

Latin Expert Serves as Chinese Cultural Messenger

Dialogue

By BI Weizi & LONG Yun

During his 15 years in China, Italian sinologist Michele Ferrero has been steadfast in promoting scholarly research on cultural exchanges between China and the West. Through reams of translation, he has made great contributions to education and mutual understanding between China and Western countries, along with broadening knowledge of Latin and Western Classics, which he has been teaching at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) since 2009.

When talking about his life in Beijing to *Science and Technology Daily (S&T Daily)*, it was clear he enjoys his work and life. Convenient digital payments, an advanced public transportation system, and friendly people all figure prominently in his reasons for enjoying China. Moreover, taking a walk in a public park and wandering about in the sea of books in a classic bookstore are his favorite things to do in his spare time.

It's precisely because he does not feel like an outsider in Beijing, which he considers home, that he is trying to introduce China as it is to the world, and promoting educational and cultural exchanges between BFSU students and foreign students, in order to deepen mutual understanding and cultivate more tolerance.

Why Latin is important

People have always argued that Latin is a dead language, as there are no native Latin speakers left in the world, so



Michele Ferrero. (PHOTO: S&T Daily)

why learn it?

"Latin is a classical language that belongs to history. Two thousand five hundred years of Western literature is written in Latin. So learning Latin is very important for learning Western history," said Ferrero, adding that history is our root and also the proof that our ancestors actually lived in this world.

As a sinologist, Ferrero also realized the importance of learning Latin for studying Chinese history. "Most of the documents about China that have been circulating on the European continent for thousands of years are written in Latin," he said.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Latin was a very common language, just

like modern English. Ferrero discovered that as early as 1590, the "Four Books" (*The Analects*, *Mencius*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, and *The Great Learning*) were translated into Latin, revealing the long history of communication between China and the Western world.

Spreading Chinese culture

The influence of Chinese culture is becoming more widespread in international communication. After studying cultural communication and researching Chinese culture and history, Ferrero suggested two effective ways to further introduce Chinese wisdom to the world.

"Some scholars believe that readers need to read the original text to understand the connotation of the book, but I

think it is not easy. Not everyone has the ability to read original works. Cultural dissemination requires translation," said Ferrero, adding that the best way for many Italians to learn about Chinese philosophy is to read translated works.

Today, some libraries in Europe have preserved manuscripts brought back from China by European sinologists and missionaries in the 17th century, covering Chinese customs, the classical system, science and technology, and culture, among others. Many Latin texts remain untranslated and unstudied. As a sinologist and Latin expert, Ferrero has been intensively engaged in translating between Chinese and Latin, with the expectation of further translations and bringing to life the communication between East and West from the past.

In recent years, China's diplomatic discourse and behavior has emphasized the importance of people-to-people exchanges in foreign relations, and measures to expand people-to-people exchanges, such as a visa-free policy to several countries, have been gradually introduced, which resonates with Ferrero.

To better understand China, "I urge people to come and see China with their own eyes," said Ferrero, who is excited to share his feelings for China with the rest of the world because Chinese love for peace and stability, and seeking common ground while respecting differences, offer practical solutions to many challenging issues facing all of humankind.

The BFSU also contributed to the article.

My China Story

From St. Petersburg to Tianjin, Chasing a Dream

By YIN Wei

"In my opinion, Chinese characters are not just a language but also a beautiful form of art, a blend of aesthetics and culture." That's some of the motivation that initially drove 21-year-old Russian student Sofija Balunova to study Chinese language, and helped her make the long trek from her home in Saint Petersburg, the cultural capital of Russia, to the School of International Education at Tianjin University (TJU). The sophomore enrolled in August 2023 and, due to her already excellent Chinese proficiency, she was allowed to begin her studies as a second-year student.

"Before coming to China to attend university, I had already passed the HSK Level 5 Chinese proficiency test." The highest level of the HSK is Level 6. Remarkably, Balunova went from being a beginner to nearly reaching the highest standard in less than a year.

Reflecting on her time at the Confucius Institute at Saint Petersburg University, Balunova described it as tough but fulfilling, "because every day I felt I was getting closer to my dream." That dream was to study in China and see the country she had dreamed about since her youth.

Growing up in a city rich in culture, Balunova has always pursued beauty and art. After graduating from middle school, she chose to study cosmetology at a vocational college. During this period, she developed a strong interest in Asian culture, and an artistic field trip solidified her fascination with Chinese culture.

"Saint Petersburg has many cultural and artistic sites, as well as exhibitions and gardens showcasing the beauty of different countries. At the Shanghai Friendship Garden in the city center, I had my first direct encounter with Chinese culture, and I was immediately captivated." The Friendship Garden, a gift from Shanghai in 2003 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Saint Petersburg's founding, is a miniature version of Yuyuan Garden. She was struck by the scenes that were completely different from the culture in Russia.

This visit sparked Balunova's immense curiosity about China, and she began to study and learn about China on her own. "I gathered information about China through the Internet and



Sofija Balunova. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Chinese social media platforms, learning about China's long history and unique culture." Her curiosity led her to focus her graduation thesis on the makeup and hairstyles of the Tang Dynasty.

From her point of view, the Tang Dynasty's makeup is vibrant and dignified, reflecting a warm and exuberant cultural atmosphere. "Through my thesis research, I hoped to introduce Chinese culture to more people."

Balunova's thirst for knowledge about China from books and the Internet gradually became soaring, and she developed a desire to study in China. "I wanted to see what China is really like and experience Chinese culture firsthand."

In 2023, after more than a year of diligent language study, Balunova finally got admitted in TJU. "The China I imagined is so different from the China I actually saw!" The moment she stepped out of the airport, she was struck by the modernity and high-tech development of Chinese cities. "I saw skyscrapers, advanced infrastructure, and experienced the speed of high-speed rail and the convenience of mobile payments. China's development far exceeded my expectations." The surprises of studying in China also included her visit to the Great Wall, which she considered it as "one of the greatest cultural heritage sites I have ever seen."

Looking ahead, Balunova hopes to continue her studies in China in the future and work in promoting Sino-Russian cultural and trade cooperation. "I believe that the exchanges between China and Russia will become increasingly closer, bringing more employment and development opportunities for the youth of both countries," she said.

The author is a staff at TJU.

Traditional Eastern Wisdom

Bashan Site Complex: Unveiling Paleolithic Human Life

By ZONG Shihan

The Bashan site complex, a cluster of over 80 Paleolithic Age sites, is located

around Bashan in Yishui county, Shandong province in east China. It was listed as one of China's top 10 archaeological discoveries in 2023.



An ivory shovel unearthed from the Bashan site complex. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

The discovery not only established a comprehensive archaeological cultural sequence in the upper reaches of the Yihe River from 100,000 years to 10,000 years ago, but also unveiled a vivid picture of ancient human life.

The Bashan site complex was discovered by accident. In July 2020, during flood discharges from the Bashan reservoir along the main stream of the Yihe, an ivory artifact was washed ashore, leading to exploration and excavation.

After three years of excavation, over 40,000 relics were unearthed from a 225 square meter area. They included 30,000 stone artifacts, over 10,000 animal bones, and a small number of organic specimens such as

bamboo and wood.

Particularly noteworthy is an ivory shovel unearthed from the site. Dating tests indicate it was made not later than 99,000 years ago. The ivory came from an adult straight-tusked elephant that weighed 10 to 15 tons, lived in the late Pleistocene era between 10,000 and 200,000 years ago, and was the largest elephant species in history.

Some animal fossils unearthed from the Bashan site have revealed, for the first time, the full utilization of giant animal resources by humans 100,000 years ago, demonstrating their adaptation strategies and historical scenes in the face of environmental changes in the Huang-Huai-Hai region.

Can Solar Flares Harm Humans?

Science Outreach

By ZONG Shihan

Since May, the Sun's activities have been increasing, with 10 X-class flares and over 60 M-class flares occurring in just one week. What are solar flares? Why have solar flares become so frequent this year? What impact do they have on our lives?

A solar flare is an intense burst of electromagnetic radiation which occurs when the magnetic energy in the Sun's atmosphere is suddenly released. Solar flares typically occur on the surface of the Sun, and are often, but not always, accompanied by solar magnetic storms (also known as coronal mass ejections), solar particle

events (also known as solar radiation storms), and other eruptive solar phenomena.

Although solar flares can last from minutes to hours, the energy they release is equivalent to the total energy of 100,000 or even a million powerful volcanic eruptions. Depending on the magnitude of energy released, they are classified into five levels: A, B, C, M, and X.

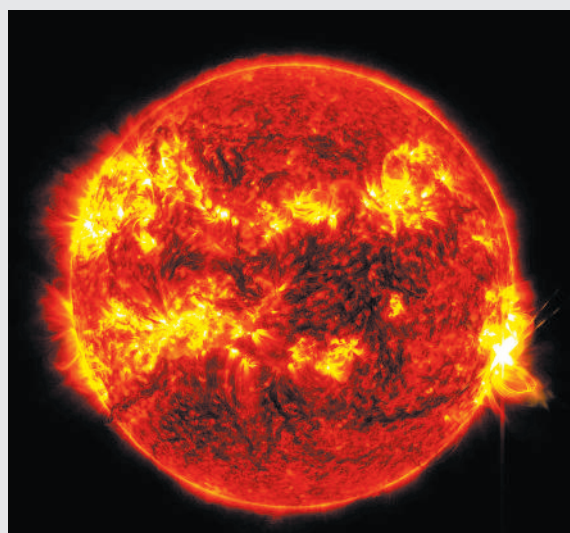
X-class flares, the most powerful ones, can interfere with the ionization of the upper atmosphere, affecting short-wave radio communication and posing a potential threat to the operation of space stations, space shuttles, and satellites.

Additionally, the electromagnetic radiation released by solar flares can potentially cause power failures and affect the accuracy of GPS positioning. On the bright side, they can also create beautiful auroras.

The Sun's activity follows a 11-year cycle approximately. We are currently in the active phase of the 25th cycle. Therefore, the frequent solar flares are a natural phenomenon.

Whether solar flares will have an impact on the human body depends on the position of the Sun's surface where they erupt and the magnitude of the eruption. However, the solar radiation energy that reaches the Earth is only a small fraction of the original flare, and the Earth's magnetic field helps block most of the high-energy particle streams brought by solar eruptions. The radi-

ation that directly reaches the human body is minimal. Therefore, solar flares have almost no impact on human health.



The biggest solar flare in 10 years hits Earth in May. (PHOTO: VCG)

Sci-Tech Week: Elevating Public Scientific Literacy

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Moreover, the NSTW serves as a gateway to make complex scientific concepts more understandable to the general public. By presenting information in a clear and engaging manner, it assists individuals to develop a deeper understanding of scientific principles, fostering scientific literacy that may have far-reaching impact. This approach not only enriches the minds of individuals, but also lays the foundation for a society that values and encourages innovation.

Inspiring tomorrow's innovators

Beyond its immediate impact on public scientific literacy, the NSTW plays a pivotal role in inspiring the next

generation of innovators and visionaries.

By exposing young minds to the wonders of science and technology at an early age, the event helps nurture a generation of problem-solvers who will shape the future of innovation in China and beyond.

During the 2024 NSTW, a number of typical events engaging the youth will be held, including the National Youth Creator and Maker Event in Wuhan city, central China's Hubei province.

By providing a platform for young people to showcase their projects, the event not only celebrates their creativity but also instills a sense of confidence in the next wave of science pioneers.

China's Medium-voltage Micro-grid Technology Making Overseas Debut

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It can achieve full local consumption of distributed new energy within the area and operate autonomously on campus. The project is expected to be put into operation in December 2024.

Backed by its experience in technology research and engineering practice, CEPRI also carried out research projects on CPFL's micro-grid standards and smart energy cities, providing standards, specifications, and technical support for

network planning, operation control, and grid-connected interface technologies involved in connecting distributed new energy to power distribution network in Brazil.

Such work has laid a technical foundation and standard validation basis for the planning, construction, operation and maintenance of subsequent distributed new energy projects, contributing Chinese wisdom to building a green, low-carbon and sustainable living environment.