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Introducing some of our contributors, editors & designers

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One Man Can Change the World

Nanjing is hosting its sophomore Tech Week later this month. For an insight as to what to expect, look no further than the cover of this very publication.

Such leading-edge revolution need not always be high tech, however. Doniyell Marshall reports on how expat demand for a taste of home has brought about many an inventive business. See p. 14-17.

Elsewhere, we’re talking cave dwellers, as Triona Ryan asks, “Did China Teach the World to fail better?” See p. 10-13.

Finally, Chesna Goel brings us the tall tale that is the money-saving street lighting solution for the city of Chengdu. And it is indeed very very tall; see p. 18-19.

Welcome to “Innovation” from The Nanjinger.

Ed.
By Maitiu Bralligan '20

My father, missing his local, fashions a bar between his house and the house next door. Cutting the fence between them, he adds hinges, creating a platform secured with a chain: a meeting point between two old neighbours.

Such sparks of innovation spread across houses that might yet be turned back into homes; new skills are honed to repurpose jetsam we once prized, as we tried to buy our way out of our tedium. Now, though, we have time to create, time to breathe.

Now may we note value in what we have, not worth. Now may we bathe in the breath of a summer’s breeze. Now may we joy in a yellow-billed blackbird’s trill. Now may we, in the corner of a dusty, cluttered room find the child we once left far behind. A child that once watched white clouds skud through azure skies, skinned their knees, rolled down hills, ran through rain... and together we’ll look again at this tired earth, re-finding our ability to imagine, to create, to start the change. Or, like my dad, just find a new friend in an old next door stranger.
There is a common connotative warmth associated with the term innovation. In a culture that glorifies success and celebrates triumph over adversity, innovation is applauded, the flipside of Icarian plummets is less lauded. It may seem paradoxical, a fallacy, a downright lie, and yet, it is true: the spectacular fails of Humanity hold within them the seeds for ever greater wins. It’s all a process. Innovation is the love child of tenacity and vision. It is born of failure. It thrives on a diet of Plan A’s, B’s, all the way to Z’s.

Betamax. Crystal Pepsi. Samsung Galaxy 7: the road to innovation is paved with flops, fiascos and in the case of the Galaxy 7, explosions!
Mankind is endowed with a superpower that sets it head and shoulders above all the floral and faunal co-habitants of this planet – the power of imagination. We, as a species, are able to access knowledge frameworks built up over millennia to understand the world around us. Longevity of experience through communication of know-how and skills from one generation to the next allows humans to evolve over time to higher states of skillfulness, intellect and consciousness. We study history to learn from the past.

We don’t know if our forebears began to spin tales in the darkness to pass the velvet menace of night, what soft sounds became the first story. We don’t know if they sprang from the first finger painting on a cave wall, or handprint that resembled a pre-historic turkey. In Professor Brian Boyd’s On the Origin of Stories, (2010) his seminal salute to Darwin’s Origin of Species, he explores art as a specifically human adaptation, “our fondness for storytelling has sharpened social cognition, encouraged cooperation, and fostered creativity.”

Through myth and legend transmitted through the oral traditions of song and storytelling, by recording symbols on walls, skins, paper and now, on nebulous clouds in cyberspace, the human being, with his ability to see a thing and imagine it bigger, faster, cooler, is adept at changing the world to suit his needs. Over time, he has learned to sing, paint, draw, sculpt, manifest from the very ether a representation of reality, either actual or envisioned in the mind. “We are such stuff as dreams are made of.” The Bard. The Tempest.

Imagination allows us to envision a future different from that experienced in the present moment or remembered past. The house you live in, for example, is a far cry from the cave-dwelling or sapling lean-tos our ancestors occupied. Perhaps there were no more caves available when the first human prototyped a house. Maybe Ug, sick of the hollering of his herd of little-Ug’s, decided to improve his situation. Mastering his initial apprehension, he leaned two fallen trees against a third to keep the saber-toothed tigers at bay.

Perhaps they installed one of those swinging contraptions on widowed Mrs. Ug’s cave entrance, to protect her from the vagaries of the night, now that Ug had met his untimely end. Sometimes, innovation is a well-intentioned path to catastrophe, and others to a slight amelioration to the onslaught of life. The lessons learned by those who live to tell the tale lead to new and improved designs. Iteration is the key to success. The Galaxy 8 is a wonderful device, very non-explosive.

We no longer have access to these proto-myths, these first attempts at learning from our mistakes. In one sense, the first stories can be seen as reflections on life past, and cultural evolution as a result of imagining a better ending. Carl Jung says that they are still buried deep in our collective unconscious, subliminally informing our world-view.

Back at the proto-house fiasco, circa 5,000 BCE, Ulf spends a long time pondering the splintered saplings.
“What if Ug had like, built his tree cave over there, in the middle of that lake? Scary-Eaty-beasts can’t swim.”

The other cave dwellers snort, they call him crazy. Crazy Ulf. And yet, one of the earliest settlements in Ireland was found in 2004, in the middle of a lake in Longford. The remains of the crannóg settlement were dated to 5,220 BCE.

A crannóg is a wattle and daub hut atop a manmade island. Not only did Crazy Ulf build a house, he built an island on the lakebed, perhaps wading out while the cave-neighbors howled, holding their ribs from the hooting, or perhaps he hollowed out a large tree trunk and floated out there, causing one cave-neighbor to get the hiccups from laughing so much. Such is the nature of innovation. Many do not share the vision, at first.

The settlement in Longford contained a stone platform 12 meters in diameter, “overlaid with brushwood and the remains of three fireplaces - it is thought to date from the late megalithic period, which makes it older than the Loughcrew cairns or the pyramids of Egypt.” Once homo sapiens started prototyping structures, there was no limit to the shape, size and silliness of some dwellings. Diversity is the stamp of our breed.

Crazy Ulf’s descendants, and the ideas they added to their eccentric ancestor’s watery vision embody the spirit of trial and error. Some added walkways, connecting the crannógs to the mainland, others built neighboring crannógs, perhaps proto-guestrooms, or proto-man-caves, proto-art studios.

Home improvements in Longford, which were carried out 1,000 years after the original stone platform was laid, suggest “if not a previously unknown 1,000-year continual civilisation, then certainly some progression from hunter gatherers to farming settlers.” (Ibid)

Crazy Ulf was not alone in his innovative dwelling design brief. Trial and error in Mexico saw the Aztecs (1,100 CE) using chinampas, artificial islands made of staked plots in the lakebed filled with wattle and mud. Chinampas were used to grow food and accessed by canoe. Crazy Ulf’s Mesoamerican counterpart also endured the good-natured derision of his peers, and yet, in recent years chinampas have resurfaced as a solution to the crippling food supply issues of Mexico City, supplying healthy, organic food to the city’s residents.
The earliest traces of our cousin primates, *Homo erectus*, in East Asia have been found in China, dating back to 1.7 million years ago. Homo sapien artifacts from 25,000 BCE on the North China Plain, show evidence of fishing and hunting, as well as baubles of bone and shell. China’s protohumans did not build lakebed dwellings, that we know if, but that is by no means to say that they did not have their own Crazy Ulf’s to explode and exasperate and excite them.

Starting about 5000 BCE, mankind spread out along the Yellow River valley. Farming and fishing, raising pigs and dogs for food, growing millet and rice, early man lived the modern off-grid ideal lifestyle. Except for the dogs. Asian Ulf was perfecting his first attempt at gunpowder. Asian Ug was his guru (R.I.P).

Ceramic pots, fishhooks, knives, arrows and needles were found in The Yangshao settlement artifacts, (5000 to 2500 BCE). These farmers lived in dwellings which were partly below the surface, like skater bowls with roofs. Their pottery included designs which may have been symbols that later evolved into written language.

In 600 BCE, proto-farmers still scattered seed onto the fields randomly outside of Middle Earth. In China, farmers started to plant individual seeds in rows, “thus reducing seed loss and making crops grow faster and stronger. This technology was not used in the western world until 2200 years later”.

We played with fire, invented the wheel, planted wheat and became domesticated by its yield and on we bumble throughout History.

Stories viscerally allow us to try, to fail, to reflect.

Innovation compels us to release our inner Ulf, and try again.

‘To fail better. ’
Natalie Amezcua, an English teacher from Los Angeles, was not expecting a lot last August when she arrived in Nanjing looking for a taste of home.

Two years of living in Korea had taught her to temper her expectations. If she wanted to enjoy the Mexican dishes she delighted in eating growing up, she was going to have to make them herself.

“Because I’m not at home”, Amezcua said, laughing. “That’s just part of living out here. If I don’t bring it or have it mailed to me, my options are limited.”
Recently, however, Amezcuahas found salvation from an unlikely source: a woman in Suzhou who makes and sells tamales; a Mesoamerican delicacy made with masa (corn dough) and a filling of the tamalera’s (tamale maker’s) choosing. Steamed and wrapped in a banana leaf or corn husk, tamales are traditionally served during celebratory occasions. For Amezcua, the dish is inextricably linked to her memories of family gatherings at her aunt’s house, surrounded by delicious aromas and the laughter of her cousins. “Tamales are my Christmas food”, she beamed. “They’re my comfort food. When I eat them, it feels like home.”

Sophia Song is happy to provide the service. The 27-year-old Chinese native belongs to a community of individual food proprietors who cater to foreigners throughout China, delivering mostly around Jiangsu Province and as far as Inner Mongolia, to satisfy their culinary needs. “They look how they’re supposed to look, taste how they’re supposed to taste”, Amezcua said. “I think they’re pretty accurate.” When China opened up to Western markets in 1979, so too did the country’s appetite for exotic dining, expanding into a multibillion-dollar industry. But along the way, an undercurrent of enthusiasts with perhaps a stronger familiarity with the foreign palate have sought to correct the course where larger chain restaurants have failed. Faced with a middling selection of Western dining options outside of Beijing and Shanghai, entrepreneurs like Song have taken it upon themselves to serve the country’s foreign population with options that better emulate the culinary offerings as they were originally intended. “Eating at restaurants can be a very hollow experience”, said Emma Jardine, 29, an expat from Northern Ireland. “When you first taste it, you get a reminder of home. But then it stops. You’re waiting for this underlying richness of the food that never comes.”

While chain restaurants like McDonalds, KFC and Starbucks have successfully rebranded in China, they don’t always replicate the tastes foreigners are accustomed to back home. Even local Western restaurants less concerned with mass appeal struggle to satisfy their foreign clientele. A scarcity of far-flung ingredients, combined with a relative unfamiliarity with the cuisine, results in an underwhelming dining experience for customers with a predisposed expectation as to how a dish should taste. “The first time I tried making them was terrible”, said Song, who was introduced to tamales through a Mexican-American man she was dating at the time. “I used cornmeal instead of masa. I didn’t understand the difference. Then I found it on Taobao, and I began perfecting my recipe.”
Three years later, Song has yet to taste tamales other than her own. But she has attracted enough interest, advertising in expat groups on Facebook and WeChat, and relying on word of mouth, to turn her business into a viable source of income.

“It’s not a complicated recipe. But it’s a lot of work”, said Song, who enlists the help of an ayi during peak winter months. “She thinks it’s interesting because she had never seen that food before, but I don’t think she likes it that much.”

The foreign community is inclined to disagree. Viewed within the context of sterilised behemoths such as Blue Frog and Element Fresh, these individuals are easy enough to ignore. But to their customers, they hold outsized significance.

“There’s a guy for everything”, Amezcua said. From English breakfast sausages to pastries to cruelty-free beauty products, the availability of these items offers peace of mind in a country that can be difficult for outsiders to navigate.

“I used to have a list of things I needed from home that if anyone ended up visiting, I’d ask them to bring it for me”, Amezcua continued. “But I can get it all here now. I don’t have that list anymore.”

These individual food proprietors embody the thrilling sense of possibility that defines life as an expat living in China. For many foreigners, the barrier of entry to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours feels lower abroad than back home. With relative ease and without a formal business background, an involved hobby can quickly blossom into a money-making venture.

“In China, business is really kind of fluid”, said Felix Campbell, 31, an expat in Nanjing who prepares and distributes meat products under the WeChat moniker, “Home Cooked Meat Co.” “It feels more open, more possible. You can kind of go with the flow and do what you want, at least to an extent.”

Campbell’s rise follows a familiar trajectory: frustration over second-rate offerings inspires an enterprising desire to remedy the problem. Friends and coworkers respond positively to the solution; word of mouth builds to the point that other businesses take notice.

In April, Campbell went into business with the restaurant Real Bread Café, a popular lunch spot among Nanjing’s expat community. For Campbell, the partnership is a notable step toward legitimising the viability of his business.

“If they’re reaching out, that’s a good sign”, Campbell said. “It’s great that I have friends who support me and pass my name along.”

While Campbell has established himself as a trusted source for sausages, burgers and meatballs in Nanjing, he was quick to mention that he works at a modest scale. Nonetheless, he acknowledged, the appetite for his business is there.

“Food gets boring here very quickly”, Jardine said. “Anything you know you like, once you realise it’s available to you, you just get on it.”

“You got to snap it up as fast as you can”, Amezcua added.

For Campbell himself, he’s doing his best to take everything in his stride. The rate at which his business has grown is something he’s still processing.

“It’s so weird to think that I’m doing this”, Campbell said. “Even now, after all of these years, just being in China still feels odd. And now I’m a small business owner?”

He smiled.

“But it feels great,” he said. “I’m having a lot of fun with it.”
Campbell has established himself as a trusted source for sausages, burgers and meatballs.
All illustrate cutting edge innovation. But one idea really takes the biscuit: plans for an artificial moon for Chengdu, capital of China’s Sichuan Province.

Chengdu’s artificial moon is a satellite that will be launched into space to orbit above Chengdu and reflect the sun’s light at night onto the city to replace streetlights. According to officials, it will be able to shine eight times brighter than the moon and save huge sums of money.

The idea has been around for a while; China released plans for it back in October 2018. According to Wu Chungfeng, Chairman of Chengdu Aerospace Science and Technology Microelectronics System Research Institute, the moon would focus its reflected light only onto the city of Chengdu itself.

Such a concept of reflecting the sun’s light at night was inspired by a French artist who thought that if there was a necklace of mirrors above the earth it would reflect the sun’s light all year round in Paris. While the plan for this innovation is to save electricity and money it has both advantages and disadvantages.

As previously mentioned one of the main benefits of the artificial moon will be the money it saves. Since it replaces streetlights at night it is estimated to save $170 million a year which would have been otherwise used for electricity. It would also be reflecting the sun so if there was any emergency and a blackout happened, there would still be light. However, Mr. Wu did say that the fake moon’s light would only amount to a fifth that of streetlights.

There are also theories that the light would affect animals and their monthly rhythms and biological processes. John Barentine, Director of Public Policy at the International Dark-Sky Association, said, “This potentially creates significant new environmental problems with what, at first, seems like a novel approach to an already solved problem”.

All of the benefits or disadvantages of the fake moon cannot be 100 percent accurate, not until it is actually launched and its effects are analysed. However, the biggest question is whether or not Chengdu’s fake moon will be a success or will it fail?

China has often flourished where other countries have floundered. In 1994, Vladimir Syromyatnikov, a Russian engineer tried to launch an artificial moon for this purpose. The satellite was called Znamya which means “banner” in Russian and it did work, at least partially. Astronauts on the International Space Station could see it reflecting a beam of light towards earth. However, those on Earth in the beam’s path only saw it for a moment. The issue was that the satellite was moving at 7 km/s so it would only flash over any one spot on the ground for a second. Had wanted it to stay in place they would have had to put it 36,000 km above the earth, i.e. in geostationary orbit. According to Scottish physicist, Scott Manley, if China were to put it that high, a much bigger mirror would be needed: Russia’s had a diameter of 65 metres.

With little news released about the Chengdu artificial moon of late, the project may have missed its initial self-imposed deadline. The plan for the satellite was for it to be launched at some point in 2020 but an exact date was never given. It was also said that if it was successful, then China would launch three more by 2022.

Where there are plenty of ups and downs to the project, Chengdu’s authorities, the moon’s designers and the media at large seemed to have missed perhaps the singularly most important point. What if it’s cloudy?
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"Education at its best is a deep act of care"
Wang Ping (王苹) was PRC's first female film director and an ambassador for the communist movement's empowering of gender equality, utilising film as a propaganda art form that would see Wang reach her zenith with 1965's "The East is Red".

Born in Nanjing in 1916, Wang's interest in theatre and acting was ignited while working as a teacher in her hometown. In 1935, her decision to take on the lead role in the Chinese adaption of Norwegian playwright, Henrik Johan's "A Doll's House", would place her fairly and squarely within the realms of both feminism and communism; the former on account of the play's portrayal of the fate of a married woman in a male-dominated world and the latter for its clashing with the values of the New Life Movement that was a supporter of the Chinese Nationalist Party.

The latter was also the reason that Wang was subsequently sacked from her teaching post by the then nationalist authorities; she was told she could longer teach anywhere in Nanjing.

Wang would spend much of the remaining 1930s and 1940s continuing her work as an actress which also advanced the Communist Party's cause. The close of the Second World War was to mark her destiny, the transition from stage to China's relatively new world of moving pictures.

Acting for Shanghai-based leftist Kunlun Film Company, Wang was a keen communist supporter, working underground for the Party prior to the establishment of PRC in 1949. Partially as a reward for her dedication, she was appointed as a film director by the August First Film Studio in 1951.

Nevertheless, Wang was by far not the only woman working as a filmmaker in a man's world, just as today. However, for those early communists, gender equality formed one of their linchpins for economic reform. Remember Mao Zedong’s famous proclamation, “Women Hold Up Half the Sky”?

Much as in other fields in China, the following decades would see more and more female directors emerge in China, but again, in echoes of today, the industry would continue to see an overrepresentation by men.

From 1957-1962, Wang would make her first five feature films, before a familiar character of world renown would enter our narrative. The following few years would see Wang rubbing shoulders with none other than the first premier of PRC himself, Zhou Enlai.

Whether Zhou had a soft spot for movies, or realised their potential for propaganda, or both, is unclear, but he nevertheless commissioned Wang to co-direct a film adaption of the popular play, "Sentinels under the Neon Lights" in 1964. This was to be a seminal moment, as it was to lead to the two working hand in hand, as director and producer, on "The East is Red", just a year later.

Zhou had originally pushed the idea for the stage show which, with its success, went on to pave the way for the movie version. Writing for SupChina, Tristan Shaw notes, “Unlike your typical propaganda flick, however, The East is Red has a high degree of artistic quality. There are senses of unity and energy to the film that make it strangely compelling”.

No wonder the International Movie Database (IMDB) scores the song and dance epic a very respectable 7.4, calling it “Pre-Cultural Revolution propaganda at its most lavish”.

Wang passed away, aged 74, on 2 December, 1990.
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The word “Taklamakan” is said to mean “Place of No Return”. That China is now embarking on the final section of a railway line that will encircle the entire desert, by 2022 it will be possible to turn that metaphor into reality.

Xinjiang, or to use its unwieldly full name, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, is translated literally as “New Frontier” (新疆). Considering its location, that moniker may ring true. For China and her ever expanding network of railways, thinking of Xinjiang as the final frontier may be more appropriate.

China Railway 14th Bureau Group (CRCC14) is responsible for project, as they are for many of China’s engineering challenges in the field of transportation. Indeed, CRCC14 has itself been busy in Nanjing recently, with the Jiajiang Tunnel project under the Yangtze that forms the southern approach to the Nanjing Number 5 Bridge.

The tunnel was a complicated effort indeed, as the boring machine came to within 80cm of the foundations for the Nanjing Eye observation platform. But by comparison to the 825 kilometre Ruoqiang to Hotan railway around the southern part of the Taklamakan Desert, it pales into insignificance.

*In more plain terms, the Taklamakan is the size of Germany.*
It’s an unforgiving environment; lying in the rain shadow of the Himalayas provides for a 60 degree Celcius difference in temperatures between winter and summer (-20 to 40 degrees). Despite this the Taklamakan almost devoid of water. The railway will link up many of the oasis towns that dot the sandy landscape, places on the Silk Road such as the long romanticised Kashgar that lies close to the the western end of the new rail link, close to the border with Afghanistan.

Given the vast barren nature of the terrain, it is no wonder Project Manager, Zhang Gang, revealed to told local media that CRCC14 has put in place a management and construction team with “rich experience in desert railway construction”, capable of working in and with the “intricate natural environment”, reported Railway Gazette on 21 May. They will need to be; working 24 hours a day, the team is expected to lay at least 2 kilometres of track per day.

As a single track line, the number of trains that will be able to run simultaneously shall be significantly curtailed. Only eight passenger trains will run each way per day, together with 15 million tonnes of freight per year. Running at speeds up to a maximum of 120 km/h, the trains shall stop at any or all of the 65 stations being built en route.

Hence we find this new line’s raison d’etre. As well as bringing much needed connectivity and economic development to local Xinjiang people, the line is yet another link in China’s increasingly famed Belt & Road Initiative.

Events of 2020 to date have also brought about considerable emphasis on domestic tourism. While The Nanjingier would not condone travelling to Xinjiang at the present time, industry insiders have said that the region could be back on the map for tourism later in the year. That said, travellers frequently encounter difficulties all across Xinjiang, largely on account of hugely varying travel policies.

When the time comes and the railway encircling the Taklamakan is in operation, the long trek from Nanjing will no doubt be worth it. if only for the opportunity for sightseeing of splendor beyond compare.
You’re about to leave your hometown and move halfway across the world to China. Your parents, somewhat reluctant to let you go, send you on your way with a farewell gift: a pistol and an umbrella.

Such were the circumstances in which 20-something Hedwig Marie “Hedda” Morrison left Germany in 1933 bound for Beijing, where she would live and work as a photographer for the following 13 years. With little knowledge of China, she took up a job in the Hartung Photo Shop, a reputable German photography studio in the heart of Peking’s Legation Quarter. There she managed a team of 17 male Chinese photographers and served a clientele of mainly diplomats and foreign residents.

In 1938, her contract ended with Hartung, but she continued as a freelance photographer, avidly documenting daily life in the capital for audiences back home and travelling throughout China with her Rolleiflex twin-lens camera.

Photography at the time was not simply an artistic pursuit; it also required a certain level of practical dexterity. Using old car parts, Morrison’s friend fashioned her a makeshift flash, which sprayed magnesium powder onto burning Meta fuel to create a powerful burst of light, used to capture dark interiors. The dangers of such a contraption became apparent, however, while photographing some Ming frescoes outside of Peking, when she managed to set herself alight.

Following an invite from the then German ambassador, Morrison travelled to Nanjing in 1944 to document the city on film. A mere seven years after the Japanese had invaded and ransacked Nanjing, she remarked on the resilience of the city and its extraordinary ability to spring back.

In her book, “Travels of a Photographer in China”, she wrote, “Nanking has an ancient history, but few cities in the world have known so much destruction and pillage over the centuries. My time in Nanking was spent very pleasantly. Despite the city’s repeated devastation it was still a very beautiful place and one that had the aura of being steeped in history. It was easy to see why throughout the centuries it had been a major centre of Chinese culture.”

Apparently “more interested in art that politics”, the ambassador had tasked German scholar, Alfred Hoffmann, to make a book on the city, with Morrison’s photos to accompany. The book includes photos of the once barren landscape of Purple Mountain, of ladies dressed in qipao on Qixia Mountain and of the grand centre of Xinjiekou to name a few. Several images describe the bustle and colour of ordinary Nanjing street life; rows of hanging salted ducks, a shop selling rope and string, a woman having her eyebrows threaded.

Although not explicitly marked, many of these photos are currently on display in the Gallery of the Republican Period at the Nanjing Museum until mid September. An additional portion of around 10,000 negatives Morrison produced while living in China can be found in the spectacular online archive, “Historical Photographs of China”, from Bristol University.

Evidently, Morrison would never use the pistol or umbrella her parents gave her. She threw them off the liner on which she first travelled to China. But the gesture alludes to the courage required to pack up life and head for unfamiliar lands at that time. Through Morrison’s photos, audiences back home could examine China in a new level of detail, while for us today they remain an invaluable source of study and fascination.
Helping to internationalise Nanjing

A bridge between the city’s government organs, enterprises, institutions, schools, communities and other social organisations.
Our eldest daughter destroyed a whole kettle. I won’t be totally surprised if this daughter does, too.

It is always a busy device in any kitchen of ours. But it’s surely the first year of a new human life which kills a kettle. Nevermind the pre-boiling needed for the milk formula; it’s that sterilising of absolutely everything.

8 years ago, we had one fizzle out on us. Fair enough, we thought. And, for a short while, we made do with boiling water on the stove.

In the UK – with a measly supply of gas – heating anything on a stove takes forever. Health and Safety, I guess.

That slow, mean heat is just plain bad for cooking Chinese food. But, while using a glass-lidded saucepan for boiling, this slowness did help me observe a Chinese water narrative.

In the world of Chinese tea, there are signposts assigned to different heating stages. Each stage is described by the size of the bubbles that appear in the water. And the analogous term used for each bubble-size is the eye of an aquatic creature.

Lots of little creatures’ eyes. If you’re one of the (many) Chinese millennials who suffers from trypophobia, you’d perhaps better stop reading now.

As water first starts to release air, at around 70 degrees Celsius, the bubbles are called “shrimp eyes” (虾眼水). Tiny, regular, individuated, reluctant even to rise.

Those bubbles cling for a while. But as the temperature rises, they are supplanted by a new generation of bubbles: the “crab eyes” (蟹眼水), more ambitious to ascend. We’re at about 79 degrees Celsius now.

If the steam hasn’t obscured your view before you hit 82 degrees, you’ll see “fish eyes” (鱼眼水). Let’s call it a yellow croaker fish (黄花鱼), because those corneas are the size of these bubbles. We’re at the final stage at which the bubbles are individually-recognisable.

The next phase is “string of pearls” (涌泉连珠). This phenomenon kicks in at around 95 degrees. Bubbles are touching and merging, less uniformly sized and moving pretty fast. Big for pearls. More like kidney beans, I’d say.

Eventually, water at these temperatures will evaporate entirely away. But there’s still one more stage to go; “raging torrent” (腾波鼓浪). This is water receiving continued heat at the boiling point. The surface is choppy. There’s nothing one could call a bubble any more. Just raging.

I’m grateful to the masters who recognised these epochal changes; “gradually-enlarging-bubbles” doesn’t do this process justice.

The qualitative observation is supported by science, too; while the larger, angrier bubbles are indeed water vapour, earlier bubbles are absorbed air gases; Nitrogen and Oxygen.

And each phase has relevance to tea.

I recommend summoning a string of pearls before scalding those rock oolongs and dark teas. Crab-eye water is ready for red and white teas, as well as the greener oolongs. Such hot water can also help strangle the last from a long-serving green tea serving. But shrimp eyes are probably the only bubbles we want to see when preparing fresh green tea.

Like many foreigners, I err on the cooler side of most steeping temperature recommendations. And, as much as I love thinking of these bubbly-eyes, it’s actually the sound which I use as my guide for tea, or the feel of the kettle’s exterior. In normal life, I seldom reach for those big-bubble states, especially not in summer.

Sure, the sterilisation of those milk bottles and plastic teats is going to require a few more raging torrents. But the baby now has teeth; she’s becoming more interested in food than milk.

Maybe our kettle will survive, after all.
GASTRONOMY  By Frank Hossack

Kàn You Make it for Coffee in Hexi? Kàn Do!

A recently-opened little bright spot of internationalism has appeared off one of Nanjing’s more traditional thoroughfares, Qingliangmen Da Jie in the city’s western Hexi area.

Kàn Coffee menu with the usual selection of coffee, plus a hitherto unheard of option. It’s this poached egg and orange coffee that has been popping up on people’s social media feeds which attracted The Nanjinger in the first place. Then there is the Kàn Mojito that had us expecting more exotica. No, it’s coffee and soda.

Such oddities aside, it’s the huge yawning window on to the street which sets Kàn apart, an ideal spot to people watch the comings and goings at the mall across the road.

Sonically, there’s no K-pop here. Instead, it’s a solo piano or violins with melodies somewhat hauntingly reminiscent. It’s perfect cafe material.

It’s all set off rather well by the little touches; paper serviettes branded with a Kan Coffee dancer.

The Nanjinger’s visit came on an early Monday afternoon. As but one of only two walk in customers. Our dedicated service was interrupted by the near steady stream of delivery guys showing up to pick up what was a bumper afternoon for delivery orders.

In what was perfect timing, the two efficient gents behind the counter dispatched the deliveries just as another six youngish hipsters walked in, filling up the little place nicely to perfection.

So business we surmise, must be good. Given that Kàn opened on 20 March, they’ve been one of the lucky few.

The drawback? There’s nothing to eat, bar a sad-looking roll that would be more at home on an in-flight tray. The Cookie Monster would not be happy.

Kàn Coffee is located at 49 Fengxi Lu 凤熙路49号. Tel 13813059780.
Rotary Club Nanjing (RCNJ) has been active again, sending PPE to Uganda, organising a blood drive on World Blood Donation Day on 14 June and compiling activities for young people remaining in Nanjing over the coming summer. Enthusiastic attendees at the most recent dinner meeting listened to how Agile and Scrum methodologies might be applied to managing RCNJ charity projects. Members get together on the first and third Wednesday of each month.
Nanjing International School’s Class of 2020 finished as they began; all together in the ballroom of the Xianlin Novotel, having undergone trial and error, the unexpected, and ultimately, growth, maturity and a degree of independence perhaps not experienced by students in previous school years.
Children at St. John's College School Nanjing couldn’t be happier to be back in school, exploring the themes of doctors and nurses whilst trying to make sense of what has been going on in the world. Add in some EAL Stilling and some messy fun in the new mud kitchen and you have yourself a packed day of development.

Doctor, Doctor!
25 May, 2020
Yangshan Park in Xianlin was the picturesque venue for a fun run that gave good reason for the local foreign community to come back together again after months of Covid-19-induced separation. The fun, family oriented event provided participants with the option of a 2 or 5 km run, both overseen by volunteer marshals. The event has since become a regular effort to raise funds for local charities.

Running in the Family

16 May, 2017
Early Years students at The British School of Nanjing returned to campus, some walking with great confidence to join their friends and teachers, a few shedding tears while saying goodbye to their parents. Back fully energised, students learned of the importance of wearing masks going to and from school, washing hands, using tissue and hand sanitiser.
“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Maimonides

Your generosity has enabled the Pfrang Association to provide scholarships for more than 20 years to underprivileged children of rural areas in Jiangsu and Anhui provinces. 

Education, a gift for life!

正是因为您的慷慨，十五年来，普方基金会才能够为江苏北部和安徽农村地区的贫困儿童提供助学基金。

教育，成就一生！
One of China’s major priorities is technology innovation, as PRC becomes a world leader in quantum research, challenging the USA in the race to develop quantum computers, as well as creating its own successful space program.

Research and development (R&D) is the backbone of innovation. Intellectual Property (IP) protections, such as patents, are critical for innovation and they are also one way to measure innovation trends. Patents secure exclusive rights to an invention, and thereby offer insight into key areas of innovation. Herein we assess the relationship between patents and innovation by exploring trends in patent applications by Chinese inventors at various different patent offices.

According to WIPO’s annual World Intellectual Property Indicators (WIPI), innovators across the globe filed 3.3 million patent applications in 2018, up 5.2 percent for a ninth straight yearly increase.

Asia continues to outpace other regions in filing activity for patents, trademarks, industrial designs and other intellectual property rights. China alone accounted for almost half of all the world’s patent filings, with India also registering impressive increases, making Asia the global hub for innovation.

Asia accounted for more than two thirds of all patent, trademark and industrial design applications in 2018, with China driving overall growth in demand for IP rights as the United States of America maintained its primacy in patent applications filed in export markets.

Beijing has implemented several measures to improve China’s patent system. In 2008, the Chinese government started a national IP strategy and passed revisions to its existing Patent Law. The National Patent Development Strategy began in 2010 and in January, 2019, new amendments to the Patent Law were proposed.

Government efforts have had an impact as China has rapidly become the world leader in patent applications.

China’s IP office received the highest number of patent applications in 2018, a record 1.54 million applications that amount to 46.4 percent of the global total and 708,799 industrial design applications, corresponding to 54 percent of the world total.

China’s relatively small contribution to the total number of triadic patents is also notable. These patents, filed jointly in Japan, the United States and the European Union, are considered the gold standard among patents. Triadic patents are difficult to obtain, but generally generate more revenue than other patent types. In 2016, China was the fourth largest contributor to triadic patents at 6.9 percent, behind Japan (31.0 percent), the United States (25.4 percent) and Germany (8.1 percent).

In a press conference in January, the Chinese National Intellectual Property Administration (CNIPA) released the annual statistics for 2019, indicating a drop of 9.1 percent in invention patent application filings from 2018. This drop may indicate a slowing economy or an increase in patent quality. Nonetheless, Chinese invention applications filed in 2019 totalled a staggering 1.401 million. The CNIPA also stated that 453,000 invention patents were granted in 2019, a 4.8 percent increase from 2018. The top three invention patentees were Huawei Technologies, China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation and OPPO Guangdong Mobile.

Innovation is the process by which new knowledge and ideas are created. Global leaders in innovation produce the scientific discoveries and technological advances that shape the modern world. It is a primary source of national power, as a country’s ability to develop new products and methods of production enables it to produce the goods desired by others. In turn, innovation creates wealth, leads to technological advancement, and fosters further innovation through the development of derivative products. When measuring China’s growing international influence, it is essential to consider the sources of Chinese innovation.

**DISCLAIMER**

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Download this map to your smartphone via The Nanjinger’s official WeChat account.

The Nanjinger’s Metro Map is the only map of the city’s metro system to include first and last times for every station, perfect for planning a late night out or an adventure to somewhere new with an early start.
How do we create confident learners?

At The British School of Nanjing, we treat every student as an individual, creating personalised learning plans adapted to strengths, passions and areas for growth.

Our Be Ambitious philosophy drives our students to achieve more than they ever thought possible. Tara in Year 12 is an excellent example of a student who, through the inspiring teachers and unique opportunities available to her at BSN, developed confidence and leadership skills during her journey with us.

Scan to watch Tara’s story and discover how we think beyond traditional education to transform learning.

bsn.org.cn