

Ocean Gazing: Episode 34
One world, one ocean: Part II
COSEE-China Planning Workshop

<fade up intro music>

Li Wen: <Introduces Ocean Gazing podcast in Chinese.>

Ari: That's Li Wen. She's a Master's student at Xiamen University, and she just welcomed us to Ocean Gazing. She said it's the podcast where we learn about the sea that connects the whole world. I'm Ari Daniel Shapiro. Last episode, I told you about the COSEE-China Planning Workshop that was held in early March in Beijing. In this episode, we're spending this whole time in the city of Xiamen where we flew to after the workshop. It's in the southeast of China. They've got palm trees, warm, moist air. It was just beautiful. So, Xiamen? It was like Chinese Florida. We're gonna meet high school students and college students talking about their experience with ocean education in China. And the change they want to see. Stay tuned.

<fade up music and sustain>

Ari: On a sunny bright morning, I walked with Vera Shi and Carrie Lee. Both of them work in the College of Oceanography and Environmental Science at Xiamen University, and they served as Secretariats for the workshop.

Can you tell me where we are, and where we're going?

Shi: We are on the campus of the Keji High School and we will go to the students' classroom.

Ari: Okay.

Lee: The school do many research in the oceanography. So today we come to know something about that, yeah.

Ari: How old are the kids?

Lee: 15 or 14.

Ari: We walked into a large auditorium. It was filled with eager-looking high school students dressed in uniform. Each of the 15 delegates from the COSEE centers in the US – we took seats in different sections of the auditorium. <crowd ambi> There were a couple of short presentations <Chinese student; applause>, and then we talked in small groups, the US delegates and the high school students asking and answering questions. There were a few of us in my group and, uh, let's see here...

Will you remind me of your names again?

Ma: My name is Ma Tien Ge.

Zheng: Mine Zheng Hao Hua.

Ari: Ma Tien Ge started things off.

Ma: I have never seen the beautiful ocean until I come to Xiamen. When I first saw it, I enjoy everything of the ocean. From then, I fall in love with it. It has a deep impact on me. I think ocean is the most beautiful scene I have ever seen.

Ari: Here's Zheng Hao Hua.

Zheng: I like ocean very much. Whenever I felt uneasy or I felt just sad, I would like to go to the sea and maybe just scream. It carry away just my troubles, and make me feel very calm in side.

Ari: So it's a place for you to kind of be yourself.

Zheng: Yeah, yeah, I just feel comfortable. So I think it's really important for us to just have the conscious of protect our sea and our environment.

Ari: Do you feel that other students think the same way, that it should be protected, it should be clean? Do you think that's common?

Ma: In Xinjiang...

Ari: That's Xinjiang Province, in the northwest of China. It's landlocked.

Ma: There is no ocean so few people have some knowledge about the ocean. So I think if they see the beautiful ocean, they will protect the ocean like us.

Ari: So you're saying that more people need to see the ocean in order to want to protect the ocean?

Ma: Yes.

Ari: Yang Lu was also a part of our group. Her English name: Tina.

Yang: Nice to meet you!

Ari: She's an undergrad student at Xiamen University, and attended the workshop earlier in the week. She had a question for the high school students too.

Yang: If you have a course on this oceanography, how do you want to learn? Like a lecture, or do some experiments, or let the teacher bring you to the ocean coastal zone?

Ma: I think go to the seaside is the best.

Ari: And do what there?

Ma: We can do some exp- , experiments there.

Ari: We eventually cleared out of auditorium, and we went outside back into the sunshine. And it was there, right on the track that the students run on, that a few of them taught me the school cheer.

Students: 1, 2, 3. Ya cheng gong. Ching ke jong. If you want to succeed, just go to Keji High School.

Ari: Ya ke...

Students: Ya cheng gong.

Ari: Ya cheng gong.

Students: Ching ke jong.

Ari Ching ke jong.

Ari: Then we took tour of the school and we saw an English class where they were reading stories about the sea, actually, coincidentally enough. And they even read one about killer whales. Then we made our way to Xiamen University. We went into one of the buildings on the campus, and I walked down the hallway next to Minru Chen. She's an associate professor there, and I asked her where we were headed.

Min: We are going to enter classroom and to listen to a course.

Ari: On what?

Min: On phytoplankton.

Ari: Okay. <Min whispers>

Ari: So we snuck into the back of class, and we watched a professor deliver a lecture on phytoplankton diversity to a class of roughly about 60 students. He had Powerpoint slides showing different species and what made them unique. Now, we thought we were just gonna sit through the lecture but after a few minutes ... <applause> The class was turned over to Bob Chen. He was one of the leaders of our group, and he's a professor at the University of Massachusetts at Boston in the Department of Environmental, Coastal and Ocean Sciences. Like before, we broke into small groups. This time, the discussions focused on ocean education at the undergrad level.

Ma: My name is Ma Xiaowan. The thing we need to improve is we have too little research to collect the organism from the sea and to travel around the sea. In China, I think this opportunity is very little. We do a lot of experiments in the lab. And we don't have the chance to see a lot of live things.

Ari: It's kind of like you do a lot of work in the lab but not in the field.

Ma: Yes, I think working in the field will be a lot more interesting than in the lab. You know, in China, there are a lot of a lot of examinations. Really a lot. And I really don't want involved in it anymore.

Ari: You're ready to get out there and do it, and stop taking tests about it.

Ma: Yes, I want to do it myself.

Ari: Some students shared their thoughts with the whole class.

Student 1: What we concerned about is to find a way to use ocean sustainably and to make full use of ocean without harming it.

Chen: Thank you very much. Yes.

Student 2: Hi. I think maybe our department may provide more basic courses introducing ocean to other major students like environmental science, math, economics or law. Okay, thank you.

Chen: Thank you.

Student 3: Our professors and teachers, they all got their interest in their own paths. They got passion. That's – I don't know why they didn't pass their passion to us.

Chen: They didn't pass their passion to you...

Student 3: They didn't pass their passion to me. I don't know others.

Student 4: The problems happening in ocean not only happen in our coastlines. And also, maybe in the middle of the ocean. Or maybe this area of the ocean didn't belong to any country. At this moment, who should take the responsibility to protect this ocean, this area? I want to know when can we cooperate together. I mean we all human beings in the world. When can we do the research together? For this moment, we only show data on the Internet. But most of the time we don't do researches together, right. And so I hope that in the future, we can have students do research together, we can fly to each other's university, and we explore the ocean and protect them together.

Chen: I thank you for a very spirited conversation. I wish we had several more hours.
<applause>

Ari: Afterwards, I caught up with Karen Chan. She's a PhD student at University of Washington, was one of the COSEE delegates from the US, and she's originally from Hong Kong. She talked about the high school and college students that we met that day.

Chan: Being somebody who grew up in the southern part of China, it does ring the bell. I was kind of like that when I was in high school. Most of us is pretty timid: we sit and we listen. I used not to believe that Chinese students will engage in discussion. And I've always worried that the sense of curiosity and inquiry would be totally under control and tamed out, even put out. But it's not the case. What is so encouraging is that when you give them an opportunity to voice their opinion, they're really enjoying doing that.

<transition music>

Ari: And here's our next sonic stumper.

<sonic stumper>

Ari: So what style of music is that? Send us your guess by visiting our website: oceangazing.org. You'll also find some photos. Oh yeah, a couple of videos of what we did for recreation in Xiamen. <karaoke> Including karaoke, which was our last sonic stumper. And a foot massage. There's a video of me, trying to enjoy myself. <outro music>

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