

THE SABER & SCROLL JOURNAL



MIDDLE KINGDOM MAXIMS REVISITED: THE LONG, WINDING, AND BUMPY ROAD OF CHINESE HISTORY

歌

ANDREW SINGER

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

WWW.ANDREWSINGERCHINA.COM

MIDDLE KINGDOM MAXIMS REVISITED: THE LONG, WINDING, AND BUMPY ROAD OF CHINESE HISTORY

Andrew Singer

Independent Scholar

ABSTRACT

After a two-century-long hiatus, China is once again a world superpower. China is one of the most consequential nations of the young twenty-first century in terms of global economic impact, cutting-edge research and development, expanding political influence, and growing military strength. China is also a nation and often an idea defying easy description and understanding. China is a place, a society, and a culture all mixed together and shrouded in mystery and misapprehension. This mystery has several foundations— the foggy passage of time, a challenging linguistic heritage, a unique worldview, international ignorance, and domestic manipulation. The Chinese government promotes maxims of Chinese history and culture that are generally accepted at face value abroad. Examining these maxims can help lead to a more clear-eyed appreciation of a China whose history is remarkable but not as linear, peaceful, and stable as China's leaders would have the world and their own people believe.

Keywords: China, Asia, world history, culture, society, nature, religion, philosophy, military, politics

MÁXIMAS DEL REINO MEDIO REVISADAS: EL LARGO, SINUOSO Y ACCIDENTADO CAMINO DE LA HISTORIA CHINA

RESUMEN

Después de una pausa de dos siglos, China vuelve a ser una superpotencia mundial. China es una de las naciones más importantes del joven siglo XXI en términos de impacto económico global, investigación y desarrollo de vanguardia, influencia política en expansión y fuerza militar creciente. China es también una nación y, a menudo, una idea que desafía la descripción y la comprensión fáciles.

China es un lugar, una sociedad y una cultura, todo mezclado y envuelto en misterio y malentendidos. Este misterio tiene varios fundamentos: el brumoso paso del tiempo, una herencia lingüística desafiante, una cosmovisión única, ignorancia internacional y manipulación doméstica. El gobierno chino promueve máximas de la historia y la cultura chinas que generalmente se aceptan al pie de la letra en el extranjero. Examinar estas máximas puede ayudar a tener una apreciación más clara de una China cuya historia es notable pero no tan lineal, pacífica y estable como los líderes de China quieren que el mundo y su propia gente crean.

Palabras clave: China, Asia, historia mundial, cultura, sociedad, naturaleza, religión, filosofía, militar, política

重审中国格言：中国历史的漫长曲折之路

摘要

停滞了两个世纪之后，中国再次成为世界超级大国。就全球经济影响、尖端研发、不断扩大的政治影响力和不断增强的军事实力而言，中国是 21 世纪早期最重要的国家之一。作为一个国家，中国往往是难以描述和理解的。中国是一个地方、一个社会和一种文化，它们交织在一起，笼罩在神秘和误解之中。这个谜团有几个基础——模糊的时间流逝、具有挑战性的语言遗产、独特的世界观、被国际忽视、以及国内操纵。中国政府提倡的中国历史和文化格言普遍在表面上被国外接受。分析这些格言有助于更清晰地认识中国，后者的历史是非凡的，但却不像中国领导人想让世界和自己的人民所相信的那样线性、和平与一定。

关键词：中国，亚洲，世界历史，文化，社会，自然，宗教，哲学，军事，政治

China, known as *Zhongguo*, the Middle Kingdom in Mandarin, is a nation, a society, and a culture that lays claim to thousands of years of civilization. China's pre-Imperial past originated in ancient kingdoms and dynasties principally between 2070–221 BCE and earlier (with names such as Erlitou, Liangzhu, Xia, Shang, and Zhou). China's Imperial past developed during the 2,000-year period between 221 BCE–1911 CE (Qin to Qing Dynasties). The Communist Era of the People's Republic of China leads China today (1949–present). Throughout all these times, the answer to the question “What is China?” continues to defy easy description and understanding.

For many, if not most, of the prior centuries and millennia of recorded history, China was a preeminent power throughout Asia and often beyond. This long and distinguished history has bred a strong sense of pride in the Chinese based on their mythological, philosophical, creative, and experiential track record. Even when China was not at the apex of the world, the notion of China, the idea of a Chinese tradition, remained a potent force near and far. China was either exoticized or demonized, sometimes both, at different times throughout history. This power as well as the notion of China as strong ended dramatically in the nineteenth century. Now, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, China is once again an established and growing economic, scientific, technological, political, and military powerhouse.

Yet China remains a place, a society, and a culture all mixed together and shrouded in mystery and misapprehension to much of the world. This mystery has several foundations—the foggy passage of time, a challenging linguistic heritage, a unique worldview, international ignorance, and domestic manipulation.

The Chinese government promotes several maxims of Chinese history and culture, including:

- China has a Continuous History of 5,000 Years;
- China's Foreign Policy is One of Harmonious Co-Existence; and
- China is a Confucian Country.

These repeated declarations are intended to project an image of China for both domestic and international audiences, and they are generally accepted at face value. These maxims, however, do not tell a complete story.

In a digital, soundbite world, such pithy statements of complex concepts are designed for political and social effect, and usually distort, obscure, and supplant the richer and important backstories. History, geography, and culture are not static. China's past is nuanced. It is both remarkable and terrible and littered with stereotypes and over-simplifications. Examining these maxims can help lead to a more clear-eyed appreciation of a China whose history is not as linear, peaceful, and stable as the country's leaders would have the world and their own people believe.

This essay is not exhaustive. Myriad aspects of Chinese history, society, and culture are excluded from this analysis. As is written in Chapter 64 of one of China's most famous philosophy texts, the *Daodejing*,

“A tree as great as a man’s embrace springs from a small shoot;
“A terrace nine stories high begins with a pile of earth;
“A journey of a thousand miles starts under one’s feet.”¹

What follows is thus but a beginning to the story of China’s long and winding past. This is a history characterized by frequent bumpy twists and turns. The journey here commences with a look at how China defines and treats its history.

DEFINING CHINESE HISTORY

China’s then-present rulers have throughout time long sought to control the historical narrative for political, social, and military purposes. In this, they are not unique, though their scope, documentation, and effectiveness have been impressive. Professor James Carter commented in a Sinica Podcast about China that “the past is what happened, history is what is written about it.”²

Chinese is the oldest, continuous written language in the world, and capturing its ancient history in words has a long tradition in China. There are (and sadly were) grand compendiums of purportedly all previous Chinese history, more focused histories of preceding and current dynasties, catalogues of important documents, and a deep well of literature, poetry, and songs. When written after the collapse of a dynasty, the victorious successor inevitably shaped the recorded history of its predecessor to showcase itself in the best light. Knowledge and facts that were inconvenient for the new history were either massaged, hidden away, or destroyed.

The brief Qin Dynasty (221 BCE–206 BCE) was the first dynasty of Imperial China. Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty and thus the first emperor of China, united a fractured land. He is reputed to have had all books of prior history, literature, philosophy, and more burned so as to eliminate knowledge of the past that did not serve the goals of his new dynastical rule.³

Did Qin Shi Huang actually issue such an order? In response to questioning of the Emperor’s tactics by a scholar at a palace banquet in 213 BCE, the Emperor’s Grand Councilor, Li Si, ordered the following:

If anyone who is not a court scholar dares to keep the ancient songs, historical records or writings of the hundred schools, these should be confiscated and burned by the provincial governor and army commander. Those who in conversation dare to quote the old songs and records should be publicly executed; those who use the old precedents to oppose the new order should have their families wiped out; and officers who know of such cases but fail to report them should be punished in the same way.

If thirty days after issuing this order, the owners of these books still have not had them destroyed, they should have their faces tattooed and be condemned to hard labor at the Great Wall. The only books which need not be destroyed are those dealing with medicine, divination and agriculture.⁴

Setting aside whether this order was ever effectuated or to what extent, it was not a blanket call to destroy all prior knowledge, to burn all the books. Rather, the decree was designed to limit and control access to knowledge. The government (court scholars) would continue to have access to this broader written record. This included the competing philosophies that existed before the Qin consolidation known as the Hundred Schools of Thought. This also included the more than 300 poems from the earliest Chinese periods collectively known as the Book of Songs. The Chinese people were to have access only to the written record of certain non-threatening topics such as medicine, divination, and agriculture.⁵

Emperor Qin Shi Huang was out to restrict what could be read, studied, and spoken about if the same might be dangerous to his new order, the stability of his new dynasty. He wanted to control the narrative of the country, and he recognized that knowledge is powerful. The stated punishments were harsh—execution, family extermination, tattooing, and hard labor. They were designed to encourage compliance.

How do we know about Grand Councilor Li's order and Emperor Qin Shi Huang's desire to control access to knowledge of the past? There were ultimately only two emperors of the Qin Dynasty before it fell to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 AD). The written record on the Qin order to confiscate books comes from the sweeping history of early China written by the famous Han Dynasty historian, Sima Qian (c. 145–86 BCE). His *Records of the Grand Historian* (which his father began and he finished) is a historical record, but also a political treatise. One of the tasks of the author was to "...clarif[y] the Han right to rule by vilifying the regime it had overthrown..."⁶ Taking Qin Shi Huang to task for allegedly denigrating and destroying China's philosophical, literary, and historical heritage was one good way to do this.

China's Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) was established by foreigners who swept down from Manchuria to defeat a weakened and splintered Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). From the beginning, the Qing rulers adopted Chinese customs in overseeing China, while preserving their northern Manchu heritage. During his long eighteenth-century reign, the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1795) ordered compilations of important Manchu genealogies, histories, and ritual records.⁷ He went even further in seeking to demonstrate his veneration of Chinese culture. Specifically, he ordered the compilation of what was to become the largest collection of China's most famous literary and historical records of its entire past. This encyclopedia is more than twice as long as the previously-largest Chinese encyclopedia, that compiled during the Ming Dynasty by the Yongle Emperor (Yongle Dadian).⁸

The Qing *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* (*Siku Quanshu*) was a ten-year team effort begun in 1773. Hundreds made up the editorial board tasked with selecting works for the encyclopedia and several thousand scribes then hand copied everything. Seven copies were ultimately made, each copy comprising in excess of 36,000 bound volumes and 79,000 sections. Four of the sets remain extant. Covered topics included the Chinese classics, histories, philosophy, and other literary works.⁹ As with his predecessors, the Qianlong Emperor knew the political power of the written record and learned the lessons of China's history in this regard.

In decreeing the creation of the encyclopedia, Qianlong ordered that all of China be searched for relevant records. This was ostensibly to improve the accuracy and completeness of the effort and included not only official libraries and offices, but also private libraries. Individuals were ordered (and subsequently enticed with false promises of leniency and that books would be returned) to turn in such works that were in their possession. Not everything made it into the compilation (or survived). Words and sentiments that slighted the Manchus or which were considered threatening to China's security or which were not disapproving enough of the former Ming Dynasty were expurgated.¹⁰ Offending volumes were destroyed. In fact, a catalogue was created of more than 2,000 works that were scheduled for destruction by the Qianlong Emperor's cultural advisors, and these works can no longer be found. In addition to satisfying the Emperor's desire for political retribution and promotion, senior editors on the project were apparently also not above excluding philosophical texts that they disagreed with and promoting those they did.¹¹

The modern Communist Party Era (1949–present) in China's long history continues this tradition of actively managing China's history for political purposes. The two strongest rulers of this current era were/are Mao Zedong (r. 1949–1976) and current leader Xi Jinping (r. 2012–present). Each man possessed/possesses a core belief that China's history impacted/impacts China's present and future. Yet each man's view, description, and use of that history could not be more different.

Mao (1893–1976) was a wellread, educated man who felt that China's long history of feudal imperial rule, strict and elitist Confucian moral code and educational system, and lack of unifying language across the nation were antiquated and held China back from entering the modern world.¹² These were the root causes of China's fall from power and abuse by outsiders and needed to be changed. To this extent, at least, Mao was much in alignment with earlier reformers and revolutionaries of the late Qing period, including Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Sun Yatsen. They, too, felt that the Chinese people had to break free from a stultifying past in order to help rebuild the country and return China to its rightful position in the world.¹³ But they were not Mao.

Mao became a Marxist and a passionate believer in the necessity of nonstop revolution to cure China's ills. The break from the past needed to be sharp, fierce, and absolute. Professor Rebecca Karl has written that [in the 1930s] "... Mao Zedong Thought became the guide for the creation

of a culture of revolution and of a revolutionary culture capable of sustaining a long-term social movement that could capture and harness the imaginations and productive potentials of a broad cross-section of the Chinese people facing insuperable odds against a powerful enemy: the Japanese.”¹⁴

Mao took his revolution to the extreme in unleashing the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966– 1976), campaigning to eliminate and destroy the Four Olds—old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits.¹⁵ There was no Chinese history or legacy worth saving. The teachings and lessons of China’s leading philosophers, such as Confucius, Mozi, and Laozi,¹⁶ were banished. The homegrown and foreign religions of Daoism and Buddhism were attacked and suppressed.¹⁷ Temples and shrines, books and art, and other trappings of the past were indiscriminately obliterated.¹⁸ Traditional respect for family and elders was turned on its head with encouraged and frequent “intra-family violence and betrayal.”¹⁹ Many millions alleged to be class (political, foreign) enemies were persecuted, tortured, and killed.²⁰ Mao’s stated goal was to create a new, successful, and powerful China. To the contrary, the destruction realized by the Cultural Revolution created a vacuum that unmoored the Chinese people and society.

Fast forward to 2012, and new leader Xi Jinping (b. 1953) adopts an updated approach to defining China’s history toward creating a united, stronger, and more prosperous nation. Xi does not choose to eliminate China’s historical legacy as did Mao. Rather, he looks to re-package, re-interpret, and promote a singular vision of China’s past that undergirds and amplifies his plan for China’s present and future. China’s success now stands on three legs: 1) the Communist Party is the sole organization that rescued China from its dire straits at the end of the Qing Dynasty; 2) The Communist Party is the sole organization that has grown China to the present; and 3) the Communist Party is the sole organization that can safeguard the Chinese people and China’s future.²¹ In Xi’s analysis, each of the above is framed, supported, and advanced through a correct knowledge and understanding of China’s glorious past, including the fallout from the so-called Century of National Humiliation following the Opium Wars in the nineteenth century.²²

Patriotic education, propaganda, and official media, as well as vibrant and strident unofficial and quasi-official nationalist platforms promote this historical story of China’s past greatness.²³ In twenty-first-century China, Xi has reintroduced a renewed emphasis on Mao’s revolutionary drive to capture and harness the imaginations and productive potentials of the people. The messages are designed to reinforce the Party’s indispensability to this story and to solidify public support for the Party and its leadership of the nation.²⁴ Xi began supercharging this process from the beginning. In his first public speech as China’s leader in 2012, Xi expounded on the “China Dream.” The “China Dream” is to reclaim China’s greatness in the world by ensuring China’s national strength, military strength, and strong social stability in order to “achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”²⁵

A corollary to this new, concerted use of China's past to promote its present and future means that dissent and alternative portrayals cannot be tolerated. During a speech on ideology in April 2016, Xi quoted a nineteenth century poet, Gong Zizhen, "...to preface a warning about forces trying to attack the party using its past: 'In extinguishing a kingdom of men the first step is to remove its history.'"²⁶ This has led to a campaign against historic nihilism. "Historical nihilism' is a term coined by the Chinese government that refers to discussion or research that challenges its official version of history ... The [Cybersecurity Administration of China]'s website invites people to report posts that 'distort' the history of the party, or China since the party's rule began in 1949. Other criteria given include 'attacks on the party leadership,' 'slandering heroes' and vilification of traditional Chinese culture."²⁷

Xi has consistently promoted a robust definition of China's past to help him in today's political present. In this, he is carrying on the tradition of his Qin, Han, Qing, and Communist predecessors.

Maxim No. 1: China Has a Continuous History of 5,000 Years

While China indeed has a long historical record of culture and civilization, this history is not one unified, stable, and unbroken chain spanning five millennia. China's past is frequent violence and disunion sprinkled with peace and cohesion, or maybe peace sprinkled with frequent violence.

In celebrating World War II Victory Day in China in 2015, Xi Jinping said in a speech that "the unyielding Chinese people fought gallantly and finally won total victory over the Japanese military aggressors, thus preserving the achievements of China's 5,000-year-old civilization and defending the cause of peace for mankind."²⁸ In a speech to the 39th group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in late May, 2022, Xi "...stressed that [the] Party has always viewed the history of the Chinese nation from the standpoint of historical materialism and has inherited and carried forward fine traditional Chinese culture. Through the continuous efforts of several generations of scholars, the research results of major projects, such as the project to trace the origins of Chinese civilization, proved that China's history includes million years [sic] of humanity, 10,000 years of culture, and more than 5,000 years of civilization."²⁹

The archaeological evidence of early civilizations in what is now China since neolithic times is extensive, and articles on new discoveries appear almost daily. This, however, is civilizations, not civilization. Pre-Imperial history in China is identified with the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties. The legendary, founding Xia Dynasty (possibly Erlitou culture³⁰) led to the documented Shang Dynasty (approximately middle to late second millennium BC). The Shang ruled locally in the Yellow River Valley in what is now North China. The Shang were not alone. More recent evidence unearthed well to the southeast in what is now Zhejiang Province has established a sophisticated Liangzhu Culture as prior in time to the Shang by more than 1,500 years.³¹ In addition, mostly

contemporaneously with the Shang, the independent kingdoms of the Baiyue people and the Sanxingdui culture ruled, respectively, in the Lingnan Region in what is now southern China and in Sichuan Province in what is now southwestern China.

The late Shang capital of Yinxu (today's Anyang in Henan Province) was excavated extensively throughout the twentieth century. The earliest form of Chinese writing, oracle bones (*jiaguwen*), was discovered here. The Sanxingdui civilization has only been excavated in earnest since the late twentieth century, leading to ongoing, exciting finds.³² Located deep in what is now Sichuan Province, Sanxingdui was a seat of political and religious power for more than 500 years (circa 1650–1150 BC). Although these various civilizations developed independently, they were not thoroughly isolated. For example, the presence at both Sanxingdui and Yinxu of cowrie shells (a form of wealth, power, and prestige that originated in the Indian Ocean) indicate contact with similar outside sources, whether from seafaring kingdoms to the south or the Silk Roads to the north from Central Asia.³³

China's 5,000-year history has often been characterized by lack of cohesion, splintering among competing power centers, tender/shifting allegiances, and rupture throughout the land that is now China. The aptly-named Warring States Period (c 475– 221 BCE) preceded the founding of the Qin Dynasty. The great Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), which replaced the short-lived Qin Dynasty and established much of the organizing structure and culture that survived largely intact and unchanged during the entire Imperial era, was itself divided into two halves by Wang Mang's fourteen-year, not-well-known Xin Dynasty (9–23 CE).³⁴ Close to 400 years of warfare were triggered by the second collapse of the Han Dynasty. China was once again splintered, north and south, east and west, regionally and locally, with various rulers, e.g., the Three Kingdoms, the Sixteen Kingdoms, the Western and Eastern Jin, Qi, Liang, Sui.³⁵ There was a cornucopia of competing emperors/ kings all vying to maintain control of their pieces of China.

The broad boundaries of the familiar map of China we know today came into existence after Manchu Qing military expansion between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Mongolia to the north, Xinjiang to the northwest, and Tibet to the southwest were conquered and became parts of China. Prior to this, the ancient maps of China looked like jigsaw puzzle boards. Different shaped pieces were slotted in and then removed, and then changed in size and shape and replaced again and again. The areas that were controlled by China grew and shrank, usually centered in the south and east of the Chinese landmass, at times stretching further north or west. China's then peripheries were almost always under attack by outside nomads, tribes, and warriors. Three of the Chinese Imperial Dynasties were foreign led—the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234), Mongol Yuan (1271–1368), and Manchu Qing (1644–1911).³⁶



Map of Tang Dynasty China and Neighboring Tribes and Empires, c 700 CE, created by Ian Kiu, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1c/Tang_Dynasty_circa_700_CE.png

When the Tang Dynasty (618– 906 CE) finally consolidated control in the seventh century, this began a 300-year renaissance. Tang China was a great cosmopolitan state with the world’s largest city, Chang’an (today’s Xi’an), and sophisticated and sublime painting, ceramics, poetry, music, and literature.³⁷ But even here, an eight-year rebellion launched in 755 by General An Lushan, a man who has been described as “fat, coarse..., shrewd, cunning, and uncouth,”³⁸ tore the Dynasty apart. General An temporarily chased the Tang Emperor out of the capital at Chang’an and declared himself Emperor of a new Great Yan Dynasty (the name never caught on). Though the rebellion was eventually put down, the restored Tang Dynasty became a shell of what it might have been and had to constantly battle to survive. The population suffered greatly, with many millions dying, territory lost, the country and countryside shattered.³⁹ Seven hundred years and four dynasties later, the brutal transition from the native Chinese Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) to the foreign Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) lasted for half a century. The slow-moving, rolling collapse of the Ming Dynasty in the seventeenth century was caused in part by incompetence and lack of vision, but was also exacerbated by “...climatic cooling, reduced agricultural yields,

revenue shortfalls, political strife, social disruptions, economic dislocations, monetary instability, epidemic diseases, and so forth.”⁴⁰ The Manchu warriors were not the only ones battling the Ming: “[t]here also abounded huge roving armies of marauders, smaller local bands of outlaws or hired thugs, pirates of the lakes, rivers, and seas, and aborigine insurrectionists, not to mention Ming government troops, who—whether renegade or not—often pillaged to survive.”⁴¹ Tens of millions of Chinese perished. The voices of those who lived and died through the tumult, as captured through surviving letters, remembrances, and records, are anguished and haunting.⁴²

Leading up to the twentieth century and the ultimate rise of the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong, the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) challenged a faltering Qing Dynasty that was also battling Western forces on Chinese soil. The Taiping were led by Hong Xiuquan, a charismatic, failed-Confucian-turned-radical-Christian who claimed to be the brother of Jesus Christ. After marching north from southern China and capturing Nanjing, Hong declared himself to be King of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace. He had tens of thousands of devoted followers and soldiers, millions of taels of silver, and a pathway north to the Qing capital at Beijing. His Heavenly Kingdom failed in part due to overly zealous social, religious, and economic policies that ultimately alienated much of the Chinese population. In addition, the Taiping leadership, riven by infighting once established as ruler of a large swath of China, faced a desperate Manchu Qing government that partnered with the very foreigners who had recently humiliated them in the First Opium War (1839–1842). Again, large areas of China were devastated, and anywhere from twenty to seventy million more people died.⁴³

There are thousands of years of history that are Chinese, but this history is not the unified, stable, and continuous path that Maxim No. 1 suggests. The Chinese population is rightly proud of the high points of their past. For its part, the Chinese government is massaging (and messaging) history and action in its attempt to avoid the recurring societal and political breaks that are seemingly the mainstay of China’s historical lineage.

Maxim No. 2: China’s Foreign Policy Is One of Harmonious Co-Existence

The Chinese have a long tradition of contact with cultures and civilizations outside of what was then China. These contacts involved the Chinese going out and foreigners knocking on the door. Whether viewed from the far past or up to the present, however, the statement that China’s foreign policy is (universally) based on harmonious co-existence shades a complete portrayal of the situation on the ground (or water as the case may be).

China’s ancient world view was a clear-cut division—China was civilized, everyone else was an uncivilized barbarian.⁴⁴ The emperor was both a Magnificent Supreme Being, *huangdi* (皇帝) as well as the Son of Heaven, *tianzi* (天子). The Son of Heaven ruled over All Beneath Heaven, *tianxia* (天下), or the “known world.”⁴⁵ The evolution of the character for heaven (天) depicts an adult person (大) positioned under a line above and is symbolic of there being a realm higher



The Qianlong Emperor Entering Suzhou on Horseback, from “The Qianlong Emperor’s Southern Inspection Tour, Scroll Six: Entering Suzhou along the Grand Canal,” painted by Xu Yang, 1770, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, photographed by the author.

than man. Heaven “...provides the legitimacy of the king’s rule.”⁴⁶ Since heaven is above and the known world below, this meant that the emperor not only ruled the civilized world of China, but also all the uncivilized barbarian realms as well.

To be fair, such an attitude toward the world was not unique to China. Ashurbanipal, the intellectual, military ruler of the Assyrian Empire in the seventh century B.C. Middle East, was among other things, “king of the world” and “king of the four quarters.” He ruled over the largest kingdom of the time, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and from northern Egypt to southeast Turkey.

“The Assyrians thought of their world as comprising a central civilized core [...] and a hostile peripheral ‘other’ beyond its borders. Wherever the king ruled, peace and prosperity abounded, whereas foreign lands situated beyond Assyria’s sphere of influence were afflicted by chaos and disorder.”⁴⁷ This mindset would have been quite relatable and comfortable for the rulers of Imperial China.

The early land route connecting China with the world was over the Silk Roads via the oasis town of Dunhuang.⁴⁸ For more than sixteen centuries, Dunhuang led into and out of China at the western end of the Hexi Corridor. As a regional center, the area attracted numerous peoples, languages, and cultures who met, co-existed, and connected. Documents recovered from a sealed

library at Dunhuang's Mogao cave site are written in Chinese, Tibetan, Uyghur, Khotanese, Songdian, and Sanskrit.⁴⁹ Dunhuang became a military garrison when the Chinese took control during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 AD). The town subsequently fell, was destroyed, was rebuilt, and control changed hands many times over the centuries among various powerful groups, including Mongolian, Tibetan, Xiongnu, Uyghur, and Chinese.⁵⁰ The entire region (Dunhuang in Gansu Province and Xinjiang Province further west) has been under Chinese control since the Manchu Qing Qianlong Emperor crushed the Dzungar people in the late 1700s.⁵¹

Just as Chinese history is filled with instances of foreigners seeking and gaining control of Chinese territory, history also contains examples, such as cited in the preceding paragraph, of China seeking to gain obedience and at times territory from neighboring kingdoms and countries. These efforts were sometimes successful and sometimes not. Whether these interactions were examples of harmonious co-existence may have been determined in each instance by how the parties defined the situation.

In the second-century BCE during the Han Dynasty, a local king in the land that is now the northern part of Vietnam bordering China declared himself to be an emperor. This did not sit well with the next-door Han Emperor. The Chinese Emperor wrote to the Dai Viet Emperor-want-to-be that “when two emperors appear simultaneously, one must be destroyed ... struggling and not yielding is not the way of a person endowed with humanity...”⁵² The latter quickly gave up his imperial designs and went on content to remain a king. It was around this time that the same area became a never-truly-comfortable administrative district of China.⁵³ Effective Chinese control ended nine centuries later when the Tang Dynasty (618–906 CE) fell. Intermittent battles back and forth with the strongly-independence-minded region restarted shortly thereafter during the Song Dynasty and continued into the nineteenth century.⁵⁴

Nearby countries and kingdoms were also within China's desired orbit. These foreign contacts were not always contentious, and each side often benefited from and was satisfied with the relationship.⁵⁵ But a more peaceful co-existence was not always the order of the day. After the fall of the Song Dynasty and the rise of the Yuan Dynasty in the late thirteenth century, Khubilai Khan sent several unsuccessful armadas to invade Japan and to battle the Cham (a kingdom in what is now the southern part of Vietnam), Annamese (Dai Viet), and Kadiri (Java) kingdoms spread across Southeast Asia.⁵⁶

The most famous maritime personage and episode in Chinese history is Admiral Zheng He and his seven voyages between 1405 and 1433.⁵⁷ He was heir to a long maritime history⁵⁸ as the Chinese ventured out to meet with “uncivilized barbarians.”⁵⁹ Zheng He, a Muslim eunuch, was a childhood friend of the man who became the Yongle Emperor of the Ming Dynasty and

dispatched him abroad. He sailed with up to 27,000 or more sailors and soldiers on dozens to hundreds of ships, including so-called treasure ships. The treasure ships were by far the largest, most technologically sophisticated sailing ships to take to the oceans to that time with waterproof compartmentalized hulls and mechanical stern-post rudders.⁶⁰ The fleets sailed down the Chinese coast from the Yangtze River, around the South China Sea, through the Malacca Straits and then across to India, Hormuz, Aden, and the northeast coast of Africa. Zheng He's fleets made dozens of stops during each voyage at established bases in long existing ports of call.

Zheng He's voyages appear to have served several purposes, both harmonious and not so harmonious. They were a mighty military force that was capable of and did in fact fight battles when needed.⁶¹ Most times, the threat of such force was sufficient itself to serve the political aims of Ming Dynasty power projection⁶² in a de facto Eastern version of the later gunboat diplomacy of the West. Facilitating and promoting the so-called tribute system (a state of mutual gift exchange and political and diplomatic theater) was another important aspect of the voyages.⁶³ The voyages provided regular contact between China and outside kingdoms and countries, bringing power and prestige to China and returning the same to visitors bringing tribute to the Imperial Court.

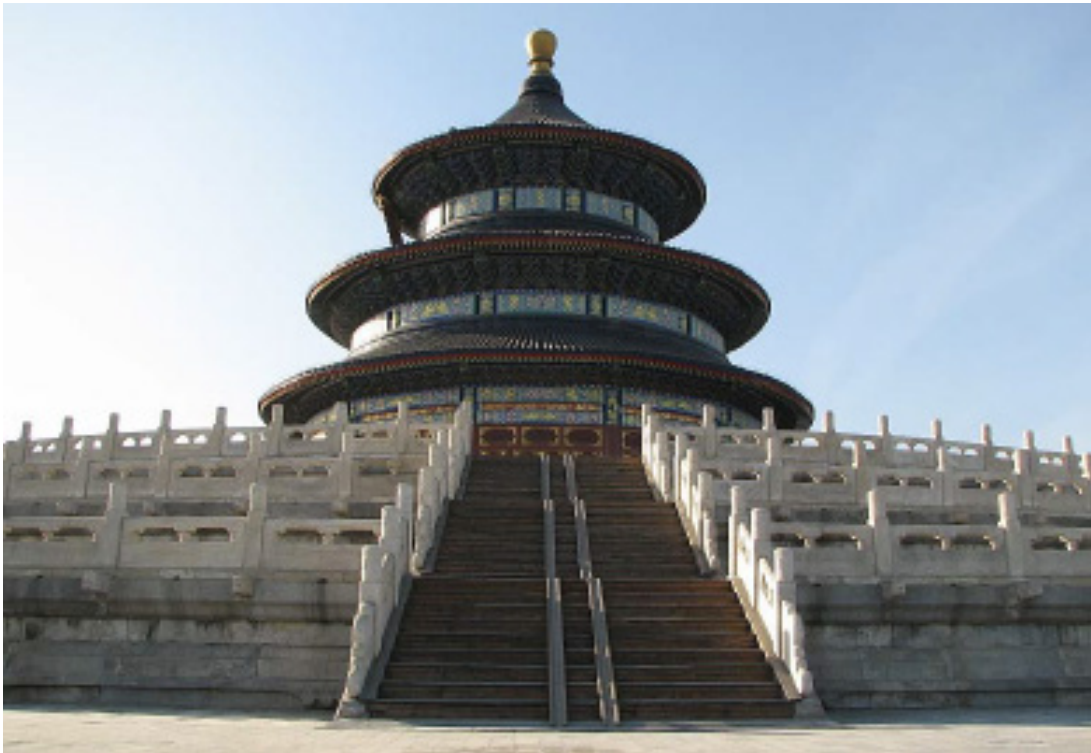
The foregoing may have been equaled, if not overshadowed, by the state-sponsored and private trade the Chinese engaged in as they exploited economic bases established in Southeast and South Asian kingdoms during the voyages.⁶⁴ In preparation for the sixth voyage in 1421, the Emperor "... not only ordered Zheng He to 'take imperial orders together with brocade, gauze, thin satin and other valuables as awards to the tributary states'..., but also provided his fleet with 'silver ingots, cotton cloth, copper coins and other goods' for trade activities in the Indian Ocean region."⁶⁵ One scholar has stated that "[d]uring the reign of Yongle, Chinese ships, Chinese sailors, and Chinese maritime technology dominated not only Asian waters but also the Indian and Arabic sea lanes."⁶⁶

When Marco Polo visited Zaitun (what he called Quanzhou in Southern China) during the Yuan Dynasty in the late thirteenth century, he found "...a port famous for the vast quantity of shipping, loaded with merchandise, that enters it and is afterward distributed through every part of the province of Manzi.⁶⁷ Originally a smugglers' haven for access to China during the Tang Dynasty, Quanzhou had been the principal port of entry for international trade since around the turn of the eleventh century.⁶⁸ The city breathed with a cosmopolitan nature and was inhabited by abundant numbers of Arabs, Persians, and other foreigners.⁶⁹

Being a foreigner in China was a fraught experience. During the Tang Dynasty An Lushan Rebellion discussed earlier (in 760 CE), rebel leader Tian Shengong sacked the central Chinese city of Yangzhou on the Yangtze River looking for treasure. It is reported that thousands of Persians, Arabs, Jews, and other foreigners were killed.⁷⁰ A century or so later (and only thirty



Above: The Golden Stream, Courtyard of the Gate of Supreme Harmony, Forbidden City, Beijing, photographed by the author. Below: The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, Temple of Heaven, Beijing, photographed by the author.



years after Emperor Wuzong issued an edict ordering the persecution of Buddhists— a foreign religion introduced into China), another rebel army led by Huang Chao, a former salt smuggler, laid waste to the wealthy merchant city of Guangzhou (not far to the west of Quanzhou). As recalled by an Arab traveler, Abu Zayd al-Sirafi,

At first the citizens of Khanfu [Guangzhou] held out against him, but he subjected them to a long siege—this was in 264 A.H. (877–878 A.D.)—until, at last, he took the city and put its people to the sword. Experts on Chinese affairs reported that the number of Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians massacred by him, quite apart from the native Chinese, was 120,000; all of them had gone to settle in this city and become merchants there. The only reason the number of victims from these four communities happens to be known is that the Chinese had kept records of their numbers.⁷¹

China's actions in relation to her neighbors and the broader world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are in ways reminiscent of the methods adopted in earlier times. The People's Republic of China fought brief wars, respectively, with India in 1962⁷² and Vietnam in 1979.⁷³ China was victorious in only the former conflict. Renewed border clashes in the remote Himalayan Mountains region with India⁷⁴ took place between 2020–2022. China is expanding into territory claimed by another Himalayan nation, Bhutan.⁷⁵ Jockeying between China and Japan is ongoing regarding a group of uninhabited islands strategically positioned in the East China Sea between Taiwan and Okinawa and not too far from the Chinese mainland.⁷⁶ The Japanese control the Senkaku Islands, while the Chinese claim they are instead their Diaoyutai Islands. China's land-reclamation efforts in the navigationally-important and resource-rich South China Sea have led to new marine and military bases in areas far from the Chinese mainland and close to nations that also claim rights Middle Kingdom in the same area, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei.⁷⁷ China has also been active even farther away. For example, in 2021 and 2022, China imposed substantial economic and political sanctions against Lithuania for taking actions China disapproved of in relation to Taiwan.⁷⁸

China is a large country with more than a dozen land borders and a long history of deep involvement with neighbors and the broader world. As with similar powerful countries, China has and continues to employ both soft and hard power to achieve her diplomatic and foreign policy aims. Relations were not always frosty in the past and were at times peaceful for relatively long stretches; however, China's long history of foreign policy is not the universally harmonious and benign one of co-existence that Maxim No. 2 promotes.

Maxim No. 3: China is a Confucian Country

The teachings of Confucius and his followers hold a special place in the Chinese sense of self, society, and culture. This being said, Confucianism in China has never operated in a vacuum. The influences of Daoism and Buddhism are equally important. The interactions among these “Three Teachings” of China⁷⁹ have not always themselves been harmonious.

Confucianism and Daoism originated indigenously in Chinese culture during the same epochs transitioning from the long collapse of the Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BC) to the rise of the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BC) and the Warring States Period (475–221 BC). Buddhism is a later foreign import brought by merchants over the Silk Road from India via Central Asia during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE).⁸⁰ The Three Teachings are not the only cultural underpinnings of Chinese society. Woven into the mix is also longstanding, popular religion consisting of “...such common rituals as offering incenses to the ancestors, conducting funerals, exorcising ghosts, and consulting fortunetellers; belief in the patterned interaction between light and dark forces or in the ruler’s influence on the natural world; the tendency to construe gods as government officials; [and] the preference for balancing tranquility and movement...”⁸¹ China’s past is a philosophically and religiously rich, competitive comingling and clash of and among all of these traditions. Confucianism is called Rujia, the School of Ru, and derives from the teachings of Kong Fuzi (or simply Kongzi), who we know as Confucius. Confucius (551–479 BCE) was an aspiring, yet frequently unemployed, politician and itinerant teacher who was frustrated by the political and social breakdown, chaos, and instability of Chinese society. He yearned for a just, ethical, and ordered system to govern the people and the country. Traveling from region to region, he petitioned kings and officials to hear his core belief that how one lived one’s life was the key ingredient of social stability. He felt that “...a good society was ruled not by law, but rather by wise and cultivated gentlemen.”⁸²

Confucius promoted five guidelines to leading a meaningful life: benevolence (ren 仁), righteousness (yi 义), ritual/propriety (li 礼), wisdom (zhi 智), and trustworthiness/faithfulness (xin 信). He set out five key social relationships of ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, elder and younger sibling, and friend and friend. A central tenet of the philosophy is striving for the middle way or balance between thought, emotion or action.⁸³ An individual needs to overcome self by submitting to ritual and in this way move towards cultivating goodness, humaneness, and becoming a decent human being.⁸⁴ The ability to sense the needs of others and act in ways that help the others grow and flourish itself creates relationships that help all flourish.⁸⁵ Man has an obligation to be an active participant “...in society and human affairs within the confines of propriety and hierarchy.”⁸⁶

The formal philosophy of Confucianism (Ruism) developed after the Master died. His thousands of disciples, in particular Mencius, documented, expanded, and spread his teachings. Ruism became a sanctioned state ideology during the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–9 C.E.). A reinterpretation and extrapolation of Ruism in the intellectually- vibrant Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE) introduced what has become known as Neo-Confucianism. This new take on Ruism became the predominant ideology that governed and characterized Chinese society through the fall of the Qing Dynasty more than eight hundred years later.⁸⁷ The civil service examination system, which became the key to success and mobility in Imperial China as a scholar-official, was based on memorizing and analyzing the extensive repository of Confucian knowledge.⁸⁸



Lao Tzu, Sakyamuni, and Confucius, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) hanging scroll, artist unknown, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, https://www.si.edu/object/fsg_F1916.109

Daoism is a competing Chinese philosophy/religion. Daoism attempts to understand the world and to organize and guide life not only in the here, but also in the hereafter. Its impact in China is as fundamental as Ruism. Originating in the Dao De Jing, Daoist belief focuses on the Dao, the Way. The Way is energy (qi). The Way is reality. There is no beginning and no ending to existence. “The Way asked of its followers that they should live in harmony with nature, free of artificiality, knowledge, and desires, responsible to the natural world.”⁸⁹ The second of the “three Daoist treasures” is moderation.⁹⁰ After repeated, failed attempts at alchemy to achieve longevity and immortality, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty concluded that he had been led astray and “... decided that ‘if we are temperate in our diet and use medicine, we make our illnesses few. That is all we can attain to.’”⁹¹

Buddhism may have come later to China (first century CE), but it quickly (in historical terms) became intimately incorporated into all facets of Chinese culture, economy, politics, and society.⁹² To Buddhists, life is a web of connected moments, each influenced by the prior and influencing the next.⁹³ As with Daoism, Buddhism offers a prescribed way to think and act in order to live a better life now and in the hereafter (Ruism is only interested in the now). In Buddhism, this means acquiring merit on the path towards seeking enlightenment. Acquiring merit means performing good deeds so that the effect of karma will be positive. Anyone can become a buddha (an enlightened being who is released from rebirth and achieves nirvana).⁹⁴

Though proponents of one or the other of the Three Teachings often jostled with each other, it was not unusual for multiple belief systems to be tolerated, if not supported, in China. For example, shortly after ascending the throne during the early Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE), Emperor Taizu, himself a believer in Confucian doctrine, ordained 8,000 Buddhist monks and encouraged scholastic Buddhism by having the Buddhist canon carved on 130,000 woodblocks.⁹⁵ However, there have been not only inter-philosophical and religious debates, but also political persecutions and violence against the believers of one sect by those of another.

Zhuangzi, the second great master of Daoism, mocked Confucians and Mohists (another movement active during the time of Confucius and Laozi) in recounting the “Fable of a Frog in the Well.” In this fable, a well frog brags to a sea turtle about its comfortable home and way of life. When the sea turtle describes the wide-ranging freedom of living in the sea, the frog is “completely dumbfounded” and cannot comprehend such a world. Zhuangzi felt that Confucians, with their strict moral codes and ritual lifestyle, were like the frog trapped in its well with only a limited and small perspective on life, whereas the Daoists maintained a limitless and expansive perspective on life flowing like the sea.⁹⁶

The foreign nature and wide acceptance of a barbarian belief system like Buddhism has been a sore point for many in China. A fifth century scholar, Gu Huan, wrote that “Buddhism originated in the land of the barbarians, is that not because the customs of the barbarians were originally evil? The Dao [Way] originated in China, is that not because the habits of the Chinese were originally good?”⁹⁷ Confucians also got into the act. A sixth century Confucian named Fan Zhen wrote that Buddhism “undermined the foundations of imperial rule,” “corrupted popular customs,” and “encouraged unfilial behavior by promoting a false and beguiling metaphysics.”⁹⁸

Beyond words, there were four great persecutions of Buddhists in China prior to the twentieth century (when all Three Teachings were attacked and suppressed for several decades).

In this first instance, while most emperors of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534) supported Buddhism, Emperor Taiwu (r. 424–452 CE) was a Daoist who ordered an attack on Buddhists in 446 CE. He became enraged at the “lawlessness of the sramanas” (adherents), possibly because he was led to believe that they were supporting the barbarian Xiongnu who the Emperor was battling for control of the northern and western regions.⁹⁹ In any event, the Emperor “...promulgated a decree calling for Buddhist persecution, ordering the killing of the sramanas, and burning and breaking Buddha images. ‘If from now on there be any who dare serve the barbarian gods or make images, statues or figures in clay or bronze, they shall be executed with their whole household.’”¹⁰⁰

The third persecution was conducted by Emperor Wuzong (r. 840–846 CE) of the Tang Dynasty and was exceedingly comprehensive and effective. An ardent Daoist, the Emperor launched his Great Anti-Buddhist Persecution of 841–845 CE. His reasoning was in part religious, financial, and political. Buddhist monasteries had grown in numbers and clout and were wealthy. By confiscating vast Buddhist wealth, taking and destroying Buddhist monasteries and temples, and placing hundreds of thousands of monks, nuns, and slaves back on the tax rolls, the Emperor accomplished several goals. He was able to increase the depleted Imperial coffers. He went a long way toward wiping out what he saw as an alien scourge on Chinese society. By promoting Daoist belief and related construction, he was also able to get the upper hand against political competitors and enemies who supported the foreign faith. The Emperor’s death in 846 ended the persecution, and his successor issued a “great amnesty” a mere five months into his new reign.¹⁰¹

China is a country with an ingrained connection to the tenets promoted by Confucius and the Neo-Confucians. These are aspirations for achieving a good and just society. Life, however, is not as simple as Maxim No. 2 portrays. The other two legs of the Three Teachings stool, Daoism and Buddhism—their existence, their influence in society, and the treatment and interplay among the three over the millennia, are important considerations in the analysis of China.

CONCLUSION: QUEST FOR UNITY AND STABILITY

Why does China's current leader Xi Jinping (and his government) promote the three maxims? He wants to tell a story using the past to shape the present and future:

- ♦ The existence of 5,000 years of continuous Chinese history sets the stage for a surge of nationalistic pride and forms a foundation for the China Dream and the inevitable great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.
- ♦ Since China has a long history of peaceful and harmonious relations with foreign kingdoms, nations, and peoples, the wider world can rest easy. China is returning to her traditional governing role, and all will be fine.
- ♦ A Confucian country is a nation ruled by individual self-cultivation, ritual, and regulated relationships in order to enhance culture, respect, and propriety. Such a society is good and just and can be a positive role model.

This essay has looked at China's history beyond the above soundbites to provide additional insight into who the Chinese are, how the Chinese think, and why China may respond and act the way she does.

Set within a millennia-long backdrop of rising and falling power and prestige, China's history of remarkable achievements buffeted by frequent chaos and instability has left its mark on the Chinese people, on Chinese society, and on China's government. Thus, while it is easy to say that the Chinese Communist Party today seeks absolute control of China simply to stay in power, China's lineage of disruption, dislocation, and distress lends credence to the argument that the Chinese population craves stability and opportunity and that (at least until recently) the Party has been providing it.

This desire for order and moderation is seen in Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.¹⁰² Keeping the masses fed, clothed, and content has long been a marker of governmental success in China, of the ruling dynasty retaining the Mandate of Heaven. Originating during the pre-Imperial Zhou Dynasty (1046–221 BC), the Mandate of Heaven (天命, tianming) holds that China's rulers lead by the grace of Heaven.¹⁰³ When those rulers are no longer just and wise and cannot protect the people, then Heaven's grace is lost and so too is the dynasty.¹⁰⁴

A relatively recent example, one which the then 23-year-old Xi Jinping must certainly remember, took place in 1976. That was a year in which it can be said that Heaven expressed displeasure with how China's rulers were conducting themselves and the country. This displeasure did not result in the fall of the Communist Party as rulers of China, but it heralded a system shock and leadership changes of pronounced consequence.

The havoc and erosion of civil society wrought by the decade-long Cultural Revolution was ongoing as the year 1976 began. Just one week in on January 8th, the beloved first Premier of the People's Republic, Zhou Enlai, died. His death led to widespread outpourings of support. On July 28th, a catastrophic earthquake devastated the northern city of Tangshan in less than half a minute. Reports of deaths range from 242,000 to more than 600,000 people.¹⁰⁵ Mao Zedong died on September 8th. The Gang of Four, led by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, fell on October 6th and new leadership was empowered. Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng, was himself ultimately replaced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. By the end of the decade, China had reestablished formal diplomatic relations with the United States and had launched the Reform and Opening Movement that set China on the path to Xi Jinping's China today. The Mandate of Heaven had wobbled—but held.

History is strong in China. The leaders of a resurgent China in the twenty-first century are using the nation's history in an attempt to backstop, position, and thrust China into a grand future. Many of the threads woven throughout China's long and varied past, from control of knowledge to dealings with outside barbarians to religion and philosophy, and more, are once again in the forefront.¹⁰⁶

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ball, Philip, *The Water Kingdom: A Secret History of China*, University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Brook, Timothy, *Great State: China and the World*, Harper Collins Publishers, 2020.
- . *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*, Belknap Press, 2010.
- Chen Shen, *Anyang and Sanxingdui: Unveiling the Mysteries of Ancient Chinese Civilizations*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 2002.
- Delgado, James P., *Khubilai Khan's Lost Fleet: In Search of a Legendary Armada*, University of California Press, 2008.
- Dreyer, Edward L., *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*, Pearson-Longman, 2007.
- French, Howard W., *Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.
- Hansen, Valerie, *The Year 1000*, Scribner, 2020.
- Hao Chunwen, *Dunhuang Manuscripts: An Introduction to Texts from the Silk Road*, Stephen F. Teiser, Tr., Portico Publishing Company, 2016.
- Hillenbrand, Margaret, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China*, Duke University Press, 2020.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. and Bryan W. Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Seven Bridges Press, 2001.
- Jenner, W.J.F., *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis*, The Penguin Press, 1992.
- Karl, Rebecca E. *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, Duke University Press.
- Kuhn, Dieter, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, Belknap Press, 2009.
- Lewis, Mark Edward, *China Between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Liu, Ping, *My Chinese Dream: From Red Guard to CEO*, China Books, 2013.
- Man, Jon, *The Terra Cotta Army: China's First Emperor and the Birth of a Nation*, Da Capo Press, 2008.
- Mote, F.W., *Imperial China 900–1800*, Harvard University Press, 1999, 2000.
- Muhlhahn, Klaus, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, Harvard University Press, 2019.

- Ning Qian, *Confucius: The Sage on the Road*, Better Link Press, 2011.
- Nylen, Michael and Vankeerberghen, Griet, Eds, *Chang'an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China*, University of Washington Press, 2015.
- Nylen, Michael and Wilson, Thomas, *Lives of Confucius: Civilization's Greatest Sage through the Ages*, Doubleday, 2010.
- Palmer, James, *Heaven Cracks Earth Shakes: The Tangshan Earthquake and the Death of Mao's China*, Basic Books, 2012.
- Paludan, Ann, *Chronicles of the Chinese Emperors: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers of Imperial China*, Thames & Hudson, 1998, Page 109.
- Ruan Xing *Confucius' Courtyard: Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China*, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022.
- Rugoff, Milton, Ed., *The Travels of Marco Polo*, New American Library, The Collection of Biography and Autobiography, 1961, 1986 printing, Chapter 82, Pages 198-199.
- Schafer, Edward H., *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, University of California Press, 1963, 1985 printing.
- Schuman, Michael, *Confucius and the World He Created*, Basic Books, 2015.
- . *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World*, PublicAffairs, 2020.
- Spence, Jonathan D., *The Search for Modern China*, W. W. Norton & Company, 1990.
- Stallard, Katie, *Dancing on Bones: History and Power in China, Russia, and North Korea*, Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Stikker, Allerd, *Sacred Mountains: How the revival of Daoism is turning China's ecological crisis around*, Bene Factum Publishing, 2014.
- Struve, Lynn A., Ed and Tr., *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm: China in Tigers' Jaws*, Yale University Press, 1993.
- Suarez, Thomas, *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia*, Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd, 1999.
- Toussaint, Auguste, *June Guicharnaud, Translator, History of the Indian Ocean*, The University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Tsai, Shih-Shan Henry, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle*, University of Washington Press, 2001.
- Wang, Robin R., *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Watt, James C.Y., *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2010.

Whitfield, Roderick Susan Whitfield, and Neville Agnew, *Cave Temples of Mogao: Art and History on the Silk Road*, The Getty Conservation Institute and J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000.

Wood, Frances, *China's First Emperor and his Terracotta Warriors*, St. Martin's Press, 2007.

———. *Great Books of China: From Ancient times to the Present*, BlueBridge, 2017.

Wriggins, Sally Hovey, *Xuanzang: A Buddhist Pilgrim on the Silk Road*, Westview Press, 1996.

NOTES

- 1 Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching, A New Translation* by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, Vintage Books, 1972.
- 2 Sinica Podcast with Kaiser Kuo, June 9, 2022, "A Comprehensive Mirror: James Carter's 'This Week in China's History' column marks two years." <https://supchina.com/podcast/a-comprehensive-mirror-james-carters-this-week-in-chinas-history-column-markstwo-years/>
- 3 Jon Man, *The Terra Cotta Army: China's First Emperor and the Birth of a Nation*, Da Capo Press, 2008, pp. 78-82. The Saber and Scroll 26
- 4 Frances Wood, *China's First Emperor and his Terracotta Warriors*, St. Martin's Press, 2007, pp. 78-83.
- 5 Frances Wood, *Great Books of China: From Ancient times to the Present*, BlueBridge, 2017, p. 50.
- 6 Ibid, p 49. *The Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian)* did not remain static after being written by Sima Qian. Some chapters were apparently "added to" or "continued," others may have had "gaps filled in," and new chapters were created. See Hans Van Ess, "The Late Western Han Historian Chu Shaosun," in Michael Nylan and Griet Vankeerberghen, Eds, *Chang'an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China*, University of Washington Press, 2015, Chapter 9, pp. 477-504.
- 7 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1990, p. 100.
- 8 Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle*, University of Washington Press, 2001, p. 133.
- 9 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, pp. 100-101.
- 10 F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900-1800*, Harvard University Press, 1999, 2000, Pages 925-928. In following through on his "literary inquisition," the Qianlong Emperor was noted as being most especially concerned with "pro-Ming sentiment," "Ming restorationist thought," "hostility to steppe peoples," "salacious and licentious entertainment writings," and "military writings."

- 11 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, p. 101.
- 12 Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, Duke University Press, 2010, Chapters 1 and 2.
- 13 Michael Schuman, *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World, Public Affairs*, 2020, Chapter 10.
- 14 Rebecca Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, p. 53.
- 15 A stanza from a song sung by the young (and impressionable) Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution went as follows: “We are Chairman Mao’s Red Guards. We steel our red hearts in great winds and waves. We arm ourselves with Mao Zedong thought, to sweep away all pests. We have the courage to criticize and to fight. There will be no end to our revolution. We will utterly smash the Old World, to keep the revolutionary landscape red forever.” (Quoted by Liu Ping in her memoir, *My Chinese Dream: From Red Guard to CEO*, China Books, 2013, pp. 51-52).
- 16 The *Daodejing* is attributed to Laozi; however, it is now generally accepted that there was no one, Laozi, but rather the teachings in the *Daodejing* were compiled from a variety of sources. See Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Seven Bridges Press, 2001, p. 157.
- 17 W. J. F. Jenner, *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China’s Crisis*, The Penguin Press, 1992, p. 196.
- 18 Klaus Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, Harvard University Press, 2019, pp. 466-467.
- 19 Margaret Hillenbrand, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China*, Duke University Press, 2020, pp. 128-129.
- 20 Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, pp. 470-471.
- 21 Katie Stallard, *Dancing on Bones: History and Power in China, Russia, and North Korea*, Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 214-215. At the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in late 2021, the “Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievement and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century” was adopted. This is only the third such historical resolution issued in China since 1949 (Mao issued the first in 1945 and his successor, Deng Xiaoping, issued the second in 1981). The lengthy Resolution includes that “...the leadership of the Party is the foundation and lifeblood of the Party and the Country, and the pillar upon which the interests and wellbeing of all Chinese people depend [Stallard, p. 215].
- 22 Michael Schuman, *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World*, pp. 308-311.

23 Klaus Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, pp. 564-565 (patriotic education directive to Tsinghua and Peking Universities in 2012). In addition, Emma Shleifer, a scholar at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, delivered a paper analyzing National Memory Narratives in China and Israel at an online SupChina Conference, “Sinologia: History and Memory in Contemporary China” on June 10, 2022. Ms. Shleifer noted how national memory narratives are crafted by the state to create a shared memory among the people. The narratives of ancient past and victimhood are utilized by the government in different ways in the two countries. In China, the narrative focusses on the glory and grandeur of China’s past history, of unity and national rejuvenation. It is also used to bolster the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party, both domestically and abroad. Finally, she cautioned that it is important to realize that these national memory narratives are often as much about what the state says as it is about what the state does not say.

24 Wang Huning, a member of the Chinese Communist Party’s Politburo Standing Committee and Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee, and a man who has been called China’s most powerful intellectual and has the ear of Xi Jinping, has written at length on the history of traditional, Chinese political culture and on the need for China to develop a new set of values to serve as the foundation of a new political culture to replace the old. In an introduction to a translation of Wang’s essay, Matthew D. Johnson writes, “[v]iewed from the perspective of political order, modernization is desirable only insofar it can be counterbalanced with the creation of new value systems whose functional role is to keep institutions strong and societies governable. Strong states are culturally unified states. For an establishment intellectual in the context of CCP-ruled China, this means preserving and centralizing Party authority; renovating and expanding faith in Party socialism; and recalibrating globalization to make the international system more conducive to Party survival” [emphasis in original]. Wang Huning, “The Structure of China’s Changing Political Culture,” David Ownby, Tr., *Reading the China Dream*, 2022 <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/wang-huning-lldquothe-structure-of-chinarsquos-changing-political-culturerdquo.html>.

25 Klaus Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, pp. 563-564. Katie Stallard writes in *Dancing on Bones* (p. 184, see Note 19) that in Xi Jinping’s 2015 speech celebrating Victory Day in China (the anniversary of the end of World War II, the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression) and other memorial days, “...as well as remembering the country’s suffering during the conflict [WWII] as part of the broader ‘century of humiliation’ China had endured before the party came to power, he said the war should also be remembered as the beginning of the end of that humiliation and the start of the journey to what he called the ‘China Dream of national rejuvenation.’...Not only did it ‘put an end to the national humiliation of China,’ he explained, but also this ‘great triumph represented the rebirth of China, opened up bright prospects for the great renewal of the Chinese nation, and set our ancient country on a new journey.’”

- 26 Josh Chin, "In China, Xi Jinping's Crackdown Extends to Dissenting Versions of History," August 1, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-china-xi-jinpings-crackdown-extends-to-dissenting-versions-of-history-1470087445>.
- 27 Jun Mai, "China deletes 2 million online posts for 'historical nihilism' as Communist Party centenary nears," May 11, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3132957/china-deletes-2-million-online-posts-historical-nihilism>. See also Katie Stallard, "History Man: How Xi Jinping turned to the past to secure the future of the Chinese Communist Party's rule," *The Wire China*, June 19, 2022, <https://www.thewirechina.com/2022/06/19/history-man/>. The Chinese populace itself also plays a role, wittingly and not, in the perpetuation and efficacy of what Professor Margaret Hillenbrand terms "public secrecy" (Margaret Hillenbrand, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China*, p. 9)
- 28 Katie Stallard, *Dancing on Bones: History and Power in China, Russia, and North Korea*, p. 182. The 2021 "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century," further includes a statement that "[w]ith a history stretching back more than 5,000 years, the Chinese nation is a great and ancient nation that has fostered a splendid civilization and made indelible contributions to the progress of human civilization." For full text, see http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/16/c_1310314611.htm.
- 29 Xinhua, Huaxia, Ed., "Xi Calls for Advancing Study of Chinese Civilization," May 29, 2022, <https://english.news.cn/20220529/a6f4d37f3e90465e88922e611b6e3d4c/c.html>.
- 30 Michael Schuman, *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World*, p 18.
- 31 "Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City," UNESCO World Heritage Convention, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1592/>. See also David Robson, "Liangzhu: The 5,000-Year-Old Chinese Civilisation that Time Forgot," *South China Morning Post*, April 18, 2020.
- 32 "Sacrificial Altar among 13,000 Relics Unearthed at Sanxingdui Archaeological Site in China," Kathleen Magramo, June 14, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/sanxingdui-china-archaeology-relics-discovery-intl-hnk/index.html>.
- 33 Bin Yang, "The Rise and Fall of Cowrie Shells: The Asian Story," *Journal of World History*, Vol. 22, No 1 (March 2011), pp. 1-25 (University of Hawaii Press), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23011676>.
- 34 Michael Nylan and Griet Vankeerberghen, Eds, *Chang'an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China*, University of Washington Press, pp. 278-280.
- 35 Mark Edward Lewis, *China Between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

- 36 Timothy Brook, *Great State: China and the World*, Harper Collins Publishers, 2022, p. 8.
- 37 Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, University of California Press, 1963, 1985 printing.
- 38 Ann Paludan, *Chronicles of the Chinese Emperors: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers of Imperial China*, Thames & Hudson, 1998, p. 109.
- 39 Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, Belknap Press, 2009, pp. 10-18.
- 40 Lynn A. Struve, Ed and Tr., *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm: China in Tigers' Jaws*, Yale University Press, 1993, Page 2. See also Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, W. W. Norton & Company, 1990.
- 41 Ibid at 2.
- 42 See Note 37.
- 43 Klaus Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, pp. 137-146.
- 44 Schuman, *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World*, p. 32.
- 45 Howard W. French, *Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2017, p. 4.
- 46 Xing Ruan, *Confucius' Courtyard: Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China*, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022, p. 27.
- 47 The British Museum, *The BP exhibition I am Ashurbanipal king of the world, king of Assyria*, Gareth Brereton, ed., Thames & Hudson, 2018, pp. 10, 105.
- 48 A new book examining the Silk Roads by Xin Wen will be published in 2023. Entitled, *The King's Road: Diplomacy and the Remaking of the Silk Road, 800-1000*, the book examines the concept of the Silk Road. He looks at the Dunhuang materials through the lens of "Is the Silk Road a nineteenth century fabrication or does it also appear in pre-modern, medieval sources?" Professor Wen breaks his analysis into three main sections – Reconstructing the World of Long-Distance Travelers, the Nature of Long-Distance Travel, and Understanding "the Silk Road." He examines the types of materials from Cave 17 that aid in each query, including without limitation, a camel contract, road guide, gift receipt, phrase book, introduction letter, and so much more. He notes references in official reports and elsewhere to numerous, lengthy, and repeated diplomatic missions, but not much re: merchants. Professor Wen concludes that for people in this region, the connecting network (a "road" if you will) that was central to the economy, kingly exchange, and politics was an accepted concept. Professor Wen reviewed his research and upcoming book during a webinar sponsored by the Dunhuang Foundation on June 9, 2022.

- 49 Hao Chunwen, *Dunhuang Manuscripts: An Introduction to Texts from the Silk Road*, Stephen F. Teiser, Tr., Portico Publishing Company, 2016, pp. 30-38.
- 50 Roderick Whitfield, Susan Whitfield, and Neville Agnew, *Cave Temples of Mogao: Art and History on the Silk Road*, The Getty Conservation Institute and J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000, pp. 10-23.
- 51 F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900-1800*, p. 936.
- 52 Howard W. French, *Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power*, p. 6.
- 53 Ibid at 133.
- 54 Ibid at 133-145.
- 55 Michael Schuman, *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World*, pp. 209-210.
- 56 Auguste Toussaint, *June Guicharnaud, Translator, History of the Indian Ocean*, The University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 77. See also Geoff Wade, "Chinese Engagement with the Indian Ocean during the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties (Tenth to Sixteenth Centuries), Chapter 4 in Michael Pearson, Ed., *Trade, Circulation, and flow in the Indian Ocean World*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 55-81, and James P. Delgado, *Khubilai Khan's Lost Fleet: In Search of a Legendary Armada*, University of California Press, 2008.
- 57 For more on early maritime trade contacts between Europe and Asia-China, including ancient world maps, see Andrew Singer, "Sailing to Cathay: Maritime Trade Routes to Asia Before and After the Arrival of the Europeans at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of the International Chinese Snuff Bottle Society*, Winter 2021, Volume LIII, Number 3, pp. 34-42 (Part I), and Spring 2022, Volume LIV, Number 1, pp. 6-26 (Part II).
- 58 In the first-century C.E. *Han Shu (Book of the Former Han Dynasty)*, it is recorded that "... Chinese vessels were visiting Sumatra, Burma, Ceylon, and southeastern India during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE). During the Tang Dynasty, Jia Dan, a scholar and official, described a sea route from Canton to Baghdad through the Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Arabian Sea" (Thomas Suarez, *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia*, Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd, 1999, p. 46). During the late Southern Song Dynasty in the early thirteenth century, a government official based in the Southern Chinese port city of Quanzhou compiled the *Gazatteeer of Foreign Lands* detailing knowledge of faraway places known to the Chinese stretching from Southeast Asia to Eastern Africa and the Mediterranean Sea (Yang Shao-yun, "A Chinese Gazetteer of Foreign Lands; A new translation of Part 1 of the Zhufan zhi 諸蕃志 (1225)," July 13, 2020, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/39bce63e4e0642d3abce6c24db470760?fbclid=IwAR1rLmEvW-SYJMimI5gre4o1pbbWMwLp0_kfNNt7uQ6VH4Dtjdsc7vo2aKg).

- 59 Notwithstanding the official line about the uncivilized barbarians, accounts from Chinese diplomats could tell a different story. In recounting his sojourn to India during the Tang Dynasty, the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (who became a de facto diplomat and facilitator of relations between China and India) writes of meeting King Harsavardhana, ruler of Northern India, around 637 CE. Xuanzang reported on the King's "virtues, valor, and sympathy for the Buddhist doctrine." (Tansen Sen, "The Travel Records of Chinese Pilgrims Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing," *Education About Asia*, Volume 11, Number 3, Winter 2006, p. 30, <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaa/>). In addition, in 1296, Zhou Daguan was dispatched as part of an official delegation to the Khmer Kingdom by the Yuan Emperor. Zhou spent eleven months in the Kingdom and subsequently wrote a detailed and descriptive book describing the sophisticated civilization he saw and experienced. One source discussing Zhou's visit to the Bayon Temple in Angkor Thom notes that he "...described towers covered in gold; outer galleries beautifully decorated with rows of eight gold figures of the Buddha; and a golden bridge, flanked by two statues of golden lions..." (Veronica Walker, "Visions of Angkor," *National Geographic History*, March/April 2022, pp. 32-45, 44).
- 60 F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800*, Harvard University Press, 1999, 2000 printing, Chapter 24, p. 614.
- 61 Zhongping Chen, "Toward a Global Network Revolution: Zheng He's Maritime Voyages and Tribute-Trade Relations between China and the Indian Ocean World," *China & Asia: A Journal in Historical Studies*, Volume 1, Number 1, 2019, pp. 19-20.
- 62 Tansen Sen, "Zheng He's Military Interventions in South Asia, 1405-1433," *China & Asia: A Journal in Historical Studies*, Volume 1, Number 2, 2019, pp. 159-160.
- 63 Zhongping Chen, "Toward a Global Network Revolution: Zheng He's Maritime Voyages and Tribute-Trade Relations between China and the Indian Ocean World," pp. 16-17.
- 64 Ibid at 16-17, 31.
- 65 Ibid at 16.
- 66 Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle*, 2001, p. 199.
- 67 Milton Rugoff Ed., *The Travels of Marco Polo*, New American Library, The Collection of Biography and Autobiography, 1961, 1986 printing, p. 198.
- 68 James C.Y. Watt, *The World of Kubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2010, p. 159.
- 69 Ibid at 160.
- 70 <https://www.jeremiahjenne.com/the-archives/2018/1/11/the-guangzhou-massacre-of-889>.

- 71 Abu Zayd al-Sirafi, *Accounts of China and India* (Library of Arabic Literature), Tum Mackintosh-Smith, Tr., NYU Press, 2014, as quoted in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guangzhou_massacre#CITEREFMackintosh-Smith2014.
- 72 Klaus Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, p. 454.
- 73 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, pp. 659, 665.
- 74 See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53062484> and <https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/14/asia/india-china-border-tensions-video-intl-hnk/index.html>.
- 75 See <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/CHINA-BHUTAN/BORDER/zjvqknaryvx/> and <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2022-10/chinas-highstakes-incursion-heights-bhutan>.
- 76 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/696183/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)696183_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/696183/EPRS_BRI(2021)696183_EN.pdf)
- 77 <https://www.chinausfocus.com/south-china-sea/>.
- 78 See https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/202208/t20220812_10742448.html#:~:text=In%20response%20to%20the%20egregious,field%20of%20international%20road%20transport and <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-economic-coercion-lessons-lithuania>.
- 79 Professor Stephen F. Teiser has written that “one of the earliest references to the trinitarian idea is attributed to Li Shiquan, a prominent scholar of the sixth century CE, who wrote that ‘Buddhism is the sun, Daoism the moon, and Confucianism the five planets.’ Li likens the three traditions to significant heavenly bodies, suggesting that although they remain separate, they also coexist as equally indispensable phenomena of the natural world” (Stephen F. Teiser, “The Spirits of Chinese Religion,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Ed., Princeton University Press, 1996, printed from *Living in the Chinese Cosmos/Asia for Educators*, Columbia University/<https://afe.easia.columbia.edu>, p. 1 of 33.)
- 80 Other philosophical traditions, including Mohism and Legalism, have also risen and fallen in China over the millennia. See Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Seven Bridges Press, 2001.
- 81 Stephen F. Teiser, “The Spirits of Chinese Religion,” p. 18 of 33.
- 82 Xing Ruan, *Confucius’ Courtyard: Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China*, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022, Page 13. In discussing this Doctrine of the Mean, Mencius said, “When one by force subdues men, they do not submit to him in heart. They submit, because their strength is not adequate to resist,” he said. But “when one subdues men by virtue, in their hearts’ core they are pleased and sincerely submit.” Michael Schuman, *Confucius and the World He Created*, Basic Books, 2015, p. 197.

- 83 Seeking moderation is not exclusive to China and appears often in Western philosophy and religions. The Chinese, though, in the words of Professor Ruan, have continuously sought not only “the salvation of their mind” and “artistic living in the middle,” but they have “...made *the middle* a moral bedrock through conscious cultivation,... Being reasonable, following common decency and humanity, therefore is the only virtuous way to live this earthly life” [emphasis in original] (Xing Ruan, *Confucius’ Courtyard: Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China*, pp. xliii-xliv).
- 84 Professor Michael Pruett lecture during online Harvard X Course entitled, “China Humanities: The Individual in Chinese Culture,” 2020.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Xing Ruan, *Confucius’ Courtyard: Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China*, Page xliii. Confucian attributes extended also to jade, the most precious stone in China. As a child, Hongli, the future Qianlong Emperor, learned that jade “is a warm liquid and has a moist aspect like benevolence. It is solid, strong and firm like wisdom, pure and not easily injured like righteousness,’ extolled Confucius. ‘Like loyalty, its brilliance lights all things near it like truth.’ Jade was a ‘gift to introduce people to virtue’ and ‘in the whole world there is no one who does not welcome this like reason.’” Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark, *The Stone of Heaven*, Little Brown, 2001, p. 9, quoting John Goette, *Jade Lore*, 1936.
- 87 Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, Belknap Press, 2009, p. 99. See also Klaus Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, pp. 69-76.
- 88 The Confucian Canon included the Five Confucian Classics (*Wujing*) and the Four Confucian Books (*Sishu*). The former included the Classic of Poetry/Book of Odes (*Shijing*), Classic of History/Book of Documents (*Shujing*), Record of Rites/Book of Rites (*Liji* or *Yili*), Book of Changes (*Yijing* or *Zhouyi*), and Spring and Autumn Annals (*Chunqiu*). The latter included the Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhongyong*), the Great Learning (*Daxue*), Mencius (*Mengzi*), and the Analects (*Lunyu*).
- 89 Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, p. 107.
- 90 “The first of these [three Daoist treasures] is *compassion*; we need to have love for ourselves, for others and for nature. The second treasure is *moderation*: we need to live in simplicity, to avoid abusing power and material goods and to apply restraint in when extracting resources. The third treasure is *humility*: we should not put ourselves before others and we should not pursue profit at the expense of others” [emphasis in original] (Professor Fang Guangchun, “The Ancient Green Revolution of Daoism,” in Allerd Stikker, *Sacred Mountains: How the revival of Daoism is turning China’s ecological crisis around*, Bene Factum Publishing, 2014, pp. 96-99, 97).
- 91 J.C. Cooper, *Chinese Alchemy: The Taoist Quest for Immortality*, Sterling Publishing, Co., 1990, pp. 44-45.

- 92 Buddhism brought new practices, new insight, and new color to Chinese life, including “[d]etailed conceptions of heavens and hells, a new pantheon, belief in reincarnation, and the doctrine of karma...” (John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 1). The Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) school of Buddhism is the largest in China overall, while the Vajrayana (Tantric) school predominates in Tibet.
- 93 This formulation was discussed by Professor Charles Jones of The Catholic University of America during a Smithsonian Associates webinar entitled, “Western and Asian Religious Views of Humanity,” on July 11, 2022.
- 94 The core of Buddhism belief is the Four Noble Truths—1) Life is suffering, 2) The root cause of suffering is desire, 3) Removing desire eliminates suffering, and 4) There is a path to eliminate suffering and attain enlightenment (that is available to all). The path is called the Eight-Fold Path and involves Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.
- 95 Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, pp. 32, 108.
- 96 Tao Jiang, “Beyond dust and grime,” Aeon Essays, <https://aeon.co/essays/zhuangzis-ancient-fable-about-the-personal-and-the-political>.
- 97 Richard J. Smith, “Buddhism and the “Great Persecution in China,” modified version of an article written for a volume entitled *Critical Moments in Religious History*, edited by Kenneth Keulman, 1993, pp. 4-5, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312089661_Buddhism_and_the_Great_Persecution_in_China.
- 98 Ibid at 5. See also Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, pp. 110-112.
- 99 Joy Lidu Yi, *Yungang: Art, History, Archaeology, Liturgy*, Routledge, 2018, p. 21.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, pp. 13-15, and Richard J. Smith, *Buddhism and the “Great Persecution in China,”* pp. 7-11.
- 102 In the Eastern Han Dynasty (31–7 BC) *Classic of Great Peace (Taipingjing)*, it is written that “If *Dao* is lost today, there will be disorder. Therefore, if yang is at peace, the myriad things will self generate; if yin is at peace, the myriad things will self complete. Yinyang orders *Dao*” (Robin R. Wang, *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture*, p. 103).
- 103 Klaus Muhlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*, pp. 38-39, 622 (Note 17).
- 104 Ibid at 38-39.
- 105 James Palmer, *Heaven Cracks Earth Shakes: The Tangshan Earthquake and the Death of Mao’s China*, Basic Books, 2012, p. 236.
- 106 My sincere thanks to Dr. Janet Baker, Curator of Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum, for her interest, time, and comments in reviewing an early draft of this essay.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Singer is a writer and speaker on China, a traveler, history lover, and collector of books and Chinese snuff bottles who lives on Cape Cod.

More on his writing can be found at andrewsingerchina.com



*Follow Andrew on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn
for all the latest blog posts and news.*

andrewsingerchina@gmail.com • [@asingerchina](https://www.instagram.com/asingerchina)

