BOOK PRIZE

Nominations Open for 2025 Baifang Schell Book Prize

Our book prize returns in its second year, celebrating exceptional books on or from China and the Sinophone world. Nominate now!

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At *China Books Review*, a digital magazine published by *The Wire China* and Asia Society's Center on U.S.-China Relations, we are proud to announce the return of the Baifang Schell Book Prize. The prize, held at Asia Society in New York, celebrates exceptional book-length works on or from China and the Sinophone world, published in English in the year under consideration.

There are awards in two categories, each accompanied by a $10,000 prize:

- **Nonfiction** *(Award for Outstanding Nonfiction Book on China or the Sinophone World)*
- **Literature** *(Award for Outstanding Literature from or on China or the Sinophone World)*

Baifang Schell Book Prize

These awards seek to recognize books that further our understanding of China and the broader region, and encourage future works of quality. The prize is named in honor of Liu Baifang Schell, who passed in 2021 after spending her life working to advance U.S.-China relations. It is administered by *China Books Review*, but the winners are chosen by two independent juries.

Last year, the juries selected *At the Edge of Empire: A Family's Reckoning with China* (Viking, June 2024) by Edward Wong as the winner of the 2024 **Nonfiction** award and *Taiwan Travelogue: A Novel* (Graywolf Press, November 2024) by Yáng Shuāng-zǐ (author) and Lin King (translator) for the 2024 **Literature** award. Two shortlists were also announced, and the winners and honorable mentions were celebrated at an awards ceremony at Asia Society in New York.

Nominations are now open for the 2025 awards! Read on to find out how to nominate up to three books per individual or publisher. The nomination period is open until December 15 (midnight), and the shortlists and winners (and honorable mentions) will be announced next spring — subscribe to our free newsletter to follow along. Scroll down to see the jury members for this year's awards (we rotate the chair annually), and FAQ.

How to Nominate

Email info@chinabooksreview.com after reading the below.

The nomination period runs from November 1 to December 15 (midnight) every year. Nominations are open to the general public (with China experts invited in particular), subject to the following restrictions:

- Every **individual** in the general public can only nominate a maximum of *three books* across both award categories (but is not required to nominate three; one or two nominations are also welcome).
- **Publishers** count as individuals. Each imprint can only nominate a maximum of *three books* across both award categories, as nominated by their representative. If you work for a publisher, you cannot nominate books as a general public member (we will check individual affiliations).
- You cannot nominate your own book. But you can ask someone else, or your publisher, to do so.

To make a nomination between Nov 1-Dec 15 (midnight), email *info@chinabooksreview* with:

- The **title** and author of the book(s) you are nominating. (Please check the publication date of the first English language edition to ensure that it is in 2025.)
- The **award** (nonfiction or literature) you are nominating each book for.
- Your publishing house or imprint if you are nominating as a publisher.

Please title your email "Book prize nomination[s]" and keep it short. All nominations count equally as one nomination for that book; it does not matter what order you give them in. We will disregard any value statements about the book(s), as we only log the nomination(s) to pass onto the juries.

Nonfiction Judges (2025)

- **Isabel Hilton** *(chair)*: Author; broadcaster; former chair of the Baillie Gifford Prize jury.
- **Yangyang Cheng:** Writer; research scholar at Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center.
- **Andrew Nathan:** Author; Professor of Political Science at Columbia University.
- **Jeffrey Wasserstrom:** Author; Professor of History of Modern China at UC Irvine.
- **Edward Wong:** *New York Times* correspondent; 2024 Baifang Schell Book Prize winner.

Literature Judges (2025)

- **Perry Link** *(chair)*: Author; Professor Emeritus of East Asian Studies at Princeton University.
- **Eric Abrahamsen:** Literary translator; chair of trustees at *Paper Republic* collective.
- **Jiayang Fan:** Staff writer at *The New Yorker*; forthcoming author.
- **RF Kuang:** Author; PhD candidate in East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale University.
- **Megan Walsh:** Writer, contributor to *Lithub* and *The Wall Street Journal,* and author of *The Subplot* (2022).

FAQ

Why did you start these awards?

By our count, over 600 English-language books on or from China and the Sinophone world are published every year (a combination of trade, academic and fiction books), but only a tiny fraction of these titles are covered by the press. We believe that important work deserves real reward — not only to *recognize* the efforts of authors, but to *encourage* future work in a climate where there is not enough understanding of China, at a juncture of history when that understanding is more critical than ever, especially the in-depth research and storytelling that book-length works can afford.

What are the criteria for selection of the winners?

The juries are fully independent, but are encouraged to reward books that carry forward the conversation on China or the Sinophone world — bringing new research, arguments or stories to light, in a compelling fashion, to further our understanding of the region in all its complexities.

The **nonfiction jury** is given the following broad criteria to reward in particular:

- *Quality*. Work that shines out for its assiduousness, ambition, clarity of thought and other measures of success, based on merit and disregarding of political stance.
- *Originality*. Whether through reporting, research or analysis, work that contributes something new to the conversation around greater China that has not been said before.
- *Readability*. Work that is easy for the general reader to follow without special prior knowledge, and whose writing and style is actively enjoyable.

The **literature jury** is given the following broad criteria to reward in particular:

- *Story*. The ability of plot, character, theme and perspective to engage the reader deeply, making them think or feel strongly.
- *Style*. The quality, originality and fluidity of language, as rendered into English if in translation (not considering the original).
- *Substance*. The skill with which themes and topics are examined (based on literary merit, not political or other viewpoint).

What books qualify for consideration?

- Only books published in the English language will be considered, published in print by a publishing house or imprint (not self-published/KDP).
- The first English-language edition of the book must be published in the calendar year under consideration (not considering any original edition, if in translation).
- For the **nonfiction** award: Any nonfiction book written for the general reader, whose subject or setting is China, the Sinophone world (including Taiwan) or the Chinese diaspora abroad.
- For the **literature** award: Any novel, novella, story collection, work of drama or poetry whose subject or setting is China, the Sinophone world (including Taiwan) or the Chinese diaspora abroad.

- Books written by authors employed by *China Books Review* or its publishers (The Wire China and Asia Society's Center on U.S.-China Relations) are disqualified from consideration (but not by authors employed by other departments of Asia Society).

What is your process?

This is the order of our process as administrators of the prize:

- Shortly after the nomination period opens, we post on the site and social media calling for nominations. We also email a list of respected China scholars, writers and experts asking them to send in nominations.
- After the nomination period ends, all nominated titles are collected, ranked by number of nominations, and sent to the juries for their information. Judges are then able to nominate further titles to add to the list for their collective consideration (but do not send in nominations as part of the general public).
- The juries consider all nominated titles to come up with a shortlist of five books (which are published on the site with blurbs from the judges, in no particular order).
- From that shortlist, the juries decide the winners and honorable mentions (which are announced on the site and in a press release, with collective praise from the jury).
- The award winners are recognized at an invite-only awards ceremony at Asia Society in New York, with two mini-panels in conversation with judges. The video of this event is then posted to the site.

How do you ensure fairness?

The jury for each award has full independence to choose the shortlist, winner and honorable mention from all qualifying books. They are instructed to disclose relationships with authors and publishers under consideration, and can recuse themselves from those discussions. The criteria of selection for the winner are based on merit alone, not background or beliefs.

How is the prize money divided?

If a book has multiple authors, the cash award is divided equally among them (with editors counting as authors for edited collections with multiple contributors). If a book is translated, the cash award is split in half between the author(s) and translator(s) — that is, two translators of a winning novel would each receive $2,500. Each winner also receives a physical award.

Who funds the prize?

The prize is funded by a grant and individual donations; it's budget is separate to that of *China Books Review*.

I have another question.

For all other questions and media inquiries, please email *info@chinabooksreview.com*. ■