

Moon Festival +

# Harmony, Unity Under the Same Moon



By LONG Yun

The Mid-Autumn Festival, one of China's most cherished traditional holidays, is deeply rooted in the country's cultural heritage. Known for the rich poetry, it has inspired and customs, the stories of the festival center around the moon, which symbolizes reunion, harmony, and togetherness.

Famous Song Dynasty poet Su Shi (1037-1101) wrote, "May we live long and share the beauty of the moon even if miles apart." These words capture to perfection the longing for one's loved ones and the beauty of shared experiences under the same sky.

Feelings have no borders. Some foreign experts who have been in China for a long time also share this sense of unity and harmony.

Italian sinologist Michele Ferrero at Beijing Foreign Studies University, who has spent 15 years in China, shared his thoughts on the Mid-Autumn Festival with *Science and Technology Daily*, "This year, I stayed in Beijing because of work, but I could still feel the Mid-Autumn Festival approaching when people began giving me mooncakes."

To him, the mooncake is not just a symbol of the full moon but also a symbol of unity

within families and among friends. Ferrero appreciates the "family time" atmosphere that the festival brings. As summer transitions into autumn, the festival marks the stage when adults prepare to return to work and youngsters to school.

Ferrero compares it to the Chinese New Year, noting that while the latter is a time to stop work and visit family, the Mid-Autumn Festival celebrates unity within the context of ongoing duties and social life. "The mooncakes give me energy and a new impetus forward," he remarked.

His compatriot, Italian scientist Francesco Faiola, has a particular fondness for the famous Cantonese-style five-kernel mooncakes, which are filled with a mix of nuts and seeds, offering a rich and textured taste.

For Faiola, the most meaningful part of the celebration is the tradition of family reunions. As modern life becomes increasingly fast-paced, the Mid-Autumn Festival offers a rare opportunity to slow down, reunite with family and reflect on the bonds.

Faiola recalls participating in a family banquet hosted by a Chinese friend during the festival. The experience, which included traditional delicacies such as hairy crabs and yellow rice

wine specially prepared for the event, was not only about enjoying food but also about sharing stories and gazing at the bright, full moon. Through this celebration, Faiola gained a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and its emphasis on family, tradition, and connection.

Both Ferrero and Faiola highlight the symbolic power of the moon during the Mid-Autumn Festival. As Faiola said, the moon serves as a metaphor for both the emotional closeness people feel with others and our pursuit of the beautiful and meaningful things in life. "Moon gazing is uniquely poetic," he said. "No matter where you are, looking up at the same moon creates a shared sense of connection with loved ones, even if they are far away."

His sentiment echoed Tang Dynasty poet Zhang Jiuling (678-740), who wrote: "As the bright moon shines over the sea/From far away you share this moment with me."

For foreign experts like Ferrero and Faiola, the festival inspires a deep sense of togetherness, though they are far from home.

Just as the moonlight touches everyone, no matter where they are, the spirit of the Mid-Autumn Festival fosters a connection that reaches across time and borders, connecting people in celebration and harmony.

# 'My Wish for You is Long Life And a Share in This Loveliness Far Away'

By BI Weizi

The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival, is a harvest festival celebrated in Chinese culture. Held on the 15th day of the eighth month of the Chinese lunisolar calendar, it falls on September 17 this year according to the Gregorian calendar. On this day, the Chinese believe that the moon is at its brightest and fullest, coinciding with harvest time in the middle of autumn.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture, and its popularity is on par with that of the Chinese New Year. The history of the festival dates back over 3,000 years. During the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), it became a popular folk festival, and the 15th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar was officially designated the day of the festival.

Influenced by Chinese culture, similar festivals are celebrated by other cultures in East and Southeast Asia. On May 20, 2006, the State Council of China included it in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage list.

The festival celebrates three fundamental concepts that are closely connected: gathering, giving thanks and praying.

• **Reunion & Fortune**

The Mid-Autumn Festival is also a time of reunion when family and friends gather together. The theme of reunion has become more prominent and important with time. During the festival, lanterns of all sizes and shapes are lit, symbolizing beacons on the path to prosperity and good fortune.

• **Moon worship & Gratitude**

One of the most important traditions is moon-gazing in the evening when it is at its fullest. Ancient Chinese believed that a good

harvest was the result of favorable weather and the blessings of heaven, and after a bountiful harvest, they would worship heaven and earth to show their gratitude.

• **Mooncakes & Thanksgiving**

Mooncakes, a rich pastry typically filled with sweet bean, egg yolk, meat or lotus seed paste, were offered to the moon god during the Mid-Autumn Festival as a tribute in ancient times. Later they became part of the cultural tradition.

Many families still make mooncakes during the festival and shops selling the delicacy do a brisk trade.

*The title is taken from Shuidiao Getou (the name of a traditional Chinese melody to which a poem in the ci style can be sung) by Su Shi (1037-1101), who was a poet, essayist, calligrapher, painter, and scholar-official who lived during the Song dynasty.*

Another landmark is the Chang'e 6 probe. On June 25, it returned to Earth bringing 1,935.3 grams of soil samples from the far side of the moon, a first in human history. Further analysis and research on the samples is expected to unlock more secrets of the satellite and take China's moon mission a step forward.

The Chang'e 6 is part of the fourth phase of China's lunar exploration program, which aims to build an international lunar research station by 2035. The Chang'e 7 mission is scheduled for launch around 2026 to survey the lunar south pole region and the Chang'e 8 probe will be launched around 2028 to carry out experiments on lunar resource utilization.

China is also expanding its international collaborations following the successful operation of payloads from the European Space Agency, France, Italy, and Pakistan on the Chang'e 6 mission. The Chang'e 7 mission will carry six scientific instruments from seven countries and international organizations while the Chang'e 8 will offer 200 kilograms of payload capacity to international applicants and has already received over 30 applications.

China envisions a crewed moon landing by 2030 and so far, the success of the moon missions makes it plausible that the vision will come true, leaving Chinese footprints on the moon.

China has shown itself to be a reliable and responsible partner and is willing to work with the international community for collective knowledge about space and further travel into the vast universe.

# Flying to the Moon

By GONG Qian

In traditional Chinese culture, the moon is emblematic of human emotions and has a prominent role in ancient Chinese literature, songs and mythology. The Mid-Autumn Festival or Moon Festival is one of the most important traditional Chinese festivals.

Since time immemorial, people have been dreaming of reaching the moon. With the advancement of science and technology, China in 2001 launched its lunar exploration program or the Chang'e Program, named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology. Since then, as it expected, China

has completed its three-step plan — orbiting the satellite, landing it and bringing back samples of lunar soil.

China's moon mission has created many landmarks. One is the Chang'e 5 probe bringing about 1,731 grams of soil samples from the moon in 2020. After researching the samples, Chinese scientists discovered a new type of mineral, which contains water in its molecular structure. Evidence shows the existence of water or water ice on the moon's surface, likely in the form of hydroxyl groups. This discovery has opened up new possibilities for the future development and utilization of lunar water resources.

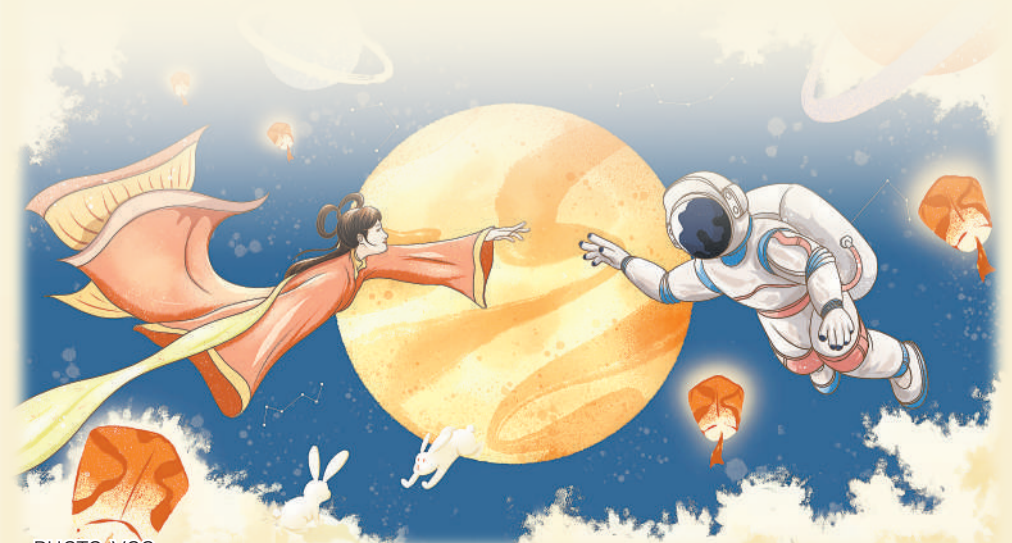


PHOTO:VCG

# How an American Scholar Fell for China

## Dialogue

By XU Qingqun

William N. Brown has called China home for over 30 years. "I'm fortunate to live in a country as beautiful as China, in the vibrant city of Xiamen, and at a university as remarkable as Xiamen University," the 68-year-old American professor at Xiamen University said.

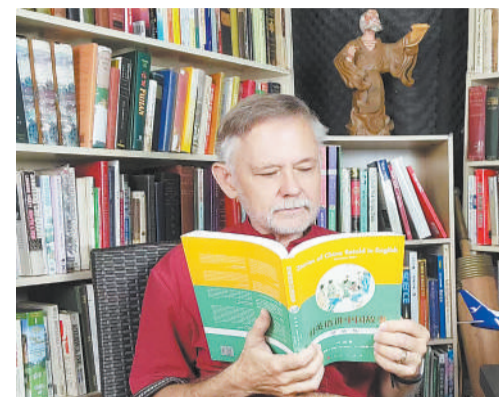
Since arriving in China in 1988, he has witnessed China's rapid transformation. As the first foreigner to gain permanent residency in Fujian province in east China, he has authored over 20 books, including *Off the Wall — How We Fell for China*, which offers a unique perspective on China's reform and opening up.

**Admiration built on understanding**

Brown's admiration for China stems from a deep understanding of its culture and history. "If you understand China's history, you realize that the Chinese are resilient people with clear goals and persistence," he explains. He recalls the early days of China's reform and opening up when everyone thought it would take five to six decades for China to see significant development.

In just over 40 years, China has undergone a dramatic transformation. Brown attributes this to the determination, innovation, and problem-solving spirit of the Chinese. "I write to my family and friends back in the U.S., telling them about these things. This is China's culture — how can I not fall in love with it?" he said.

When some of his Western friends questioned whether his experience was limited to coastal cities like Xiamen, Brown decided to travel across China to show them a multi-dimensional China. From famous metropolises to remote villages, he has explored the country by plane, train, car and even horse-drawn carriage. The more he traveled, the more he fell in love with the diverse land-



Professor William N. Brown. (COURTESY PHOTO)

scapes and warm-hearted people he encountered.

**Setting the record straight**

Brown's experiences have made him a firm believer in China's future. He is confident that the government will continue to support foreign talent and promote policies that contribute to China's high-quality development.

Having witnessed China's transformation since 1988, he feels it is his duty to share his experiences with the world. When he first arrived, he quickly realized that China was nothing like what the Western media portrayed. Driven by a sense of justice, he began writing letters to friends and family back home to set the record straight.

In 2019, he embarked on his second trip around China, covering over 20,000 kilometers in just 32 days. Compared to his first trip few decades ago, when he had covered about 40,000 kilometers in three months, the difference was striking. Roads and infrastructure had improved dramatically. He has a postscript to add: "The Chinese saying 'To get rich, build a road first' is not just to improve people's financial condition, but also to enrich their minds, ideas, and attitudes."

*This article is edited and translated based on the Chinese version.*

## China Impression

# A Comoran Student's Growth in China

By YIN Wei

For Mroivili Faouzia, a Comoran student at Tianjin University in China, the most important aspect of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Beijing last week was its achievements in promoting cooperation in the education sector between China and Africa.

"I am very pleased to see the outcomes of the summit in terms of people-to-people exchanges," she said, adding that this means many African women like her will have opportunities to study in China. This will promote the development of women in Africa and in turn, promote the progress and development of African countries.

Faouzia is a direct beneficiary of this cooperation. On the eve of the 2018 FOCAC Summit, Azali Assoumani, president of Comoros, visited Tianjin University and a memorandum of understanding was signed between the university and the Embassy of Comoros in China to provide scholarships to Comoran students. Faouzia is one of the recipients of the scholarship.

"Can you believe it, my connection with China began with ice cream!" Faouzia laughed. "When I was young, there was an ice cream vendor in my neighborhood who sold the most delicious ice cream I've ever tasted. The owner was said to be Chinese. My impression of China was that it was a place that made the best ice cream, and I thought, 'I will go there when I grow up!'"

As she grew older, Faouzia learned more about China. "China was among the first nations to recognize Comoros as an independent state and has supported my country in nearly every sector."

This interest peaked during her second year in high school in 2017. "Two significant factors strengthened that interest," she recalled. The first was a classmate who began learning Chinese through the Confucius program at the University of Comoros, which later evolved into the Confucius Institute offering free Chinese courses.

"I thought I'd love to study Chinese too," she said. However, when she discussed this with her mom, she was cautioned about the challenges ahead. "I was on a tight schedule as a second-year high school student, and the institute was in another city."

Despite these obstacles, her passion for learning the language outweighed her mother's concerns. She devoted every Sunday to shuttling between two cities to attend Chinese classes. "Considering what happened later, I couldn't have made a better decision. All the trouble paid off," Faouzia said.

The second factor was the medical care she received from a team of Chinese doctors who came from Guangxi. "I had been a premature baby, and my health had been unstable for a long time. The Chinese doctor performed acupuncture and it worked like a miracle!" Faouzia said.

After the treatment, she felt stronger. The treatment not only healed her but also made her dream of studying in China.

Half a year after starting her Chinese studies, she participated in a Chinese proficiency contest and won the opportunity to compete in the finals in China. During the contest in 2017, she visited a Chinese university and decided to further her education in China. "Fortunately, I performed well in the contest and was awarded a language study program in China."

After completing high school, she studied Chinese for a semester at the University of Comoros before heading to Dalian University in 2019 for the language program. While many relatives urged her to study in France — due to the language advantage as French is one of the three official languages of Comoros, and also because of France's relative proximity to Comoros — she stuck to her decision. "Deep inside, I'm a curious girl craving adventure and new cultures. I want to broaden my perspective of the world. China was definitely the dream place for me to explore."

Eventually, she applied for admission to Tianjin University for her Bachelor's degree, choosing computer science and technology as her major. Her aim is to integrate artificial intelligence with medicine in her future studies.

Faouzia has made numerous friends in China. "I have truly enjoyed my life here, largely because the people are so kind and generous. Together, we are fostering a future of shared prosperity, cultural exchange, and mutual respect."

*This article is contributed by Tianjin University.*