



Power Point slide commentary (also located in the notes portion of the Power Point) to accompany, “China: The enigma and the mystery, the truth and the lies” by Lallon Pond.

SLIDE 1: meant to engage the audience.

SLIDE 2:

COMMENTS:

While China is certainly mysterious and an enigma to any Westerner trying to truly understand a culture and a people with nearly 6000 years of history, and of course I don't know what is truth and what are lies when it comes to China. But I did leave with a very different perception than I took with me. This is an exploration of how those changes came to be and is meant to be a starting place to begin a more in-depth examination of China; its history and its culture.

SLIDE 3: I will also discuss my interpretation of this poem.

COMMENTS:

This was the opening of the lecture by Dr. Gao Yanli, an associate professor of History at Peking University on Chinese Understanding of Chinese History – she was excellent.

SLIDE 4:

COMMENTS:

All of these are true and false.

- There are certainly a LOT of people in China, and you are never unaware of that. People and cars are everywhere. Traffic is always busy, but while the Chinese look Asian as opposed to the common “Western” characteristics Americans are used to, they don't all look alike. Ethnic minorities can be distinguished, Northern and Southern Chinese have different characteristics, BUT Westerners look different. We are outsiders, barbarians, the others. Professor Ge Jianxiong from Fudan University in Shanghai explained it this way. In ancient China, the two characters for China meant “everything under heaven” and the Chinese were the masters of the land under heaven. People in remote areas were not Chinese and therefore were barely considered people. This was not a problem for nearly 2000 years as there was little to no contact with the world outside China. It wasn't until the 9th century that Arabian troops defeated Tang troops, then marched into China and were defeated by Tibetan troops. The strong militaries that ruled China were assimilated into Chinese culture and, thus, “became” Chinese, e.g. the Mongols, the Manchurians, the Tibetans. According to Professor Ge Jianxiong, since the 1911 revolution, most Manchurians changed their nationality to Chinese and since the government started recognizing minorities, many have gone back to their original minority from a previous Han/Chinese identity (Professor Ge Jianxiong).
- Some places they stare, many they don't; we are rather insignificant most of the time in high tourist areas. Of course, the more rural, the more likely to be stared at. I found teenagers love to have their pictures taken with foreigners and are

almost always willing to pose for a picture. And the Chinese I came in contact with loved to have their children photographed while elders did not like to be photographed for the most part.

- And indeed, you WILL get lost if you don't take your address in Chinese characters and while signs are now written in English letters for tourists, you will still get lost if you don't get help from the Chinese, who for the most part, are happy to help, IF you can find some common language.
- Our China scholar, Dr. Craig Canning, explained that while the Communist government is a centralized, authoritarian government, it is a weak central government. During imperial rule, the lowest government level ruled ~150,000-300,000 people and the notion of "the sky is high and the emperor is far away" developed. This notion is still strongly held by many Chinese with regard to the government.
- One of the most interesting aspects of our trip was lack of censorship we found. We were able to ask virtually any question we wanted to, although we never had time to ask all the questions we had. During our visit at *China Daily*, the largest daily newspaper in English on the mainland, we asked about censorship. The Deputy Editor-in-Chief Huang Qing told us there was some censorship for all papers, that most papers practiced self-censorship and were pretty clear on what was allowed and what was not. She gave the example that things were improving as at the beginning, *China Daily* could not report on natural disasters, which is no longer the case. There has been huge progress overall, but journalists would like it to be better.
- Professor Ni Shixiong of Fudan University in Shanghai reiterated several times in his lecture on Contemporary Foreign Policy that the core and key to China's foreign policy was to take a lead role in a peaceful race for development; a race by peace, for peace, in peace. China needs a peaceful environment and want to bring peace by using peace which will lead to peace for China and the whole world. While this seems disingenuous to a Western eye, understanding that harmonious relationships are at the core of Chinese culture gives it more credibility.

All of these questions and more will be discussed.

SLIDE 5:

COMMENTS:

I had actually traveled to China previously and so knew the experience of being in China, feeling overwhelmed by the differentness of China, and truly being stared at during that trip. I was, however, traveling in a group of three women, one of whom was close to 6 feet with red hair and green eyes – yes, we attracted quite a bit of attention. But I also spent my time visiting orphanages on that trip and while I loved my travels and loved the people of China, I still did not have a very complete picture of the country. Thus, with this second trip I took a double set of biases and not a lot of information about China and its history and culture with me – that was about to change.

SLIDE 6:

COMMENTS:

However, before we look at the changes that took place while in China, let's take a quick look at very recent headlines and stories about China. These headlines, for me, say

- China makes up silly rules, what a silly government
- It is dangerous to be a dissident in China and to voice dissent
- China is growing and will take over the world
- China and India as rivals gives the US hope that their rivalry will allow us to stay the most powerful nation on earth.
- What do these headlines make you think?

SLIDE 7:

COMMENTS:

And again, these brief summaries of larger stories, give Westerners a view of China that makes it look like an enemy.

SLIDE 8:

COMMENTS:

The ten propositions re. China were formulated and presented to our group by Dr. Craig Canning, who has an extensive scholarly background in China as well as many extended stays on the mainland beginning in the 1980's. He returns frequently and is, in fact, on the mainland now teaching at a Chinese University.

1. China is too old, too diverse, too insular to completely understand.  
Contradictions are numerous; official policies on ethnic minorities appear to favor minorities and minorities are celebrated in museums for their festivals and ethnic dress and are allowed to have more than one child, BUT I believe most authorities would say that ethnic minorities are in danger of being swallowed up by the Han Chinese majority who, as I stated before, consider themselves the "true" Chinese, the inhabitants of the middle kingdom. The Han make up ~92% of the Chinese populations with 55 other minorities making up the other 8%. China is undergoing rapid, broad-ranging change in how people live and work together and apart. Construction of high rises are EVERYWHERE, and people are moving from the hutong neighborhoods of Beijing into high-rise neighborhoods, and this is happening across the country. There are great economic and population density and development gaps between the eastern coastal regions and the less populated, much poorer western plains, BUT these differences are recognized and plans are in place to bring about more equity.
2. The Chinese diaspora is across the globe. Many Chinese, regardless of where they live, consider themselves first and foremost Chinese. This is especially true in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, Manila, throughout SE Asia, Australia; even in the Americas and Europe.
3. China, as a country, is at the same time disaggregating into more homogeneous regions, i.e., there is not just ONE China, but many different pieces that make up

China. There is the Core China and the Outer China. There is eastern China and western China. There is southern China and northern China. There is immense diversity.

4. While the CCP has pushed governmental levels to neighborhoods, the old adage “the sky is high and the emperor is far away” prevails. As mentioned with respect to the *China Daily*, the Chinese know the limits, and can either choose to adhere to them or not, although by and large the culture of the Chinese is to get along.
5. Dissidents give one picture of China, and there are many dissidents. Wei Jingsheng, who posted the fifth modernization, democracy, on the Democracy Wall in Beijing is in exile. Li Hongzhi, the founder of the Falun Gong (or Dafu) spiritual movement lives in New York. He was branded by the CCP as an evil charlatan (see <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/ppflg/t36564.htm> ) after a large group of his followers materialized outside party headquarters, to the party’s surprise. There is the farmer, the urban worker, the migrant worker (estimated to number at 150-200 million people), CCP members (~75 million), the entrepreneur (estimated at >50%), overseas Chinese, students, minorities and foreigners. Depending on your eyes and what you are looking at/for, you can see many different Chinas. Mine is but one picture.
6. Three Overs and One Link:  
GROUP>individual  
AGE>youth  
MALE>female

One link: GUANXI – the importance of connections and relationships in conducting business, being part of groups, in virtually every social enterprise you can think of, this notion of Guanxi is critical. And in spite of change, these still prevail.

Although the one child policy is making inroads into the links; group over individual (an only child can become more important than group), age over youth (only children can become overly doted upon) and sometimes even male over female (e.g., if your only child is female)

#### SLIDE 9:

#### COMMENTS:

7. In the 90’s many saw HK as China’s hope for the future. Since the handover, this is reversing. HK is dependent on China for its existence and the one country/two systems policy seems to be working well. Taiwan and China are also creating economic ties after opening up social ties. Both of these distinctly Chinese islands need the mainland to remain competitive. HK needs the electricity, water and other natural resources that the mainland provides. Taiwan needs more open economic ties to remain economically competitive in the world market. The Jamestown Foundation in May of this year published “Cross-Strait Matrix: The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement”, an examination of the ongoing negotiations around this complex issue between two former rivals.
8. The Chinese understand the problem and it came up as a topic of discussion in many of the lectures, but how to enforce new policies in a population that remains

nearly 50% agrarian and rural with practices dating back centuries is difficult. However, China's success, or lack of it, has global implications.

9. Dr. Tom Gold, a sociologist from Berkeley referred to this as "crossing the river by feeling for the stones", i.e., less concerned about Marxist ideology, they are looking for success regardless of what it's called and how it is realized. From the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, this term is interpreted as "Socialism with Chinese characteristics is something that combines the basic principles of scientific socialism with the facts of building socialism unique to China. Socialism is the common rule and essential feature of the practice, while Chinese characteristics are what the basic principles of socialism really embody in China." (<http://english.people.com.cn/90002/92169/92211/6275043.html> , accessed 10/27/2009). Basically, the Chinese are opening to the west again, after a Century of Humiliation that very much defines their interactions. They are allowing a socialist market economy to exist, while maintaining government control of some industries. What is most important is Chinese... this will be done the way the Chinese want it done regardless of what the rest of the world says. They will listen and learn, but the rest of the world will never be able to tell China what to do and how do to it. They will not fall victim to western invaders again.

10. My favorite of the propositions. China is a mystery and an enigma, but it is endlessly fascinating and you can spend a lifetime learning about it...

#### SLIDE 10:

##### COMMENTS:

- My picture of ancient China was really from David Carradine in the Kung Fu series. I now realize this was not even close to ancient, it was simply the look for the last Chinese empire. But it was this period that led to the success of Communism in China
- Opium became popular in China when the British, who were required to trade hard currency for tea, began using opium for trade. China became a nation of addicts, and Lin Zexu outlawed the use of opium (it was already outlawed in England). As a hardliner and invulnerable to bribery, Lin destroyed all stores of opium he could find and locked up addicts. The British retaliated, winning the war ending with
- The Treaty of Nanking, the terms of which were dictated by the British, opened China for plundering by the imperialist countries.

#### SLIDE 11:

##### COMMENTS:

- The treaties of Tianjin and the Peking Convention were the result of a second outbreak of hostilities as a result of an alleged illegal search by the Chinese of a British vessel, but more than likely were the result of increased Chinese hostility to western powers, and the Chinese creativity in circumventing the terms of the treaty. Again, technical superiority allowed the Western powers to defeat the Chinese. When the Qing Empire refused to allow diplomats to reside in Beijing, hostilities again began that ended with the Peking (or Beijing) Convention. At this point, the Chinese were viewed as stupid and backwards due to their lack of

- knowledge about the rest of the world. Of course, the Chinese believed they were the world.
- The Taiping Rebellion lasted over a decade and led to the death of nearly 30 million people. It started as a response to the unequal treaties just discussed, but was also a rebellion against being treated as guest people. According to Dr. Hsu, the Hakka had been aristocrats in Northern China but fled south when the barbarians invaded. During the Qing Dynasty, government office was no longer hereditary but earned by taking imperial exams. As a result the Hakka became impoverished and marginalized. They were considered guest people; they spoke a different dialect, did not bind feet and had a reputation for being haughty.
  - Hong Xuiquan was Hakka, failed the civil service exams four times and the last time he took the exams he overheard a Christian missionary. He then began having dreams and he believed he was the brother of Jesus and his mission was to establish the Heavenly Kingdom where all demon worshippers would be killed (including the ruling Qing dynasty Manchus). He advocated monogamy, equality between the sexes, leading a moral, pure life that excluded gambling and drug use, and no private property and the equal distribution of food. The rebellion was eventually crushed, but with great loss of life and increasing bitterness towards the empire.
  - The Boxer Rebellion was yet another attempt to expel foreigners. A group of martial artists who believed they had special powers, e.g., flight and impervious to bullets and swords, began rebellions in Northern China. Empress Dowager Cixi met with the Boxers, as they were known to Westerners, and supported their rebellion. A force of 20,000 troops from the eight countries being expelled put the rebellion down, which resulted in the Boxer Protocol
  - The Boxer Protocol, yet one more unequal treaty required the government to pay staggering indemnities while Chinese artifacts were looted
  - This flooring is taken from a lecture given by Dr. Yu Renqiu to our group at CEAIE in Beijing. Dr. Yu is a professor at SUNY-Purchase
  - For 1500 years, Japan had been a loyal ally to China; it was considered a little brother (remember the 3 overs and 1 link) and therefore had obligations to its big brother. However, Japan had been learning from the West and became aggressive, wanting to defeat China as a ploy against Western aggression. This was the most humiliating defeat China suffered. To be defeated by a little island country led to the fear of China becoming extinct and being colonized by Japan and the West. The war ended with the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

SLIDE 12:

COMMENTS:

- From Dr. Yu Renqiu's presentation referred to previously
- The Reform of 1898, in which the Chinese tried to enact reform based on perceived western strengths, e.g. modernizing the exam system, creating a modern education system, changing the military buildup to strengthen the military. It only lasted 100 days before the conservatives took over and the Chinese state fell into warlordism.

- During this time, however, the important concept of Ti/Yong arose; Ti meaning essence, i.e. Chinese identity and yong referring to the technology and science available from the West. According to Dr. Tom Gold (Sociologist, Berkeley, pre-departure orientation lecture), it's a question of finding a balance between maintaining the Chinese essence while becoming modern. The Chinese are still trying to find that balance (crossing the river feeling the stones). For example, how can the Internet be used for practical purposes without it overwhelming the essence of being Chinese? The primary question is how do we control who and what we are? This struggle is very much a product of the century of humiliation.
- In the Revolution of 1911, Sun Yat-Sen, the father of modern China, overthrew the imperial system, the first true revolution since 221 BCE (Dr. Yu Renqiu). It was a result of many factors.
- The Republic of China was formed in 1912 as a result, but the government was not strong enough to unite the country and it plunged into warlordism splintering the country
- The May 4th movement was a student protest in 1919 in Tiananmen Square against the Versailles Treaty, which had given the former German concession of Shandong to the Japanese as well as capitulating to Japanese demands in regard to China. The Chinese government was seen as weak, and this began a movement toward Chinese nationalism and rejection of imperialism and Chinese traditionalism, which the students blamed for China's weakness.
- The Northern Expedition: Sun Yat-sen was ready to join with the CCP and get aid from Russia when he died. This left Chiang Kai-shek in charge and the three (KMT, CCP and Russia) joined forces to defeat three notorious warlords in the north, even though Chiang was anti-communist. After the defeat of the warlords, China united tentatively.
- Manchurian Incident: Two Japanese soldiers blow up a portion of the Manchurian RR and blame it on the Chinese. As a result Japan sent troops and colonized Manchuria.
- KMT vs. CCP: The Kuomintang, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, saw the CCP as a greater evil than Japan. He nearly extinguishes the communists and the Long March ensues during which Mao becomes the leader of the CCP. Chiang wants to continue the fight but his military wants to pursue the Japanese, so the military kidnaps Chiang in Xi'an (an ancient capital city) and he is forced to cooperate with the CCP against the Japanese.

SLIDE 13:

COMMENTS:

- The Japanese went into full-scale war with China in 1937, and the war ended with the surrender of the Japanese in 1945. During this time numerous atrocities occurred. At the end of WWII, Chiang got most of the Japanese colonies returned and began fighting the communists.
- With the Japanese taken care of, Chiang set to destroy the Communists and was defeated in 1949 when he fled to Taiwan, where he ruled until his death in 1975.

SLIDE 14:

#### COMMENTS:

- During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Zheng He made eight voyages to Southeast Asia and as far as Africa (1405-1433). While China's prestige was heightened and its maritime power was respected, the government found it too expensive to maintain and ended the exploration.
- This led to the closing of the borders of China from the mid 15th century until near the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) in the 19th century. This, of course, led to a very insular culture, although one of great accomplishments, e.g. building of the Summer Palace, establishment of a literary compilation, economic and population growth, beginning of trade. But this also led to the century of humiliation.
- Dynastic cycles-This notion was introduced to the group by Tom Gold, the sociologist from Berkeley. It describes the process by which dynasties rise to their height under the "Mandate of Heaven", then lose the mandate and decline. Dan Usher in his article, "The Dynastic Cycle and the Stationary State" (The American Economic Review, Vol. 79, No. 5 (Dec., 1989), pp. 1031-1044) explains dynastic cycle as both moral and economic (p. 1033). Robert Marsh in his book, *The Mandarins: the circulation of elites in China, 1600-1900* (Ayer Publishing, 1980) describes the dynastic cycle on pp. 43-44. The cycle above paraphrases these.
- Thus, as the Qing dynasty is ending all of the above are occurring. In addition, the Communist period has been likened to a 100-year dynasty cycle (Gold)

#### SLIDE 15:

#### COMMENTS:

- In half of the lectures that I heard, this was clearly stated. From Confucianism and Taoism, harmony is the goal of the family, the village, the state, the empire, the country, the world.
- After the century of humiliation, the Chinese will never isolate themselves to the point they cannot defend their borders. They value the integrity of their borders, they want a united China and if it requires that some will not have human rights, so be it. Remembering the three overs and one link, many Chinese feel it is appropriate to sacrifice individual freedom for the harmony of the whole.
- But with westernization and global access to information, the desire for more freedom remains. It will be interesting to watch over time, and I hope to be able to return.