3  Into The Gobi Desert During Deep Winter
8  Pleading of the Wild Yak
11  Wild yaks and a brush with disaster
14  Tracking Wild Yak in the Snow
16  Craving for Crane and Crab
20  TWO ANCIENT CAPITALS – Thirty years before and after
26  A ‘village’ of strangers helps conserve Li artifacts
28  Cradle of China’s Communist Revolution
32  China’s auto industry, then and now
34  CERS in the Field
35  News/CERS in the Media

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Xian Main Street as of 1979;
White-tailed Eagle and Cranes;
Mongol lama of the Gobi;
Wild Yak on the move.
President’s Message

Friends and supporters often told me that CERS is too low key, as much of our work and results are known only to a small circle of people. I often answered that we are selectively high-profile, choosing to expose ourselves where it really counts. Otherwise we may be inundated by requests for more information or overwhelmed by eager enthusiasts seeking help which we have no time or means to deliver. Perhaps using business jargon, I can call it equitable exposure.

This however is now changing, at least in one respect. Our new website includes far more information than before, drawing from our huge archive of material and data, films and photographs. A separate team of CERS colleagues have been quietly working away, focusing on organizing 38 years of archival record on China now owned by CERS, not to mention the repository of historical photos that have been donated to us over the last few years. In the upcoming months, we will be integrating some of the choicest materials for inclusion into our website.

The CERS newsletter which we have been publishing for well over ten years is one of the most important means for dissemination of work of the Society. The content of this publication has many timeless pieces, as well as much information which cannot be obtained elsewhere. These articles and reports would also be included in our website in the future, thus arriving at a much larger readership.

In this issue, we bring you more diverse activities of CERS. From exploring the northern Steppes of Inner Mongolia to reports by two of our field workers on Wild Yak that roam the plateau, from a professor’s report in the southern island of Hainan, to a piece on Yan’an during the war years may provide some new perspective on an important base of the communists before their ascent to power.

Another historical piece compares two old capitals of Xian and Kyoto, and the destiny of each of these ancient cities. Finally an article on the cranes of Hokkaido offers comparison to the Black-necked Crane which CERS has been working on for over twenty years. To me, the pictures that illustrate this piece are particularly beautiful.

I hope everyone will enjoy the diversity of what CERS brings. It is our low-key way of enriching our readers’ experience of the world around us.
even the single monk, a young fellow, had left his temple. On the rare occasion when there is a religious function here, lamas from a distant monastery come and preside over it. Today only two families live adjacent to the temple, becoming the keepers of this distant outpost of Buddhism.

“What is your last name?” one of us asked the old man who walked in to check on these unlikely visitors in the deep of winter. “I have no last name,” answered the bearded man. We were all taken aback by his answer, until he added, “We are Mongols and do not use last names!” “So what is your name then?” we asked. “Ottoba,” came the answer. The 80-year-old had a ready grin, with several missing teeth. For years, he has been the temple’s caretaker by default.

With a tiny courtyard and a few steps, the temple was perhaps less than a hundred square meters. Two prayer wheels on the front and a yellow metal roof gave the outward resemblance of any Tibetan-style temple. Inside, however, it was quite ornamental with full color scrolls in silk hanging from the ceiling. Two old rugs were used as the back and bottom of a seat. We negotiated in vain to purchase them, but Ottoba simply refused to sell. There was even a golden yellow canopy over the altar seat, reserved for some dignified Living Buddha, if one should happen to drop by this out-of-the-way place, in the worst possible location.

Its best feature, however, was also its location - against the south side of a beautiful red and white sandstone mountain which shielded it from the Gobi’s bitter Siberian wind. Facing south provided maximum heat from a minimal sun when it cast its rays in a shortened winter day. I had noticed that this winter sun had not risen higher than 45 degrees above our heads throughout the day as I drove across the desert. Standing out, there was always a sizable shadow following me to my north, unlike further south when the shade would get smaller during the midday hours. A more personal note was my junk-food bag. Even inside the car, my snacks were frozen into popsicle-like hard candies. Those ‘candies’ of dried mango or plum were fine, but not those with the exotic flavors of squid and baby scallops.

As we usually live further south, we are used to hearing weather reports about a Siberian cold front approaching that would bring about a a drop in temperature of a few degrees or more. But here we were part of the cold front, with outside temperatures always lingering below minus 20. Any slight chill factor would take the temperature down another two-digit level. Ottoba seemed to have weathered the years well, dressed relatively lightly. He and his wife together received over 2,000 Yuan from the government monthly and felt quite happy, their needs adequately met.

I looked around the dry terrain and wondered how they got their water. Ottoba told me he has a well and the water is only three to four meters below. I asked whether there was any noticeable dry bout or change in water level, given the global emphasis on climate change. But he said the water level has always been the same.

That reply came as a surprise as just days before we were told in Dunhuang that the local water level was descending at extremely alarming rate. What used to be a few centimeters of change per year had become a 20-meter drop annually within recent years. That would render the desert oasis waterless within a decade or more, if some new
For me, this huge expanse of land is only beginning to unveil its many secrets, just like Ah Gui Temple which lay hidden among the hills of the windswept Gobi. Almost a hundred years ago, paleontologist Roy Chapman Andrews, whom the movie Indiana Jones tried to impersonate, dug up the first dinosaur eggs in the depth of the Gobi Desert. Since then, there have been many discoveries of fossilized treasures which continue to baffle paleontologists and archaeologists.

As we stopped for lunch at a roadside restaurant, a little Mongol girl, not dressed in traditional costume, greeted me with a disarming smile. My own foray into the desert may be short. But future generations who live around the desert will have many more years of exciting treasure hunting in this vast and physically prohibitive land.

Further into the desert, we stopped and visited a site called Mandela which featured ancient rock art in an area with exceptional geological features. The rocks had been eroded by wind for millions of years, into wonderfully smooth and rounded indents, whereas the human art were dated back to 4,000 to 6,000 years ago. The effigies were mainly of people and animals, but some had people riding what appeared to be either camels, horses or even reindeer. Such primitive art somehow seemed very elementary and complementary to a place where nature ruled supreme. In a land of huge sky with the Gobi’s long horizon, man always played a subservient role. It is a place where I, too, feel small and humbled, as nature reduces us to tiny specks like the Gobi dust.

A comparison may help understand why I feel so shrunken in space and time: Inner Mongolia is huge in size, larger than Texas and California combined. Arcing around northern China, it covers a width of 29 degrees in longitude. If it were superimposed over North America or Europe, it would cover a stretch from Washington, DC to the Rocky Mountains, or from Barcelona in Spain to Kiev in the Ukraine, a distance of 2,400 kilometers.
PLEADING OF THE WILD YAK

Song Hao Kun
translated by Terry Cao and edited by Sheila Byers
March 8, 2010

We, the group of yaks living in the Xiangshui River Basin of Ha’er Village in Gansu for generations, have recently been having difficulty getting even one square meal a day. How did the world come to be like this? We cannot imagine what happened.

Since the time of my grandpa’s grandpa, our family has been living on this land without much difficulty. Although we were sometimes attacked by wolves and snow leopards, we shared our hatred for the invaders and fought undaunted with our horns. Our family line continued and we had more than 1,000 brothers and sisters.

At that time, we occasionally saw two-legged animals called humans, but we rarely had to deal with them. Or rather, they dared not offend us because they were afraid of our horns. Not to brag, but even the strength of eight or 10 humans cannot match that of one yak. They called us wild yaks. Well, it’s okay to be “wild.” We enjoyed our free lifestyle.

Everything changed in the time of my grandpa’s grandpa. Humans began to possess something called “gun,” which could be used to kill us from far away. After a great number of losses, my grandpa’s grandpa instructed us not to provoke two-legged humans, but to avoid them. We did as we were told, but the humans would not leave us alone. Living in the Xiangshui River Basin for generations, we yaks have grown used to our home. We are active on the high mountain marshlands during the summer and on both sides of Ha’er Village in the winter. We live 4,000 meters above sea level, and the humans used to live below us. In recent years, however, the humans have continuously invaded our home. They began coming every year to hunt us with guns, slaying as few as one or two or as many as 10 or more. We began to grow more and more afraid of humans.

Later even, more humans invaded our home. Although less of them carried guns, we had to hide from them since we had no idea of their intentions. As more humans came, they brought sheep as well. We were supposed to spend winter on both sides of Ha’er Village, but today, the sheep come in summer and eat almost all of the grass. Worse still, some humans come to pasture in summer and enclose our grass by building iron fences preventing us from entering and eating. Since we are so hungry, we have no choice but to control our birth rate. Better to have never been born than to die from hunger! As a result, the number of our family members has fallen from 1,000 to 700.

We have many relatives in Qinghai. In the first few years we would often visit one another. Quite a number of romances grew out of these visits. Our third great-grandma and fourth great-aunt all came from Qinghai; our second great-aunt got married and lived there, too. In recent years, however, we stopped visiting one another. For one thing, it takes too much time and energy to avoid the humans’ residences, wire nettings and guns. For another, our relatives in Qinghai do not welcome us to come and eat the dwindling pasture. Like us, they must protect their resources. We have become wary of our relatives and friends as if they were thieves; visiting one another becomes insipid if not awkward.

Humans give us a hard time, and Heaven does not show its mercy, either. There is less and less rain and snowfall, and the snow line becomes shorter and shorter, retreating more than 30 meters in the past 20 years. The less snow and water there is, the worse the grass becomes, and we grow more hungry. Our big family used to have some heavyweight members weighing more than a ton. Now anyone weighing over 500 kilograms is deemed a big guy.

Living such a dangerous and deprived life, I have thought of becoming a yak fed by humans. Even though we will eventually lie on their plates, at least we would not need to worry about our food, nor run from guns. But I am used to freedom. Born free, live free, die free. Why can’t we have freedom and survival at the same time?

I wish Heaven would give us more snow to nourish more grasslands for us so that we would not need to be anxious about food.

I wish those humans with guns would not come close to us so we could walk freely at home.

I wish those who pasture would not enclose our grass with wire nettings and that the sheep would not come to our home to eat.

There is just one wish I want to share with humans: I want to have a square meal at home.

TOP TO BOTTOM: Wild Yaks of the Qilian Mountains; Open wilderness of the Qilian Mt; Fences of the Kazak nomads.
As the earthquake tragedy unfolded in Yushu, Qinghai, in mid-April, our thoughts and prayers have definitely been with those affected. On that fateful day, we were fortunately in the Cuochi community over 250 kilometers away. We barely felt tremors that morning and didn’t even hear the news until that night. I was not able to make international calls but thankfully a prompt email response by How Man put my mother at ease. The earthquake certainly put things in perspective, and we quickly had a meeting in response. We decided it best that I return to Xining via Golmud while the others finish the last wild yak protection team workshop in Cuochi before returning to Jiegu to check on friends and help out the rescue effort.

I had travelled to the Cuochi and Lichi communities of Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve with Tashi Dorjie, or Zha Duo, of the snowland great rivers non-governmental organization to observe community conservation work with wild yak and Tibetan antelope, or chiru, that CERS supported. Reading the snowland website was one thing but seeing the charismatic Zha Duo in action was another thing entirely. The focus of the trip was meetings and workshops with herders, and Zha Duo effectively held the herders’ attention and engaged in lively discussions with them. The herders spoke in Tibetan but from what I observed and discussed with Zha Duo the meetings were very productive, and even I with my newly minted Tibetan name, Drong Ba Dorjie, “son of wild yak”, was able to give a short statement expressing my admiration for the herders’ conservation efforts and the importance of their work.

It was my first trip to the Sanjiangyuan reserve and I quickly noticed the quality of the alpine meadow especially in Cuochi. I also observed plenty of wildlife. For example, before even reaching the wild yak protected area in Cuochi I saw three pairs of black-necked cranes, about 500 Tibetan gazelle, about 250 kiang or Tibetan wild ass, two wolves, seven foxes, a badger as well as many steppe buzzards and a few lammergeiers.

Wild yak were my focus on the trip, though, and I was eager to observe the novel conservation approach around Cuochi where herders protect wild yak partly as a genetic resource to improve the bloodlines of their domestic herds. Specifically, the calves wild bulls produce are larger and hardier than fully domestic calves, and this is a novel conservation approach for several reasons. Firstly, the ancestors of many types of domestic livestock are extinct such as aurochs for domestic cattle and the ancestor of dromedary camels. For sheep, the benefits of wild/domestic hybrids are known - for example, the hybrids are better able to utilize poor pasture. But the wild ancestors of sheep are not endangered and are not protected for hybridization benefits. Moreover, in the case of water buffalo, the wild ancestor is endangered but they are not protected for hybridization benefits. Finally, in the case of wild Bactrian camels, the males are a menace and will kill domestic males during rut.

Although my trip was cut short because of the earthquake, I still saw 20 wild yak bulls in an area of Cuochi where large herds of 100 or more are present in winter and another eight bulls near the Lichi community. At the moment, hunting is not a threat and wild yak bulls are expanding their range into Lichi, an indicator of conservation success in Cuochi where 12 families have voluntarily moved out of the wild yak protected area to enhance conservation. There is also the potential for wild yaks to expand their range to the south into the Suoja community where community conservation initiatives have also taken place. I also saw four hybrid calves sired by wild bulls; these calves definitely had a wild air about them with black coats and especially large neck humps, and I heard about another two hybrids including a particularly virile 10-year-old bull that has sired many calves.

Hybridization from the wild yaks to domestic is beneficial to the Cuochi community but if introgression goes the other way, that is, if domestic females join wild herds, this would be a problem. Migration of domestic yak into wild herds compromises the integrity of the wild yak bloodlines and is a threat for wild yak conservation. For example, in some areas, individuals in wild yak herds have been seen with white faces or patches, a sure sign of introgression with domestic yak. Thankfully, I did not see any wild yaks with white coats and according to herders the wild yaks remain all black. However, the herders noted that domestic yak cows occasionally escape to the wild herds, once in five years according to one, and in the future we will have to work on avoiding any loss of females to wild herds.

In the future, it is also necessary to conduct winter surveys especially in the important southern area of Cuochi by the upper Yangtze to get a complete idea of the number of wild yaks being protected. It would also be interesting to revisit the highway from Wudaoliang to Golmud, because on this trip we saw about 42 wild yak bulls on this route, many more than I, George Schaller and other researchers have seen on previous trips. It seems that wild yak may be expanding into this area from Kekexili, and would be good to further document a positive conservation story such as this as well as the one taking place in Cuochi thanks to the support of CERS.
The sound is disturbing. With each step, I can hear the ice cracking behind me as I cross the frozen river. Rather than walking, I am waltzing awkwardly on ice, sliding one foot after the other, as I glide gingerly towards the other bank.

The five yaks we are trying to approach are on the other side of the river, still 500 meters away. We cannot make just a single crossing to reach them. As the river meanders, we have to cross over it several times. And then there are other smaller streams between us and the yaks. So the sound of cracking ice becomes more frequent - and foreboding.

As with the weather and temperature outside, suffice to say time was also frozen. My watch stopped ticking at 1:30am as I left it outside my sleeping pack the night before. This was my old hunting ground, the Big Khartan River, for many summers in the 1990s. I used to explore these same mountains at a time when CERS maintained a research center in Dunhuang, an oasis town along the ancient Silk Road. But entering during the winter is a totally different challenge, an experience that will freeze in your mind as hard and deep as the ice block of the outside terrain in front of me.

Given the long winter and extreme low temperature, the cracking sound with each step I take must be from the top and newest layer formed. I presume there are several hard and frozen layers of ice further below. Nonetheless, the sound of ice cracking under your body is never reassuring. And in other places, the snow is knee-deep.

Our brand new Land Rover Defenders are out in force, all three of them in a test-run during this winter expedition. Unfortunately we are only able to fill up with minus 20 grade diesel, and night-time temperatures certainly drop below that. One car developed a fuel-delivery problem, possibly from the heavy wax and water in the diesel fuel. By then, we were 150 kilometers off road into wilderness. Perhaps the vehicle felt numb, too. We managed to tow it almost 300 kilometers back to safety in Dunhuang.

If I can still write with some coherence, it is because I am wrapped in down gear from the summer, the Gobi is extremely hot as people are toasted in over 40-degree heat. In the winter, though, those two vastly different ecosystems have one thing in common: Both places are freezing cold. As an explorer, I have always maintained that once below minus 20 degrees, it feels all the same, be it minus 20, 30 or 40. Our body becomes numb and can no longer register the difference. So here we are, at that very trying margin of human sensitivity.
head to toe. The night before, my soft-leather Ugg boots were frozen so hard and stiff that I could not get my feet into them the following morning. Luckily I have a back-up pair of boots in the car. Batteries which usually last a long time can only be useful for a fraction of their standard span. Having spares of every item is essential.

Some may think we must be masochists to execute an expedition against such odds and in such hostile elements. But explorers do take on a few exceptional challenges, even if they are of sound mind. Maybe our physical faculties are so impaired that we need to be in extreme conditions to feel some sensitivity.

The wild yak that we are studying can be spotted most easily in the winter, when they stand out clearly against the white snow. It is also during this season that they descend lower to the foothills and river banks, exposing themselves to our lenses. Even the elusive and evasive Argali Big Horn Sheep are easily spotted, as are wild ass and Tibetan Gazelle.

From past experience of being charged by single bulls, we know better than to get close to such solitary animals. They chase us not because we are a target for mating. To the contrary, lone bulls live solo because they lost in mating battles and were forced to leave their herd. These individuals are usually the former kings of the herd, until one day a younger and stronger bull takes over his harem by challenging the leader. Losing face after his long rein, the king leaves his herd to lead a solitary life. Like other mating losers, their temperament becomes unpredictable and irritable, to the point where the simplest provocation could trigger their attack.

We approach one single bull, but stop half a kilometer away to observe it. This present herd of five includes a large male and four females. It is ideal for close-quarter viewing from within a couple hundred meters. Their long bushy ‘skirt’ seems some form of high fashion of the animal kingdom. Brushing their furry skirt from side to side as they stride, they walk around gracefully while stopping now and then to graze on the grass that is barely visible above the deep snow. At one point, as they cautiously crossed a frozen river, I think their heavy weight - up to a ton for a male - must wreak havoc on the ice. Apparently they know what they are doing, and successfully cross without incident.

An overnight snowstorm has buried almost all our tracks. To retreat now would make good sense. After all, one car is down and I have 13 members under my charge and my responsibility. Another storm would strand us, possibly until spring. And we have only brought provisions for one week.

I recall the words of my favorite poem, from the famous Tang poet Wang Zhihuan: “The fragrance of spring would not blow beyond the Jade Gate”. The Jade Gate stands at the bottom of these same hills we are exploring, at an elevation of barely 1,500 meters - and we are at about 4,000 meters. I don’t think I dare wait for spring’s arrival.
White-tailed Eagle swooshed down in the middle of a flock of cranes. Startled, a large male hopped into the air and aimed its beak at the raptor as the rest of the cranes called out in unison, “Gok, Ga Ga! Gok, Ga Ga!” The “Gok” sound was that of the male, and the “Ga Ga” that of each of its pairing female partners, calling right after without ever missing a beat. But the eagle was too fast for the elegant crane. As it took to the air, I could see it clutched a live fish in its claws - stolen from the crane.

As the cranes were focusing on half a dozen eagles circling above waiting for another chance to home in on the next attack, a red fox was stealthily closing in from behind. Nearby were other birds, sparrows, ravens and even swans, all lurking to share the meal which was set out daily for the cranes.

I was here at Kushiro, the southeastern tip of the large island of Hokkaido in northernmost Japan. Nearby is one of Japan’s most important reserves, Kushiro Shitsugen, or wetland. It is also the most important habitat of the Japanese Cranes, or Grus japonensis, known in China and Korea as the Red-crowned Cranes.

Crimes in China and Korea tend to migrate from their summer breeding ground in the north to a wintering ground in the south. But the Japanese flock is sedentary and live in Hokkaido year-round. The Japanese Crane is without doubt the best-loved bird in Japan, symbolizing many cherished virtues in life: longevity, love and loyalty. Its motifs are seen in all aspects of daily life, from lacquered screens, to kimonos and hanging scrolls. It is also the character children most love to fold colorful paper into when undertaking origami.

The Japanese Crane’s fate was not always assured. It was once hunted almost to extinction. It is said that cranes used to exist as far south as Edo - today’s Tokyo. One account says hunters from the Matsumae clan shot 300 cranes and preserved them with salt. This dish, called “shiozuru”, or salted cranes, was sent to Edo. Such over-hunting and reclamation of Hokkaido in the early Meiji period caused the crane to become almost extinct at the end of the Meiji period.

Kimiya Koga, the chief scientist and ornithologist at the Akan International Crane Center, a prefecture government-run agency to protect the cranes, says there were only 33 cranes left by 1952. Following the discovery of a small breeding flock in Tsurui in the wetlands, the government and concerned conservationists began a long and slow process of protection to nurse the cranes back to a healthy-sized population. Today, Koga says, there are more than 1,300 Japanese cranes. He has worked with them for the last 18 years and will soon be transferred to the Kushiro zoo.

For three months during the winter, food was being left out in several crane roosting and feeding sites to help the cranes through the long and bitter winter as snow covered everything in sight. While they are mainly fed corn, occasionally they get a heartier meal of fresh fish. Everyday at 2pm, not only the cranes and other birds gather for their routine meal, photographers from all over Japan also flock here for the best opportunity to capture in pictures a large convergence of cranes.

The photographers brought huge lenses mounted on tripods. With today’s digital cameras offering high-speed execution, my own experience shows that it is best to use a hand-held model with a 300mm lens on auto-focus mode. Maneuvering with a tripod would be difficult, far too slow to catch a bird in flight. With the feeding program, now people can get close to the cranes, sometimes to within 10 meters or less. This let me have a chance to view the cranes in action at the start of this story.

Further north in the village of Tsurui, which means “crane abode” in Kanji, I met Makoto Ando in his farm home. The 45-year-old has lived in this house he built himself for 10 years. He was born and raised in Sapporo but moved to Tsurui 25 years ago because of his love of nature, and the cranes. Today, Ando used his house as a hostel for visitors to view the cranes and offered his service as a nature guide. He professed to know many secret spots where the cranes can be observed in seclusion. One particular room upstairs has a large window, overlooking the meadow below. During my visit it was covered in snow. But Ando said a lucky borderer can wake up to see a pair of cranes performing their courtship dance.

Nearby is another farm which makes an award-winning cheese, sold in hotels and specialty shops in the area at quite a high price. I bought some to try and it compared well with our own yak cheese. Appropriately, the brand name is Tsurui, Crane Abode, and the logo depicts two singing cranes.

I have been planning to visit and view the Japanese Crane for a very long time. Several times I had to cancel my trip due to other obligations and priorities. Now I finally have come this long way during the perfect season. My obsession with the crane has been in the making for more than 20 years. It began in 1988 when I first set eyes on the Black-necked Cranes of the Tibetan plateau.

I have authored a book on this subject, made several films, and even built our own Crane Center in Shangri-la of Yunnan. For the last two winters, we successfully captured five Black-necked Cranes and attached satellite-tracking devices to them for scientists to better understand their activities, migration route and patterns. My visit to Kushiro reaffirms my conviction that some day we will also be able to observe the Black-necked Crane of the Tibetan plateau up close.

This trip landed me an unexpected bonus: I was able to sample variations of the northern island’s famed King Crab. Every morning I woke up before sunrise. At 43° North in latitude, the sun rises late and sets just after 4 pm in January. Below my hotel was a water channel connected to the Pacific Ocean just a short distance out the causeway. On two mornings I saw fishing boats anchored next...
to the dock, fully lit as if unloading their night’s catch. I was eager to find out their work routine but failed to do so three days in a row.

Finally I saw the boats going out last night, fully lit with bright lanterns, at around 9 pm. This morning I got up early enough, at 5 am, and saw two of the boats coming into the channel. With binoculars I had brought to observe the cranes, I saw the fishermen unloading their catch inside green crates from their boats into their trucks. Then I understood where the seafood I was devouring day after day, meal after meal, came from.

Throughout the markets and restaurants of the area, seafood was in abundance. I have been craving these crabs once I saw them and ate it in restaurants as soon as I arrived in Kushiro. I even went to the fish market to look at them alive. When I saw them in one market, I bought a huge frozen pack and took it back to the hotel to boil it in hot water as my night snack.

While the crab is not cheap in Hokkaido, it is considerably less expensive than eating it anywhere else, being flown in and delivered to fine restaurants in the world. Just a week or so ago, I was in Myanmar’s Bay of Bengal having the time of my life eating King Prawn. It seems appropriate, though a little decadent, that now I am in Hokkaido eating King Crab to my heart’s delight.

Having spent three days outdoors in the cold to observe and photograph cranes, and with another winter expedition to the plateau coming up next week, it seems a good excuse to indulge in some fine food as a reward. My cravings - to observe the cranes and eat the crabs - were finally quenched, at least until next winter when I may visit here again.
TWO ANCIENT CAPITALS – 30 YEARS BEFORE AND AFTER
Within a week, I had visited Xian in China, then Kyoto in Japan, both ancient capitals dating back more than a thousand years. Kyoto used as a prototype of its design the Tang Dynasty’s Chang’an - today’s Xian. In the beginning, the rectangular walled city of Kyoto was almost an exact replica of Chang’an in geomancy, though only one-third the size.

Before the 7th Century, the Japanese looked to China as their model, in art, culture, architecture, scholarship, religion and even government administration. Kanji, the traditional Japanese writing, was borrowed from Chinese characters, and became the prerequisite study by scholars, and a threshold for anyone aspiring to become literate.

I am not a student of history, and cannot compare the two cities from over a millennium ago. But neither was I a stranger to these cities. More than 30 years ago, I visited both Xian and Kyoto during my days as a journalist. In Xian, I visited the terracotta army before it was officially opened to public in 1979. In Kyoto, I studied the Minka thatch-roofed farm houses and published an illustrated article in the Architectural Digest. Another feature for the same magazine covered the Kyoto private garden of Konosuke Matsushita, the founder of National/Panasonic.

Fate had me visiting both these cities in the same week. Xian had gone through a complete facelift and little of the old city can be identified. Even remnants of the old city wall and its gates became choke points of the dense traffic of cars and buses. Bicycles are no longer popular, replaced by motorcycles and electric-cycles. The tranquility which was once the ancient capital’s main attraction has been shattered.

During the epoch of the Tang Dynasty, famed poet Li Po, also known as Li Bai, captured the capital’s dynamics and excesses with its many hostels, brothels and bars. These were operated mainly by women of Middle Eastern ancestry. One of the earliest mosques in China is also found in Xian, as Islam arrived about the same time during the Tang Dynasty. Xian then boasted a large body of more than 10,000 foreign students, arriving from distant lands to learn arts and sciences from this world metropolis. Today’s students are in hot pursuit of capital gains in this former capital, money-making being their near-uniform goal upon graduation.

The bars, hostels, and brothels pretending to be proper massage parlors are still prevalent, multiplying by leaps and bounds. The decadence of a newly-made wealthy class are seen everywhere. Those driving, or being chauffeured, in the most expensive cars are likely the risk takers who hit the jackpot. Often such individuals are uneducated, or under-educated, willing to take more marginal and higher risks for higher returns. Educated and cultured people generally prefer a safer and more gradual rise to success.

Those who succeeded through professional skills are distinctly divided from those who succeeded through more shady occupations. The fashion in which these two groups spend their money and conduct their leisure time reflects their respective backgrounds and choices. A wealthy person without culture and education can be considered a poor person. This is particularly true in today’s China, especially in Xian.

Kyoto, on the other hand, has many young and even older people riding around on bicycles. Though this is winter, they are still out and about with their pedal power. Conservation is a high priority for a nation with little natural resources. Throughout the city’s backstreets, one can find remains of old buildings, temples and gardens. Even traditional handicrafts and workshops still enjoy active support in society, in evidence on a stroll through Nishiki market in the heart of town. Even a stationery shop selling today’s paper and pen had in its display window antique writing, printing and measuring instruments.
Artisan works command premium prices compared to those stamped out by modern machines. The many bookstores that take up prime locations in Kyoto also speak volumes about the Japanese who hold knowledge and culture in the highest esteem. It is not unusual to see groups of women clad in elegant kimonos in the streets of Kyoto. In Xian or other Chinese cities, ladies dressed in Mao outfits or nightclub hostesses. It is no coincidence that bookstores in Japan feature authors, a doctor and a newspaper publisher, rather than politicians or revolutionary heroes as in Communist countries.

China and Japan may be a good match in being nationalistic. But Japan also knows how to value foreign artistic treasures. It may be interesting to note that the Nippon Music Foundation owns at least 19 Stradivarius violins and cellos which are available for loan to elite artists, with many Strads in private hands. In China, however, there are none within the public domain and probably none owned privately, despite having the world’s largest foreign-currency reserves and many newly minted millionaires. Were the Chinese to know the Strads are of investment grade, they would certainly take a bet and speculate on them. The other irony is that if one checks online, there are many cheap “made-in-China Strads” listed for sale.

I am no admirer of Japan’s military and expansionist past. I even saw in Kyoto an antique print shop openly displaying large prints depicting the Japanese army fighting the Manchu forces in China. But overall Japanese respect history (with the exception of its recent war history), and culture is of essential importance to its national identity. In Kyoto, as in other Japanese cities, conservation and preservation are rather understated as a matter of course. In China, however, it needs to be a high-profile overstatement if any attention is to be drawn to the issue.

At the Big Gander Monastery of Xian, the Tang Dynasty pilgrim monk Xuan Zang spent years transcribing Buddhist sutras he brought back from India. Similarly, the Nanzen-ji Temple at the foothill of Kyoto also had early sutras transcribed. The early history of these two capitals shared many common traditions and heritage. Today, Xian perhaps can take a lesson from Kyoto in preserving and reviving its traditional culture. But as with many things in life, the clock cannot be turned back.

Through arrangement by a Japanese friend, I visited the most famous traditional Japanese Inn in Kyoto, the Hiiragiya Ryokan, a mere two blocks from my inn. The owner Akemi Nishimura showed me the different rooms in which many celebrities had stayed. Even Charlie Chaplin came twice, with a second visit when he brought along his new wife. The inn took its name from the holly leaves, hiiragi in Japanese. It was started by Akemi’s family in 1818 and has been in the hospitality business since. Their utmost care and attention to detail is legendary. Even modern amenities, like a television or a phone, are carefully disguised with a piece of traditional fabric.

As Akemi told me, many of her 45 employees have been with the inn for a long time. Recently the oldest staff passed away after more than 50 years of dedicated service. Now Hiroko is the oldest, having served for almost 50 years. I asked to meet her, and out came an old lady in kimono. When I asked her age, she modestly declined to answer. Seeing a clock at the entrance with the animal zodiac on it, I changed my question and asked what sign she was born under. She meekly answered Chicken. I flattered her, saying I am no admirer of Japan’s military and expansionist past. I even saw in Kyoto an antique print shop openly displaying large prints depicting the Japanese army fighting the Manchu forces in China. But overall Japanese respect history (with the exception of its recent war history), and culture is of essential importance to its national identity. In Kyoto, as in other Japanese cities, conservation and preservation are rather understated as a matter of course. In China, however, it needs to be a high-profile overstatement if any attention is to be drawn to the issue.

At the Big Gander Monastery of Xian, the Tang Dynasty pilgrim monk Xuan Zang spent years transcribing Buddhist sutras he brought back from India. Similarly, the Nanzen-ji Temple at the foothill of Kyoto also had early sutras transcribed. The early history of these two capitals shared many common traditions and heritage. Today, Xian perhaps can take a lesson from Kyoto in preserving and reviving its traditional culture. But as with many things in life, the clock cannot be turned back.

Through arrangement by a Japanese friend, I visited the most famous traditional Japanese Inn in Kyoto, the Hiiragiya Ryokan, a mere two blocks from my inn. The owner Akemi Nishimura showed me the different rooms in which many celebrities had stayed. Even Charlie Chaplin came twice, with a second visit when he brought along his new wife. The inn took its name from the holly leaves, hiiragi in Japanese. It was started by Akemi’s family in 1818 and has been in the hospitality business since. Their utmost care and attention to detail is legendary. Even modern amenities, like a television or a phone, are carefully disguised with a piece of traditional fabric.

As Akemi told me, many of her 45 employees have been with the inn for a long time. Recently the oldest staff passed away after more than 50 years of dedicated service. Now Hiroko is the oldest, having served for almost 50 years. I asked to meet her, and out came an old lady in kimono. When I asked her age, she modestly declined to answer. Seeing a clock at the entrance with the animal zodiac on it, I changed my question and asked what sign she was born under. She meekly answered Chicken. I flattered her, saying she must be eight years younger than myself, though I figure she must have been born in 1933.

The most famous celebrity to have stayed at the Hiiragiya was Yasunari Kawabata. The Nobel Prize winner in Literature was said to have written some of his most important works here at the inn. It is certainly a luxury to be writing at such a serene and tranquil place. The Japanese Laureate also wrote words of praise about the Hiiragiya Ryokan. Like a composer who is prolific with musical notes, Kawabata was endowed with affluence in words.

These days, the serenity that inspired him comes at a price. It costs more than US$700 a night double occupancy to book into the small suite, Room 14, where Kawabata used to stay, facing a tiny garden. Kawabata particularly liked the place when the holly leaves changed color in late autumn, or during the early summer rainy season. Those are high season when prices rise even higher, if one can book a room at all. Kawabata committed suicide within four years of receiving his prize. Had he continued to stay at the Hiiragiya, his prize money would have been depleted rather quickly, given writing is a time-consuming vocation.

My visit at the Hiiragiya was necessarily short, short enough just to view a few select rooms and interview proprietress Akkemi Nishinura. But it nonetheless inspired me to write the preface of a new book. If the spirit of Kawabata is with me, it may reflect a romantic mood, though with a touch of sadness for times past, like his award-winning story “Thousand Cranes”. I expect no prizes for my book, though, nor contemplate experiencing mental exhaustion that would drive me towards my own demise.
I t has been hot and muggy all day and now it is raining. Two of the collection groups are still out in the field. Encountering muddy, narrow paths, pigs, dogs, and dark smoky homes, the teams are knocking on doors to meet the inhabitants of the remote tropical Li village surrounding me. They hope to return with artifacts, saved from being discarded. They will return with insights into a world very different from their own.

The group from Wisconsin arrived on Hainan Island in early August 2009. The drive from the airport was half modern expressway and half a winding concrete road rising slowly through the mountains, twisting and turning past vistas of limestone rocks and a blue sea. Traveling in a CERS Land Rover, I joined How Man, Berry and Xavier and slowly followed the road. To replace the dirt floors and concrete and rock paths and steps throughout. The colored cement emulates the clay soil and the embedded rocks make the CERS area clean with a natural aesthetic. Traditional Li houses have thatched bamboo roofs supported by tree trunks, walls made with knotted bamboo strips coated with mud and compacted dirt floors. Air circulates through the horizontal gap left between the roof and walls.

The process of collecting artifacts required a trip though twisted narrow paths between interlocking houses. Teams were organized into three groups with one Chinese speaker in each group. Every group had an assigned area of 30 houses to visit in the process. The students were invaluable during the Hainan Island project. They worked collaboratively, learned new skills and were not afraid of hard labor, showing flexibility and tenacity throughout the process.

The students were impressioned with what they accomplished and I hope to have them return. The students were invaluable during the Hainan Island project. They worked collaboratively, learned new skills and were not afraid of hard labor, showing flexibility and tenacity throughout the process.
About 10 years ago, I made a trip to Guangzhou to visit a few old friends whom I had met in the 1970s and ’80s. I had lunch with Wu Tianfu, a retired senior cadre who was my government-assigned fixer during my days with the National Geographic. Between 1984 and 1985, Wu accompanied me on two extraordinary expeditions, one covering the Islamic frontiers of western China, and the other following the Yangtze from mouth to source. Over those two lengthy journeys, we became close friends. I always felt privileged as Wu had accompanied Ho Chi Minh many times, and was also Che Guevara’s escort in China.

During lunch, we chatted about the old days before going to his home for tea. At one point, Wu took an old book from his closet and opened to a page where he had a little folded paper acting as a bookmark. Carefully he unfolded the paper. Inside were six small stamps. He handed them to me, saying, “This is for you as a souvenir”. I was taken aback as I am no stamp collector. Each stamp had the design of a pagoda on it, but they were different colors — red, yellow, blue, purple and green. The sixth one was also green, but with red rubber-stamped ink on it, changing the original one-yuan value to 30 yuan.

“I have kept these stamps for many years and never thought much of it, but now they have become very valuable,” Wu said. These postage stamps were printed and circulated in China’s northwest region, within the areas controlled by the communists before they came to power in 1949. In Communist jargon, those areas were known as the “liberated” region. The pagoda was the Tang Dynasty structure which stood out against the hills of Yan’an, home to the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1935 to 1947. Chairman Mao lived in and around Yan’an for more than 10 years, before he led his winning army into Beijing and founded the People’s Republic of China. The pagoda subsequently became an icon for the consolidation of the Communist Party movement in China.

My friend Wu left Singapore as a teenager, went through Vietnam, Chongqing and Xian, before arriving at Yan’an to join the anti-Japanese 8th Route Army in 1940. Since then, he had worked within the inner circle of the Communist Party, though in a low-key fashion. I used to hear him whisper stories of the top brass of the Central Government, almost always positive, about days in Yan’an as well as after the government moved to Beijing. These stamps were one of the mementos of his years in Yan’an. Later I was to learn these modest looking hand-cut stamps, my gift from Wu, actually graced the cover of several Chinese stamp books I saw in bookstores.

Two other friends also hailed from the early days of Yan’an, considered the sacred site of the Chinese Communist movement, and a threshold which catapulted them to power. Wang Jingbo, former governor of Qinghai Province, was crucial in facilitating my trip to the source of the Yangtze in 1985. Back in Yan’an days, he was the first county chief of Yan’an and named as a model chief. Another close friend, Ye Wobo, was Chief of Granary, and anything food related, during those very trying and turbulent years.

Now I stood before the real pagoda. I am in Yan’an, 40 years after developing a keen interest in Chinese communist history while studying in America. I had visited Mao’s childhood home in Hunan in 1977, and his private study and home inside Zhongnanhai in Beijing in 1986. But here in Yan’an was his modest abode during his years of struggle, inside grottos of the loess hills. During the 1940s, Mao was
in his late 40s to 50s. That period could perhaps be considered Mao’s “Mid-life Crisis”, a political crisis out of which he became the acclaimed and undisputed leader of China’s Communist Party.

I paced the small but spotless rooms which Mao used during his time in Yan’an. Nearby were those used by General Zhu De and Zhou Enlai. Just one terrace below were those grottos used by Liu Shouqi, General Peng Dehuai and Renbishi. My guide told me that Mao was somewhat superstitious. He believed that Yan’an - meaning “Extended Safety” - would be a tranquil place for the retreating Red Army after its historical Long March. The longer he stayed there, the more safe the party would become. Likewise, superstitious locals believe the fate of those living one terrace below China’s future leaders was less fortunate. They either died young or were trampled during the subsequent ruthless political struggles of the Cultural Revolution.

One room where Renbishi lived had pictures depicting the young revolutionary’s early years in Yan’an. He died in 1950 soon after the victorious Red Army entered Beijing. A picture of his funeral was the only one I ever saw of a grim and sad-faced Mao with his hand opened, as if at a loss. He was always portrayed as vibrant and purposeful in all propaganda images. A sad Zhu De also stood to the side of Renbishi’s raised coffin.

All veterans of the Long March ended up in Yan’an. Almost all were to become future leaders of the country, Deng Xiaoping included. Some were less fortunate during the Cultural Revolution and met their demise in disgrace and died in despair. But during the formative years of Yan’an, they were all comrades in arms, surviving several political struggles. Later years of political struggles were even more brutal, dividing the party into factions and fragmenting the unity of their earlier days.

To commemorate the importance of Yan’an, the Central Government recently allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to construct a museum there, to portray the Communist Party’s evolution from its formative years to adulthood. That history and tradition, a modest and humble beginning compared to today’s excessive and decadent lifestyle, has become a site of education for party members from all over the country.

Recently the Central Committee designated Xi Jinping the next most-likely General Secretary. His family hailed from Shaanxi Province and his father Xi Zhongxun was elected as the first Chairman of the successful Northwest Region Soviet in 1934. That was a year before Mao arrived in Yan’an and used this place as the stronghold of the country’s Communist movement, a place that also confirmed Mao’s place in China and in history.

As a geographer and an amateur student of contemporary Chinese history, I cannot help but ponder the situation of old Yan’an during the 1930s to 1940s. Weakened by the Long March, the Red Army settled in Yan’an, despite the fact a huge and well-equipped army from Manchuria was stationed nearby in Xian. I can only imagine that there must have been some prior-agreed truce or unwritten pact between the Communists and the young Marshall Zhang Xueliang at Xian.

The Xian incident took place in 1937 when Zhang kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek and forced the Kuomintang to join the Communists in fighting against the Japanese. This dramatic episode could only have played out so successfully if it had been a sequel to a previous secret pact.

In later years, when he was confined to house arrest in Taiwan, Zhou Enlai indicated several times his concern and thoughts for Marshall Zhang. Such long memories could hardly be due to only the Xian incident. It would make more sense if the deep friendship was extended as a result of a crucial time in history when the survival of the Communists was on the line, and depended on a mutual understanding with Marshall Zhang.

In 1936, when the Communists had barely had a chance to catch their breath, Mao wrote his now famous poem which compared himself to the Han and Tang Emperors, as well as mocking Genghiz Khan. It is understandable why he would keep this rather boastful poem private at the time. It was not until nine years later, after the Japanese were defeated and the Communists were on their way to taking over the entire country, that he finally let this poem see the light of day, Yan’an, where he wrote this poem, was indeed the cradle for the Communists’ rise to power.
I is a sunny spring afternoon and I have just returned to my hotel after attending the opening of the Beijing Automobile Show. Though today the event is open only to the press, the cars flocking to the Exhibit Center clog up traffic to the nearby Capital Airport. There is no reason to doubt the claim that China surpassed the US as the world’s number one car - producing country in 2009, ahead of all predictions.

I quietly eat lunch alone, in this secluded courtyard house in the heart of Beijing. There is no one else around, so I can contemplate peacefully. My two quiet companions seated in the same courtyard are a pair of life-size statues of Sun Yat Sen and Lu Xun. With these historical figures in my midst, my mind naturally turns to the past, to 30 years ago.

In 1979, as a young journalist, I visited several manufacturing plants in China. Of significance and most relevant was Yongjiu (‘Forever’) Bicycle Factory, one of two leading brands of bicycles in China. At the time, a bicycle was the most sought-after luxury for all Chinese. The average Chinese made about 40 to 50 yuan a month, and a bicycle cost 160 yuan, a hefty sum then. Even the purchase of a bicycle required a coveted special permit. Almost everything was rationed, from rice to cloth, from milk to gasoline. I traveled with a pocketful of rice coupons which I needed to produce when buying a meal at the few government-run canteens and restaurants. Private restaurants were unheard of.

In those days, no car was privately owned so cars were of little relevance to the average Chinese. But as a matter of personal interest, I had visited the Beijing Number One Auto Factory, which made the Beijing Jeep by hand. Later in Shanghai, I also visited the manufacturing plant which turned out the Shanghai Brand sedan, a model with the retro-looking design of the 1950s, including a touch of art deco inside.

Fast-forward 31 years, and today Yongjiu bicycle is a relic of the past. Instead, the retro-looking design of the 1950s, including a touch of art deco inside.

Then, motor-tricycles for passengers were prevalent even in the largest cities as the choicest, and sometimes only, transportation means. Now I see many home-grown vehicle-conversion companies showing off their own editions of stretched or armored limousines at the Auto Show. It is as if Hollywood’s star-studded Sunset Boulevard has been reincarnated in the Chang An Street along Tian An Men Square, vying for admiring common folks’ attention.

By the mid-1980s, on my geographical expeditions, I imported off-road vehicles with spotlights, roof-racks, power winches and fat mud-tires. They were looked upon as novelty and often a crowd gathered wherever we stopped. By the early 1990s, our Land Rover Defenders grabbed attention as people stared in awe at our “tough” looking monsters. These 4x4 vehicles, however, performed their best guelling and best act when no one was looking, in the remotest parts of the country.

Then, motor-tricycles for passengers were prevalent even in the largest cities as the choicest, and sometimes only, transportation means. Now I see many home-grown vehicle-conversion companies showing off their own editions of stretched or armored limousines at the Auto Show. It is as if Hollywood’s star-studded Sunset Boulevard has been reincarnated in the Chang An Street along Tian An Men Square, vying for admiring common folks’ attention.

By the mid-1980s, on my geographical expeditions, I imported off-road vehicles with spotlights, roof-racks, power winches and fat mud-tires. They were looked upon as novelty and often a crowd gathered wherever we stopped. By the early 1990s, our Land Rover Defenders grabbed attention as people stared in awe at our “tough” looking monsters. These 4x4 vehicles, however, performed their best guelling and best act when no one was looking, in the remotest parts of the country.

It was a succession of these Land Rovers which delivered the CERS team to the most forward bases within manageable range of the sources of the Yangtze, the Mekong, and the Yellow River. Above all, they took us back safely. Four of my original Land Rovers are still in service today, a testament to these imported cars’ durability. Back then, if they needed repairs, we had to haul our own parts through a customs and bureaucratic maze. Today, Land Rover is well positioned in the China market and we can fly parts into any part of the country if needed.

China has become both a car-manufacturing and marketing powerhouse. Even home-grown brands like Geely which started 13 years ago making small low-cost cars suddenly joined the big leagues with the recent purchase of Sweden’s Volvo, which Ford had owned for a number of years. Some foreign press had referred to this as “a snake swallowing an elephant”. There were questions about whether this gobbling act would cause Geely indigestion. But its Chairman Li Shufu, an entrepreneur, looked rather gleeful when he took control of the brand which has long been respected for its safety features and sturdiness. Whether this acquisition would bring much-needed technology and quality upgrades to Geely’s stable of small cars, or tarnish Volvo’s reputation, has yet to be seen.

One thing is certain: China’s car industry is cash-rich with locals’ newfound appetite for cars while foreign brands are struggling to survive.

Near my host Land Rover’s exhibit of its latest models, I caught glimpses of other famous and not-so-famous brands. The crowd of reporters and journalists rushing to glimpse any new car release shows trading in cars is gravitating, from the West to the East. Some of the world’s most valued brands are using this show for the global launch of their new models, an honor China could not have dreamt possible just a few years ago. Even concept cars, prototypes to illustrate future directions, make their debut in Beijing. The Beijing Auto Show is one way China’s car industry is not only by car, but in the fast lane.
CERS IN THE FIELD

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Surviving Mongolian winter; Zhang Fan at Sacred Yan’an; Chris filming Wild Yak; Xavier & How Man on the Irrawaddy; CERS team orange in Myanmar; Breakfast cruise on the Irrawaddy.

NEWS NEWS NEWS

CERS IN THE MEDIA

- CERS launched a newly designed website, providing more information and background about the Society. Please visit www.cers.org.hk.
- In conjunction with Land Rover UK, How Man delivered a lecture regarding the discovery of the Yangtze, Mekong and Yellow River sources at the Royal Geographical Society in London. Martin Ruzek joined How Man in explaining the remote sensing technology used in defining and measuring these sources.
- Five Black-necked Cranes captured during the last two winters are now carrying satellite tracking devices. They all arrived safely at the summer nesting ground in western Sichuan Tibetan region bordering Bayu and Xinlong Counties.
- Wong How Man received an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from his alma mater at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls.
- CERS hosted speleologists visiting Yunnan from Slovenia. The relationship between the two countries in caving has gone back over fifteen years.
- CERS provided funding support to the Arjin Mountain Nature Reserve for 2010 and signed another MOU with the Reserve in support of their wildlife research for three years from 2011 to 2013.
- Several CERS friends and supporters visited Myanmar and our partner’s Burmese Cattery and Café at Inle Lake. They are Wellington Yee, Derrick Quek, Kuok Hui Kwong and Eufung Hwang.
- While in the US recently How Man visited with Peter Goutiere, Bill Maher and Moon Chin, all Hump pilot friends of CERS.
- CERS provided our annual lecture in conjunction with the Royal Geographical Society Hong Kong Chapter. The topic was on “Exploring Burma”. A short film was also shown during that evening.
- Several CERS supporters and guests visited the Burmese Cat project site at Inle Lake of Myanmar. They are Wellington Yee, Derrick Quek, Hui Kuok and Eufung Hwang.
- A CERS summer expedition was launched to western Sichuan, Xinjiang’s Arjin Mountain Nature Reserve, and northern Tibet’s Changtang region.
- CERS launched a newly designed website, providing more information and background about the Society. Please visit www.cers.org.hk.

UPPER: Richard Bangs and How Man during filming. LOWER: CERS with three articles in CNG anniversary issue.

CERS IN THE MEDIA

- PBS Channel in the US aired a program on Hong Kong which included an interview with How Man by producer Richard Bangs.
- Chinese National Geography published an article “Bridge by God – Gaoligongshan” authored by Zhang Fan.
- Two reports were published by CERS caving team on their exploration of caves in Panzihua region of southern Sichuan.
- Two articles were published in the Chinese magazine “Car and People” about CERS caving activities.
- Rhythm Magazine published two articles by How Man, one about the upper Irrawaddy River and the other about the offshore islands in southern Myanmar.
CURRENT PATRONS

Hong Kong
- Gigi Arnoux
- Kevin Chau
- Kevin Ching
- James Chen
- William E. Connor
- William Fung
- Hans Michael Jebsen
- Christabel & Ricky Lau
- Sammy & Wendy Lee
- Anish Lalvani
- Audrey Lo
- David Mong
- Daniel Ng
- Albert Ngan
- Patrick Ma
- Danny & Eva Patterson
- Stephen Suen
- Hamilton Tang
- James & Mary Tien
- Nissim Tse
- Patrick Wang
- Dora Wu
- Marjorie Yang
- Sonny Yau
- Wellington & Virginia Yee
- Billy Yung

Overseas
- Ingrid Ehrenberg & Joe Chan
- Eric Chen
- Scott & Signe Cook
- Judith-Ann Corrente
- Ester Goelkel
- Joel Horowitz
- Barry Lam
- Lady McNeice
- Arvind Narula
- Derrick Quek
- Oliver Silsby
- Don Conlan

Corporate
- City Developments Limited
- Cathay Pacific Airways
- Coca-Cola
- Dragonair
- Eu Yan Sang Int’l Ltd
- Land Rover
- Omega
- Sampo Group

A subscription to this newsletter is US$100 for three issues.
All proceeds support CERS projects.
Please contact us directly if you are interested in signing up.
See the bottom of page two for contact details.

CERS’ MISSION:
The mission of CERS is to EXPLORE remote regions of China, conduct multi-disciplinary RESEARCH, CONSERVE nature and culture, and EDUCATE through dissemination of results in popular channels.

The production of China Explorers is made possible through the generous contributions of Toppan Vite Limited.