some First People's priceless objects in 2008. To highlight the size of the NMC loan—120 items—Dr. Hoe points out that most other museums are lucky to be able to borrow only a few.

Dr. Hoe says that it is important to view the exhibition against CMC's broad educational goal. Canadians can learn a great deal from China's past, one of the world's longest surviving cultures. Most people now acknowledge that with globalization, everything is interrelated, including pollution and art, and that to understand Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have to know more about China. Canadians have a particular interest in the culture of China because of the role that

Chinese immigrants have played in Canada's history, including the era of legal and social discrimination of Chinese that continued until the end of World War II. For its part, China, a

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## Coming Events

- **April 25, 7:30 p.m.** at Library and Archives Canada, Exhibition Room A, a presentation by **Dr. Greg Donaghy**, Head of the Historical Section, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, and by **Dr. Michael Stevenson**, Lecturer in Canadian Economic History, Schulich School of Business, York University, on *“The Limits of Alliance: Cold War Solidarity and Canadian Wheat Exports to China, 1950-63.”*

Though a committed member of the Western Alliance and an early supporter of US efforts to isolate the PRC, Canada concluded large wheat sales to Beijing in the late 1950s in the face of strong US opposition. Drawing on a broad range of archival records, this talk explores the three main factors that encouraged Ottawa: growing doubts about the wisdom of isolating China; mounting anger at Washington's use of subsidized wheat to capture Canadian markets; and a surging sense of Canadian nationalism. Clearly, a narrowly-defined national interest easily trumped the ideological pressures for Western solidarity, changing the parameters of Canada's Asian cold war.

- **Early June, Visit for CCFS Members to the CMC's *Treasures from China Exhibition* led by the Museum's Asia Curator, Dr. Ban Seng Hoe.** Details TBA.

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## TVO's Steve Paikin hosts discussion on *The Brand New China*

- with Bernie Frolic, York University; Wenran Jiang, Univ. of Alberta; Alan Alexandroff, Munk Centre; and William Jankowiak, Professor of Anthropology, University of Nevada; with a written comment from Dr. Huang Huikang, Minister-Counsellor, Chinese Embassy *“30 million people learning Mandarin; 500 Confucius Institutes planned by 2010; a booming economy showing another way forward. What does China want for itself... and for the rest of the world?”* Thus Steve Paikin introduced TVO's 'Agenda' for February 1, 2007.

Discussion focussed on the “softer” side of China's foreign policy, including the proposed establishment by the Chinese authorities of Confucius Institutes around the world. According to Bernie Frolic, they are popping up like mushrooms all over the place with 130 now in 50 countries, including two in Vancouver and Waterloo and others likely to follow. Their hope: to have 100 million people around the world learning Chinese in a few years. Will Mandarin give English a run for its money? “Not in the short term,” says Alan Alexandroff. “English is a significant language of research and commercial activity in the major cities of Asia, including China.” According to Wenran Jiang, the purpose of this activity is the spread of the Chinese language and culture so that China's rise will have not only an economic dimension, a trade dimension, perhaps a military dimension, but also a “soft power” dimension to present an image of China rising peacefully. At the same time, Chinese authorities are trying to find a new

identity, going back thousands of years to some of the old values, like harmony, respect for order, and working hard, re-packaged to be sold to the world as values of a new, emerging China.

Frolic expressed “a little concern” whether China can rediscover Confucianism and make it part of a central value system, after all the efforts to eliminate it under communism. - See page 5  
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## **An Interview with Dr. Ban Seng Hoe** – continued from page 2

continental power in centuries past, is reaching out again and Canada and the CMC will benefit.

Dr. Hoe explains that the artefacts in the *Treasures from China* exhibition will be displayed with a museological perspective, which is very different from how such artefacts are displayed in the NMC. In particular, the CMC presentation will provide historical and cultural context. The style of documentation is also different. There will be an introductory and a concluding panel, both of which will be in Chinese as well as the two official languages. Each artefact's name will also be in three languages and there will be short explanatory panels in the two official languages. Working on the whole presentation at CMC is a team of experts in design, marketing, media and interpretation, while Dr. Hoe is responsible for research.

One of Dr. Hoe's major tasks is to decide on the groupings of the artefacts. The ceramics are a major component of the exhibition and will form the spinal chord of the display or, as he puts it, “a hidden dragon in the exhibition's design” perhaps influenced somewhat by the CMC's architecture. He faces many challenges in making the whole exhibit intelligible to Canadians. Although documentation will come from the NMC and Chinese researchers are sharing their knowledge, a few artefacts may not have precise archeological or other records. Nevertheless, the artefacts will be identified within the context of the various ancient, dynastic and imperial periods.

The explanatory panels will enable the visitor to identify forms that are evident in ancient bronze but survive in different categories of materials, such as jade or porcelain. One may also observe similar motifs taken from foreign cultures, such as Central Asian, South Asian and European. Thus, the display will form a harmonious whole—indigenous, intercultural, integrated and interrelated. As Dr. Hoe puts it:

*There is always a continuous interchange and relationship in shapes, forms and meanings in different media of Chinese art. So sometimes we need to have a fresh look at old civilizations in light of current circumstances, and examine what are the factors that contribute to their continuity and persistency. We all have a common origin and possess a long history. What makes a people with a complex and long civilization different from the others? Perhaps our exhibition will attempt to provide a cursory answer to some of these questions.*

Before the exhibition opens, a small, 32-page catalogue will be published, which will enable the visitor to better appreciate the *Treasures from China*. Books that provide useful background to the exhibition are:

Jessica Rawson (ed). *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*. Thames and Hudson, 1992. (approx. 400 pp.)

Michael Sullivan. *The Arts of China*. Fourth ed., (expanded and revised). University of California Press, 2000. (342pp, 168 colour illustrations. CAD\$50 paperback.)

William Watson. *The Arts of China, 1600–1900*. Yale University Press, forthcoming late May 2007. (CAD\$75.95 hardcover. You may want to wait for a paperback edition.)

William Watson (ed). *L'Art de la Chine*. Paris Citadelles et Mazenod, 1997. Part of the series "L'Art et les grandes civilisations."

It should be noted that the opening of the exhibition *Treasures from China* on May 11 is a feature event of **Asian Heritage Month** (AHM). Further details of the AHM program are available on its website [WWW.ASIANHERITAGEMONTH.NET](http://WWW.ASIANHERITAGEMONTH.NET).

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**New Members:** *A warm welcome is extended to Mr. Wenrui Bao and family, Ms. Fanny Zagarra and Mr. Tello-Seto Zagarra.*

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**TVO's Agenda on *The Brand New China*** – continued from page 3

“I don't think Confucianism is quite enough. Moreover, it is constantly under attack by Western culture.” he said. “The values of the British Empire were Christianity and the rule of law; America's strengths are freedom of the individual and economic efficiency. What is China going to offer to the world and its people?”

According to Jankowiak, particularly in universities, there is interest in searching around the issue of spirituality – the underground churches being a small indicator of people looking for something else. A Canadian author, Daniel Bell, has posited the existence of a moral vacuum that is being filled to some extent by Christian sects, falun gong, and extreme forms of nationalism. The government considers that such alternatives threaten the hard won peace and security that underpin Chinese development, and so it has encouraged the revival of China's venerable tradition, Confucianism.

Steve Paikin: “It is said that what communism and Confucianism have in common is a belief in a powerful and infallible centre. According to Jankowiak, “(The people) are aware of it. The capital, Beijing, remains a primary reference point on how people are thinking and reflecting on their place in China.” The single time zone (Beijing time) and one language tell you something about how the Chinese people think about their system.

To the moderator's question, “What does Confucianism have to offer?” Jankowiak answered stability and connection between the masses and the elite. There is an expectation that the elites owe something to the people and vice versa: they can voice disagreement, but once a decision is taken, they should fall into line. To the related question, “How does a Confucian government justify itself?” Frolic suggested it is based on an understanding when interpreted strictly that “the wise, represented by the 10 to 15 % who understand the art of governance, will take the lead. These are the best people to rule.” According to Jiang, it is part of the mindset of the Chinese elite that they believe they can make it work: a sort of one-party, soft authoritarian rule, adjustable to the people's needs.

Steve Paikin: “Everyone predicts that China will be big. How big?” All agree: China has great power aspirations. How to get there peacefully is the question. To achieve great power status peacefully is a big challenge, without precedent, Jiang says. It is a subject of huge debate within China. Some advocate confrontation, believing that other powers will not allow China to rise peacefully.

According to Alexandroff, China is a significant distance away from such eventualities. The years beginning 2030 (when China is expected to surpass the U.S. in GDP) are a long way off. China still has a low GDP per capita and plenty of work to do internally. Japan learned at tremendous cost that it is a lot better to trade than to conquer. Frolic reiterated that an accurate forecast depends on the time frame under consideration: “In the next ten years, nothing will happen. Over the next twenty years, however, China may begin to flex its muscles as a result of

competition for resources. China may do something different than other nations (to advance its position), but not in my lifetime.” Jankowiak observed that China while looking to its past is betting on its future, whereas the Islamic world, particularly its clergy, is looking to the golden age of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Steve Paikin: “Do the Chinese feel destined to play a pivotal role in foreign affairs?” Yes, China’s amazing growth is permeating all of Chinese society and creating a sense of pride. - *Over Canada-China Friendship Society* *March 2007 Newsletter – Page 6*

*Continued from page 5* - According to Jiang, the Chinese also feel that their rise must have a base of hard power along with soft power, but he acknowledged that there is a lively debate on how to manage this aspect.

Steve Paikin asks: “Can one speak of the Chinese people as one cohesive culture?” According to Jankowiak, people have, but the new trend is to emphasize the tremendous diversity in China, not just with regard to minorities which represent only 4 % of the Chinese population, but within the majority Han population – by regions, dialects, groups, etc. Personally, he chooses to emphasize the commonality that comes from a common language structure, similarities in funeral rights, arrangements in family lines, etc. but most especially in the commitment to a family economy, the cellular structure which extends from the village level all the way up to the nation state. He declared firmly, “There is no danger of China coming apart!”

### **Comment on this discussion by Dr. Huang Huikang, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Chinese Embassy in Canada**

Confucianism, with its emphasis on peace, respect for order and harmony has greatly influenced the Chinese thinking. Because of its cultural tradition, the Chinese nation has always loved peace. In handling the relations with other countries, the Chinese people always believe in such ideas as “the strong should not intimidate the weak”, “the rich should not bully the poor” and “don’t do unto others what you would not have them do unto you”, etc.. We are also a strong believer in “harmony is the most precious” and always emphasize benevolence, good-neighborliness and harmony in diversity. Our dream is that “all within the four seas are brothers” and harmony among all nations. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was the channel for the visits of envoys, trade and cultural exchanges between China and its neighbors. One thousand years ago, China had exchanges with foreign countries both on land and sea, selling tea, silk and porcelain to many countries in Asia and Europe. Over 600 years ago, the famous navigator Zheng He made seven overseas voyages, reaching more than 30 countries and regions in Asia and Africa. Some even said he reached Canada. Unlike some European explorers, he brought to those places advanced farming and handicraft techniques, fine products and genuine friendship.

China’s core value and cultural tradition plays a very important role in determining the peaceful and cooperative nature of China’s development. Besides historical traditions, China’s national reality and trend of the times also decide that peaceful development is the only viable path for China’s modernization drive, and the fundamental direction of China’s future growth.

Since 1978, great and earth-shaking historical changes have taken place in China. China has sustained an average annual growth rate of 9.4% in the last 28 years. The growth rate in 2006 reached 10.7%. From 1978 to 2006, China’s GDP increased from US\$147.3 billion to US\$2.6847 trillion, its trade from US\$20.6 billion to US\$1.7607 trillion, and foreign exchange reserve from US\$167 million to US\$1.0663 trillion. However, China is still a developing country that ranks behind the 100th place in the world in terms of per capita GDP and facing grave challenges such

as overpopulation, weak economic foundation, un-developed productivity, uneven development and environmental problems. Every year, 7.5 million people enter the labor market, and 20 million people need jobs. Moreover, there are still 20 to 30 million people in rural and urban areas living in poverty. In addition, we also need to care for 60 million disabled people. It requires the hard work of generations to make China's modernization drive a complete success and deliver a prosperous life for all the Chinese people. An international environment of enduring peace and a stable surrounding environment are essential for China's development.

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The world in the 21st century is experiencing deepening economic globalization and regional integration. With increasing common interests, countries are more interdependent, living in a global village. People throughout the world need to cooperate to meet the increasing common challenges and risks. One cannot isolate oneself from others, nor can one benefit at others' expense. In today's world, antagonizing alliance and bloc confrontation do not work. Different social systems, development paths and models coexist and learn from each other. No one is able to replace or swallow up the other. To pursue peace, development and cooperation is the trend of the times. To establish partnership and community of interest becomes the wise choice for many countries. To seek peace, development and cooperation is the common aspiration of the people around the world and an irresistible trend of history. Any country hoping to realize its own development goals has to go along with this trend.

The Chinese people are fully aware that only the development achieved through peaceful means is sustainable and reliable, and only peaceful development will bring benefits to Chinese people and the people of the whole world. That is why China has chosen and is committed to a peaceful development path. On the domestic front, we are dedicated to harmonious development and a people-oriented approach to build a harmonious society and realize economic and social development in a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable way. On the international front, we adhere to peaceful development and work for a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.



*Attending the Society's New Year Banquet Celebration, February 11, 2007 from left to right  
CCFS President Lolan Merklinger, Ambassador Lu Shumin, Ambassador Arthur Menzies,  
Mme. Lu (Gao Shuqin) and Ken Merklinger*

### **Past Events: Canada-China Friendship Society of Ottawa welcomes the Chinese New Year, February 11, 2007**

One hundred and sixty friends of China marked the start of the Chinese New Year with a 10-course banquet at the Mandarin Ogilvie Restaurant. Speakers and guests included Chinese Ambassador Lu Shumin and Madame Lu, Senator Mac Harb, Gatineau Councillor Joseph da Sylva and Mme. Boisvert, Mr. David Gibbons representing Mayor Larry O'Brien, and Dr. Huang Xing Zhong, President of the Ottawa Chinese Community Association. Others attending included representatives of the Ottawa Police Department, the National Gallery, CHEO, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, the Ottawa Carleton District School Board and ten doctors and their spouses from Pembroke. Door prizes were generously donated by the Chinese Embassy, Canada Post Corporation, the Mandarin Ogilvie and Shanghai Restaurants, and by members of the Society. Music was provided by Ziqi Ye and Wendy Dai on the *gu-zhen* and well-known Ottawa musicians Dominic D'Arcy and George Sapounidis. The Chair of the banquet was Lolan Wang Merklinger.

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**We are greatly saddened to report the passing of one of the founding members of the Canada-China Friendship Society of Ottawa, Mr. Tin Shoong Yap, on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Aged 72, Tin is survived by four children and his wife Luna. A large gathering attended his funeral at the Kelly Funeral Home on Somerset Street where many offered tributes to his very full and productive life. Our sincere condolences to Tin's family.**

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