

Premier Li Keqiang met with Richard Joseph Durbin, a senior senator from the US state of Illinois and Democratic Party whip.



Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Ji Bingxuan (center, front) attended the reception in commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the establishment of China-Austria diplomatic ties.

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President Li Xiaolin Meets with Former French Prime Minister Jean Pierre Raffarin

Xing Shuhua



President Li Xiaolin met with Mr. Jean Pierre Raffarin, the former French prime minister, on May 27. President Li spoke highly of the outstanding contributions made by Raffarin to promoting the two countries' relations over the years. She also emphasized that Chinese people viewed him as a hero and true friend since he visited China as French prime minister during the SARS period in 2003. President Li invited Raffarin to attend the 5th Top Leaders Forum for Chinese and French Local Governments Cooperation, which will be held in Chengdu in October. Raffarin accepted the invitation. He positively commended the efforts and achievements made by the CPAFFC and President Li in enhancing local government cooperation between the two countries.

Vice-President Song Jingwu was present at the meeting.

CJFA President Tang Jiakuan Meets with Governor of Fukuoka-ken

Wang lin



Mr. Tang Jiakuan, President of the China-Japan Friendship Association met with Governor Ogawa Hiroshi, Speaker Inoue Tadatoshi of Fukuoka-ken Prefecture and the delegation they led on March 28, 2016. CPAFFC Vice-President Song Jingwu was present.

Both sides exchanged ideas on topics of common concern, such as the exchanges, the local and nongovernmental cooperation between China and Japan and the prospect of Chinese economic development. After Beijing, Governor Hiroshi would visit Nanjing, Jiangsu province to attend the 20th anniversary celebration of Jiangsu-Fukuoka-ken Friendship Sakura Park.

Celebration of the 45th Anniversary of China-Nigeria Diplomatic Relations Held in Beijing

Zhang Yujun

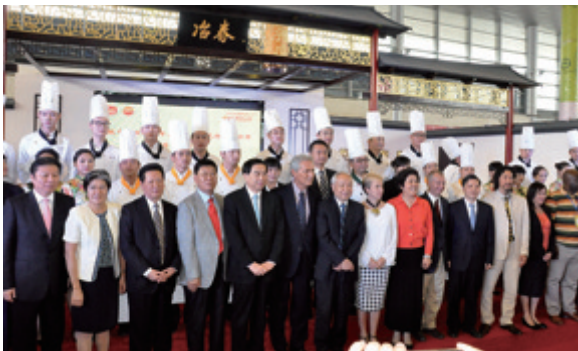


A reception celebrating the 45th anniversary of China-Nigeria diplomatic relations was held in Beijing on April 13, 2016. Mr. Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister; Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama, the Nigerian foreign minister; Mme. Lin Yi, CPAFFC vice-president; Mr. Gu Xiaojie, the Chinese ambassador to Nigeria; and 300 other guests from both sides attended the reception.

Mr. Wang said that China is willing to uphold our African policy featuring sincerity, real results, affinity and good faith. Mr. Onyeama said that Nigeria values our traditional friendship and is willing to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation with China in areas such as infrastructure construction and energy and resources development, so as to push the Nigeria-China strategic partnership to a new high.

President Li Xiaolin Meets with Apple Vice-President Jackson

Jiang Yingshan



On April 26, 2016, CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin met with Vice-President Lisa Jackson of Apple Inc. She briefed Jackson on the CPAFFC's history and major projects, including the China-US Governors Forum. Li also stressed that both China and the United States should enhance cooperation based on mutual trust. She hoped that Apple would contribute more to supporting China's development, environmental protection and philanthropy causes. Jackson said Apple is looking forward to enhancing its cooperation and exchanges with the Friendship Association and will play a more important role in environmental protection and corporate social responsibility.

Vice-President Hu Sishe Leads Delegation to seminar about Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu

Wang Lijuan

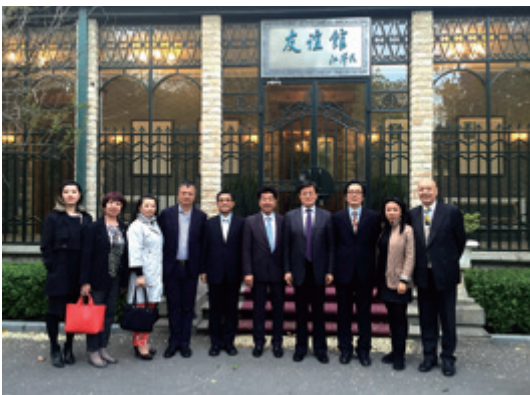


“Seminar of Jointly Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu’s Death and Launch Ceremony of Fuzhou Culture Week” has been jointly held by the CPAFFC and Jiangxi People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Fuzhou Municipal People’s Government, Stratford of the United Kingdom, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and supported by Chinese Embassy in the United Kingdom in Stratford on April 20th, 2016.

At the meeting, Fuzhou has officially signed an agreement for sister cities with Stratford, and presented bronze statues of Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu to Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, which serves as permanent witness of cultural communication of China and the UK.

Secretary-General Li Xikui Meets with President of Australian Soong Ching Ling Foundation

Hu Yang



Mr. Li Xikui, secretary-general of the CPAFFC, met with Mr. Chen Xinghui, president of Australian Soong Ching Ling Foundation (ASCLF) and his delegation and gave a banquet in honor of them on April 16, 2016. During the meeting, Mr. Li and Mr. Chen made a brief introductions of the work done by the CPAFFC and ASCLF recently. Mr. Chen said that his organization would like to continue strengthening collaboration with the CPAFFC and make great contributions to the cause of people-to-people friendship between the two countries. Both sides also had a discussion on how to better develop friendly exchanges between the two peoples. The delegation also visited an exhibitions on the history of the CPAFFC.

Confidence, Vitality and Opportunities in China-US Relations

Li Xiaolin

Keynote speech by CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin at the 2016 USCPFA Washington Seminar on US-China Relations

Dear friends of USCPFA, ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

I'm very happy to meet with you in spring, which is mild and moderate and makes all flowers bloom, especially in this beautiful city of Washington, DC.

First and foremost, I would like to thank President Dianna Greer of the USCPFA for inviting me here to meet with friends old and new.

Since I graduated from university, I have been working on China-US relations. My entire career is so closely linked with the China-US relationship that I find myself an inseparable part of it. Throughout the years, USCPFA has done a lot to increase mutual understanding by promoting China-US friendly exchanges and cooperation. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to USCPFA and all the friends who have devoted themselves to the development of China-US relations.



Keynote speech by President Li Xiaolin of the CPAFFC at the 2016 USCPFA Washington Seminar on China-US relations.

Ladies and gentlemen, the China-US relationship is one of the most significant and vibrant bilateral relationships in the world. Sound and steady development of China-US relations is in line with the fundamental interests of the people of the two countries, and

benefits the world. President Xi Jinping met with President Barack Obama in Washington, DC, on March 31. The two leaders agreed to deepen cooperation in various areas, strengthen communication and cooperation on major international issues, consolidate and

expand common interests and continue to build a new model of major country relations. The core ideas of building a new model of major country relations are no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation; the major ways toward this goal are to increase exchanges and enhance cooperation.

The exchanges and cooperation between China and the US have witnessed sound development in recent years. Last year, China became the largest trading partner of the US, surpassing Canada, with an annual trade volume of nearly \$560 billion, more than 200 times the volume when the two countries first established diplomatic ties in 1979. The United States has become China's second-largest trading partner, next only to the European Union. By the end of 2015, two-way investment between the two countries exceeded \$150 billion, hitting a record high. China-US people-to-people exchanges have become closer than ever. According to statistics, a flight takes off every 24 minutes between China and the US, and there are more than 10,000 people in transit across the Pacific Ocean between the two countries. Looking back at 1979, when our two countries officially established diplomatic ties, quoting an American friend, the people-to-people exchanges at that time were less than the number of pandas.

Ladies and gentlemen, just now a friend asked me how we should look at the Chinese economy and its future

prospects. It's a very good question. Before I give any comments, I'd like to compliment President Diana Greer on the excellent choice of time for this seminar. The Chinese Two Sessions have just ended, and the 13th Five Year Plan has been passed. In next five years, China will actively adapt itself to a new normal economy, comprehensively promoting innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development, and completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. The new round of reform in China will cover an ever-greater area with an ever-stronger force.

The Chinese people are now pursuing the Two Centenary Goals and working hard to realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. The Chinese Dream and the American Dream are closely connected with each other. The steady and sustainable development and modernization of China will benefit people of both countries. China and the US are becoming increasingly interdependent and are becoming a community of shared interests. We are bound together for good and ill. Naturally, we focus on each other's economic development.

I have three words to share with you on China's development. The first word is confidence. In the first quarter of this year, in spite of the slowing world economy and huge downward pressure, China's GDP has grown 6.7 percent, showing signs of recovery and stability, and meeting the annual GDP growth target of 6.5 to 7 percent. As the

industrialization, urbanization, agricultural modernization and information technology popularization of China unleashes further economic potential, we are confident that the Chinese economy will continue to grow in a sustainable way.

The second is vitality. The Chinese economy and society will be further vitalized in deepening reform. Reform will further stimulate the market vitality for development, promoting the transformation of China's economic growth model and readjustment of its economic structure. Reform will also accelerate profound changes in various social and economic sectors, promoting development of various social industries.

Third, opportunities. China's development will transform and upgrade its industries, stimulate domestic demand and bring about peace, openness and win-win cooperation. The faster China develops, the more open it becomes. The faster China develops, the more opportunities it will bring to the US and the rest of the world. Statistics indicate that, in the next five years, China will import \$10 trillion worth of commodities, making an overseas investment of \$500 billion, and more than 500 million Chinese tourists will travel abroad. This means huge business opportunities for the US. In the future, China will further expand cooperation in various areas, especially in energy, environmental protection, agriculture and infrastructure construction. Regional-level cooperation

and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries will be further strengthened.

The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries is a national people's organization engaged in the people-to-people diplomacy of the People's Republic of China. The aims of the association are to enhance people's friendship, promote international cooperation, safeguard world peace and promote common development. Increasing mutual understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation between China and the US has been our longtime commitment. There are both challenges and opportunities in China-US relations in the future. CPAFFC is willing to work with USCPFA in keeping our tradition of cooperation, fully utilizing our advantages, nurturing our next generation of friendship ambassadors, creating new forms and enriching the content of exchanges, and taking more practical measures in strengthening political mutual trust, deepening people-to-people affections and promoting win-win cooperation.

As the Chinese saying goes, the fire burns high when everybody brings wood to it. As China-US relations develop, we need more friends like President Diana, more passionate support and active participation by friends like our peers at USCPFA. It is your passionate support and active participation that brings our two peoples, in China and the US, closer to each other.

Thank you.

Sheffield: Industrial Legacy Turns to Future

Hao Xiaosong

To prepare for participation in the first Sino-UK Local Government Forum, I traveled to the United Kingdom in late March. The forum was held in London and Sheffield, with a theme of cooperation between China's Yangtze Economic Corridor and the UK's Northern Powerhouse.

"Northern Powerhouse" has become a buzzword in meetings of the leaders of both countries and in every aspect of the cooperation between the two sides. Proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is an ambitious plan that aims to boost economic growth and revive the economy by improving city traffic, strengthening investment in scientific and technological innovation and delegating financial power — to name just a few of its objectives.

Because of the tight schedule, we only had time for a quick tour in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, which is characterized by rows of dilapidated red brick houses and large buildings in the suburban area. Its industrial heritage is apparent, reminiscent of the past glory of the Industrial Revolution.

Sheffield is famous for its tableware, which is why the closing ceremony was held in the "House of Bladesmith", headquarters of Hallam Blade-

smith Guild, whose history spans more than 400 years.

Sheffield is also a city of sports. When we first arrived, the weather was cloudy and rainy. Our hotel was near the Sheffield soccer club, and a home game had just concluded. A number of roads were closed to keep traffic in order, so we had to make a detour. On our way to the hotel, we saw a seemingly endless line of football fans. We learned only the next day that the home team had lost and that locals were saying the players' performance that day was as terrible as the weather.

Sports have provided wonderful opportunities for Sheffield to make a positive transformation. In 1991, the city was the venue for the World University Games, and several of stadiums were built on industrial ruins, a project that injected vigor into this economically stressed city. Now, Sheffield plans to build an Olympic Legacy Park — a health-oriented community and a high-end manufacturing and R&D center focusing on sports science.

One cannot speak of Sheffield without mentioning its transportation system. The city lies 270 kilometers from London, and my first trip there took four hours by car. Running north and south, the M1 highway connects



CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin addressed the opening ceremony of the first China-UK regional leaders exchange program.

London with Leeds. The highway is under pressure, with heavy traffic, and it needs major improvements. By contrast, it takes only two hours to travel between Sheffield and London by train. Though not as fast as a Chinese high-speed rail line, it is much more efficient and comfortable than the highway. The problem is that it's difficult to buy a ticket during rush hour. Supply can't meet demand. Moreover, it costs 80 pounds (763 yuan) for a second-class ride to Sheffield, which is rather expensive. Generally speaking, there is a lot to do to improve local transportation.

Sheffield cemented its reputation in British history as a coal and steel center in the 19th century. In his book *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, British writer D.H. Lawrence depicted the vicissitudes of the Eastwood coal mine near his hometown, Nottingham, and its impact on local people. Eastwood lies just 48 kilometers south of Sheffield.

Like many cities in Northern England, Sheffield rose and thrived during the Industrial Revolution. The coal industry was once the pillar of many cities and villages, and in a certain sense it even provided spiritual support for local people.

On the way from Sheffield to the Manchester Airport, we drove through Peak District National Park. Roadside villages and vast fields gave us the glimpses of beautiful English countryside we had yearned for. Lawrence strongly opposed industrialization on grounds that it alienates people from nature. However, on the other side, it brought tremendous benefits to people's lives. Without it, people might still be living a pastoral life — beautiful and happy — but how, then, would science, technology and a developing economy emerge? And how can people perfectly develop themselves in an all-round way?

Being the birthplace of the Indus-

trial Revolution, North England has inherited a strong industrial legacy and made a great contribution to the economic development of the UK. However, since the 1970s, under the influence of globalization, local plants and mines failed in the global competition and had to close, leading to massive unemployment and economic recession. Things have been better in recent years, as the government has spared no effort to encourage an economic transition and has strengthened investment in the area. The region now accounts for 17 percent of Britain's total population, but the economic contribution rate lags somewhat at only 13 percent. Compared with the 24.5 percent contribution of London, there is still some distance to go.

At present, in the process of a new round of economic transformation driven by innovation, high technology and cultural industries, the city of Sheffield still faces a variety of issues, including outdated infrastructure and a brain drain. It is in urgent need of investment, especially in upgraded infrastructure. The United Kingdom values China's investment and rich experience in infrastructure construction and seeks to maximize its synergy with China's One Belt, One Road Initiative and the Yangtze Economic Corridor.

China sees great potential in cooperating with the Northern Powerhouse, as Chinese manufacturing industries must explore overseas markets to be profitable. This is why we held the forum. The successful event demonstrates that pragmatic cooperation is the essence of the golden era of relations between China and the UK. ■

Integrating Regional Development, Promoting Local Cooperation

Reflections on the China-UK Regional Leaders Exchange Program

Liu Chang



CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin addressed the China-UK Ministerial Roundtable

The first China-UK Regional Leaders Meeting was held March 21-24 in the United Kingdom, both in London and the industrial city of Sheffield. The event was jointly organized by the CPAFFC and the British Department for Communities and Local Government. The Chinese delegation, comprising government

officials and entrepreneurs from Jiangxi, Hubei and Hunan provinces and the municipalities of Chongqing, Chengdu and Wuhan — all located along the Yangtze Economic Corridor — joined British elites from political, business and academic circles, as well as local leaders of England’s Northern Powerhouse. The meeting, with 500

participants, centered on the theme “Cooperation Between the Yangtze Economic Corridor and England’s Northern Powerhouse.”

1. The British regard regional cooperation as prime benefit of its China policy.

China-UK cooperation boils down to the implementation of policies and plans at the regional level. The British side highly values China-UK regional ties, which play an important role in the relations of the two countries. Britain offered to include regional cooperation in the China-UK High-Level People-to-People Exchange Mechanism, set up a coordination mechanism at the ministerial level and carefully plan and prepare for the China-UK Regional Leaders Exchange Program as part of the outcome of President Xi’s state visit to the United Kingdom. The Chinese group was part of discussions about regional cooperation in key areas and specific projects involving the British Department for Communities and Local Gov-

ernment, Treasury, Transport and Food, Environment and Rural affairs. Mayors from major cities in northern England, such as Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield also participated. Member of Parliament Greg Clark, secretary of state for communities and local government, said Prime Minister David Cameron and the government expect the China-UK Regional Leaders Exchange Program to promote bilateral cooperation in such fields as trade and investment, science and technology, innovation, employment and other areas concerning people's livelihoods.

2. The British side works hard to promote the Northern Powerhouse.

MP James Wharton, parliamentary under-secretary of state for local growth and the Northern Powerhouse presented the Northern Powerhouse in detail. He said the broad national strategy for the Northern Powerhouse, aims at balance in the regional development of the UK. The purpose of the proposal is to build a unified labor market and integrate resources for public service through improved transportation links, investment in science and innovation and the devolution of powers in city deals. With the development of competitive industries such as financial services, transportation and logistics, and advanced education, priority is given to the development of low-carbon city, graphene, nuclear energy, innovative healthcare and big data to rejuvenate the economy of northern England. He also expressed willingness to invite Chinese provincial and

municipal governments and companies to join the proposal. Lord O'Neill, commercial secretary to the Treasury, pointed out that the aim of the Northern Powerhouse is to boost economic development in northern England by strengthening connectivity. He also mentioned that the British side is ready to learn from China about regional development.

3. Inter-ministerial coordination needs to be strengthened in China-UK regional cooperation.

Covering a wide range of areas, such as finance, transportation, science, technology, health and culture, the China-UK regional cooperation needs the guidance and participation of relevant departments. To advance regional cooperation between the two sides, the British side set up a coordination mechanism headed by the Department for Communities and Local Government, joined by several government organs such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Treasury. Within the framework of the China-UK High-Level People-to-People Exchange Mechanism, CPAFFC can coordinate with relevant ministries in China through various forms, including working to make preparations for launching exchange programs in China between Chinese and British regional leaders.

4. Integrate with the Northern Powerhouse

The integration of development strategies plays an important role

in bilateral relations. Integration strategies will also become the top priority in regional cooperation. The integration of China-UK regional development strategies goes beyond trade and investment. On one hand, backed by world-class scientific and research resources, northern England has accumulated experience in the development of low-carbon cities, while China has focused on building a green Yangtze Economic Corridor. So there is huge potential for cooperation in these areas between the two regions.

On the other hand, northern England is one of the cradles of the Industrial Revolution. The Northern Powerhouse has many similarities with the revitalization of old industrial bases in Northeast China and the integrated development of Beijing and Tianjin municipalities and Hebei province. So there is much to learn from each other for win-win results. ■



The China-UK Ministerial Roundtable was held in Lancaster House

Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe International Railway Puts Sino-UK Cooperation on Fast Track

Some Thoughts on the Future Potential of Sino-British Transportation and Logistics

**By the Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office
of the Chongqing Municipal People's Government**

A Chongqing delegation led by Vice-Mayor Chen Heping visited Britain from March 21 to 25. With arrangements made by the CPAFFC, Mr. Chen participated in meetings including the China-Britain Ministerial Meeting, the China-Britain Local Leader Roundtable and the 4th Annual China Business Conference organized by the China-Britain Business Council. Chen met individually with Lord James Sassoon, chairman of the China-Britain Business Council, as well as the board director of Jardine Matheson Group. Meanwhile, discussions about bilateral cooperation have caught wide attention

at all levels in Britain, especially the most talked-about cooperation on transportation and logistics and the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe International Railway.

Chongqing is the only municipality directly under the central government in central and western China, as well as one of the five core cities of the country. It is located at the intersection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Yangtze Economic Corridor, and therefore enjoys unique advantages in transportation and logistics. With the “golden waterway” of the Yangtze running through the city, the water ports,

rail ports and airports in Chongqing are all of first-class caliber, with a total annual cargo capacity of 160 million tons.

Capacity at Jiangbei International Airport alone is 32 million tons, forming a triple “three-in-one” platform consisting of three transportation hubs of water, railway and air, three national first-class ports and three bonded areas based on open channels such as the Yangtze and the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe International Railway. It takes just 12 days to transport goods between China and Europe. The railway links Chongqing with Duisburg, Germany, passing through the Xinjiang Uygur

autonomous region, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and Poland. As of mid-March this year, a total of 540 trains have run on the railway, whose operations feature a high on-time rate and an outstanding departure-return balance, one measure of railroad efficiency. It ranks among the best of all the trains running between China and Europe and has become one of the major channels for overland trade between the two.

Development momentum and opportunities of Chongqing Municipality

One of China's most important industrial bases, Chongqing is now Asia's largest production base for the electronic and information industry and China's largest center for automobile manufacturing, natural gas, chemical engineering, instrument R&D and manufacturing, and high-power transformer production. It is also one of the largest bases for R&D and manufacturing of ships and the emerging general aviation industry in western China.

An integrated industrial chain has taken shape, consisting of dozens of automobile brands such as Chang'an and Lifan and an industrial cluster of electronic and information companies including Hewlett Packard and other brands, Foxconn and five other contract manufacturers, and more than 800 supporting enterprises specializing in components and parts.

In 2015, the GDP of Chongqing reached 1.57 trillion RMB, a rise of 11 percent year-on-year, which is among

the highest of all cities in China.

Guided by the central government's strategic plan, Chongqing is now working to promote all-round and open cooperation with foreign countries in various fields. It aims to propel economic restructuring and upgrading and to promote cluster development covering 10 strategic emerging industrial sectors — basic crucial electronic parts, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and robotics, new materials, high-end transportation, new-energy automobiles and smart vehicles, chemistry and engineering, shale gas, biomedicine and environmental protection.

Ten strategic service industries are also part of the vision — licensed financial services, outsourcing of services (software design, for example), cross-border e-commerce and settlement, display of bonded goods and bonded trade as well as online cloud computing and big data.

Reflections on Chongqing's cooperation on transportation and logistics with Britain

Britain is highly developed in modern transportation and logistics, with well-equipped facilities, a high level of logistical automation and a sound policymaking and planning system. There's a lot China can learn from. The cooperation between the two sides on transportation and logistics may start with the following few concepts:

First, promote multimodal trans-

portation on the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe International Railway and encourage British companies to place orders for goods to be carried back on the next trip. Chongqing enjoys special regional advantages. For example, it is the only port allowed for bulk importing, as well as the importation of fruits and meat in western China. It can cooperate with British agencies and enterprises to take advantage of low logistical costs in areas along the railway, work further to bring premium cars, quality fruits and meat from Britain and Europe into Chongqing via the railway, and enter markets in central and western China, or even neighboring countries and areas of East, Southeast and Central Asia.

Second, enhance the connections of the railway to water transport routes. Chongqing has a unique strength in waterway transportation on the Yangtze River, while ports in Britain (such as Liverpool) have been operated for centuries and have well-developed infrastructure. Enhanced cooperation in shipping between the two sides also fits with China's Development Strategy for the Yangtze Economic Corridor. Portal logistics service companies on both sides could carry out all-round cooperation in both investment and operation, so as to achieve full use of connections between railway and waterway transportation, enhancing the influence and flexibility of the overall route. It is recommended that Britain cooperate extensively with the Chongqing Shipping Exchange, which is doing well in financial services for the shipping

industry in areas like insurance and financial guarantees.

Third, provide information sharing on the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe International Railway. As information plays a crucial part in the development of modern logistics, the two sides could strengthen the connectivity of logistical information on freight transport with the strategic approach of “Internet Plus Logistics”, especially through building a comprehensive logistics and e-commerce platform to interlink logistical factors — such as vehicles and ships for transshipment — that aims to improve operational efficiency, reduce logistic as costs and sharpen the competitive edge of companies.

Fourth, build up a personnel training and communication mechanism. The development of a modern logistics industry creates demand for high-caliber professionals. Therefore, Chongqing and Britain could make joint efforts to provide professional education and training, organize training programs under the themes of transportation, shipment at ports and logistics development. They could also host forums to improve managers’ professional skills and expertise in this field.

Fifth, continue to enhance city-to-city friendly relationships between the two countries. City-to-city exchange is an important component of the Sino-British relationship. The two sides could utilize sister-city relations as a platform to carry out multi-tier, wide-ranging and friendly exchanges and cooperation among local communities to achieve mutual benefits and win-win development for both sides. ■

Building a Golden Era of China-Britain Local Cooperation

Department of European & Asian Affairs



China-UK Regional Leaders’ Roundtable

The CPAFFC and the British Department for Communities and Local Government gathered with local leaders from China and Britain to address cooperation between the

Yangtze Economic Corridor and the Northern Powerhouse.

The meetings were held in London and Sheffield, UK, from March 21 to 24 and consisted of an opening

ceremony, a ministerial roundtable conference, a roundtable of local leaders, several parallel breakout forums, field visits, informal meetings with senior government officials and the opening ceremony of the China-Britain Business Council.

The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office was in charge of reception affairs. The British side even recalled its consuls general in Guangzhou, Chongqing and Wuhan to accompany the Chinese guests in Britain. Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Yandong and UK Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt sent letters of congratulation. The two are co-chairs of the China-UK People-to-People Dialogue.



Lord Powell met with CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin.

Implementing the results of

President Xi's visit to Britain

Since President Xi Jinping visited Britain in October 2015, the two countries have established a comprehensive strategic partnership for the 21st century and opened a “Golden Era” in the China-UK relationship. In the joint declaration published after the summit, both sides expressed great interest in cooperating on their respective development initiatives, especially China’s One Belt, One Road Initiative and the UK’s investment plans for infrastructure upgrades and the building of the Northern Powerhouse.

At the subsequent bilateral meetings, government leaders of the two countries expressed a desire to

strengthen strategic docking in regional development — for example, the strategic cooperation between the Yangtze Economic Corridor and the Northern Powerhouse. At the third China-UK People-to-People Dialogue held in London before President Xi’s visit, the two countries reached a consensus on strengthening cooperation at the local level. Meanwhile, as the two leading departments in the China-UK local cooperation mechanism, the CPAFFC and the British Department for Communities and Local Government signed a memorandum of understanding — “Strengthening the China-UK Local Relationship”— and agreed to hold the first Chinese-British Local Leaders’ Meeting in Britain early this year. The theme of the meeting was “Yangtze Economic Corridor and Northern Pow-

erhouse”.

China, UK look forward with confidence to cooperation in the “Golden Era”

As host of the first conference, the British side arranged the meeting at a high level with solid content in various forms, demonstrating the British government’s expectation and support for bilateral cooperation. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Oliver Letwin said sustainable growth of the Chinese economy and its structural transformation and upgrading would help promote a sustainable development of economic and trade investment and mutually beneficial cooperation. Various sectors of

Britain, Letwin said, are determined to join in China's development in the next 10 to 20 years and expect the bilateral cooperation to be deeper and wider with the help of such platforms as the Local Leaders' Meeting.

Secretary of State Greg Clark said Prime Minister David Cameron and the British government look forward to the meeting's success, and that local and regional cooperation is the key to the deepening of cooperation between the two countries. The conference will provide an important platform for both sides to meet common challenges, explore new room for cooperation and seek investment opportunities.

Other government officials said conferences between the leaders of the two countries are key steps to the realization of the Golden Era. There are many similar features between the Northern Powerhouse and China's Yangtze Economic Corridor, and they hope to realize mutual prosperity and promote technological innovation through strengthening mutual investment and exports.

CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin has noted on many occasions that 2016 is the first year of the Golden Era, and China intends to strive, together with Britain, to grasp the historical opportunity to inject fresh force into the bilat-

eral relationship for healthy and stable development. She said local cooperation is the basis of the two countries' relations. The CPAFFC, she said, will give full play to the China-Britain Local Leaders' Meeting as a platform, and make full use the current resources in Sino-UK friendly cities. She said the organization would increase the number of friendly cities and optimize their distribution to further promote cooperation between Chinese and British local regions. That will be the highlight of the Golden Era, she said — helping the two countries' 21st century comprehensive strategic partnership better serve local development.

Delegates in front of the Sheffield Town Hall



At the conference, CPAFFC Vice-President Song Jingwu said this year marks the all-round promotion of the Yangtze Economic Corridor, one of China's three major strategies in the 13th Five-Year Plan, including such development ideas as innovation, coordination, environmental protection, openness and sharing. He said the building of the Yangtze River city cluster and the Chengdu-Chongqing city cluster can provide more opportunities for strengthening the cooperation with the Northern Powerhouse and help bring the docking strategy in regional development to reality.

Britain and China can achieve pragmatic and fruitful results, he said.

In just two days, the conference provided sufficient time for face-to-face communication between leaders from both countries. Additionally, the enterprises from China attended a business promotion meeting arranged by the CBBC and the UK Trade and Investment Administration.

Leaders of Chinese provinces and cities agreed that the conference was significant and timely. It also deepened and consolidated the results of President Xi's visit to Britain, as well as built a platform for strengthening close cooperation between the two countries. They briefed attendees on their province's or city's current cooperation with British counterparts and their short- and long-term plans.

The two sides agreed that the countries have strong cooperation potential in the fields of high-end manufacturing, infrastructure, medical care,

financial services, creative industries, clean energy, public services, educational exchanges and technological research. They have expressed their intent to cooperate on specific projects.

In the five parallel breakout session under themes aimed at finance, sustainable development initiatives, climate risks, transportation planning and the establishment of a strong primary healthcare system, the British officials and entrepreneurs shared their experience in public-private partnerships, carbon emissions trading, infrastructure upgrades, a national health system and digital game development. They had beneficial communications and discussions with Chinese provinces and cities, and studied related projects and enterprises.

Jiangxi, Chongqing, Chengdu, and Wuhan all have friendly-city counterparts in the UK but have little communication with the northern areas of Britain. At the conference, Chongqing established links with Liverpool by agreeing to develop joint cargo transport through the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe railway. Hunan province signed a memorandum about developing friendly exchanges with Lincolnshire on the basis of ongoing projects. As a friendly city, Chengdu signed the "Memorandum of Strategic Cooperation 2016-20" with Sheffield. Wuhan signed the "Agreement on Cooperative Research of the Yangtze Economic Corridor and Northern Powerhouse" with Sheffield, in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the sister-city relationship. ■

Voice of Friendship: In your opinion, what kind of opportunities can be created for both countries in this golden era?

Woodward: This Golden Era of UK-China bilateral relations is incredibly exciting and signals a new phase. This will focus on the three areas highlighted during President Xi's state visit: developing our economies for the future; working together to tackle pressing global issues; and developing our trade and investment links.

During the state visit, we established a new global partnership for the 21st century. It will be a win-win relationship between our two countries. The UK and China will cooperate more closely in the future on challenges facing the world, for example our cooperation on Syria, climate change, Ebola and the sustainable nuclear deal on Iran.

Trade and investment between the UK and China has hit historic highs — the almost 40 billion worth of deals signed during President Xi's visit laid the groundwork for further growth, with economic benefits for both countries.

To further increase benefits to both our economies, we need to continue to deepen and widen our policy and business links by collaborating in new areas, building stronger region-to-region ties and ensuring greater market access in China.

Interview with the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to China

Staff reporter



Barbara Janet Woodward, ambassador of the United Kingdom to China

In particular, the UK's leadership in retail, services, healthcare and education all provide enormous opportunities to support China's 13th Five Year Plan transition toward a consumption- and knowledge-based economy. British companies are already driving new sources of innovation and growth in China's economy. For example, China is now the biggest market in the world for smartphones and other mobile devices. Nine out of every 10 are powered by chips supplied by the UK company ARM. British gas companies BP

and Shell are two of the biggest foreign energy investors in China.

UK companies are also eager to partner with Chinese companies on One Belt, One Road, the Yangtze Economic Corridor and Made in China 2025. We encourage Chinese companies to seek opportunities in UK initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine and Infrastructure Alliance. We will also continue to share our experience to support China's economic transition, in particular on financial ser-

vices and public-private partnerships.

The strong UK China relationship is also contributing to both countries' prosperity through further cooperation on a range of matters from science and innovation, energy, urbanisation and health to deepening our commercial relationship.

VOF: What's your take on the exchanges between the existing China-UK friendship cities? And what is your expectation on the establishment of friendship cities between our two countries in the future?

Woodward: Let me start by saying that I strongly support city-to-city and region-to-region partnerships. During President Xi's state visit our Governments rightly recognized the global significance and strategic importance of stronger UK-China relations. But equally important we committed to broaden regional and local collaboration between our countries.

There are beacons of excellence among existing city-to-city partnerships. I regularly see leaders

from Nottingham, whose partnership with Ningbo goes from strength to strength.

Manchester is celebrating the 30th anniversary of its relationship with Wuhan, and Bristol has a strong relationship with Guangzhou. It's good to see Milton Keynes' new link-up with Jinjiang coming along well and I've high hopes for Liverpool's recent link-up with Kunming. I'm looking forward to Tianjin's participation at next month's International Waterfront Forum in Liverpool and hope to see businesses from several Chinese cities at the International Festival for Business in Liverpool shortly afterward. During his visit to China last September, George Osborne, chancellor of the exchequer, commissioned a report into how to make more of all our city-to-city partnerships. We're looking forward to seeing that report shortly.

I'm delighted the British Embassy and our colleagues in the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries worked closely together to produce such a successful China-UK Regional Leaders Summit in London and Sheffield in March. Of course I'm also very grateful to President Li Xiaolin, whom I look forward to seeing again shortly, for leading the Chinese delegation.

What the leaders' summit again showed, and what I see and hear in my travels around China in support of regional and local partnerships between

our countries, is the enormous appetite on both sides for more, stronger, local partnerships. Our cities and regions share common challenges from providing high-quality public services and modern infrastructure to creating economic opportunity and prosperity for all. I look forward to working with CPAFFC to ensure the Golden Era delivers a better future for all our people, wherever they live.

VOF: *Would you please share with us your views on China-UK people-to-people and cultural exchanges?*

Woodward: I use the Chinese 'ding' to describe the UK-China bilateral relationship. It accurately reflects the three legs which support the global partnership and golden era — government-to-government, business-to-business and people-to-people relations. Each is equally important, and supports the broader relationship in different ways.

Each year there are more exchanges between the people of the UK and China. The depth and breadth of our global partnership means there are many specific areas I could talk about. For example, in the last year alone, there were nearly 500,000 Chinese nationals obtaining visas for the UK, a 19 percent increase. The two-year visa pilot launched in January will only increase this. Moreover, our average processing time for a non-settlement visas in 2015 was less than seven days, against a 15-working-day service standard.

Similarly, there are currently more than 145,000 Chinese students studying in the UK, and a further 57,000 pursuing UK degree-level qualifications in China through more than 260 transnational education program. The British Council's 'Generation UK', program aims to see 80,000 UK students participate in academic study or work experience program in China by 2020. Another great example is our Premier Skills soccer training program, a partnership with the Premier League, which has already trained more than 1,100 soccer coaches in China and benefitted nearly 500,000 young people by enhancing their skills on the pitch and building their confidence, leadership skills, and cross-cultural understanding. These are just a few highlights of our flourishing People to People links.

Of course we are looking at areas where we can further develop these exchanges. Following last year's People-to-People Dialogue consensus to focus on gender issues, in March this year we ran the 'Be Yourself' campaign across China highlighting the economic and societal benefits of gender equality.

We are also looking at further cooperation between education institutions, exchanges on culture, sports, tourism, and many others.

VOF: *In April, 2016, the CPAFFC delegation participated in activities in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the death of*

Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu, a great playwright in China's Ming Dynasty, in Stratford Upon Avon in Britain. How can we further push forward these commemorative activities? Is it possible that a long-term cooperative mechanism will be set up to commemorate the two great men?

Woodward: At the start of the year, the British Council and the GREAT Britain campaign launched "Shakespeare Lives" in China. On the 400th anniversary of his death, this is a major program for 2016 celebrating Shakespeare's works and his influence on culture, education and society. Shakespeare Lives is an opportunity for millions of people of all ages in China to actively experience Shakespeare's works through brand new productions of his plays, through film, music, public talks, educational resources and online. The program is sparking cultural, educational and economic exchange, through the shared language of Shakespeare.

This year also marks the 400th anniversary of Chinese writer Tang Xianzu's death, and there are many parallels we can draw between the two writers. The themes and subject matter of the two playwrights frequently overlap. Our program takes Shakespeare's connection to Tang Xianzu even further through events such as "The Dream" — a collaboration between Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre and Gecko — that links Tang Xianzu's *Dream Plays* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. ■

President Li Xiaolin Visits Saudi Arabia

Zhang Min

At the invitation of Prince Alwaleed, chairman of Kingdom Holding Company of Saudi Arabia, CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin led a delegation to visit Saudi Arabia from Feb 16 to 20. During the visit, Ms. Li met with the prince, visited Kingdom Hospital and Kingdom School and held working talks with Alwaleed Philanthropies.

During the meeting with Prince Alwaleed, Ms. Li mentioned that Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Saudi Arabia in January had been very successful. The two sides issued the Joint Statement on the Establishment of China-Saudi Arabia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, providing a historic opportunity to enrich people-to-

people connections.

The CPAFFC is willing, Ms. Li said, to establish cooperation with Kingdom Holding Company in charity, cultural and educational cooperation, local government exchanges and other areas to enhance friendship between China and Saudi Arabia.

In a warm welcoming speech, Prince Alwaleed said he completely agreed with Ms. Li's comments on bilateral relations and hoped to launch multilevel, broad-area cooperation with the CPAFFC. He said he expected to visit China in the near future for in-depth discussions with Chinese leaders and Ms. Li about China-Saudi Arabia relations and people-to-people cooperation. ■



CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin met with Prince Alwaleed

On the Roof of the World

Lyubov Dovrotar

My dream to go to Tibet, where I could experience the local people and culture, came true when Kazakhstan's We-Media delegates, including me, were invited by the Chinese embassy in Kazakhstan to visit China. We obtained firsthand knowledge that China is Kazakhstan's friendly neighbor and a close strategic partner. At the same time, China's development is impressive to us.

— *Lyubov Dovrotar*

We first arrived at Urumqi, capital of China's Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region, in the evening. Wen Guangmei and her colleague, both of whom work with the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, met our We-Media delegation from Kazakhstan at the airport. Ms. Wen's Russian name is Natasha and her partner's is Arlena — both easy for us to remember. Their fluent Russian and good communication ability made us feel at home.

We know that their institution works for developing people-to-people diplomacy and friendship between China and other countries. In recent years, China-Kazakhstan cooperation in many

fields is speeding up. Additionally, deepening recognition of people's lifestyles and status in the two countries is significant for strengthening bilateral relations. According to one staff member at Tibet's friendship association (a branch of the CPAFFC), we were the first visitors from Kazakhstan to Tibet in 20 years. As a host, the Tibet association showed us some of the development feats achieved by the Tibetan society and economy.

Coincidentally, the day we visited in Tibet fell on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the autonomous region, a perfect opportunity to compare Tibet's past and present.

Let's look back in time.

The 17-article Agreement of the Central People's Government and Local Government of Tibet was signed on May 23, 1951, a vitally important turning point at which Tibet embarked on its road to liberation. However, armed rebellions complicated matters in the following years. The 14th Dalai Lama went overseas following the Tibetan reactionary upper strata in 1959. Fortunately, none of this prevented the establishment of the Tibet autonomous region in 1965.

To my surprise, the topic of the 14th Dalai Lama is not forbidden in

China. What's more, the Chinese government makes it clear that the government has no objection to the Dalai Lama's return, providing he states publicly that Tibet is an inalienable part of China and gives up thoughts of tearing Tibet from China.

The past 50 years witnessed earth-shaking changes in Tibet. As living standards and the social environment improved, the Tibetan population doubled during this period. The regional government abolished an old regulation requiring that one-fourth of local boys had to become monks. This is a major reason for the population growth. Although present-day Tibetans are still deeply religious, there is no need to worry about being forced to cultivate in a monastery. At present, Tibet has 1,787 monasteries with 46,000 monks and nuns.

To increase Tibet's population, the country's family planning policy is not implemented in this area, so most families have three children — some even have five or six. According to their own capacity, parents have the final say about how many children they can have.

With urbanization accelerating in China, people in sparsely populated Tibet need urgently to move to cities.

City governments need to provide them with services, including housing, education, professional training and employment.

Our team was received by a Tibetan couple who moved into their new urban house just a few days earlier. Dawa Sambo and his wife Karma Chungar, like 90 percent of Tibetans, live in a traditional two-story house. The Tibetan language is usually used in their daily life, though students also learn Chinese at school. In this way, the Tibetan language and culture is protected by the local government and people.

Dawa's house was provided by the local government. Its interior is decorated according to personal taste — for example, the ceiling is adorned by colorful and lively flower patterns with Tibetan characters. Dawa and Karma have three children, who they believe will be educated well because Tibetans enjoy favorable education policies. In other parts of China, nine years of compulsory education is the rule, but in Tibet the time is extended to 15 years including three years of kindergarten and three years of high school. It is expensive for a child to attend kindergarten in China. For instance, it costs around 3,300 yuan (\$500) a month in Beijing. Dawa said it is deeply felt that Tibetan people's living conditions are significantly improved since they achieved autonomy.

Dawa and his wife prepared a Tibetan feast for us. Stewed yak meat and dairy products attracted us like magnets because these foods are also staples in Kazakhstan. People in Kazakhstan

usually drink horse or camel milk, but Tibetan people are used to eating yak meat and drinking yak milk which contains plenty of nutrients. There is also a factory for processing yak fur.

In Dawa's house, we felt Tibetan hospitality deeply.

New construction is underway not far from Dawa's house. The urban area is rapidly taking shape. Dozens of high buildings mushroom, accompanied by infrastructure like schools, kindergartens and recreational facilities. New urban areas integrate with old monasteries perfectly and harmoniously.

There was no highway in Tibet before its liberation. Now, a transportation network consisting of 75,000 kilometers of highways has been completed. Most highways are in perfect condition. I once read a report saying that China's cement output over the last two years is equal to the total amount the US ever produced. At the outset, I doubted it, but now Tibetan construction and development taking place before my eyes makes me believe it firmly.

At present, Tibet has five operating airports and one under construction. A railway stretch through the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The survey for the route began in the early 1980s. This was a significant project, as it was completed under tough plateau conditions and with a huge investment in labor and materials. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway was completed about 10 years ago, connecting the plateau with inland places. The railway runs 1,956 kilometers from Xining, the capital of Qinghai province, to Lhasa, Tibet. It is the

highest railway in the world and carries countless tourists and religious followers to the roof of the world.

Tibet received 15 million visitors in 2014, almost five times the 3.3 million Tibetan population. Five years ago, only 2 million tourists traveled here. In order to protect the natural environment and landscape, local governments stopped building new factories and put more effort into tourism development. They now provide more qualified tourism services.

When our delegation met with He Wenhao, vice-chairman of the Tibet autonomous region, he said the Aiding Tibet Program had been successful. Last year, Tibet's GDP reached 10 billion yuan, a historic breakthrough for a border region. In the first half of this year, China's GDP grew by about 7 percent; meanwhile, Tibet ranks fourth in China for growth rate, He said.

"Tibet's development was discussed in a meeting of the Communist Party of China Central Committee Political Bureau, and it is expected that Tibetan society and economy will make further progress," He said.

Modern highways and air transportation provide convenience for those who dream of visiting Buddhist holy places in Tibet, and they play crucial roles in Tibet's tourism — an experience beyond words. Local charm is a powerful draw for outsiders. You can feel it by visiting the Norbulinka Palace (the Dalai Lama's summer palace), the Potala Palace and the Jokhang Monastery. It is said that if you do not go to Jokhang Monastery, you cannot proclaim that you have been to Tibet. This

monastery is the birthplace of Tibetan Buddhism and a vital part of Tibetan culture and history.

A full-size Sakyamuni Buddha gilded statue is housed at Jokhang Monastery. It is 1.5 meters tall — the actual size of Sakyamuni when he was 12 years old. This is one of the three holiest life-size Sakyamuni statues in the world. Legend has it that this statue was brought from India to China, where Tang Dynasty (618-907) princess Wen Cheng took it to Tibet in AD 641 as her dowry. It is made of precious metal and decorated with many gems. Countless people come to worship this statue but have to stay a distance from it because it is protected by iron nets. We had a special treat. The monastery guard allowed us to have a close look at the statue, which made other religious followers and tourists envious.

Those days on the roof of the world have lifted my spirits even higher. Perhaps that was one reason I found myself breathing hard at an altitude of 3,600 meters. Fortunately, Natasha prepared Tibetan medicine for us against altitude sickness. The antidote was an oral liquid with ingredients extracted from the herb *rhodiola rosea*, a traditional Chinese medicine. Our visit was completed as planned, even though the altitude sickness caused some trouble.

This experience will be one of our most precious treasures. We believe that Tibet's rapid and sound development over the past 50 years inspired local people to cherish life and work for their brilliant future. ■

Ann Paludan and Her Story of Stones

Dedicated to Adrian Wang

Zhang Ruoning

China, with its impressive heritage of ancient carved stones, also has a long history of research aimed at understanding the stones and their characters. Epigraphy boomed during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), with specialists enthusiastically engaged in collecting and studying written records about carvings of previous dynasties. Because modern archaeology started late in China — the result of war and social turmoil in the modern era — it was not until recently that archaeological research based on sound scientific methods began to emerge in significant way.

For a long time, Chinese scholars' research into ancient carved stones received little attention from the international academic community, with Western scholars typically making only brief mention in their reports. Most of their studies focus on the evolution and development of religious carvings introduced to China with Buddhism, and they tend to support the idea that Buddhist carvings gradually replaced China's tradition.

British scholar Ann Paludan (1928-2014) was one of the few Western researchers dedicated to the study of traditional Chinese stone carving.

Her experiences in many field studies in China enabled her to make direct contact with the carvings, as well as ancient architecture in various forms. She was greatly impressed by the wisdom and delicate skills of the Chinese people, who infused their own understanding of life into their art.

In her books, Paludan says Chinese traditional stone carving, while often downplayed or even ignored by Western scholars, has a history of more than 2,000 years and an inexhaustible vitality. Driven by the unique Chinese philosophy, values and aesthetics, a set of carving techniques and tools developed, and classic stone carving coexisted with religious carving in harmony until modern times.

In April 1993, Paludan, then 65, visited China to conduct field studies with the assistance of CPAFFC. Exploring Chinese culture represented a new journey for her. As her translator, I was honored to accompany her on this unforgettable trip, and I am excited to share our experiences.

An ascetic “monk”

Ann's trip lasted for 29 days, during which she visited Beijing, Shanxi,



Ann Paludan visits the Central Academy of Arts in Beijing

Henan, Hubei, Jiangsu and Shandong provinces. Her busy schedule included talking with local archaeologists, museum curators and experts on the protection of cultural relics, visiting local stone-carving shops and craftsmen and taking many photos. Every night after a day of rushing about, she organized her notes, coded and compiled photographs in great numbers, cleaned her camera lens and prepared the interview outline for the next day. This was her daily routine which she never missed.

The books Ann wrote are classified as archaeology, which doesn't often pay well. Since the publisher had provided only a tiny advance, Ann tried

her best to save money during the journey. The stones she wanted to see and record were usually located in remote rural areas, so we used slow transportation most of the time: low-speed trains, long-distance buses, country vans, tricycles and even tractors.

Ann planned to visit the Yungang Grottoes and the Hanging Temple after arriving at Datong in Shanxi province. Our local hosts helped us rent a used car with steering on the right, British style, which probably had been given by a foreigner as a gift or imported from overseas. In 1993, China's express highway network was yet to be built. We had scarcely left the city of Datong

before finding ourselves on a bumpy unpaved road in tandem with a stream of trucks carrying coal. Swept along by the flow of the trucks, we were trapped in an abyss of dust and darkness. Coal dust mixed with road dust blew against our windshield to obscure our sight. Our driver, growing increasingly impatient, tried repeatedly to pass the truck ahead but failed every time. He even tried to swing to the wrong side for a quick pass but Ann stopped him firmly. It seemed that she had become accustomed to such "special" travel in a strange environment. Thus we bumped along all the way, carried by the long queue of coal juggernauts. Everybody's face and clothing was caked in thick dust as we approached our destination.

On a mountain section of the road, we saw some farmers' yards with red paper cuttings shining on the windows. Ann asked the driver to stop, saying she wanted to take photos and wanted the driver to have a rest as well. The woman of the house looked at us in astonishment, unprepared for a visit from strangers covered head to toe in dust. We told her who we were and what we wanted, and she was pleased and genially asked us to come inside. She fetched water from the well for us to wash and presented each of us with a cup of tea. Then she sat on the earthen brick bed, legs crossed. With a pair of scissors and red paper in hand, she demonstrated her paper-cutting skills with pride. The spring sunlight poured in to make the room warm and comfortable. We were like a group of itinerant monks worn out by a journey who had finally found shelter.

Ann took pictures and chatted with our hostess about the patterns of the cuttings in the window and their meaning. She asked with unabashed curiosity who taught her the skills and whether there were any standard paper patterns and if she herself had invented any new patterns. The straightforward questions amused the hostess, making her giggle repeatedly. Ann picked up a piece from the cuttings that were spread over the bed and said with excitement, “This looks similar to the patterns on the carved stones.” She lifted the paper and looked at it against the sunlight with the same concentration I had seen on her face during work. It seemed she had forgotten the fatigue of the trip.

The “laywoman”

Ann was from an intellectual family. Her grandfather, Gilbert Murray, was a famous classicist in the United Kingdom. He was an authoritative scholar in ancient Greek literature, drama and religion at Oxford University, and a prolific writer. Playwright George Bernard Shaw maintained a long-term friendship with Murray. Ann’s grandmother was the daughter of the ninth Earl of Carlisle.

Ann joined the British diplomatic corps after graduation from Oxford. Later, she married Danish diplomat Janus Paludan. When he was appointed as the Danish ambassador to China, the couple went to Beijing and lived there from 1972 to 1976, during which time Ann developed her strong interest in Chinese stone carving.

She explained to me how this in-



A Bixie stands guard over a high official’s tomb from the Southern Dynasty

terest developed. During their stay in Beijing, the couple liked going on picnics near the Ming tombs on weekends. At that time, only the Changling and Dingling mausoleums were maintained in good condition; all the others had been in disrepair for a longtime. Few people set foot on their grounds, and grass flourished. Some of the buildings were collapsing, and the remnants of stone sculptures could be found everywhere. Ann was attracted by these delicate carved stones. At the same time, she was worried that the buildings and stones would soon lose their original look and even disappear, so she began documenting them in photographs.

She spent a lot of time and energy looking for related Chinese and foreign records but found only *The Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties*, written by a French author in the 1930s. Ann examined the descriptions

and pictures in that book and checked them against the real objects. She found that the book was incomplete and often inaccurate, so she made up her mind to undertake her own systematic study. She started with the Ming tombs and later extended her studies to cover the entire field of Chinese stone carving.

When the diplomatic stay in China ended, Ann began the task of compiling her materials and writing articles. She returned to China many times to conduct field studies. From the 1980s to 1990s, she published *The Imperial Ming Tombs*, *The Ming Tombs*, and *The Chinese Spirit Road: The Classical Tradition of Stone Tomb Statuary*. On her last trip, she visited with Chinese scholars in her field, many of whom were amazed at her determination, given her age, to study Chinese stone figures. Yet they admired her accomplishments and the international rec-

ognition she received. Every time she was praised for her achievements, Ann would say, in modest Chinese style, “I was only a student learning stone carving. I want to learn something from the masters. All I have are curiosity and hard work.”

Ann asked me how to express “layman” or “beginners” in Chinese. I tried my best to list the Chinese phrases and sayings for her and explained their meanings. Ann liked the saying *Men Wai Han* (“the man outside the door”), and she added her own innovation. When praised by others, she would shake her head and say in Chinese, “No, no, I am only a woman outside the door.” The listeners would be confused at first, but later they would smile when they got the meaning. They were touched by her humor and honesty.

Ann’s modesty didn’t detract from her academic achievements. Her unique viewpoints, based on her intensive field studies, and her analysis of the development of Chinese carved stones on the basis of Chinese history and philosophy, helped her win great acclaim. According to Professor Luo Zhewen, a renowned expert on ancient buildings and the former director of the China Cultural Relics Research Institute, “Ann Paludan’s books and research have enriched the study of the Chinese classic sculpture with their professional standards.”

I once asked Ann how she overcame her lack of knowledge at the beginning of her career in archaeology, Chinese history and Chinese philosophy — after all, she started a new branch of research. She replied: “They

were really huge challenges. I had to start everything from zero. However, all the fields are related to each other. All I did was dump my fears and start to work earnestly.”

The camera box

The collection and exhibition of photographs is an important part of an archaeological book. Ann carried three cameras with her, one of which was a specially designed view camera for reversal films. The camera body was a wooden box, 30-by-30 centimeters, which looked like an artist’s paint box. Though it was heavy and inconvenient to carry, it was the only tool capable of producing professional-grade reversal films for museum collections. Therefore, Ann was particularly careful to protect the camera during the whole journey. Her protectiveness led to many memorable incidents.

Ann and I took turns carrying the camera when we went out to take pictures. Every time it rained or a sandstorm hit, Ann would cover the box with her rainproof coat. Such great care for the box prompted a lot of questions and guesses. A driver surmised that some cultural relics were kept inside. One jade carver said the size of the box was just right for the work he had just finished. A hotel waitress asked in awe whether it was a safe. Curiosity and wild imagination about the mysterious wooden box accompanied us on most of our journey.

To avoid excessive attention, Ann purchased a big, ordinary woven bag and put the camera box in it. This made

it easier to carry. However, it was almost thrown away by the waiters at a hotel who thought it was a bag of rubbish.

As the camera could only accommodate 12 large film sheets, we had to refill it frequently.

One day we visited an ancient temple where there was a monkey performing on the square in front of a crowd of onlookers. It was a scene of bustle and excitement. Ann walked past the crowd, set up the camera and started taking pictures of the stone lions guarding the building. After awhile the film was used up. She knelt down on the stone pavement to replenish it, an action that caught the attention of the crowd, curious about this foreign woman. Forgetting the monkey, they moved over to see what tricks Ann would play. Noticing their interest, Ann said to me calmly, “I’ll do the performance and you collect money. We’ll be able to cover the expenses of the coming journey!”

We left after finishing the photography. But a few onlookers followed us for quite a distance, apparently expecting something more entertaining than the monkey show.

This experience and others related to the camera box became frequent topics of our leisure conversations and brought much joy to our journey.

Emergency stop

At 10:30 one night, we got on the No 343 train from Datong to Taiyuan — in the hard-sleeper compartment. We put down our luggage and looked

outside. It was raining.

The train started rolling and the passengers all went to the lavatory to wash before sleeping. Ann went to the front end of the compartment to get some hot water. I bent down to reorganize our luggage under the bed. Suddenly, there was a deafening sound of metal clanking and the train lurched to a sudden stop. The force threw me to the floor. Everywhere on the train was a mess. Many passengers had fallen, and some were even thrown off the upper deck of the compartment. Screams and groans were everywhere and people were frightened.

I sat up in pain and instinctively looked toward the far end of the corridor, where I saw Ann staggering along, bleeding from a long cut on her arm. She calmly told me that she had grazed a handrail when the train made the emergency stop. To prevent her wound from becoming infected, I sought the conductor for assistance, and he located a first-aid case in which there was some antiseptic powder and a roll of gauze. The powder wasn't fresh and had been condensed to clots. But it proved especially valuable in this emergency.

I went back to the sleeping compartment and saw a boy next to our beds who had cut his forehead. He was crying in pain. His mother was using a piece of newspaper to cover his wound. Ann stopped her, saying that was not the proper way to treat the injury. Taking over, she removed the paper from the boy's head. Then she cleaned his head with water using the gauze I had found and applied some of the antiseptic to the cut. She kept a small portion

of the powder for herself and asked me to give the rest to the other passengers.

Two hours later, the train started moving again. The rain became heavier and the hot air inside the compartment caused the windows to fog over. The frightened passengers didn't want to sleep on the upper decks, so they all sat on the lower beds. The boy with the cut on his forehead turned to his kind foreign nurse. He didn't speak, but his appreciation was evident. Ann fell into a sound sleep with her head leaning against the window. The tiring journey nearly wore her out, but her courage and kindness shone through that rainy night and brightened an unpredictable trip.

Envoy from the West

The imperial tombs of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), located in Gongxian county in Hebei province, are a large building complex. Of the nine emperors of the Northern Song, seven were buried here. Only the Huizong and Qinzong emperors were not. There are nearly 1,000 tombs, including those for imperial families, relatives, empresses, generals and ministers, such as Kou Zhun, Bao Zheng, Yang Liulang and Zhao Pu. Also, there are nearly 1,000 carved stones and sculptures scattered in the rural fields around Gongxian.

Ann stayed in Gongxian for two days. She talked with the local cultural relics protection department and visited some major carvings. The local government attached great importance to Ann's visit, and leaders accompanied us during the visit.



Statue of an Arab envoy at the Yongding Mausoleum of the Song Dynasty

Our first destination was the Yongzhao Tomb of the Renzong emperor. At that time, the tomb had become a free public park, and we were there on a Saturday. Crowds of tourists were ambling around, enjoying the spring breeze. The local leaders worried that the tourists might inconvenience Ann as she took photos, so they made a temporary decision to close the park and eject the tourists. Ann had been taking photos of the patterns on a statue when she realized that the park staff was driving the tourists

away. She asked what had happened and then said firmly to the leaders: "I appreciate your kindness, but this park actually belongs to them. It is I who is interrupting them. If you insist on driving them away, I won't continue my visit." The leaders were embarrassed and stopped the evictions. And the park quickly returned to its hustle and bustle again.

Later, we visited the Yongxi, Yongtan and Yongyu imperial tombs, whose carved stones are mainly found along the "divine passage" — the path leading to the gates. Stones including ornamental columns, auspicious horses, sheep and statues of government officials, generals, palace workers and foreign envoys were arranged symmetrically to flank the passage. The tradition of building divine passage started in the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220). It continued to the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1644; 1644-1911). The carvings along the divine passages built in the Song Dynasty were usually large — some statues depicting humans exceeded 4 meters in height — creating a feeling of grandeur. They have stood on deserted fields in solemn silence for hundreds of years, guarding the glory of the once-brilliant dynasties.

The most impressive sculptures are those depicting foreign envoys. Dressed in exotic clothes, the envoys have a different appearance from other figures. Standing beside a stone elephant, for example, is its trainer, whose curly hair reaches his shoulders. His forehead is decorated with jewelry and his earrings are in large size. The varied unique patterns told

Ann that they came from different regions and different ethnic groups. The figures carried valuable bottles, corals, lotus plants and rhinoceros horns to pay tribute to the emperors and seek the cooperation and protection of the Chinese empire.

Ann made detailed studies of the envoys. She explained to me, one by one, the features of envoys from Arab countries, Korea and Southeast Asia as well as from the then Hotan Kingdom in what is today's Xinjiang region. In her opinion, the number of foreigners coming to China during the Song Dynasty far exceeded those of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907). During the flourishing era of the Tang, most foreigners came from Western regions, Arab countries, Korea and Japan. However, during the Song Dynasty, envoys also came from Southeast Asia, Africa and Europe. The statues of these envoys show that the Northern Song Dynasty was open to foreign cultures, that it did not esteem military force and that it enjoyed active diplomatic and trade activities.

Ann lost no opportunity to demonstrate her British sense of humor. Once we saw the figure of an envoy presenting gifts to an emperor. The envoy wore a head cloth and, with mouth ajar, maintained a humble and respectful facial expression, with hands holding the gift tight to his chest. Ann pointed at this figure and said, "I like this one the most. I would like to invite him to have tea with me. I want to tell him not to worry and that everything will be fine. We are colleagues. We both came to China to give our gifts.

My books are my gifts."

Reunion

On our last day in Nanjing, we went to Qixia town to explore carved Bixie and Kyrin, auspicious, mythical animals in ancient China's southern dynasties. Their statues were used by the ancient emperors as decorations and as tomb guards, demonstrating both power and good fortune. In the southern dynasties, the Kyrin were often put in the emperors' tombs, while the Bixie were arranged in the tombs of other nobles. The emperors hoped that their souls would fly to a fairyland with the help of these creatures. The carved Kyrin and Bixie in the southern dynasties represent the peak of ancient Chinese stone carving. The city emblem of Nanjing is a Bixie.

The stone animals in Qixia were Ann's favorite. During her previous field studies, she had visited the place several times and took large numbers of photographs. Every time she mentioned the artworks, she would heap praises on them. Ann also loved a sculpture in front of the tomb of Huo Qubing, a general in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). The sculpture shows a horse trampling a Hun invader. She thought Han Dynasty carvings had an imposing presence and those from the southern dynasties exhibited that feature. The craftsman's skills had been honed to perfection, capturing the animals' vigor and diversity.

The first one we saw was a stone Bixie at the tomb of Xiaojing. It was raining heavily when we arrived at Shi-

yue village in the Ganjia Alley of Qixia. The stone Bixie stood in farmland, and the road leading to it was flooded and inaccessible by car. Ann suggested that we give up the car and wade, but our guide tried to dissuade her: “The rain is so heavy, we will be soaking wet if we continue; and besides, the muddy field may not even be accessible. Anyway it’s just a stone statue, nothing special.”

Ann said to me in a low voice, “The rain can’t stop me. It is so beautiful that I want to have a reunion with it.”

We had purchased raincoats and waterproof boots in a small village shop and put them on. Then we braved the wind and rain and trudged toward the center of the field. Mist was rising and rice seedlings waved in the drizzle. After a while we saw the 3-meter-tall stone Bixie, standing unmoved and impassive. Ann smoothed her wet hair and said with excitement, “I hope you have found it a worthy trip. The Europeans regard the Bixie as the noblest stone animal in Asia. It is only on the original site that you can feel the solemnity of the sculpture.”

The Bixie, with wings and claws extended, looked as though it was about to fly; its awesome bearing radiated vigor and dignity. Ann jubilantly told stories about the animal. This stone Bixie once had a companion that stood face-to-face with it. But it was broken when it was unearthed and, as there was no suitable technology to fix it at the time, it was reburied to protect it.

“It was wise to do so,” Ann said

with relief. “But we don’t know which ancient artist created this delicate work. Stone carvers were regarded as craftsmen and were not respected as artists. Therefore, they remain unknown in history. The emperors would be angry if they knew that we came such a long distance to look at this stone animal rather than at their memorial tablets. I will come again to pay my respects and honor its creators if I get the opportunity. I believe the souls of the stonecutters still live in this stone.”

We looked back at the Bixie repeatedly as it gradually vanished in the rain. The huge animal has guarded this piece of land for thousands of years, keeping company with the land long after the imperial glory had faded. It carried the features of a great civilization and showed the vitality and innovation of the Chinese people. It seems that the Bixie is still whispering in our ears, extending greetings to an envoy from afar.

Years have passed since Ann and I said goodbye. After the trip, she wrote and published *Chinese Sculpture: A Great Tradition and Chronicle of the Chinese Emperors: The Reign-By-Reign Record of the Rulers of Imperial China*, among other works.

I wonder whether the silent stones she once visited are still there. Looking at pillars and Kyrins today, I think of Ann Paludan, a skillful and dedicated expert. She died in 2014 at the age of 86. But the spirit she brought to her work will remain in my memory forever, as steadfast as the stones she loved. ■

A symposium — “Green and Healthy City Development on the International Friendship City Platform” — was jointly hosted on March 17 by the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and Social Sciences Academic Press (China). The event included a book-launch ceremony. Xu Kuangdi, former vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and Li Xiaolin, president of the CPAFFC, addressed the attendees.

Relations between sovereign nations have always been the core of international relations. Countries are becoming increasingly interdependent, with dramatic changes taking place in the global economy, city internationalization, science and technology—particularly information technology. These changes directly impact and reshape the global political landscape, where a multilevel, three-dimensional, interconnected international relationship is taking shape with more players going onto the international stage.

Over the past 30 years of reform and opening-up, the process of internationalization of Chinese cities has accelerated and deepened with more frequent exchanges. The International Friendship City program has played a crucial role in the national development strategy and foreign communication by promoting the economic development of cities and people-to-people exchanges.

To improve the theoretical system of city-to-city diplomacy and deeply

Green and Healthy City Development Gets a Boost from International Friendship City Platform

Xu Yanqing

Exchange Center for International Friendship Cities



Mr. Xu Kuangdi, former vice-chairman of the CPPCC

implement the guiding principle advanced by President Xi Jinping — that is, working hard to promote the work of International Friendship Cities and foreign exchanges between local governments to achieve shared resources

and mutually beneficial win-win cooperation — the Exchange Center for International Friendship Cities invited prominent experts and scholars on international relations to participate in a special research project under the guid-

ance of the CPAFFC’s president. After 23 months of “concentrated” research and heated discussion, the experts and scholars produced two monographs: *City-to-City Diplomacy — Theory and Practice* and *Special Report on Competitiveness of Chinese Cities (1973-2015) — An Open City for a Win-Win Future*. Social Sciences Academic Press (China) joined the CPAFFC to publish the two books.

Mr. Xu said it was opportune that these two monographs were published against the backdrop of the Central City Work Conference, the commencement of the country’s 13th Five Year Plan and a new stage of development for Chinese cities. New-type urbanization provides an internal driving force for the development of cities, while the acceleration of globalization creates external opportunities, Mr. Xu said. City-to-city diplomacy therefore plays an

active and key role in promoting internationalization and urbanization, mobilizing resources at home and abroad by utilizing governmental and private sources, coordinating and integrating city development, sharing experience and knowledge and laying a solid social foundation for international relations.

There are some unique thoughts in the two new monographs — for example, the proposal for establishing Friendship City groups along the Belt and Road in emerging markets within BRICS countries and in other groups.

“I hope that both local officials and scholars can draw inspiration from them to make contributions to the theory and practice of city-to-city diplomacy,” Mr. Xu said.

CPAFFC President Li said that because cities are the “nodes” of globalization at the front lines of global affairs and governance, the bonds for international cooperation and cross-border coordination will play an increasingly crucial role in meeting global challenges. First, the city is the core carrier of economic development and strategy for promoting innovation and mass entrepreneurship. Therefore, great importance should be attached to cities’ fundamental role in the process of transforming and upgrading the Chinese economy, and we must build up new driving forces for economic development, Ms. Li said.

Second, Ms. Li said, it is imperative for Chinese cities to change their understanding and give more attention to the quality rather than just the speed



of city development.

Third, urbanization is an important driving force for Chinese development, Ms. Li said. In the process, we must pay more attention to the quality of cities, control development intensity, strengthen security management and promote shared governance and benefits.

Li Xinyu, director of the Exchange Center for International Friendship Cities gave a detailed account of the two books’ creation and the thinking behind their content and structure. *City-to-City Diplomacy — Theory and Practice* systematically explores and discusses the status and role of city diplomacy in international relations. It has three parts: theoretical study, comparative study and case study.

The other book, *Special Report on Competitiveness of Chinese Cities (1973-2015) — An Open City for a*

Win-Win Future, presents an “index of city friendship” and comprehensively, objectively and systematically summarizes China’s efforts in promoting international Friendship Cities over the past 40 years. The report, the first of its kind, points out that the intercity relations will change from “obtaining” to “giving”, along with win-win cooperation. We should develop friendship cities with Africa, Middle East, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia for mutual complementation in development advantages and common prosperity, Li Xinyu said.

The international relations study circles spoke highly of the two books. Experts attending the event shared their opinions on city diplomacy from the perspective of the books’ academic significance and the important role of city diplomacy in development. Zheng

Bingwen, director of the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said he got the two books two days earlier and was soon absorbed by them. He said they were excellent monographs in terms of both scientific soundness and professionalism, as they introduced quantitative analysis into the study of city diplomacy and have done well in both quantitative and qualitative analysis. He suggested that universities set up courses on city diplomacy.

Tu Qiyu, a research fellow at the Shanghai Social Sciences Academy and chief editor of the *Blue Book of International Cities*, also said he hoped he would have an opportunity to participate in the city diplomacy studies hosted by the CPAFFC.

Yang Qun, chief editor at Social Sciences Academic Press (China); Deng Yonghong, bureau chief of the Blue Book branch of Social Sciences Academic Press (China); Huang Ping, director of the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Hu Sishe and Song Jingwu, vice-presidents of the CPAFFC; Li Xikui, secretary-general of the CPAFFC; and representatives of the local Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries attended the event.

The event was widely covered by the media, including CCTV's Live News, Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, China Daily, Global Network, China Youth Network and Phoenix. Online reports and reprints number well over 500. ■

A Program to Combine Knowledge with Practice

Zhou Shan

In late January, a group of 36 teachers from Xi'an International Studies University, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Xiamen University, Hunan University, Hebei University and 27 other Chinese institutions visited the Japanese prefectures of Nagano and Gunma, where Chinese students were working as interns at local companies.

The Program for Chinese Col-

lege Students to Attend Social Practice in Japan—jointly hosted by China's Service Center for Friendship and Cooperation with Foreign Countries—sends Japanese language majors from Chinese universities to Japan for three-month internships at businesses. The program aims to promote mutual understanding between young people of both countries and provide a wider platform for Japanese majors to experi-

The delegation attended the reception



ence Japan and its language firsthand.

The visiting group was led by Zhang Juxiang, director of the service center, which is one of nine CPAFFC departments involved with foreign affairs. In 2006, the service center introduced a paid summer internship program from the United States into China, which has since been popular among universities nationwide, with thousands of college students involved every year. After that, the center launched its practical work experience program in Japan based on the visa requirements of the Japanese government.

The program has two divisions — summer and winter — each of which spans three months around the summer or winter vacations. Most of the jobs are in the service sector, one of Japan's most representative industries, where students can work full-time as an ordinary staff in businesses including large holiday villages, hotels or small inns. All the interns were given enough money to cover all expenses for the trip.

So far, the program has sent more than 800 Japanese majors from about 100 Chinese universities to Japan. While helping students to improve their Japanese language proficiency, the program also enables them to merge into Japanese society and business, which can broaden their horizons and sharpen their comprehension.

The co-host of the program — the Japan-China Economic and Cultural Exchange and Friendship Association — has invited Chinese university teachers on a field trip to Japan every January since 2013 to see for themselves where the Chinese students work



Chinese students were learning the Japanese corporate culture

and the places where they live and study.

Li Xikui, secretary-general of the CPAFFC, said at the departure meeting that sending Japanese majors to practice in Japan is an important work to foster a future generation that will continue the China-Japan friendship. He also expressed his wish that students majoring in foreign languages would take on the mission of promoting friendly exchanges between China and the other countries.

The Chinese teachers' group first visited Nagano City Hall at the invitation of Mayor Shuichi Abe, who spoke highly of the role the program had played in helping Chinese students learn about Japan, and Nagano in particular. He said he was confident that the future world would be one characterized by win-win cooperation and that friendship eventually will be the only course chosen by China and Japan

in their relations. Therefore, he said, he hoped his city's friendly cooperation with various Chinese cities will be permanent.

Service center director Zhang expressed his thanks to the Nagano government for its support of the program. Since the launch, Nagano has been publicizing the project through the city hall website and has called for outstanding local enterprises to help Chinese students gain practical experience. Over the past five years, more than 20 enterprises in Nagano have accepted 214 Chinese college students — one-fourth of the entire program — ranking first among all administrative areas in Japan.

Quoting President Xi Jinping — “the root of China-Japan friendship lies in people-to-people friendship” — Zhang said the platform the program provided for mutual understanding between the two nations' young people is

exactly where China-Japan friendship is rooted.

Speaking on behalf of the visiting teachers, Hua Chao, a dean at Tianjin Foreign Studies University, pointed out the advantages of the program in helping students become independent and gain the ability to adapt, to remain open-minded and to be capable of multicultural communication.

The group then visited Tangram Resorts in Shinano, Nagano. The multifunctional vacation venue for skiing, hot springs, shopping, boarding and catering is one of the best-known companies in Nagano. Eight students from Hunan and Hubei provinces and the city of Xi'an, arrived in Shinano in late December and have so far worked as interns for more than a month. The students had a job rotation just a few days earlier and were adjusting well to their new assignments.

At a seminar with Tangram staff members, a vacation services leader made a detailed presentation about the students' working and living conditions, as well as their work duties. The resorts' general manager noted that he strongly supported students in their job rotations during their stay. He said wide experience is more important than efficiency. He said he hoped that the students would acquire as much experience as they could from the three-month project.

The students also took turns reporting in Japanese about their work and life. They admitted that, at first, they felt a bit tired and uncomfortable at work, but a month later, they had

become more skillful and found themselves enjoying their jobs. Over the past month, apart from improving their listening and speaking skills and gaining insights into differences between Chinese and Japanese cultures, the students also polished their personal work ethic and learned how to get along with others. They said valuable memories will stay with them forever.

The teachers also benefited from the friendly exchanges with people from the friendship associations in Nagano and Matsumoto, as well as with members of the Nagano Women's Committee. All the exchanges contributed to the popularity of the program in Japan. In addition, the group visited enterprises that adopted the program in Karuizawa, Nagano prefecture, and Kusatsu, Gunma prefecture, and met face-to-face with heads of the enterprises and the stu-

dents involved.

Wu Shaohua, a teacher from Xi'an International Studies University, summed up:

"The clean and safe environment, as well as the order of society, are among the things we could learn from Japan — especially for young people. The first step is to observe closely while engaged in practical work. I hope that through these modest yet great jobs in the service industry Chinese college students can learn to plant their feet on solid ground instead of having high ambitions and low ability."

Yu Yiwen, a teacher at Xiamen University, suggested that while students should continue to learn about Japan and its language from books and lectures, the practical program offers a rich opportunity to merge into Japanese society and learn directly from the country's people and enterprises. ■

Students from Xi'an International Studies University described what they saw and heard in Japan.



A New Historic Chapter to Boost People-to-People Diplomacy through Cultural Exchange

Marking the opening of the China-Latin America and Caribbean 2016 Year of Cultural Exchange

Tang Mingxin

Though separated by a vast ocean, China and Latin America have long been tied by the waves in between.

The China-Latin America and Caribbean 2016 Year of Cultural Exchange was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in July 2014 at the China-Latin America and Caribbean Leaders Summit in Brasilia, and has since received enthusiastic support. Today, the grand cultural exchange program — themed “Bringing in, Going out”—was unveiled.

The past 67 years since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China have witnessed dramatic changes in the relationship between China and Latin American and Caribbean countries. And one part of that history — from the start of people-to-people diplomacy to the later booming of cultural exchanges and friendly communications between the two sides — holds

exceptional charm. As a witness and participant, I can still feel the excitement as memories flood back to that grand chapter.

A historical bridge of friendship across the ocean

Cultural exchange is an integral part of human history, like a wheel driving societies forward. It is like a rainbow that integrates all human beings, both intellectually and materially, spanning time and borders to enhance understanding and friendship and spread science and technology. Exchange thus has a significant bearing on the development and prosperity of ethnic cultures and the social lives of countries around the world, along with

people’s well-being.

The courageous, hard-working Chinese people created a unique culture with their own hands and wisdom, blended with the fine cultures of different nationalities across the globe, with an inclusive mind and an enthusiastic attitude to develop a splendid Chinese civilization that adds to the glamour of human civilization.

Though separated by a vast ocean, China and Latin America have long been tied by the waves in between. The earliest cultural communications between the two sides trace back to the mid-5th century BC, when China was in its Northern and Southern Dynasty period. At that time, Maya culture was prospering on the Yucatan Peninsula, while Central America and the Andes

region were embracing the dawn of the Quecha culture.

The ancient Chinese tablets, coins and sculptures excavated in Mexico; the tablets found in Peru inscribed with the Han language for worshipping the god Taisui; the coins of the Han Dynasty discovered in Ecuador; and the custom of observing certain Chinese rites, such as yin yang and feng shui among indigenous inhabitants living in tribal villages in Columbia and beyond, indicate the cultural traces left behind by Chinese people in Latin America.

Meanwhile, as trade became more frequent, agricultural technologies that had contributed much to the progress of human society and material life, as well as products such as maize, potato, tomato, peanut, tobacco and pumpkin cultivated by native Americans, were brought to China.

It's worth mentioning that a sea route linking both sides of the Pacific Ocean took shape later during a time when Chinese merchant vessels were shipping goods such as silk, pottery, tea, jade, cotton cloth and handicrafts via today's Philippines to Acapulco, Mexico, where merchants from Central and South America flocked to purchase goods to sell in other corners of Latin America. The route was known as the "China Road" in Mexico. Vessels dubbed "Chinese galleons" at the time returned with loads of Mexican silver coins and local products from Latin America.

Thriving for more than three cen-

turies, the route injected vitality into the markets and social life on both ends, provided a channel to facilitate cultural exchanges and contributed to the building of a maritime Silk Road across the Pacific. No wonder Mexican people like to call Chinese people *paisano*, meaning "fellow townsman". The shared heritage of cultural exchanges has tied us together for a long time.

In 1614, Mirrha, a girl said to be from China who had survived ordeals at sea, was brought to Acapulco, where she created the China-Puebla dress, a patterned, colorfully knitted and exquisitely embroidered garment combining the characteristics of Chinese and Mexican folk costumes long popular among local residents. Later, the craft of embroidery and knitting from China spread rapidly, making Puebla a renowned center of embroidery.

I saw a sculpture of Mirrha in a Puebla street garden at the city's center. Adorning a pool on a cylindrical platform was a statue of the girl from the East, attired in colorfully embroidered garments. Looking upon that beautiful figure, I couldn't help admiring what the girl had done to spread Chinese embroidery and earn the love of the local people. Moreover, I was deeply moved by the friendly, kindhearted and genuine Mexican people.

Great visions propel people-to-people exchanges

Since the establishment of the

People's Republic of China, cultural exchanges and friendly relations between China and Latin America experienced some years of bumpy development. China was besieged and blocked by Western countries, led by the United States, which tried every means available to keep Latin America — regarded as the backyard of the US — from establishing relations. However, forward-looking Chinese leaders, including Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai, proceeded from the heights of global crisis to propose a guideline for Latin American relations:

"Advance in no rush but with perseverance. Take steady steps forward and carry out both official and unofficial exchanges, with the latter being a push for the former."

Chairman Mao stated explicitly when receiving a group of Latin American journalists that China welcomes any country that is ready to establish diplomatic relations; if not, business connections are also acceptable; and if neither is workable, normal exchanges are also OK. The guideline of "unofficial exchanges being a push for the official ones" helped accelerate China-Latin American ties, which developed from the preliminary people-to-people exchanges to a new level.

I can still recall clearly a meaningful remark by Chairman Mao at a meeting with a Latin American delegation of progressive youths:

"You are all heroes braving the wind and the waves, and you don't fear

being blocked and besieged by the US-led West. You slash your way through obstacles and troubles. This shows that the power of solidarity among people is irresistible. You are pioneers who open up friendly exchanges between the Chinese and Latin American people, and we appreciate your genuine friendship.”

Similarly, Premier Zhou Enlai made some significant remarks when meeting with several delegations from Latin America.

“China and Latin America could be viewed as neighbors separated by the Pacific Ocean,” he said. “As an old Chinese saying goes, good friends and neighbors will not be separated by distance. We are the best neighbors and friends across the ocean. Therefore, I sincerely wish that we can work together to make the Pacific Ocean true to the name, bringing about peace to facilitate world progress and the well-being of humanity.”

Their words have proved true. Under their guidance, China actively carried out people-to-people and cultural exchanges with Latin American countries, featuring activities of various forms, with visits to Latin America by social groups in the fields of culture, education, art, economy and trade. Journalists, youth, women’s circles and trade unions were all part of it.

Latin America also witnessed a rise in the number of pioneering figures who wanted friendly relations with the People’s Republic of China.

More than 2,000 people from at least 20 Latin American countries visited China between 1950 and 1970. Groups including figures such as Salvador Allende, who later became president of Chile, as well as lawmakers and party members, came to visit China despite hindrances, which helped enhance understanding and friendly sentiment toward China.

Many Latin American countries set up associations for cultural and friendly exchanges with China. Non-governmental organizations such as chambers of commerce followed suit. With increased people-to-people exchanges, a trend driven by unofficial forces to promote official ties between the two sides took shape in Latin America. In the 1970s and 1980s, China established diplomatic relations with 17 countries, ushering in the second prime time in its relationship with Latin America.

Envoys of friendship to advance relations

Throughout the history of friendly relations between China and Latin America, there have been countless envoys whose contributions will be well-remembered.

In November 1984, I joined a delegation of the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries on a visit to six Latin American countries — Ecuador, Chile, Argen-

tina, Brazil, Guyana and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In Chile, we felt the hospitality of friends including Juan Martinez Camps, president of the Chinese Culture Association in Chile, who expressed in an exhilarating tone his excitement of being able to receive Chinese friends in Santiago finally after so many years.

He said, “Even though in a geological sense Chile is the most distant country from China, the bonds of friendship have tied us together throughout history. As our former president, Mr. Allende, once said, if we dug a tunnel to the center of the earth from Chile, the other end would lead to China. This indicates that our two countries are neighbors sharing the same wall and we are born brothers with mutual benefits.”

I thought the ties proved an old Chinese saying: “True neighbors will not be kept from one another by long distance.”

He then added, “However, the booming of our friendly relations should be attributed to the hard work of many people. Our former vice-president Mr. Bedregal, who met with Chairman Mao and President Liu Shaoqi and worked to expand bilateral exchanges until the official establishment of diplomatic relations with China, is a representative figure who contributed all his life to the establishment of Chile-China diplomatic relations.”

In May 1979, I went with the

CPAFFC delegation to Columbia. Set up just two years before, the Columbian Association for Friendship with China had done a tremendous amount of work to promote the relationship between the two countries. Moreover, Chairman Gomez of the association had made fine arrangements for this visit.

The trip climaxed in an exclusive meeting with President Julio César Turbay Ayala, who started by saying how he had long admired China. He then said: “China’s ancient culture is a huge treasure for all humanity and I myself also obtained a lot of useful learning from it. Chinese friends like to quote a famous saying from Confucius to show hospitality towards their guests; therefore, I would also like to use it to welcome my Chinese friends: How happy we are to have friends from afar!”

Hou Tong, the head of the CPAFFC delegation, immediately expressed China’s wish to see substantial progress on Sino-Columbia relations to benefit both peoples. President Turbay said he would like to see concrete yields from the economic ties between China and Columbia, which would be decisive in promoting political ties between the two sides. He also wished to see a consensus reached between the two countries in this respect so that relevant negotiations might be concluded quickly. Mr. Hou said he would make a prompt report to the Chinese government about President Turbay’s remarks, adding that

he believed breakthroughs would be achieved.

At the end of the meeting, Turbay stated that he could tell his Chinese friends without reservation that the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries was possible and would not take long. As expected, not long after that meeting, Columbia resumed contacts and meetings with the Permanent Mission of People’s Republic of China to the United Nations over the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries, which facilitated and accelerated the process.

Eventually, the two sides signed the Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and Columbia on Feb 7, 1980, in New York.

The Glamour of Art Exchanges

The People’s Republic of China has promoted the fine traditional culture of the Chinese people and actively carried out cultural exchanges. The hearts of people on both sides have been opened through the exchanges, which have built a foundation of understanding and friendship and enabled people to enjoy the glamour of the arts while acquiring knowledge at the same time.

In May 1975, I visited countries including Venezuela and Guyana with Chinese art groups sponsored by the CPAFFC. To diversify the performances and enhance the stage effects, we

added local songs and dances to every performance. One day, when the art group was rehearsing in the theatre, a burst of warm applause came from the door. People were applauding one of our singers, who was practicing a Venezuelan folk song.

At the official performance, the theatre was suffused in a joyous atmosphere as the audience sang along in Spanish the lines, “I was born in this stream of the rippling Arauca River, I am sister of the foam”, from the well-known Venezuelan song *Alma Llanera* (“Soul of the Plains”); some in the audience clapped along with the rhythm.

The night before the Chinese troupe left Venezuela, Mr. Gonzalo Barrios, president of the National Assembly, met with members and said sincerely that the extraordinary Chinese performance had won the hearts of the Venezuelan people and that Venezuelans were happy to have Chinese people as friends.

During our visit to Guyana, a cloudburst sent down torrents of rain shortly after our performance began. We were all concerned that the storm might cause chaos in the theatre. However, thousands of audience members remained in their seats and continued to watch the performance with great passion. Everyone rose and moved to the strong and lively rhythm of the Guyana music performed by the Chinese artists. Some joined hands, waving handkerchiefs to interact with the performers on stage.

One day, after the show, an elderly, gray-haired woman walked backstage in search of the soprano who had just performed *Oh, Beautiful Guyana*, a famous song in the region. This woman, it turned out, was the mother of the songwriter. With a trembling voice, she thanked the soprano for her wonderful performance, which had vividly conveyed her intense love of Guyana.

“We love China, too,” she said, because “it respects the histories and cultures of all countries, large or small, on an equal footing. You are great, reliable and loyal friends to the people of Guyana!”

I became acquainted with Madame Laura Peruffo, secretary of the Asian Culture Association in Argentina, during my visit to that country in 1984. She told me a touching story of how Chinese and Argentine people had worked to further their friendship and cultural exchanges.

In July 1962, when she was at the World Festival of Youth and Students in Helsinki, Finland, she heard that dancers from China wanted to study Argentine dances. She was so thrilled that she decided to go to them and offer tutoring, leaving her baby girl in the care of some Chinese performers. Years later, she came to China with an Argentine folk dance troupe. She brought her daughter along as rehearsal director for the Chinese dancers to correct their moves in *Festival on the Highland*, a well-known Argentine program.

She pointed to the pretty girl stand-

ing next to me. “She was the baby girl that I handed to the care of Chinese performers, and she received care and love as dear as if it came from her own family,” she said. “I was really moved, and since then have been a loyal friend to the Chinese people. In the future, there will be more young people to join our work, as my daughter did.”

Shared love in ancient philosophy

Long distance cannot separate those who have shared ideals. Though separated by seas and oceans, China and Latin America are brought together by a shared history of cultural exchanges and goals of common development — natural bonds that make Chinese and Latin American people feel close to each other.

In the winter of 1960, Chairman Mao said in a meeting with journalists from Latin America:

“Today we are lucky to have so many Latin American friends here, and you are the best teachers to help us learn more about Latin America. Some of you come from Peru, where the great ancient Inca Empire was once located. It is said that the Inca society was bound by strict moral standards.”

A journalist from Peru named Arçay, replied, “It’s true. The moral standards the Inca people observed for generations can be summarized in three short sentences: ‘Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not flatter.’ I believe in China there are also many famous quotes

about moral standards.”

Chairman Mao nodded in approval: “Good point! You’re right. We also have moral standards that have been observed since ancient times. We have shared minds in this respect.”

In November 2003, during a visit to Brazil by a delegation of the China-Latin America Friendship Association, Cheng Siwei, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, who headed the delegation, awarded the China-Latin America Friendship Medal along with a certificate to Mr. Santos, president of the Brazil-China Culture and Trade Center, for his hard work on improving bilateral relations and his outstanding contribution to promoting understanding and friendship between people of both countries over the past four decades.

It all started in 1963, when he assisted the first delegation from China to participate in the International Expo in Rio de Janeiro and helped set up a local office for Xinhua News Agency. In March 1964, nine representatives of Xinhua and the China Chamber of International Commerce were arrested after a coup in Brazil. It was Mr. Santos who hustled about to assist the rescue work through legal channels.

In August 1974, after China established diplomatic relations with Brazil, he rushed about to choose a site for the Chinese embassy. Last but not least, when the Brazil-China Culture and Trade Center was established in June 1986, he assisted in a series of friendly

exchanges to promote ties between the two countries, including hosting China Cultural Week, receiving Chinese delegations and groups, helping build sister-city ties between Rio de Janeiro and Beijing and arranging visits to China for important representatives from the Brazilian Congress, as well as for political and business figures.

Santos visited China once again in 1992, when he talked to me about how his strong faith, along with the essence of Chinese culture, had supported him through his work to promote peace and friendship for the two countries over the decades. He said he had learned from the Chinese culture the art of persistence, captured by the old saying, “Where there is a will, there is a way”, and by the persevering central character in the story *The Old Man and the Mountain*.

“Just as Yugong, the old man, said, despite ranges of high mountains ahead, as long as we work persistently from generation to generation, we are sure to remove the obstacles one day, ushering in the spring of the Brazil-China relationship.”

“I was deeply convinced,” he told me, “that the two largest developing countries in the world and the milestones of friendship built by the two peoples would last forever.”

On the eve of the 1995 National Day, the Chinese embassy hosted a series of activities for China Cultural Week at the city hall of La Paz, Bolivia. It included Chinese movies and exhibitions of pictures and stamps of China. I

gave opening remarks as the ambassador, mentioning that “cultural exchange is like a rainbow arched across the sky.”

“The China Cultural Week opens today and we have arranged a series of rich and varied programs that showcase the history and ethnic characteristics of China, which hopefully will help open a window for the Bolivian people to learn more about China,” I said. “We also genuinely wish to see enhanced understanding and friendship between our two peoples through cultural exchanges, such as the Bolivia Culture Week that is going to be held in China in the near future.”

Later, Bolivian Vice-President Victor Hugo Cardenas, who attended the ceremony upon invitation, said in his speech:

“The China Cultural Week opening today provides us with a perspective to learn more about the amazing ancient Chinese culture well as a prospering new China.

“I am inspired by what Ambassador Tang Mingxin just said in his speech, that China’s achievements today should be credited to the hard work of many generations.

“As an old Chinese saying of Lao Tzu goes, ‘A huge tree grows from a tiny seedling; a nine-story tower is built from a handful of earth; a journey of a thousand li begins with the first step.’

“Bolivia will learn from China’s development experience. I am convinced that through our efforts, we will

accomplish the great journey of a thousand li step-by-step and build a better Bolivia in the future.”

His words won a round of warm applause.

Common goals to achieve through Shared Minds

At present, the China-Latin America relationship is at its best. The two sides are ready to begin a new voyage from a new historical starting line. The prospect of multi-layered, wide-ranging and multi-channeled cultural exchanges and cooperation between China, Latin American and Caribbean countries is taking shape. Just as President Xi Jinping mentioned during his visit to Latin America, the relationship between the two sides is based on the affinity of people from both. China will energetically carry out cultural exchanges with foreign countries and contribute to the progress of human civilization, he said.

In December, during an event to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cuba, I had a friendly talk with Mr. Alberto J. Blanco Silva, the Cuban ambassador to China. He spoke highly of President Xi’s visit to Latin America.

“There is a time difference of 12 hours between Cuba and China. Therefore, when it is day in Cuba, it is night in China — a time when the Cuban people can take care of their Chinese

friends. And when Cuba enters the night, the Chinese people can, in turn, look after their Cuban friends, because we are not only good pals but also good brothers and comrades.”

I replied: “You’re right, Your Excellency. We’re born to be a community of shared destiny.”

On Jan 26, China’s Ministry of Culture announced that the China-Latin America and Caribbean Year of Cultural Exchange would be celebrated in China in conjunction with approximately 30 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean. It will be the largest annual cultural event ever co-hosted by China and Latin American countries since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. The year is a milestone that will provide unprecedented historical opportunities for bilateral exchanges and cooperation in the field of cultural and people-to-people exchanges, inject new momentum into the development of both sides, help Chinese and Latin American people appreciate their counterpart’s culture and bring them closer in mind and soul to become representatives of harmonious coexistence and common development. In this way, they will realize the Chinese and Latin American Dream of common progress and prosperity.

About the author:

Tang Mingxin is the former Chinese ambassador to Bolivia and Uruguay and is honorary vice-chairman of the Association of Former Diplomats of China. ■

Delegation from University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy Visits Sichuan

Chuan You

At the invitation of the CPAFFC, a 20-member student delegation from the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago visited Sichuan province for academic study and friendly exchanges March 22-24. The visit was organized by the China-US Exchange Foundation.

The foundation was founded in Hong Kong in 2008 by Dong Jianhua, vice-chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and adopted a mission to strengthen communication and enhance mutual understanding, trust and friendship between the Chinese and American people through exchanges in various fields. It was the first visit to Sichuan for the delegation, which comprised master’s degree and doctoral students specializing in China’s economic development, reform and urban governance.

The delegation first called on the Sichuan provincial Development and Reform Commission, where members learned about the economic and social progress Sichuan achieved

over the past 30-plus years since the start of China’s reform and opening-up drive. Members of the delegation exchanged ideas with the working staff of the commission on various subjects, including China’s urbanization, reform of State-owned enterprises, the integration of traditions and modernity in urban development, momentum for the economic growth of Sichuan and how to boost the province’s economic development in the future. Through the discussions, the delegation acquired a better understanding of Sichuan.

At Sichuan University’s School of Public Administration, delegation members were briefed about the institution’s history and the importance of the School of Public Administration in the development of policy reforms. After some vigorous discussions, a consensus was reached that there is great



potential for cooperation between Sichuan's public administration school and the University of Chicago's public policy school. In addition, both sides expressed a desire to build a partnership between the two universities.

On behalf of Zhao Ping, president of the Sichuan People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Xiang Qionghua, secretary-general of the association, met with the delegation in Chengdu. Xiang characterized Sichuan as a major province in middle and western China as measured by its economy, culture, agriculture and tourism. Chengdu, the provincial capital, is also a hub of science and technology, trade and commerce, finance, transportation and communications, she said. She expressed confidence that Sichuan will attract increasing attention from its American friends.

The delegation responded positively. The two sides had an enthusiastic discussion about China-US relations, friendly exchanges, cooperation and job opportunities for foreigners in Sichuan.

During its time in Chengdu, the delegation also visited the Chengdu Planning Exhibition Hall, the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding and Wuhou Temple. The American guests said they were deeply impressed by Sichuan's rational urban planning, beautiful ecological environment, profound culture and the integration of traditions and modernity — and its spicy food. Brandon Kurzweg, the delegation's tutor, said he would work hard to promote friendly exchanges between the two schools and recommended that senior scholars visit Sichuan in the near future. ■

Chengdu-Daegu Makers' Exchange Helps Upgrade Cities' Relations

**Chengdu Municipal Foreign and
Overseas Chinese Affairs Office**



In a friendly atmosphere on April 4, the 2016 International Sister City (Daegu) Makers' Exchange Seminar, co-hosted by the Chengdu People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Daegu Center for Creative Economy and Innovation, was held in Daegu, Republic of Korea.

Chengdu's rural tourism design was presented, along with a spare parts trading platform, a startup coffee incubator construction project and Daegu's technologies on manicure innovation, textile printing and treatment of soil pollution.

The two sides exchanged views

and shared their experiences on public innovation and entrepreneurship.

To enhance exchanges between sister cities and develop the mutually complementary resources encouraged by the Chengdu friendship association, the Sichuan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Promotion Association and Daegu Center signed a memorandum of understanding centering on cooperation between the two sides in innovation and entrepreneurship. Government departments, industrial associations and small and medium-sized enterprises from the two sides attended the signing ceremony and had extensive exchanges and dialogues. ■

Australian Adventure:

Youth in Chengdu, Perth Gain Friendly Momentum

**Chengdu Municipal Foreign and Overseas
Chinese Affairs Office**



Ten winners of the Picture Yourself in Perth program — known as PYP — traveled to the Australian city for a nine-day study tour Feb 13-21. It's a brand exchange between Perth and China's Chengdu in Sichuan province. Perth Vice-Mayor James and Director of Study Perth Mike Ryan warmly received the Chengdu students with an official meeting. They briefed the Chinese youths about the beautiful landscape, sound education infrastructure and the diverse culture of Perth, expressing the hope of deepening Chengdu-Perth cooperation and understanding between the two peoples.

During their stay in Perth, the students visited Canning College and Edith Cowan University to live and study with their local counterparts. The trip broadened the Chengdu students' horizons and deepened their understanding of Perth, a sister city of Chengdu.

PYP, which is sponsored by the Perth government, has been held in Chengdu five times, with the aim of providing opportunities for Chinese students to study in Australia and strengthening the friendship between the cities. In September 2012, an agreement was signed establishing a sister city relationship. ■

A small village nestled beside National Highway 318 in Chengdu's Pujiang county was little known until recently, when Chengdu joined with the South Korean city of Gimcheon to launch a pottery art exchange program there.

Under a government plan to build innovative industry-oriented villages and promote the Qiong kiln culture, the old village of Mingyue was transformed into an international pottery center for the traditional craft. On March 19, a symposium on Korean and Chinese pottery culture and art was held at the Mingyue Library in the community's International Ceramic Arts Village. During the event, the Chengdu Mingyue Ceramic Society, together with the Fine Arts Association of Gimcheon, signed an agreement to develop pottery art and exchange ceramic works. They also launched the Gimcheon Ceramic Arts Museum.

A race through tea growing hills and bamboo woods

That morning, 500 runners wearing fluorescent green suits ran into the spring fields of western Sichuan, passing rows of tea plants, rape flowers and pine trees along the way. The race — known as the China-ROK Mingyue Long-Distance Race in Tea-Growing Hills and Bamboo Woods" — was co-sponsored by the Sichuan People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the Chengdu People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Sports and the Pujiang county government.

The race, dubbed a mini-marathon

Grand Gathering for China and ROK at Mingyue Village

Chengdu Municipal Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office

by the participants, was an 8.8-kilometer loop course starting from the tourist reception center of the arts village. The runners ran past Distant Sunshine House, Chenbangbang Tiny Village and Mingyue Kiln in the hills and woods, enjoying the fresh air and beautiful country scenes.

Mingyue tea and bamboo shoots are local specialties. After the race, some of the runners participated in rural tourism promotion activities, including pottery-making, picking tea and collecting bamboo shoots.

Pottery helps strengthen Chengdu-Gimcheon ties

In the afternoon, a symposium on Korean and Chinese pottery art and culture was held, and resident pottery artists in Mingyue — including Li Qing, Li Qingquan and Liao Tianlang — and their Korean colleagues exchanged ideas and experiences related to the pottery arts. During the event, the Chengdu Mingyue Ceramic Society and the Fine Arts Association of Gimcheon signed an agreement to jointly develop and share pottery art. They also launched the Gimcheon Ceramic Arts Museum in the village.

Korean friends also visited the Mingyue Kiln and the Mr. Shu Building, and competed with local artists in

on-the-spot pottery making. The venues were filled with laughter. Some Korean friends said they would begin to study Chinese “as soon as they stepped out of the room”.

“We hope to have more exchanges with artists of Mingyue and make pottery together to deepen mutual understanding and learn from each other, with a long-term goal of industrial cooperation,” said Ryu Geon Sang, president of the Fine Arts Association of Gimcheon. His remarks received positive feedback from local artists.

In another piece of good news, Chengdu Creativity and Design Week will be held in Mingyue in September to display pottery works jointly created by artists from Chengdu and Gimcheon.

It has been more than two decades since Chengdu and Gimcheon started their friendly exchanges. Since the two sides established a sister city relationship in 2000, they have implemented fruitful and pragmatic cooperation in the fields of education, culture and art.

“Given that the China-ROK Free Trade Agreement took effect at the end of last year, and the China-Korea Innovation & Entrepreneurship Park has settled in Chengdu, these Chengdu-ROK sister-city exchanges are bound to embrace brilliant prospects,” said Han Sang Kook, ROK Deputy Consul General in Chengdu. “The cultural ex-

change event this time, incorporating rich and diverse activities and attracting a large number of participants, had a lively on-the-spot atmosphere. Korean friends coming from afar were left with a favorable impression and witnessed for themselves the new mode of countryside construction cooperation. All these are bound to promote the innovative expansion of Chengdu-ROK sister city relations. It is sincerely hoped that more featured sister city exhibition halls will flourish in Chengdu.”

Gimcheon Ceramic Arts Museum launched

To coincide with the pottery exchange event, the opening ceremony of the Gimcheon Ceramic Arts Museum was also held, meaning that Chengdu is about to have its first foreign culture exhibition hall named after its sister city. Gimcheon was the first of Chengdu’s international sister cities to set up a cultural products exhibition hall in Chengdu.

The Gimcheon Ceramic Arts Museum, covering an area of 25 square meters, is located in the second exhibition hall of the Mingyue culture center. The museum displays nine pottery pieces and two calligraphy works donated by artists from Gimcheon as well as Gimcheon profiles. ■

Traditional Han Chinese Marriage Customs

By staff reporter ZHANG LI

MARRIAGE is important to everyone. To the average family, marriage means producing children so that its blood lineage can continue down to the next generation. A grand and joyful wedding is an essential symbol of marriage, as from that moment on, a man and woman have promised to love each other and cleave together forever. Various customs within a wedding signify blessings for the couple's married life. In modern society, people choose their own spouses. Men and women get to know each other, fall in love and get married.

They've abandoned the traditions that have no practical meaning in contemporary society. But it's good for young people to know some of the old practices, so that society remains aware of its cultural treasures. China boasts a long history and rich culture. The traditional marriage customs of the Han Chinese are just one part of Chinese culture, and reflect the Hans understanding of marriage — which is not only that a couple live together, but that their union forms a societal bond between two families.

In ancient China, marriage hap-

pened through “the parents’ order and the matchmaker’s word”. Men and women entered marriage without knowing each other. Two families of equal social status often married their children to each other. The man and woman got to know each other through their matchmaker’s intercession. To guarantee a smooth road toward the wedding, various rituals were conducted. In 2008, the marriage customs of Xiaoyi city’s Jiajiazhuang Village in Shanxi province, the Tenmile Red Dowry of Ninghai County in Zhejiang province, and the Wedding-on-the-Water of Doumen Town in Guangdong province were listed as national intangible cultural heritages.

Six Etiquettes

Han Chinese weddings involve six stages, called the Six Etiquettes. They start off with a marriage proposal (*Na Cai*), followed by an inquiry into the bride’s birthplace and other personal information (*Wen Ming*) and divination (*Na Ji*). Acceptance of the bridal gifts is next (*Na Zheng*), then choosing the wedding day (*Qing Qi*), and finally the wedding ceremony (*Qin Ying*). *Na Cai* denotes the man’s family’s sending of a matchmaker to the



The newly weds kowtow to Heaven and Earth



The groom takes his bride home

woman's family to initiate a marriage proposal. After her family accepts the overture, his family prepares gifts for a formal proposal — a tradition that has been preserved till present times. Nowadays, once a man and woman fall in love, he normally goes to her family to ask for her hand in marriage. In some rural areas, the tradition of having a matchmaker has been preserved. The matchmaker takes the man to the woman's home, where they have tea and a chat. If he is interested in the woman, he will drink the tea that is offered. If the woman also likes the man, her parents will invite him to stay for dinner. If neither is interested in the other, the two will simply say goodbye to avoid any embarrassment. If the two families don't object to the proposal, the man's family will instruct the matchmaker to ask for the woman's name and birthdate. In ancient China, close relatives of the same surname

were forbidden to marry because those who shared the same family name had common ancestry, which precluded their wedded union. The couple's birthdates are needed for fortunetelling, to see if they are compatible and to predict their shared future. This step is called *Na Ji*. If the fortunetelling results are good, the man's family presents the woman's family with gifts in honor of the betrothal. There are no specific rules on what the gifts should be or their quantity. They vary according to the customs of different regions, as well as the economic conditions of the families involved. According to Chinese tradition, once a man marries a woman, she becomes a member of his family; the betrothal gifts, or "bride price", represent an economic compensation to her family to express appreciation for their efforts in raising her. The value of the betrothal gifts reflects the financial standing of the

man's family, and the status that the woman enjoys when she becomes part of his family. Once her family accepts the gifts, the couple becomes officially engaged. *Qing Qi* is when the man's family picks a wedding date and asks for the approval of the woman's family. *Qin Ying* is when the groom fetches and welcomes the bride to his home on their wedding day. According to folk custom, the woman becomes formally married to the man after he fetches her and welcomes her to his family. Without the completion of this step, their marriage would not be accepted by the public. In modern society, the marriage law stipulates that a man and woman legally become a couple once they register and get a marriage license from the Department of Civil Affairs. But in some places, the tradition has been kept that the two only become married once their wedding has been officiated.

Marriage customs in Jiajiazhuang, Xiaoyi city, Shanxi

The marriage customs in Jiajiazhuang Village of Xiaoyi city, Shanxi province, which is based on the Six Etiquettes, feature detailed steps and a festive atmosphere. They are the typical marriage practices of the Han Chinese in the Yellow River Basin. The practices include various aspects of local life, such as music, dance, literature, crafts and religion, representing an important part of local people's cultural life. The day before the wedding, the woman's family makes *mantou*, or steamed bread, in various shapes, such as that of a gourd, and decorate it with auspicious symbols. The woman takes the bread to

the man's family on her wedding day to signify a happy married life.

For her journey to the man's house, the bride wears a red robe and coat, tied at the waist with a 1-meter-long red woolen yarn. The yarn, called the "long-life string", has to be hidden inside her robe. When the groom goes to fetch his bride, he brings red eggs, cotton thread and desserts. The red eggs and thread are used to remove unwanted hair on the bride's face, signifying the girl becoming a woman. The groom and bride kowtow and say goodbye to her parents, who pin red and green ribbons on the groom to celebrate the wedding with colorful decorations.

The groom is then allowed to take his bride home. When the wedding procession reaches the groom's home, the members of his family welcome the bride by setting off firecrackers, scattering flower petals and playing music. There are also customs on decorating the bridal chamber. The door and window are adorned with double happiness symbols. Walnuts and red dates are placed everywhere in the room, symbolizing many children for the newlyweds.

The groom and bride offer each other water with brown sugar, which they both drink, connoting a sweet married life. Next, the groom and bride kowtow to Heaven, Earth, and their parents. They then become a couple.

After the ceremony, the man and woman toast relatives and friends attending the event and express their wedding wishes, such as remaining a devoted couple throughout their lives.

There is a quirky custom in Xiaoyi worth noting: The groom's parents wear comical facial decorations and costumes. Local people think that the weirder and sillier their getup, the happier the wedding will be.

"Teasing the bride and the bridegroom on wedding night" (*nao dong fang*) is the highlight of the day. The participating guests are normally the couple's friends and other young people. They gather at the bridal room to banter with the couple and play pranks on the newlyweds, who will act out all their embarrassing suggestions.

People consider *nao Dong fang* an interesting part of the wedding celebration, because it drives out evil spirits and blesses the couple with a happy and prosperous marriage. But it's not considered a tradition in good taste since it often involves dirty jokes. With social development, the practice has been improved to be funnier but less embarrassing.

The day after the wedding, the

newlyweds pay a visit to the woman's family, carrying gifts, and stay for lunch. In the afternoon, they return to the man's home. On the fifth day after the wedding, they again visit her home. That day, her parents give their daughter a *huoshao* (flat cake) plus *jiaozi*, a wish for the couple to have a baby boy the following year. One month after their wedding, the couple visit the woman's family again.

The groom visits his bride's home to thank the woman's parents for their efforts in raising their daughter and to take the opportunity to get to know her relatives and friends. She, on the other hand, visits to show her parents that she will never forget their love for her. As time has gone by, the marriage rituals in Xiaoyi have gradually been simplified, and some steps have been skipped. Nowadays people just wish the newlyweds a happy, harmonious and prosperous married life through entertaining activities. ■

From China Today



The sedan chair protects the bride from curious peeping eyes

Chengdu International Connections Project Generates “Olive Branch Effect”

Responding to outreach, a 29-year-old man from Mexico visits Chengdu

**Chengdu Municipal Foreign and Overseas
Chinese Affairs Office**

One evening in mid-March, a chocolate-skinned man wearing a peaked cap, carrying a backpack and dragging a suitcase, walked slowly out of Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport. A waiting official from the Chengdu Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office rushed up to greet him with a broad smile. It was their first meeting, although they had communicated for nearly two months via e-mail and social media.

The man, José Emmanuel Martínez Valle, was from Chengdu’s first Latin American sister city—Zapopan, Mexico. He works in Zapopan’s public engineering and infrastructure bureau. Having won Chengdu’s Government Scholarship for Civil Servants from International Sister Cities, Martínez came for a four-month study tour to learn the Chinese language and explore traditional Chinese culture at Sichuan University.

Sister-city relations grow with civil servant exchange program

Located in western Mexico, Zapopan has a population of 1.24 million and is an important hub of the Guadalajara metropolitan area. It’s the second-



Civil servants from Zapopan with Sichuan Opera performers in 2015

largest urban hub in Mexico and enjoys the fastest development momentum in the area. It is home to the region’s best university, cultural venues, shopping malls, hotels and stadiums.

Friendly exchanges between Chengdu and Zapopan started in 2010, with a sister-city relationship established in October 2015. Tang Liangzhi, deputy secretary of the Communist Party of China Chengdu Committee and mayor of Chengdu, signed an agreement with Pablo Lemus, mayor of Zapopan, establishing the sister-city status. Zapopan is Chengdu’s 28th sister city.

Exchanges and cooperation entered a new stage with the creation of

the civil servant exchange program.

In March last year, Zapopan — at the time designated as a friendly and cooperative city — selected two civil servants from the municipality’s General Office to study in Chengdu. They enjoyed four months of study at Chengdu University. During their stay, they acquired basic knowledge of the Chinese language, *tai chi* and Chinese painting. They also actively integrated into life in Chengdu by making a lot of friends. They subsequently participated in Chengdu’s major international exchange activities, including the 2015 China-ROK Tea Culture Exchange Seminar, the 92nd China Food and

Drinks Fair, the Dujiangyan Qingming Water Releasing Festival, the award ceremony of “Picture Myself in Perth” competition, the opening ceremony of the First China (Chengdu)-India International Yoga Festival and the first China (Chengdu) – Russia (Volgograd) Teenager Spray-Painted Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition. They visited famous tourist sites in Chengdu, including the International Sister Cities Exhibition Hall, the Jinsha Site Museum and the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding.

At the beginning of July last year, a civil servant in charge of international exchanges from Chengdu undertook a 4 1/2-month study tour in Zapopan at the invitation of the sister city, where she experienced the city’s magnificent charms.

International Connections Project generates ‘olive branch effect’

In September 2014, having deliberated carefully, Chengdu took the initiative in China to launch a government scholarship program for civil servants and students from its international sister cities to enhance mutual recognition and friendship and gain insight into each other’s regional culture and industrial development.

Examining the project, Zhu Zhihong, vice-executive mayor of Chengdu, put it this way: “Because someone has to take the first step, we will be the first to extend the olive branch.” Judging from the results, that olive branch has been a big success, generating pleasing positive feedback.

After winning the scholarship,

Sushko Natalia from Haifa, Israel, who is on a study tour at Chengdu University, expressed her excitement: “The scholarship is a driving force, encouraging me to forge ahead. Special thanks go to Chengdu Municipality. Best wishes to Chengdu. I wish the Chinese people great success in realizing their Chinese dream.”

Eleven Australian youths have won scholarships through the Chengdu-Perth education exchange event, “Embrace Chengdu, Hometown of the Panda”, under sister-city programs. Interviewed by Chengdu local media, they expressed their view that, despite a tight schedule, Chengdu left colorful and impressive memories. After returning home, they shared their study experiences with their relatives, who became interested and looked forward to visiting Chengdu themselves.

Since Chengdu extended its “olive branch”, young students and civil servants from the city are increasingly enjoying the benefits of the sister cities. In September 2014, Horsens, Denmark, began to implement a civil servant exchange program to invite civil servants of Chengdu to the city with all expenses covered by the Horsens government. In October, Maastricht, the Netherlands, launched the Maastricht-Chengdu Friendship Scholarship. In December, Haifa, Israel, invited civil servants of Chengdu to attend training on environment protection.

Currently, the project has attracted more than 300 civil servants and students from international sister cities to study in Chengdu, and 112 foreign students have successfully applied for the scholarship. ■

Youth international communication is not only important in people-to-people diplomacy but is also meaningful in the country’s long-term strategic development. In recent years, steadily pushing forward the youth communication between friendly cities, Quanzhou, Fujian province, has improved mutual understanding and friendship between China and the outside world and invigorated the sustainable development of friendship with foreign cities for the city — and even for the whole province.

Large-scale performances and sports events were organized for youths

On one hand, we brought in foreign youths to participate in our major cultural and sports activities. For example, we invited a youth choir from Neustadt, Germany, to the International Folk Arts Festival, and a children’s choir from Urasoe, Japan, to the International Children’s Choir Festival in Quanzhou. During the activities, we arranged for the teenagers from foreign sister cities to stay in the homes of their Quanzhou counterparts, helping them learn about the rich customs of multicultural Quanzhou. In 1990, 1992, 2002, 2007 and 2012, we formed a Quanzhou-Urasoe Representative Team to take part in the Sino-Japan Sister Cities’ Youth Table Tennis Competition in Beijing and achieved good results.

On the other hand, we organized youths in Quanzhou to extend their international horizons in other countries. We organized the Quanzhou Youth Martial Arts Representative Team to

Youth Exchanges Strengthen Ties with Foreign Cities

For communication between the youths of Quanzhou and those of foreign sister cities, we organized a number of large events, which included some “going out” and others “invited in”.

Quanzhou Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs

participate in the Urasoe-Quanzhou Martial Arts Exchange Conference in the Japanese city, where the unique South Shaolin martial arts of Quanzhou impressed local people deeply. We held a friendly match and a get-together for the Quanzhou Youth Football Representative Team and middle-school students in Urasoe. We organized a boys' and a girls' basketball team to take part in China Week activities and the International Basketball Tournament in Holzer Becker City, Denmark. We also organized a faculty and student representative team of Quanzhou Fifth Middle School to visit San Diego, California, in the United States, where they participated in the second “Culture China: China's Intangible Cultural Heritage Trip and the Chinese Teenagers' Exhibition and Performance of Intangible Cultural Heritage” at the headquarters

of the United Nations.

Regular youth exchange activities held between sister cities

We have been actively discussing and reaching agreements with our sister cities to organize youth activities. Up to now, it has become regular for our city to hold the youth exchange program with three sister cities. The first was in Urasoe, Japan. In March 2001, the two sides signed the Quanzhou-Urasoe Youth Friendly Exchange Memorandum, under which the two cities would send young exchange teams to each other every two years, beginning in 2002. In just five days, we organized children from the two cities — mainly primary school students — to join in exchange activities in pairs, as cultural, sports, teaching, classroom practice, visiting and get-together activities.

The second was Yenisehir, Mersin, Turkey. In 2002, we reached an agreement with the city to exchange youth teams every two years and organize 1+1 homestyle exchange activities, which means that we would arrange for the youths to live in local students' homes in a “one-to-one” style according to gender and age. What's more, we held extracurricular practices, visits, tours and get-togethers mainly for high school students for 10 days each time.

The third was Neustadt, Germany. As we did in Turkey, our city and Neustadt have made it normal and regular to send youth representative teams to each other every two years for homestyle exchange activities since 2010.

We promoted friendly exchanges in education on the platform of international sister cities, actively creating

opportunities to promote exchange and cooperation between the universities and middle schools of Quanzhou and her sister cities. This created favorable conditions for nurturing creative and innovative international talent with the ability to stay abreast of the times.

The first field was universities. Huaqiao University has established exchange and cooperation channels with San Diego State University, Turkey Mersin University, Kaiserslautern University of Technology and Rheinland-Pfalz University of Ludwigshafen, Germany, so that the two sides can cooperate in the exchanges of students, teachers, scientific research and project development.

Meanwhile, another institution in our city, Quanzhou Normal University, which has been actively discussing its exchange cooperation with Germany's Rheinland-Pfalz Monta Bauer School of Music, has organized two groups of teachers and students to go to Rheinland-Pfalz for home-style communication with students at the music school.

The second field is middle schools. Quanzhou Fifth Middle School signed a cultural and educational letter of intent with Monterey Park City in the US to actively create conditions to encourage graduate students of Quanzhou Fifth Middle School. Afterward, Monterey Park City actively organized American youths, most of whom were Chinese Americans, to carry out summer camps in Quanzhou.

Student representative teams were organized to carry out home-style friendly exchanges in each other's

cities — between Quanzhou Seventh Middle School and Oberhausen, Germany, as well as Quanzhou Yuanpei Middle School and Hérault Cruz Alfred High School in France.

Moves were made to implement an exchange program for researchers

As enhancing personnel exchanges is a significant element in promoting sister city relations, we have in recent years actively promoted an exchange program for researchers with all sister cities, including sending seven translators for three- or six-month training programs to Urasoe, Japan; Monterey Park in Los Angeles County, California; and Neustadt, Germany.

Researchers not only improved their foreign language abilities but also learned about the institutions and operation modes of sister cities' governments and enterprises, which was a great advantage for future exchanges and cooperation in all fields in terms of language and personnel connections.

Meanwhile, our city welcomed liaison personnel from Japan, Germany and Turkey to study here. For instance, we cooperated with Urasoe, Japan, to organize Chinese training in the High-Caliber Exchange Talents Training Project and accepted students from a Urasoe language research and study class to study in Quanzhou several times. Thanks to the study tour, researchers from sister cities improved their Chinese, enhanced their understanding of Quanzhou and deepened their affections for China.

Our city has continued to pro-

mote youth communication between sister cities over many years, which has deepened the understanding of Quanzhou among sister cities' youths, enabled Quanzhou youths to go abroad to extend their international horizons, improve understanding and friendship between youths from the two cities and laid a solid foundation for the sustainable development of sister-city relations. Through these activities we have come to realize the following:

1. Sister cities youth exchange promotes cooperation in other fields

In the process of establishing international sister city relationships and widely exchanging and interacting with other cities, we have been actively arranging youth exchanges and visits, creating an environment in which frequent high-level exchange visits and active interactions take place, further expanding external exchange and cooperation, promoting cross-city investment cooperation and talent exchange, increasing Quanzhou's international popularity, extending the vision of Quanzhou's citizens and improving Quanzhou's brand for investment and urban culture, as well as its international reputation.

2. Sister cities youth exchanges promote sustainable development of relationships

Through carefully arranged scheduling, we highlighted both Chinese characteristics and Quanzhou-specific characteristics in the arrangement of activities — presenting them properly.

We meticulously designed menus to appeal to foreigners' tastes, took photos of every unforgettable moment and created a CD collection as a gift for each youth and made WeChat and QQ groups to enhance youths' connection and deepen their personal connections to one another. Due to the warmth of all exchange activities, foreign youths all had so wonderful an impression of Quanzhou that they would like to study Chinese and visit Quanzhou again.

3. Sister cities youth exchanges promote Chinese traditional culture

We organized youths in sister cities to learn such Chinese cultural traditions as calligraphy, traditional painting, chess, handicrafts and Shaolin kung fu, as well as to enjoy art performances with rich characteristics from South Fujian. These activities included a demonstration of nanyin (a form of traditional Chinese music), a puppet show, South Shaolin martial arts and liyuan opera (a form of traditional Chinese opera), attendance at lectures about Chinese history and the establishment of the Maritime Silk Road and paying visits to all the counties of Quanzhou to visit local people and landscapes where folk cultures prevail.

Through the activities mentioned above, sister city youths experienced Chinese traditional culture firsthand, especially the unique charm of South Fujian culture, which enabled them to serve as a bridge of cultural exchange between China and other countries. ■

Yangzhou Uses Food as Medium for Foreign Communication

Yang Le

Huaiyang cuisine, regarded by many as the best food in southeastern China, is one of the four major traditional Chinese cuisines. On the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the city of Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, the World Association of Chinese Cuisine named it an International Gourmet Food City. For years, Yangzhou has served foreign communications along with its tasty food, showcasing a unique charm featuring the best Chinese and

international characteristics.

A significant attempt

In September 1999, the city held the first China Yangzhou International Sister City Food Festival in the Yangzhou State Guesthouse and Xiyuan Hotel. That year marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. It also marked the respective 15th and fifth anniversaries of sister-city relations with Atsugi, Japan, and Kent City, Michigan, in the

Speech by Mayor Zhu Minyang at a news conference



United States. The food festival, hosted by the Yangzhou municipal government and run by the city's Foreign Affairs Office, was the city's first festival featuring a food theme and represented a significant attempt to promote cultural exchange between China and the rest of the world.

More than 360 distinguished guests attended from eight sister cities in the US, Japan, Australia and other countries that had established sister-city relations with Yangzhou, as well as guests from South Korea, France, Germany, Belgium and a few other places that had enjoyed food culture exchanges with our city. The guests outnumbered all other foreign-communication-oriented events ever held in the city.

Besides the exchange and cooking skills demonstrations — such as the “Learn to Cook Huaiyang Food” program — we also held other celebrations and communication activities. These included a signing ceremony establishing economic cooperative city relations between Yangzhou and Neubrandenburg, Germany, and a celebration of sister-city relationships with Kent City and Atsugi. The latter marked the 10th anniversary of friendly communication between Yangzhou's suburban Wantou Town and Irihiro village in Japan.

The China Yangzhou International Sister City Food Festival provides us with a channel to learn gastronomy from our foreign sister cities and strengthen communication between East and West. After the festival, we regularly held multiple food work-

shops, enjoyed friendly communications and economic and trade events in Yangzhou, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, among other places. These activities were well received and have gained wide recognition. The first food festival played an important role in kicking off the series of activities.

Leapfrog development of the “food as medium” program

Yangzhou has held major food festivals and city promotion activities in Beijing for three consecutive years, plus the first and the second New Year Reception and Yangzhou Food Culture Festival held in Beijing in 2014 and 2015. It has had a profound and widespread influence both at home and abroad.

On Jan12 this year, the Yangzhou Public Diplomacy Association and China Public Diplomacy Association

hosted the reception's opening ceremony. Nearly 200 guests participated in the event, including diplomats from 14 countries, representatives from eight international organizations and multiple chambers of commerce, and friends from six foreign media outlets. They were invited to taste delicious Yangzhou food and experience Yangzhou culture.

Qian Hongshan, assistant minister of foreign affairs; Ma Zhengang, vice-president of the CPDA; and Ghanim Al-Shibli, the Arab League's ambassador to China, addressed the opening ceremony. Xie Zhengyi, secretary of the municipal committee of the Communist Party of China, briefed guests about Yangzhou. Hong Jinhua, chairman of the Municipal Political Consultative Conference and president of YPDA, along with other top officials, was also in attendance.

The Yangzhou Food Culture Festival is the highlight of the CPDA's New Year Reception and has become a



Making Yangzhou steamed buns

window for foreign diplomats and international friends to learn about Yangzhou.

Qian Hongshan, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed his thanks to the two hosting parties.

CPDA's Ma said: "Yangzhou is a famous Chinese city with a world-renowned food culture. And CPDA is proud to cooperate with Yangzhou."

Said the Arab League ambassador: "This is the best Chinese food I've ever tasted. I would like to promote Yangzhou food and invite more Arabian friends to come to Yangzhou, enjoy its tasty food and explore the rich culture behind it, thus promoting communications between Yangzhou and the Arab world."

Highlights of the program

Yangzhou Week, which was held in September, was the highlight of all the national public diplomacy activities last year. It has achieved fruitful results in line with the One Belt, One Road Initiative.

Once at the junction of the maritime and overland Silk Roads, Yangzhou has made the best of its historical and cultural advantages to actively carry out public diplomacy and showcase its image in a comprehensive and diversified way.

Attendees at the opening ceremony included Francesco Rutelli, president of Culture Priority Association and former vice-prime minister of Italy; Irene Pivetti, president of the Italy China Friend-

ship Association and former speaker of the Italian parliament; Stefano Beltrame, consul general of Italy to Shanghai; Lyu Fengding, vice-president of CPDA; Han Fangming, member of the Standing Committee and Deputy Director General of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and president of the Charhar Institute; Shen Guofang, CPDA executive and first vice-chairman of the China Foundation of International Studies; Yang Liu, president of World Association of Chinese Cuisine; Yang Xiuping, secretary-general of the ASEAN China Center; Chen Anjie, director of the Executive Committee of China Corporate United Pavilion at the Milan World Expo; Zhu Minyang, deputy secretary-general of the municipal CPC Committee and mayor of Yangzhou; Hong Jinhua, chairman of the municipal People's Political Consultative Conference and president of YPDA; along with representatives of five international organizations, diplomats from 15 Silk Road countries and distinguished guests from 27 other countries and regions.

CPDA's Lyu said: "Culture is a major carrier of public diplomacy. As a cultural city with a history of 2,500 years, Yangzhou has been playing an important role in inheriting Chinese history and culture. There is no denying that Yangzhou food culture is widely renowned and that Huaiyang cuisine is popular across all sectors of society. I hope that everybody in this reception, including guests from Silk Road countries, will become friends and explore opportunities for cooperation."

"Yangzhou Week has made rich achievements," he continued. "Yangzhou was named an International Gourmet Food City; the China ASEAN (Culinary) Training Base was established; Food Diplomacy-Yangzhou Mode was officially launched; the Chinese Culture and One Belt, One Road forum was opened; and a cooking skills demonstration for foreign and Chinese guests to learn to make Yangzhou buns were part of the activities. Foreign guests praised Yangzhou cuisine as being the "most Chinese and most international".

RESULTS

First, the concept of food as medium has yielded unusually brilliant results and has a bright future. For example, efforts have been made to publicize Huaiyang cuisine for formal occasions.

For years at State banquets, Huaiyang cuisine has entertained King Sihanouk of Cambodia, President Kim Il-sung of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, French President Jacques Chirac and US President George W. Bush, among other distinguished guests. Anecdotes linger from those banquets: Sihanouk loved shizitou (a large meatball); Kim Il-sung enjoyed a taste of the Red Chamber banquet; Jacques Chirac wanted to be a public relations staff member for Yangzhou cuisine; and Bush favored Yangzhou fried rice.

In recent years, we have also entertained in Yangzhou numerous state leaders from other countries, includ-

ing President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, President Filip Vujanović of the Republic of Montenegro, Prime Minister Joe Natuman of the Republic of Vanuatu, Speaker Josip Leko of the Croatian Parliament, Speaker Ekwee David Ethuro of the Kenyan Senate, and former Dominican President Hipolito Mejia.

All of them gave thumbs-up as they tasted authentic Yangzhou cuisine, agreeing that Huaiyang cuisine is worthy of its reputation. In November 2013, a Huaiyang cuisine delegation went to the United Nations headquarters in New York to join the Chinese Food Festival. It was the first time that Huaiyang food was put on UN dinner tables.

Feng Enyuan, head of the delegation, said, “As one of the important elements of Chinese cuisine, Huaiyang cuisine should demonstrate itself in a high-level arena.”

Second, various international food and culture displays were presented.

Yangzhou has invited many of its foreign sister cities to jointly hold Yangzhou food displays, such as the Yangzhou Food and Culture Festival and Silk Road Cuisine Display Week.

All the activities together had profound influence, attracting and winning the favor of large numbers of international and domestic guests. The food displays created an excellent opportunity to promote Huaiyang cuisine and advance the internationalization of Yangzhou.

So far Yangzhou has established sister city relations with more than 50 cities around the world and maintains

economic, trade and cultural communications with more than 160 countries and regions globally. The successful holding of the food display has enhanced the popularity and reputation of Yangzhou and its food with these friends.

In addition, a Research and Demonstration Base of Huaiyang cuisine was set up to accommodate food-oriented communications between international sister cities. We officially inaugurated the China ASEAN (Culinary) Training Base during Yangzhou Week. The activities mentioned have effectively promoted food-oriented foreign communications.

Third, taking advantage of international relationships and celebrations, Yangzhou is transforming itself into a global conference city.

Since 2013, we have held more than 20 major international conferences, including the Council of the World League of Historic Cities.

Also held every year are such celebrations as the International Economic and Trade Tourism Festival and the China Yangzhou International Canal Expo. All these events attracted numerous high-ranking foreign guests and provided a broad arena for promotion of Huaiyang cuisine and the internalization of Yangzhou.

The Public Diplomacy Association supports the events and provided a platform for our city to hold the Yangzhou Food Culture Festival in Beijing for three consecutive years.

As CPDA vice-president Ma Zhengang said, “One of the missions of CPDA is to promote local cities and culture. We are willing to make CPDA a platform for helping Yangzhou food go global and contribute our own efforts in the internalization of Yangzhou and its economy.”

Yangzhou can well take advantage of this beneficial platform to promote foreign communications and cooperation with food as medium. ■

