



Journal  
OF THE  
Royal Asiatic  
Society  
China



---

Vol. 75 No. 1  
2013



**JOURNAL**  
**OF THE**  
**ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY**  
**China**





Journal  
OF THE  
Royal Asiatic  
Society  
China

---

Vol. 75 No. 1, 2013

---

EDITOR  
Lindsay Shen, PhD.

Copyright 2013 RAS China.

The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China is published by  
Earnshaw Books on behalf of the Royal Asiatic Society China.



CONTRIBUTIONS

The editors of the Journal invite submission of original unpublished scholarly articles and book reviews on the religion and philosophy, art and architecture, archaeology, anthropology and environment, of China. Books sent for review will be donated to the Royal Asiatic Society China Library. Contributors receive a copy of the Journal.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members receive a copy of the journal, with their paid annual membership fee. Individual copies will be sold to non-members, as available.

LIBRARY POLICY

Copies and back issues of the Journal are available in the library. The library is available to members.

[www.royalasiaticsociety.org.cn](http://www.royalasiaticsociety.org.cn)



Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China  
Vol. 75 No. 1, 2013

978-988-8422-44-9

© 2013 Royal Asiatic Society China

The copyright of each article rests with the author.

EB086

Designed and produced for RAS China by Earnshaw Books Ltd. (Hong Kong)  
Room 1801, 18F, Public Bank Centre, 120 Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in material form, by any means, whether graphic, electronic, mechanical or other, including photocopying or information storage, in whole or in part. May not be used to prepare other publications without written permission from the publisher.

*The Royal Asiatic Society China thanks Earnshaw Books  
for its valuable contribution and support.*



# CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR	3
JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY CHINA ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2012	5
RAS CHINA COUNCIL 2009-2013	6
<b>NEW PERSPECTIVES</b>	
<b>Peer Reviewed Research Articles</b>	
Xin Qiji (1140-1207): Patriotism, Idle Sorrow, and Poetic Creation <i>by Paul Hansen</i>	10
Cultural Translation and <i>Post hoc</i> Intellectual Conceit: Critical Reflections on the Conflating of Traditional Chinese Cultural Thought and Practice, and the Theory and Practice of Deconstruction in Relation to the Theorising of Contemporary Chinese Art <i>by Paul Gladston</i>	32
Books of Change: A Western Family's Writings on China, 1855-1949 <i>by Tim Chamberlain</i>	55
The Scottish Shanghailanders Alexander Wylie (1815-1887): Missionary, Man of Letters, Mathematician <i>by Ian Gow</i>	77
Harriet Monroe, Amy Lowell and Witter Bynner: the scramble for Chinese poetry <i>by Anne Witchard</i>	103
<b>Selected Essays</b>	
Lu Xun's Thoughts on Parental Influence <i>by Sophie Leacacos</i>	135

## DISCOVERIES

### Peer Reviewed Research Articles

Collecting Research Materials in Shanghai: A Qing Dynasty Astrologer's Predictions for the Future

*by Ronald Suleski* 139

### Selected Essays

Finding Eliza in the Bibliotheca Zikawei

*by Lindsay Shen* 162

Managing Cinemas in Old Shanghai

*by Tess Johnston* 171

The Story of the Sketchbook

*by Sarah Keenlyside* 178

## PLACES

### Peer Reviewed Research Articles

The Early Hotels of the Shanghai Foreign Settlement

*by Eric Politzer* 182

Gypsies of Shanghai: the Roma Community of Late 1930s and 1940s Shanghai and its Role in the City's Entertainment Industry

*by Paul French* 206

### Selected Essays

A Brief History of Shanghai's Future

*by Jeffrey Wasserstrom* 221

The Seven Ages of Dongjiadu: Urban Form in Shanghai's Old Docks

*by Katya Knyazeva* 231

Yangpu: Past, Present and Future: The Engine of Shanghai

*by Michelle Blumenthal* 254

A New Course in History

*by Peter Hibbard* 260

Fox Spirits, Gate Towers and Old Peking <i>by M. A. Aldrich</i>	264
Chasing Ghosts in Old Tianjin <i>by Bill Savadove</i>	270
The North Korea Mass Games <i>by Gary Jones</i>	279
The Trading Melting Pot of Kashgar <i>by Sam Chambers, with photographs by André Eichman</i>	289

### BOOK REVIEWS

<i>Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres</i> , ed. Kam Louie <i>reviewed by Karen S. Kingsbury</i>	302
<i>Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography</i> , eds. May Holdsworth and Christopher Munn <i>reviewed by Frances Wood</i>	304
<i>Décadence Mandchoue: The China Memoirs of Sir Edmund Trelawny Backhouse</i> , ed. Derek Sandhaus <i>reviewed by Paul French</i>	306
<i>Qian Qianyi's Reflections of Yellow Mountain: Traces of a Late-Ming Hatchet and Chisel</i> by Stephen McDowall <i>reviewed by Tamara H. Bentley</i>	312
<i>Lao She in London</i> by Anne Witchard <i>reviewed by Jo Lusby</i>	315
<i>Knowledge is Pleasure: Florence Ayscough in Shanghai</i> by Lindsay Shen <i>reviewed by Sue Anne Tay</i>	318
<i>Writing in(to) Architecture: China's Architectural Design and Construction Since 1949</i> by Sylvia Chan <i>reviewed by Austin Williams</i>	323

<i>Midnight in Peking – How the murder of a young Englishwoman haunted the last days of Old China</i> by Paul French reviewed by Alex Sparks	326
<i>Shanghai Fury: Australian Heroes of Revolutionary China</i> by Peter Thompson reviewed by Liu Wei	328
<i>The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914</i> by Robert Bickers reviewed by Derek Sandhaus	330
<i>Over There: The Pictorial Chronicle of the Chinese Labour Corps in the Great War</i> by the Weihai Municipal Archives reviewed by Alex Sparks	334
<i>Reluctant Regulators: How the West Created and How China Survived the Global Financial Crisis</i> by Leo F. Goodstadt reviewed by Frank Mulligan	336
<i>Structure, Audience and Soft Power in East Asian Pop Culture</i> by Chua Beng Huat reviewed by William F. Smith	339
<i>Beijing Record: A Physical and Political History of Planning Modern Beijing</i> by Wang Jun reviewed by Jeremy Goldkorn	342
<i>Chinatowns in a Transnational World, Myths and Realities of an Urban Phenomenon</i> , eds. Vanessa Künnemann and Ruth Mayer reviewed by Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong	347
<i>China's Vanishing Worlds: Countryside, Traditions and Cultural Spaces</i> by Matthias Messmer and Hsin-Mei Chuang reviewed by Neale McGoldrick	351
<i>Europe and China: Strategic Partners or Rivals?</i> , ed. Roland Vogt reviewed by Austin Williams	354
<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>	357

## FOREWORD

Volume 75 of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China*, represents not only a commitment to the continuation of the “re-launched” publication but in addition, a move towards raising the quality of the Journal through the establishment of an international Editorial Advisory Committee and a new broader format. It is designed to provide a vehicle for RAS members to contribute their insights on China, as well as offering the opportunity for scholars and others internationally to submit their papers. As President and previously as Hon. Secretary, I am delighted to have witnessed the emergence of the Journal as the fruits of tremendous enthusiasm, commitment and hard work of those who launched the first edition and those, especially the present Council, who helped with this volume. The result is, I believe, a superb issue, rich in insights on a wide range of subjects and from a wide range of scholars as well as excellent contributions from knowledgeable present-day RAS members. The Journal is one pillar of the RAS Council commitment to continuing to carry the baton to fulfill the wishes of the Founding President, Dr Bridgman, as Peter Hibbard mentions below. A second pillar, which further strengthens the RAS commitment to spread greater knowledge of China, is the development of the new RAS China Monograph Series, published by Hong Kong University Press and launched in 2012 with the first two monographs. The newly established RAS Library, a third pillar, provides a resource and home for all our archival material. The fourth pillar, the RAS Programme, features a Lecture Series offering a platform for speakers to present to our members, and includes Focus Group meetings for discussion and debate on books, films, history and culture.

Producing a high quality Journal is no easy task and I would like to thank Hon. Editor, Dr. Lindsay Shen, and all those who have contributed by way of editing, proofreading, insights, design and publication, and of course, the authors and Advisory Committee Members, who have all willingly and selflessly helped to make this new issue possible and I really hope you enjoy reading its contents.

**Katy Gow, President**

Back in 1857, Dr Elijah Coleman Bridgman, an accomplished Sinologue and the first American missionary to set foot in China in 1830, was elected President of our Society's forerunner, the Shanghai Scientific and Literary Society. Bridgman had the foresight to see that Shanghai would soon become one of the greatest centres of influence in the Eastern hemisphere and in his inaugural address to the Society, in October that year, he asserted that "literature and science must surely find a nursery here." He also remarked that:

*As the Society advances its researches, ways and means will be required in order that we may add our own literary and scientific contributions to the list of new publications, which characterize and make illustrious the remarkable age in which we live. A public journal ... will be an essential auxiliary. From a body of educated men as large as that now resident in Northern China ... It seems to me the public has the right to expect a publication of this kind.*

And thus, the Society's first journal was published in June 1858 – around the same time that it became the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (NCBRAS).

When the Society was reconvened in 2007, we were very much committed to both recognizing and building upon its fine heritage and our first Journal in over 60 years was published in April 2010. That Journal, bearing number 74, now sits aside volume number 73 published in 1948, on the shelves of the new Royal Asiatic Society China Library. This archive – a library for our membership – carried on a tradition, established in the 1860s, when the NCBRAS library was born. At the heart of our new library is one of only four almost complete sets of our former Journal to be found in Asia. The revival of both the Journal and the Library have been made possible through the hard work and generous support of many of our members and friends, to whom the Society owes a great deal in its continuing pursuit to promote the age-old ideals of intellectual and cultural enrichment in the city that Dr Bridgman had high hopes for.

**Peter Hibbard, MBE, President 2007 to 2011**

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China* has venerable roots reaching back to 1858, when its first issue was released. It also has new shoots, as the publication of the society that was re-established first in Hangzhou in 2006, then a year later in Shanghai. As such, it is still forging its new identity, presenting research into Chinese culture and society, past and present, with a focus on mainland China. This current issue contains articles from scholars working in different parts of the world, for whom Shanghai is a major international metropolis, as well as members of the Society based in Shanghai, whose interests may be in the microcosmic and local. Some of the material presented here falls outside the boundaries of traditional scholarship, and includes photo-essays, interviews, transcriptions, and memoirs. Whether produced inside or outside the academy, all the material here is considered of value in furthering knowledge of China.

This issue is divided into three sections, followed by book reviews. *New Perspectives* provides fresh insights into subjects that have received scholarly and popular attention, but benefit from further reflection. Investigations include a re-appraisal of the reputations of several early western translators of Chinese poetry; a critical reflection on the existing analysis of Chinese contemporary art; the rediscovery of a Scottish missionary translator and scholar; and translations of a Song dynasty poet lesser-known to English-language readers.

*Discoveries* is a selection of sleuth-work. In this section writers share “ephemera” that could just as easily have been destroyed or forgotten, but have instead been unearthed and revelled in: an astrologer’s book of predictions, a sketchbook of life in the Beijing *hutongs*, a bookkeeper’s log for Shanghai cinemas – all found in street markets; and a diary of the woman who founded the first school for girls in Shanghai, discovered un-catalogued in the Shanghai Library.

In *Places*, articles and essays linger in historic and present Shanghai, exploring the crannies of lesser-known neighbourhoods, or portraying overlooked inhabitants from the past. Contributions range further afield to Beijing, Tianjin, Kashgar and North Korea.

I would like to thank the recently formed Advisory Committee for their help in suggesting contributors, as well as peer reviewers and books for review; this year the journal instituted a peer review process

for research papers; these are collected at the beginning of each section. I would also like to thank Spencer Dodington, Honorary Editor, 2011, for sourcing some of the articles in this issue: Thanks are due too, to everyone who assisted with proof-reading, especially Ed Allen, Shelly Bryant and Susie Gordon. As always, the Society's Council and President, Katy Gow, have been an unfailing source of support and encouragement.

**Lindsay Shen**  
**Hon Journal Editor**

# **JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY CHINA ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2012**

Robert Bickers: University of Bristol

Michelle Blumenthal, independent art consultant, Shanghai; RAS China board

Katharine Burnett: University of California, Davis

Colin Day, formerly Publisher of Hong Kong University Press

Spencer Dodington: writer, Shanghai

Paul French: writer, Shanghai; RAS China board

Ian Gow: Sino-British College, Shanghai

Peter Hibbard: independent scholar, Shanghai; RAS China board

Liu Wei: Zhejiang University, Hangzhou; RAS China board

Robert Mintz: The Walters Art Museum, MD

Ni Yibin: independent scholar, Shanghai

Justin O'Jack: Council on International Educational Exchange, Shanghai

Lynn Pan: independent scholar, Shanghai

Jeffrey Riegel: University of Sydney

Lindsay Shen: Sino-British College, Shanghai; RAS China board

William Smith: Sino-British College, Shanghai

## **RAS CHINA 2009-2010**

**HON VICE PRESIDENTS** Carma Elliot OBE – British Consul General  
Nenad Djordjevic – former Serbia Consul Gerant  
Professor Liu Wei, PhD – Zhejiang University

### **RAS COUNCIL - OFFICERS AND MEMBERS**

President	Peter Hibbard MBE
Vice Presidents	Mike Nethercott Justin O'Jack
Hon Secretary & Newsletter	Katy Gow
Hon Treasurer	Jan Flohr
Hon Programme Director	Michelle Blumenthal
Hon Journal Editor	Spencer Dodington
Hon Research & Publications Director	Paul French
Hon Librarian	Kim Taylor PhD
Councillors	Charles Johnson Isabella Jackson Tess Johnston
Ex-officio	Jennifer Wen

#### **RAS CHAPTERS**

Vice President Suzhou	Bill Dodson
-----------------------	-------------

# RAS CHINA 2010-2011

## HON VICE PRESIDENTS

Carma Elliot OBE CMG  
Nenad Djordjevic  
Professor Liu Wei, PhD

## RAS COUNCIL - OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

President	Peter Hibbard MBE
Hon Secretary & Newsletter	Katy Gow
Hon Treasurer	Jan Flohr
Hon Programme Director	Michelle Blumenthal
Hon Journal Editor	Spencer Dodington
Hon Research & Publications Director	Paul French
Hon Librarian	Kim Taylor PhD
Councillors	Amandine Crey Lynn Fawcett Alexandra Hendrickson Charles Johnson Tess Johnston Wendy Stockley
Ex Officio	Jennifer Wen

## RAS CHAPTERS

Vice President Suzhou	Bill Dodson
-----------------------	-------------

## **RAS CHINA 2011-2012**

### **HON VICE PRESIDENTS**

Carma Elliot OBE CMG

Nenad Djordjevic

Professor Liu Wei, PhD

### **PAST PRESIDENT**

2007-2011 Peter Hibbard MBE

## **RAS COUNCIL - OFFICERS AND MEMBERS**

President

Katy Gow

Vice Presidents

Spencer Dodington

Tess Johnston

Mike Nethercott

Hon Secretary

Patricia Lambert

Hon Treasurer

Jan Flohr

Hon Programme Director

Michelle Blumenthal

Hon Journal Editor

Lindsay Shen PhD

Hon Research & Publications Director

Paul French

Hon Librarian

Kim Taylor PhD

Councillors

Simon Drakeford

Lynn Fawcett

Alexandra Hendrickson

Liz Jennings

Neale McGoldrick

Wendy Stockley

Past President 2007-2011

Peter Hibbard MBE

Ex Officio

Jennifer Wen

### **RAS CHAPTERS**

Vice President Suzhou

Bill Dodson

## **RAS CHINA 2012-2013**

<b>HONORARY PRESIDENT</b>	Brian Davidson - HM Consul General, British Consulate Shanghai
<b>HON VICE PRESIDENT</b>	Carma Elliot OBE CMG Nenad Djordjevic Professor Liu Wei, PhD
<b>PAST PRESIDENT</b>	2007-2011 Peter Hibbard MBE

## **RAS COUNCIL - OFFICERS AND MEMBERS**

Elected at Annual General Meeting 27th November 2012

President	Katy Gow
Vice Presidents	Tess Johnston Mike Nethercott Jan Flohr
Hon Secretary	Patrica Lambert
Hon Treasurer	Simon Drakeford
Hon Programme Director	vacant
Hon Journal Editor	vacant
Hon Research & Publications Director	Paul French
Hon Librarian	Ed Allen
Councillors	Lynn Fawcett Susie Gordon Alexandra Hendrickson Peter Hibbard MBE Liz Jennings Neale McGoldrick Wendy Stockley

### **RAS CHAPTERS**

Vice President Suzhou	Bill Dodson
-----------------------	-------------

## XIN QIJI (1140-1207)

### Patriotism, Idle Sorrow, and Poetic Creation

BY PAUL HANSEN

*How*

*Men laugh*

*at his robe and cap,*

*Onto death*

*shrouded in dust.*

In the late Spring of 1162 a young Chinese rebel commander and staff officer was riding with his troops through territory held by the enemy. The enemy was a nomadic tribal confederation, styled the Jin, which had conquered most of north China. This rebel band was on its return journey from the Southern Song fastness of Jiankang (present day Nanjing) to a Chinese rebel force of some 200,000 men, the “Army of Heavenly Peace” in Shandong Province; it was a journey of several days and some six-hundred kilometres. As an emissary for his own commander, Geng Jing, “Commissioner” of that army, the troop leader, barely twenty-one, had just pledged the loyalty of the entire Shandong rebel force to the legitimist Song Dynasty.

Known to history as the Southern Song (1127-1279), this was the native dynasty that continued to rule in south China. The young commander’s pledge of fealty was given personally to the Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127-1162). Gaozong accepted the allegiance of the rebel Shandong army and awarded its young emissary the honorary title of “Gentleman for Rendering Service”.

Xin Qiji and his troops, for our poet was that commander and emissary, had then begun their return ride, but when they reached Haizhou (Haidong, in the northeast of present-day Jiangsu Province), he heard that Geng Jing had been murdered by a turncoat subordinate, Zhang Anguo, who then offered his services to the Jin forces. Immediately, at the head of some fifty picked horsemen, Xin Qiji rode to the Jin camp, penetrated to the tent where Zhang was drinking with a Jin general, seized him and carried the traitor, tied to his saddle, back to Nanjing. There Zhang was publicly beheaded, and Xin Qiji began a career in the Song civil service. In time the Jin suppressed the native Chinese rebellion, and after these tumultuous events Xin Qiji was never to return to

his home in Shandong.

Nevertheless, despite his talents and commitment the transplanted northerner and Song official was never fully accepted by the southern court and officialdom. He hardly advanced beyond the middle levels of the civil service and due to his frequent and vigorously expressed recommendations encouraging reconquest, incurred imperial and official disapproval. Consequently, Xin Qiji was forced to squander more than two decades of his vigorous middle years in enforced retirement where his enemies at least, certainly laughed at his official uniform, “robe and cap”, “shrouded” in the “dust” of idleness. He himself characterized his feelings about both futile official service and compulsory retirement as “idle sorrow” (‘*xian chou*’ [闲愁]), remarking, “Idle sorrow/ is most bitter”. And in 1178, in Lin’an (present-day Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province), capital of the Southern Song, while he was visiting a scenic site whose beautiful springs recalled those of his home, Ji’nan in Shandong, he wrote:

*I hate it*  
*in this spot,*  
*Landscape*  
*basically like home,*  
*A wanderer*  
*now.*

The waste of his widely recognized civil and military talents was a loss to the empire and a personal tragedy for the man.

However, Xin Qiji was also a skilled, dynamic and prolific composer of lyrics (*ci*), indeed the most prolific creator in that form of the entire Song dynasty. These celebrated lyrics reflect a lifelong patriotism and opposition to the Jurchen (Jin) occupation of north China. Our poet’s sense of pain for the country’s as well as his own lost opportunities was never absent from his thoughts and emotions, nor far from his writing brush. Along with love of country, his lyrics are noted for their variety of poetic styles, depth of learning, love of landscape and wine and especially the powerful intensity of their expression. As the late Irving Lo wrote: “Particularly admired is the remarkably wide range of his style: from earthy humor and colloquialism to high reaches of philosophical speculation, and [as well *ed.*] the fecundity of his learning, from moods of the deepest melancholy and tenderness to the most spirited outbursts

of high-minded sentiments”.

Across the centuries, his myriads of admirers, some great poets themselves, saw that the loss of his extraordinary abilities to the Song state and his own ensuing personal tragedy had created an undying heritage for the patriotism of the Chinese people and for the continuing grand current of Chinese literature. It is my wish that these translations be in some ways worthy of the stunning lyrics of this extraordinary poet and help to further introduce them to the world of English poetry.

Versions of two of these translations have previously appeared in my book, *Slanting light along the riverbank, a stretch of trees*, and other translations of Xin Qiji's lyrics in my *Jeweled Hairpin Split: Seven lyrics of love and sorrow*, (The Clarel Press, Suzhou and Anacortes, 2010 and 2011).

Within the limits of my modest abilities I have striven to be accurate to the originals while creating something akin to poems in English. I must however own that I have taken the very occasional liberty when there seemed no alternative, but at those infrequent times have painstakingly sought to avoid distorting the meaning of the originals. Ultimately any errors in these translations, notes or references are mine alone, and I welcome your comments.

At an earlier stage the Washington poet and classical scholar, Michael Daley, completed the Herculean task of reading and commenting on all of the several dozen Xin Qiji lyrics I am in process of doing. He deserves more than thanks.

Finally, it is my most pleasant obligation to thank Lindsay Shen, editor of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China*, for affording me the honor of contributing to the resumption of this venerable publication. May the spirits of old Giles and Hopkins, Wilhelm and Waley look upon its resurrection with beneficent regard.

Paul Hansen,  
Hangzhou,  
December, 15, 2012

I

COMING  
TO MOURN THE PAST

*At Jiankang, climbing to the Pavilion  
of the Appreciative Heart*

*For Shi Zhengzhi, Regent of Nanjing*

*To the tune: Nian Nujiao*

i.

Coming  
    to mourn the past  
And climb  
    a lofty tower,  
I'll win a thousand cups  
    of idle sorrow.

The crouching tiger,  
    coiled dragon where are they?  
Only rise and dissolution  
    fill the eye.

Beyond willow,  
    slanting Sun,  
The river's edge,  
    a bird returns,  
Hilltop,  
    tall trees wind-tossed.

Strip of sail  
    going west,  
Who trills a melody  
    on flute of frost-bamboo?

ii.

I remember still Xie An,

relaxed, refined,  
 East Mountain,  
     an aging hermit,  
 Tears falling  
     to the zither's plaint.

Granting his younger clansmen  
                                     all the martial glory,  
 Long day whiled away  
                                     at the go board.

Precious mirror  
                                     hard to find,  
 Blue clouds  
                                     near sunset,  
 Who urges me  
                                     toward the verdant cup?

Up river,  
     the angry wind,  
 A dawn will come,  
                                     waves overturn the house.

一 聲 誰 噴 霜 竹 。	片 帆 西 去 。	隴 上 吹 喬 木 。	水 邊 歸 鳥 。	柳 外 斜 陽 。	只 有 興 亡 滿 目 。	虎 踞 龍 蟠 何 處 是 。	贏 得 閑 愁 千 斛 。	上 危 樓 。	我 來 吊 古 。	呈 史 留 守 致 道 。	登 建 康 賞 心 停 。	念 奴 嬌 。
---------------------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------

朝 來 波 浪 翻 屋 。	江 頭 風 怒 。	誰 勸 杯 中 綠 。	碧 雲 將 暮 。	寶 鏡 難 尋 。	長 日 惟 消 棋 局 。	兒 輩 功 名 都 付 與 。	淚 落 哀 箏 曲 。	東 山 歲 晚 。	卻 憶 安 石 風 流 。
---------------------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------------

This lyric was written around 1169 when Xin was serving in Jiankang.

*Shi Zhengzhi* (JS: 1151) was a high official, far senior to Xin Qiji at the time this lyric was written. He once submitted a memorial to the Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127-1162), entitled *A Guidebook to Reconquest*; in it Shi suggested shifting the capital to Jiankang during times of military activity and to Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou) during peacetime: an idea which was considered but not implemented. He was as well the original creator of the Suzhou garden now known as the "Master of the Nets".

*Idle sorrow* reflects Jiaxuan's distress at the court's inaction about the re-conquest of the north. As long as the Song court disregarded what he considered its primary duty, he was unable to fulfill his own patriotic and personal goals. So, in terms of his most pressing concerns the poet feels he is living in idleness and sorrow.

*Crouching tiger, /coiled dragon* is part of a remark the Latter Han (25-220) and Three Kingdoms (220-280) strategist and statesman Zhuge Liang (181-234) made to Sun Quan (182-252), ruler of the state of Wu, concerning the topography and *fengshui* (geomancy) of Jiankang: "Bell Mountain (*Mount Zhong*) is a *coiled dragon* and Rock Wall (*Shicheng*) a *crouching tiger*: residence for a true monarch." Jiankang was often the capital of southern China when the unity of the empire was shattered, so the *tiger* and *dragon* are here an ironic and melancholy reference to the reduced southern Song state.

*Only rise and dissolution/ fill the eye*: This historical glimpse recalls the several tragically short dynasties which had their capitals in what is now Nanjing: The Wu state during the era of The Three Kingdoms (220-280) after the final disintegration of the Han Dynasty, the Period of Disunion between the collapse of the Western Jin (316) and the Sui unification (581), and the decades of the Five Dynasties (907-960) from the fall of the Tang until the Song unification.

*Zhuge Liang*, one of China's greatest strategists, was a general and later First Councilor of the state of Shu, which, during the period of the Three Kingdoms comprised most of Sichuan, Guizhou and Yunnan. Zhuge lived as a recluse for part of his life, and Liu Bei (162-223), a Han prince, and later ruler of Shu (221-263) visited him three times at his hermitage before Zhuge agreed to serve with him. Subsequently he became Liu Bei's most able subordinate and military commander, assisting him in confronting Cao Cao (155-220), ruler of the rival state

of Wei.

Sun Quan, Cao Cao and Liu Bei were the founders of the Three Kingdoms that succeeded the Latter Han Dynasty. Of these states, no single one, that created in the Southeast by Sun, in the North by Cao and his heirs, nor in present-day Sichuan by Liu, was able to unify the Empire. Either at war or maintaining an uneasy peace, they existed in a tottery equilibrium known as the “three legs of the cauldron”. Unification only occurred in 280 after the successor to the Wei Kingdom, the Western Jin (266-316), had extinguished its two rivals.

In the five lines from *Beyond willow to flute of frost bamboo* Xin Qiji paints a scene of autumn dusk and desolation, a scene that reflects his own dispirited, listless mood. He even describes the bamboo of the flute as *frost*, or autumn, bamboo, on which the solitary boatman trills a single melody.

*I remember still Xie An/ relaxed, refined:* Xie An (320-385), was one of the great statesmen and cultural figures of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), which like the Southern Song only ruled in the South. A member of the politically prominent Xie clan, he did not accept office until he was forty. Previously he had lived as a recluse on East Mountain near Shaoxing; his companion was a woman entertainer and, hand in hand, they would wander enjoyably about. The future Emperor Jianwen (r. 371-2) said of him, “Xie An is sure to come out of retirement. As long as he shares the same pleasures as other men, he can’t help sharing their anxieties”.

*Tears fell at zither’s/ plaintive tune:* Over the course of the next two decades, surviving the deadly political strife typical of the times, Xie An rose steadily in rank, though not without enduring slander and the emperor’s distrust. At a certain banquet when he was serving under the shadow of his ruler’s displeasure, the Emperor Xiaowu ordered Huan Yi (d. ca 392), a friend of the statesman’s and the foremost flautist of his generation, to play the flute. While Huan expressed no reluctance, after one tune he requested that a slave, a good flautist, play the flute while Huan played the zither and sang. The Emperor acquiesced and Huan sang a song of remonstrance against the Emperor’s treatment of Xie An:

*Being a ruler*  
*has never been easy,*  
*And only good ministers*  
*have trouble,*

*Their loyal deeds*  
*are never obvious,*  
*Thus suspicion*  
*and disaster appear.*

Xie An was brought to tears and moved from his place to be nearer to his friend, and an expression of extreme regret appeared on the Emperor's face.

*Long day whiled away/ at the go board:* The climax of Xie An's career was the Battle of the Fei River in 383 when, under his political guidance and with his nephew Xie Xuan (343-388) in command of the military forces, the Chinese Jin repulsed an invasion from the north on the part of the proto-Tibetan Fu Jian (338-385), emperor of the Former Qin. When a message reporting the victory reached him, "Xie An was playing go with a guest; after reading it, he set it on the couch without any pleased expression at all on his face, and continued to play as before".

*The precious mirror/ was hard to find:* During the Changqing Reign Period (821-24) of the Tang Emperor Muzong (Li Heng), a fisherman dropped his net into a deep spot in the Qinhuai River at Nanjing and brought up a brilliant copper mirror about a foot across. When the fisherman looked at himself in the mirror, he was startled to see his internal organs and blood vessels in great detail, all twisting and moving. He began to tremble and dropped it back in the water. The fisherman spoke of this to a neighbor and Li Yu, a member of the imperial clan, heard of it. He had the riverbed laboriously searched for a whole year, but it was never recovered. The "precious mirror" here refers to good military leadership, of which Xie An availed himself when he selected his able nephew as commander of the Jin armies in their defense against the Former Qin.

In his mentioning the *precious mirror* as well as *Xie An*, to whom he refers often in his lyrics, the poet hints at his own ambition of contributing in a major way to the recovery of the lost territories. These of course included his own lost home in present-day Shandong.

*Who urges me/ toward the verdant cup?* Both Xin Qiji's deep concerns and isolation *urge* him to drink. *The verdant cup* means fine wine; green wine, made say from plums, is not unusual in China even today.

Alluding to these historical events, Xin is in fact lamenting the present situation of the Southern Song Dynasty and criticizing what he sees as a feckless court party that consistently refused to take steps to

reconquer the lost northern provinces. Thus, he refers to *idle sorrow*. At the same time the country itself lies in mortal danger due to the court's clinging to the dangerous policy of pursuing peace with a malevolent foe, and one day an *angry wind* and *waves* will *overturn the house*.



glossy,  
Jade bamboo  
wet.

Autumn dew  
falls  
Pearl, agate  
drip.  
The lofty pavilion  
arches over  
A jewel-clear,  
emerald abyss.

Drunken dancing wakens  
shade of *simurgh* or phoenix,  
Yet pure songs don't dispel  
tears of fish and dragon.

I hate it  
in this spot,  
Landscape  
basically like home,  
A wanderer  
now.

无 人 识 。	玉 斧 削 方 壺	是 当 年	傍 湖 千 丈 开 青 壁 。	谁 信 天 峰 飞 堕 地	佩 环 声 急 。	群 仙 东 下	渐 翠 谷	冠 纓 拱 立 。	看 夹 道	直 节 堂 堂	题 冷 泉 亭	满 江 红
------------------	-----------------------	-------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------	------------------	-------------	-----------------------	-------------	------------------	------------------	-------------

今	风	恨	浩	醉	玉	向	琼	秋	琅	山
为	物	此	歌	舞	渊	危	珠	露	玕	木
客	本	中	莫	且	澄	亭	滴	下	湿	润
。	吾		遣	摇	碧	横	。		。	
	家		鱼	鸾	。	跨				
			龙	凤						
			泣	影						
			。							

Written in Hangzhou, styled the “temporary capital” of the Southern Song, this lyric was probably composed in 1178 .

In Xin Qiji’s time Cold Spring Kiosk stood above a deep pool at the foot of Come-Flying Peak (Please see below).

*East-sea goddesses*: these feminine deities would be Daoist immortals from Mount Square Pot (please see below) and the other fabled Daoist isles in the Gulf of Bohai to the east of Shandong.

*This heavenly peak* refers to Come-Flying Peak (*Feilai Feng*) on the southeast part of the Lingyin Temple campus west of West Lake. The Indian monk Huili founded Lingyin Temple during the Xianhe (326-335) of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420). He said Come-Flying Peak had flown to Hangzhou and was one of the smaller summits of the Vulture Peak in India, where the Buddha Shakyamuni preached the *Lotus Sutra*.

*Mount Square Pot (Fanghu Shan)* is one of five legendary islands in the Bohai Sea, north of the Shandong peninsula and east of Dalian. Square Pot and the other islands are the home of the Daoist Immortals and believed to have been sculpted by the creator using a jade axe.

*Simurgh* is the translation, conventionally accepted by many Sinologists, for the mythological bird *lian*. It is a Persian word derived from the Sanskrit *cyena*, eagle, plus *murgh*, bird, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as “A monstrous bird of Persian legend, imagined as rational, having the power of speech and of great age”. Though a stunning word, the two mythological creatures are only linked in the minds of certain modern translators.

*Landscape/ basically like home, // A wanderer/ now*: Xin was from Jinan in Shandong, a city famous for its springs. As we have noted, once he left his home to serve the native Song Dynasty in the south, he never returned.

In this lyric Xin Qiji constructs a grand fantasy out of his visit to Cold Spring Kiosk. First, in his personification of the pine trees as upstanding officials lining the emperor’s path he suggests an era of

good government and by further implication, national unity. In his description of the celestial ambiance of Cold Spring Pond, Xin Qiji imagines the purling of its waterfalls and rills are the tinkling of the waist ornaments worn by Daoist goddesses from the eastern sea.

Later in the *canto* he buttresses this reference to the sacred eastern isles when he offers a choice between the Buddhist and Daoist creation legends for Come-Flying Peak, thus comparing the Hangzhou mountain to the immortals' home of Mount Square Pot near his native land of Shandong. This indirect reference to his own birthplace in Shandong with its celebrated springs is mocked in the sudden reversal this lyric takes at its conclusion. The reversal is itself foreshadowed by Xin Qiji's own skepticism about these fantasies, *No human/ knows?*

In *canto* two, intoxicated by its other-worldly atmosphere, Xin and his companions cross the pond for a party at Cold Spring Pavilion itself, but their drinking, dance and song cannot mask the laments of a deep tragic, reality, one even the fish and dragon spirits of the pond seem to mourn: Where national unity is not pursued, there is no good government, and hedonism cannot mask a betrayal of ideals. Thus, what resembles a Daoist heaven with its rills and spring only more forcibly impresses upon the poet his own homeless wanderings and inability to alter a national tragedy. Xin Qiji's lyric is similar to, but subjectively more complex than, a poem composed in Hangzhou by his contemporary Lin Sheng (*fl.* 1174-89), 'Written in the Official Hostel at Lin'an':

Mountain beyond blue mountain,  
tower beyond tower,  
The Singing, dancing on West Lake,  
when do they stop?  
The wind's warm perfume  
gets the tourists drunk,  
Till they think Hangzhou  
is the District of Bian.

The *District of Bian*, presently Kaifeng, Henan Province, was the capital of the Song dynasty before the seizure of the North by the Jurchen Jin Dynasty in 1127.

### III

## OH, THE DEPTH OF MY DECLINE, OH!

*I, your servant, used this tune to write lyrics celebrating the gardens and pavilions around the county seat. One day as I sat in the Hovering Clouds Hall, the sound of water, and the mountain hues offered a surprising charm. I reckoned stream and mountain wanted to be models for me, so I made some lines in close imitation of Tao Qian's "Hovering Clouds", a poem he wrote when thinking of a dear friend.*

*To the tune: He Xinlang*

Oh, the depth  
of my decline, oh!

Saddening,  
a lifetime  
Of friendships  
fallen away,  
So just a few  
remain today.

My hair, turned white in vain,  
drapes down a hundred feet,  
A laugh —  
everything that people do.

You ask me, *What is it, Sir,*  
*that can make you happy?*  
I see a mountain, naturally blue,  
greatly entrancing,  
The blue peak,  
I reckon,  
Might regard me  
that way too.



贺新郎

邑中园亭仆皆为  
 赋此词。一日，  
 独坐停云，水声  
 山色，竟来相娱  
 ，  
 意溪山欲援例者  
 ，  
 遂作数语，  
 庶几仿佛渊明思  
 亲友之意云

甚矣吾衰矣。	一尊搔首东窗里。	想渊明	停云诗就	此时风味。	江左沉酣求名者	岂识浊醪妙理。	回首叫	云飞风起。	不恨古人吾不见	恨古人	不见吾狂耳。	知我者	二三子。
。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。
。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。
。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。	。

This lyric was written in 1201.

*Oh the depth/ of my decline, oh!* : Xin Qiji begins the lyric with a famous remark of the Master Kong: “Oh the depth my decline, oh! For a long time, oh! I’ve had no dreams of the Duke of Zhou”. Of this statement James Legge writes, “In his earlier years, while hope still animated him, [the Master *ed.*] often dreamt” of the Duke of Zhou.

Xin Qiji never quite gave up his hopes for re-conquest, though as he grew older he saw they were unlikely to be realized. His quoting the Master Kong here implies re-conquest is unlikely because the feckless court and decadent officialdom do not follow the ideals and precepts of the Master Kong and his predecessor the Duke of Zhou. In Xin’s view these ideals would enjoin them to recover the northern homelands.

*Tao Qian* (365-427; Zi: Yuanming) is generally considered China’s greatest poet of the reclusive and pastoral life. Like Xin Qiji, Tao lived in

a time of disunion when north China was ruled by non-Chinese invaders and the south by generally weak and corrupt Chinese governments. The era when Tao lived was, if anything, an even darker time than Xin's: assassination and judicial murder were widespread. In order to support himself and his family Tao did enter upon an official career under the Eastern Jin (317-420), but in 405 after less than three months in office he quit in disgust and returned to his home and the life of a peasant farmer, preferring its independence and integrity despite the attendant hardships.

*My hair, turned white in vain* is an allusion to Li Bo's "Song of the Autumn Slough, Seventeen Poems":

*My hair white  
for thousands of feet,  
The reason?  
my sorrows are as long.*

*I see a mountain, naturally blue: blue mountain* is a term for reclusion.

*Naturally*, because *qing*, which ranges from green to a nearly black blue, is the color of something in its natural state.

Xin Qiji finds the mountain *entrancing*, and, anthropomorphising, supposes that it feels something similar about him. Thus he uses *entrancing* both to describe his spiritual perception of the blue, craggy mountain and reckons it sees the same quality in an aging, depressive, cashiered poet-official. The charm which poet and mountain share would lie in a rocky integrity and lofty visage; indeed, he sees them as alike *In feeling* and *appearance*. Pursuing this imagined intimacy, the poet hopes for spiritual peace.

Yet as we know, Xin Qiji's true friends are few and none of them present. Further, the mountain is ultimately unfeeling, yet the poet takes it as a friend. This reveals how strongly the poet's isolation, the result of his frustrated ambitions for re-conquest, and resulting dearth of true friends, has affected him. Xin Qiji's choice to prefer a mountain as companion depicts his loneliness more starkly, yet also suggests the poet's unflinching integrity.

*On the east porch with a winejar/ I scratch my head:* With this allusion to Tao Qian's "Hovering Clouds", as we have seen a meditation about a friend who is far away, the poet reiterates his own isolation and intro-



This song, calling for capable soldiers who would protect the empire and written by an emperor himself, prepares the reader to understand the origins of Xin Qiji's madness in the next stanza.

*I have no regret those ancients/ haven't seen me:* Zhang Rong, a favorite of Emperor Taizu of the Southern Qi (479-482), "was good at the grass script" and often praised his own abilities.

Once the emperor said: "The Director's calligraphy is forceful, but don't you regret not having the technique of the two Wangs?" Rong said: "It's not that Your Servant regrets lacking the technique of the Two Wangs, but that the Two Wangs regret lacking your servant's technique". He also often exclaimed: "I don't regret not seeing the ancients. What I regret is the ancients don't see me".

*The two Wangs* are Wang Xizhi (c. 309-365) who wrote the most celebrated example of Chinese calligraphy, "The Preface to the Orchid Pavilion", and his unconventional son Xianzhi (344-388), also considered a superb practitioner of the art. Wang Xizhi is generally thought to be China's most influential calligrapher.

*Just regret/ they// Haven't noticed/ that I'm crazy.* Of course Xin considers himself *crazy* because of his obsessive insistence on reconquest. That those who have passed on might envy Zhang Rong and ignore Xin Qiji's madness are attitudes neither bothers to explain.

*Those who know me, a couple of disciples:* With this quote from the *Analects* expressing the Master Kong's disappointment about the fact that only a handful of people knew what his life meant and what his real goals were, Xin Qiji takes his place with the ancient sages and men of integrity who did not compromise their principles, and were not broken by the powerful nor by social convention: men as different as the outrageous Seven Sages and China's premier philosopher, the Master Kong, with whose words the poet opens and closes this lyric.

## Endnotes

### Xin Qiji (1140-1207), Patriotism, Idle Sorrow and Poetic Creation

*How/ men laugh*: D, p. 92 and ZXD, I, p. 212. Haizhou: HAC, p. 61, H3; ZGDTJ, p. 101, D2. For *Idle sorrow/ is most bitter*: D, p. 66 and ZXD, I, p. 151; see the *Nian Nujiao* lyric, “Coming to mourn the past”. For *I hate it/ in this spot*: see the *Manjianghong* lyric, “Tough, imposing, upright pines”. For Irving Lo’s comment see HCCL, “Preface” (unpaginated). For an account of Xin Qiji’s life and work in their contemporary context, see Gong Bendong, 巩本栋, *A Critical Biography of Xin Qiji*, 辛弃疾评传 (CB).

### *Nian Nujiao* Coming to mourn the past

Text: ZXD, I, p. 18. *Pavilion of the Appreciative Heart*: D, p. 12. *Shi Zhengzhi*: ZXD, I, p. 15, n. 1; ZW, II, 334.31; for Shi and the Master of the Nets Garden see SZYLBO, p. 28. *Crouched tiger, /coiled dragon*: D, p. 236. *An is sure to come out of retirement*: SSXYM, VII, 21, 207. *Tears fell: op cit*, p. 389, n. 2; For *Huan Yi’s song* please see ZXD, I, p. 20, n. 5, citing *Jin Shu*, ‘Huan Yi Biography’. *He just whiled away*: SSXYM, VI, 35, p. 192. *The precious mirror*: ZXD, I, p. 20, n. 7. *The verdant cup* 绿酒: ZW, VII, 28209.159: 碧绿, “verdant”; there is also the very similar form 醪, ZW, IX. 40800: 美酒, “fine wine”, which I employ in this translation; Hightower translates 绿酒 as “clear wine”; see TQH, 64.

### *Manjianghong*, Tough, imposing, upright pines

Text: ZXD, I, 126. *Come-Flying Peak*: ZW, 9.43483.318 and 10.44974.76. *Square-Pot Mountain*: ZW, IV, 13936.394. For Li Sheng, “*Written in the Official Hostel at Lin’an*” please see Wang Rongchu 王荣初, ed. & comm., *Selected West Lake Poems* 西湖诗词选 (Zhejiang Wenyi Publishing House 浙江文艺出版社: Hangzhou, 1985), 99.

### *He Xinlang*, Oh, the depth of my decline, Oh!

Text: ZXD, II, p. 1360. *Oh, extreme/ is my decay, oh!*: LYL, VII, 5, p. 196; Arthur Waley translates this passage: “How utterly have things gone to the bad with me!”; LYW, VII, 5, p. 115. For Hightower’s translation of “*Hovering Clouds*” see TQH, pp. 11-12. For Zhang Rong see ZXD, II, p. 1362, n. 9 and ZW, III, 10026.1370. For the Southern Qi rulers see ZW, II, 2798.625. For *Those who know me* see LYL, XIV, 37, p. 288; and LYW, *loc cit*, p. 178.



## Bibliography

- D Xin Qiji, *Jiaxuan Ci Biannian Jianzhu* 辛稼轩词编年笺注, Deng Guangming 邓广铭, ed., Shanghai Guji Publishing House 上海古籍出版社, 2nd printing, Shanghai, 1998.
- CB Gong Bendong, 巩本栋, *A Critical Biography of Xin Qiji*, 辛弃疾评传, Nanjing University Publishing House 南京大学出版社, Nanjing 南京, (1998), 5th ed., 2007
- HAC Zhang Jiyun, ed., *Historical Atlas of China* 中國歷史地圖, Chinese Culture University Press 中國文化大學出版部, Huagang 華岡, Taiwan Pr., 1980.
- HCCL Lo, Irving Yucheng, *Hsin Ch'i-chi*, Twayne's World Authors Series, Twanye Publishers Inc., New York, 1971.
- LYL (School of) Kong Qiu 孔丘, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. I, Confucian Analects, James Legge trans., Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1st ed. 1872) 2nd ed. n. d., (Taiwan ed. n. d.).
- LYW (School of) Kong Qiu 孔丘, *The Analects*, 论语, Arthur Waley trans., Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knoph, New York, 2000.
- SSHYM Liu Yiqing, 刘义庆 Richard B. Mather trans., *A New Account of Tales of the World*, 世说新语, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1976.
- SZYLBO Cao Lindi 曹林娣, *An Examination and Appreciation of Horizontal and Vertical Inscriptions in The Suzhou Gardens* 苏州园林匾额楹联鉴赏, Huaxia Publishing House, 3rd ed., Beijing, 2009
- TQH Tao Qian, James Robert Hightower trans., *The Poetry of Tao Ch'ien*, Oxford University Press, London, 1970
- ZW *Zhongwen Dacidian* 中文大辞典, *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, 张其昀 Zhang Qiyun ed., Chinese Culture University Press, Taipei, 1973, 7th printing, 1985.

- ZGDTJ Du Xiurong 杜秀荣 & Tang Jianjun 唐建军, senior eds., *Atlas of China*, 中国地图集, 中国地图出版社, Chinese Cartographical Publishing House, Beijing, 2004, 4th Printing, 2006.
- ZXD Xin Qiji, *The Lyrics of Xinqiji, New Explanations and Compilation of Criticisms* 辛弃疾词, Zhu Decai, Xue Xiangsheng & Deng Hongmei 朱德才, 薛祥生 & 邓红梅 eds., The China Bookstore 中国书店, 2 vols., Beijing, 2006.

# CULTURAL TRANSLATION AND POST HOC INTELLECTUAL CONCEIT

## Critical Reflections on the Conflating of Traditional Chinese Cultural Thought and Practice and the Theory and Practice of Deconstruction in Relation to the Theorising of Contemporary Chinese Art

BY PAUL GLADSTON

Cultural interaction and exchange between China and the West has no clearly identifiable point of origin. The first recorded instances of direct cultural contact between China and (what has come to be known as) the West took place during the thirteenth century as a result of expeditions to the East mounted by Europeans; most notably that described by the Venetian Marco Polo.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, evidence of indirect cultural engagement via the Silk Road between Asia and Europe stretching back to Classical Antiquity and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cultural interaction and exchange between China and the West began to intensify significantly as a result of maritime trade links established by European traders and colonialists. Within Europe, this intensification resulted in a mania for all things Chinese that extended to the production of works of visual art, architecture, fashion, interior design and garden design referred to collectively since the late nineteenth century as “Chinoiserie”, much of which involved highly abstract interpretations of Chinese visual and textual sources as well as culturally non-specific combinations of differing technical and stylistic elements.<sup>3</sup> That same European mania also extended to the assimilation of Chinese cultural thinking and practice as part of discourses relating to the law, literature, politics and philosophy.<sup>4</sup> European influences on Chinese culture during the same period include Western post-Renaissance modes of pictorial representation (including the use of oil painting, *chiaroscuro* and perspective geometry) and Catholic Christian theology, both of which entered China principally through the teachings of Jesuit missionaries.<sup>5</sup>

A key example of the impact of Chinese cultural thinking on European philosophy during the eighteenth century can be found in relation to the work of the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. As well as developing philosophical concepts, including “simple substance” and “pre-established harmony”, that were almost certainly informed by

sinophile accounts of Confucian thought written by Jesuit missionaries working in China,<sup>6</sup> Leibniz contended (incorrectly) that hexagrams found in the classical Chinese text the *I Ching* 易经 or *Zhouyi* 周易 (The *Classic of Changes* or *Book of Changes*) (c. 1150 BCE),<sup>7</sup> which correspond ostensibly to the binary numbers from 0 to 111111, were evidence of a sophisticated mathematical culture in China preceding that of Europe. Leibniz also argued that the non-phonetic (ideographic) system of writing used to communicate between differing cultural groups within China – which, he assumed, following theories developed by the Dutch orientalist Jacob Gohl, transcended indigenous differences in cultural outlook – provided the model for a universal philosophical language, or *characteristica universalis* (universal character), capable of communicating abstract mathematical, scientific and metaphysical concepts accurately regardless of national-cultural divisions.<sup>8</sup> Leibniz's use of Chinese writing as an example to support the idea of a *characteristica universalis* was a response to continuing theological concerns within Europe with regard to the communication of information across cultural boundaries, which it was feared would, through the effects of cultural-linguistic difference, distort the truth of the word of God. It may also have supported a personal desire on Leibniz's part to develop a pluralistic philosophy combining differing schools of thought and cultural ways of thinking.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, cultural interaction and exchange between China and the West persisted and intensified still further across a range of artistic and intellectual disciplines. Within Western artistic circles (in Europe and America), this included increasingly orientalisising representations of the East as a place of exotic/decadent otherness as well as self-consciously artificial combinations of eastern and western cultural elements. Consider here, for example, James Abbott MacNeill Whistler's carefully staged depictions of East-Asian artifacts within European settings in paintings such as *Rose and Silver: The Princess from the Land of Porcelain* (1863-4) and *Symphony in White, No. 2 The Little White Girl* (1864) as well as the artist's heavily mediated appropriation of Japanese motifs as part of the redecoration of the Peacock Room (1876-77) commissioned to house an extensive private collection of Chinese porcelain.

The combining of East-Asian and Western styles was an important aspect of the development of the Aesthetic Movement in Europe and North America during the latter part of the nineteenth century. This

movement, which embraced the notion of “art for art’s sake” (*l’art pour l’art*) expounded by Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant and Théophile Gautier among others, regarded “true” art as an autotelic medium necessarily separated from any moral, didactic or utilitarian function. For artists and writers aligned with the Aesthetic Movement, such as James MacNeill Whistler and Walter Pater, the separation of art from any moral, didactic and/or utilitarian function was not, however, an outright rejection of art’s critical/political significance. Rather, it was an attempt to secure the position of art as a focus for free cultural expression beyond any moral, conceptual and practical constraints and therefore as the marker of a wider conception of social freedom and the self-actuating individual.

During the late nineteenth century, there were also appropriations of Chinese cultural thought and practice as part of the development of Western philosophy. Of utmost significance in this regard is Friedrich Nietzsche’s stated interest in Buddhism as a religion fostering self-reflexivity<sup>9</sup> and in the classic Daoist text the *Daodejing* 道德经 as a focus for intellectual relativism,<sup>10</sup> both of which resonate with the pervasively sceptical tenor of Nietzsche’s own non-rationalist thinking.

In 1854 a previously isolationist Japan was forced to open up to the outside world by the US Navy. This stimulated the emergence of “Japonisme”, a late nineteenth century genre of Western artistic production involving the appropriation of Japanese artistic styles and techniques that effectively displaced China as the primary source of East-Asian cultural influence on Western art. Chinese cultural thought and practice nevertheless continued to have a significant impact on the West. Within the US, from the mid nineteenth century through to the second half of the twentieth century there was an abiding interest in and appreciation of the formal techniques of traditional Chinese calligraphy and ink and brush painting as well as the intellectual traditions surrounding those practices as part of the teaching of art.<sup>11</sup> This abiding interest had a strong impact not only on the work of early twentieth-century modernists such as Georgia O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz,<sup>12</sup> but also later twentieth-century abstractionists such as Ad Reinhardt, Mark Tobey, Agnes Martin and Brice Marden.<sup>13</sup>

While it would be mistake to view the persistence of Chinese cultural influence on twentieth-century modernist/abstractionist art in the US as a straightforward continuation of nineteenth-century aestheticism, it is nevertheless possible to see in the conjunction of Chinese painterly

techniques and American formalist abstraction the persistent traces of a desire to uphold art as an autotelic focus for freedom of artistic expression. American interest in traditional Chinese calligraphy painting during the immediate post-war period was supported by a number of exhibitions in the US including a major exhibition of Chinese painting from the National Palace Museum in Taiwan that travelled to five American museums during the early 1960s.

Early twentieth century European avant-garde artists associated with Dada and Surrealism also appropriated aspects of traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice in support of their attempts to arrive at a critical/revolutionary reworking of life along the more playful lines of art. These attempts include the use of chance techniques<sup>14</sup> similar to those employed as part of traditional Chinese divinatory rituals associated with the *I Ching*<sup>15</sup> as well as the espousal of non-rationalist modes of thinking associated with Daoism and Buddhism.<sup>16</sup> By contrast with the Western philosophical tradition's durable belief in the negation of difference as part of some sort of transcendental unity or whole, vernacular Chinese thought and practice upholds the Daoist/Buddhist notion that there is the possibility of reciprocal interaction between persistently differing states of being (viz. the dynamic interrelationship between *yin* 阴 and *yang* 阳 given visual expression by the well-known Chinese symbol of the *taijitu* 太极图).<sup>17</sup>

The combining of European avant-garde artistic practice and Chinese cultural thinking and practice also became a feature of the emergent avant-garde art scene in the US. This combination of avant-garde artistic practice (principally techniques involving the pairing of collage-montage) and Chinese cultural thinking and practice came about not only through the influence of avant-garde European artists who had travelled to America such as Marcel Duchamp (whose early ready-made *Fountain* provoked a running scandal in the US press as the result of its rejection by the hanging committee of the New York Society of Independent Artists in 1917)<sup>18</sup> and Max Ernst (one of the originators of Surrealist collage), but also the emergence of home-grown avant-garde sinophiles such as the filmmaker Maya Derren and the musician John Cage. Cage's work in particular would go on to act as an exemplar of the bringing together of avant-garde critical intent and Chinese cultural influence as a consequence of the artist's openly acknowledged use of chance techniques associated with the *I Ching* as part of his musical composition.

The combining of avant-garde intent and Chinese cultural thought and practice was also a significant feature of the development of modernist art in China during the early twentieth century. As part of the reforming New Culture and May Fourth movements,<sup>19</sup> which became established in China during the early years of the twentieth century, Chinese artists (some of whom had travelled to study in Europe and Japan) began to appropriate a range of technical, stylistic and theoretical influences from Western modernist art. These appropriations, which took place against the background of earlier borrowings from the Western academic tradition initiated by European missionaries during the seventeenth century, resulted in an effective division of Chinese art into three categories for the purposes of public exhibition: “traditional”, “modernist” and “modern-literati” (modern-traditional), otherwise referred to as *Guo Hua* 国画 (national painting).<sup>20</sup> Examples of artworks belonging to the second category include paintings produced by members of the Shanghai-based Storm Society, who, in 1931, published a manifesto aligning the group with Western modernist movements such as a Fauvism and Dada; while examples belonging to the latter include photographs by Long Chin San that combine modern techniques with imagery more usually associated with traditional Chinese *shan shui* 山水 (“mountains and water”)<sup>21</sup> ink and brush landscape painting. From the late 1930s until the late 1970s, avant-garde experimentation was heavily stymied within mainland China, first by the disruptive effects of the Japanese invasion of China and the civil struggle between Communists and Nationalists prior to the establishing of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and then by the suppressive actions of the Chinese Communist Party who, during the Maoist Period from 1949 to 1976, insisted that art produced and displayed publicly within the PRC should represent the views of the masses and support the revolutionary aims of the CCP.

Interest in and appreciation of Chinese traditional cultural thought and practice and the impact of the work of European Dadaists and Surrealists (many of whom fled to the US before and during WWII to avoid Nazi oppression)<sup>22</sup> continued to cast a long shadow over artistic production in the US during the second half of the twentieth century. The coming together of these factors not only supported the continuing development of formalist abstraction as part of American high modernism before and after WWII, it also contributed to the persistence of counter-abstractionist tendencies within the US. During the

1950s, these counter-abstractivist tendencies began to return to the fore through the work of neo-Dadaist American artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns (both of whom drew on the work of Marcel Duchamp and John Cage), thereby forming part of the context for the emergence of American Pop Art and Conceptualism in the 1960s. Continuing interest in and appreciation of Chinese traditional cultural thought and practice as well as in the legacy of Dadaism and Surrealism also impacted strongly on the work of contemporary American artists such as Bill Viola, James Lee Byars and Kim Jones, whose use of video and installation is exemplary of a self-consciously postmodernist shift away from the formalist abstractions of Western high modernism.<sup>23</sup>

Although cultural, socio-economic and political conditions in post-war Europe differed considerably from those in the US, neo-Dadaist tendencies also began to come to the fore there partly in resistance to the hegemony of American formalist abstraction and partly as a re-engagement with aspects of the critical project of the early twentieth century European avant-gardes. Key players in the resurgence of counter-abstractivist tendencies with Europe during the immediate post-War period include Joseph Beuys and Yves Klein, both of whom expressed an interest in and appreciation of Eastern non-rationalist thinking and practice.

A similar shift in attitudes can be understood to have taken place at more or less the same time among radicalised non-Western artists and curators who had by then appropriated collage-montage techniques associated with the Western avant-gardes as part of their own practice, and who had begun to deploy those techniques as a way of actively resisting the assumed hegemony not only of Western high modernism, but also its underlying adherence to Western colonialist/imperialist relations of dominance. A very early example of this resistance can be found in relation to the work of the Gutai group (formed in Tokyo in 1954), which, despite formal resemblances between the work of its members and French *art informel* of the same period, claimed a specifically Japanese approach towards the use of materials.<sup>24</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, the optimistic assumptions of progressive social change and cultural innovation that accompanied the development of Western high modernism throughout the early and mid-twentieth century gave way by degrees to more pervasively sceptical attitudes associated with postmodernism. While a searching discussion of the critical relationship between modernist and postmodernist

sensibilities lies beyond the scope of this present essay, an indispensable aspect of the shift from the former to the latter is a move away from post-Enlightenment philosophical rationalism in favour of attitudes and practices associated with Jacques Derrida's development of the theory and practice of deconstruction as a way of demonstrating the fundamental illegitimacy of Western philosophy's metaphysical truth claims.

Key to Derrida's development of the theory and practice of deconstruction is an assertion that language signifies not as the result of a reflective correspondence between signifiers and signified meanings, nor simply, as structuralist linguistic theory would have it, structural differences between signs within a given language system, but instead through a persistent action of differing and deferring between signs for which Derrida coined the term *différance*. In light of this, it becomes necessary to think of linguistic meaning as something that is not only subject to continual re-contextualisation and re-motivation but also spatial and temporal dispersal along unfolding networks of signification.<sup>25</sup> As Fredric Jameson indicates, postmodernism involves attitudes and cultural practices that look towards the deconstruction of a range of rationalist conceptual oppositions underlying the progressive outlook of modernism, including notions of appearance and essence, centre and periphery, high and low culture, art and life and past, present and future.<sup>26</sup> As a consequence, universalising modernist notions of Western-centric progressive development are suspended in favour of a more complex envisioning of history as an unfolding of events that are made subject to continual deconstructive reinterpretation in the face of changing circumstances in such a way that any hierarchical structuring of time and/or place is persistently suspended.

As Gregory L. Ulmer makes clear in his essay "The Object of Post-Criticism",<sup>27</sup> Derrida's development of the theory and practice of deconstruction as a focus for the undoing of Western philosophical truth claims can be interpreted as an extension and reworking of the use of collage-montage by the early twentieth-century European and American artistic avant-gardes. In the case of the artistic avant-gardes, collage-montage, involves the remounting of texts, images and/or objects within unusual settings wherein they take on new and unexpected meanings in addition to those conventionally ascribed to them. As a consequence of which, the significance of those objects, images and texts is rendered irretrievably undecidable. Consider here, for example, Marcel Duchamp's

ready-made *Fountain*, which involves the proposed remounting of a urinal as a work of “art”. In the case of deconstructive practice, argues Ulmer, analogous techniques, such as textual inversion, juxtaposition and dislocation, are used to much the same end.

Derrida’s development of the theory and practice of deconstruction can therefore be understood not only to carry the traces of the prior actions of the Western artistic avant-gardes – which are, as consequence, retroactively repositioned as “deconstructive” *avant la lettre* – but also the avant-gardes’ appropriation of Chinese cultural thought and practice in support of its own critical use of collage-montage. Indeed, Ulmer buttresses such a reading in the second part of his essay by presenting a close comparative analysis of John Cage’s use of collage-montage techniques and Derridean deconstruction.<sup>28</sup>

Derrida himself gives further credence to the connection between deconstruction and Chinese cultural thought and practice in his text *Of Grammatology* by effectively aligning the former with the latter as part of a deconstruction of Leibniz’s assumptions about the capacity of Chinese writing to transcend differences in cultural-linguistic outlook. Here, Derrida argues that Leibniz’s upholding of Chinese writing as an exemplar in support of the idea of a *characteristica universalis* involves an unduly abstract view of Chinese cultural thought and practice or, as Derrida terms it, a “European hallucination” that overlooks the pervasively deconstructive effects of language associated with *différance*.<sup>29</sup> Further circumstantial evidence of a link between deconstruction and traditional Chinese thought and practice also resides in Derrida’s acknowledgement of his debt to Nietzschean non-rationalism.

It is, therefore, unsurprising to find persistent assertions within the literature on contemporary art that there is some sort of correspondence between the non-rationalism of traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice and the deconstructivist tendencies ascribed to artistic postmodernism. Assertions of this sort are most definitely a powerful subtext to the work of present-day American abstractionists and postmodernists such as Marden and Viola.<sup>30</sup> They also emerge forcefully in the literature relating to contemporary Chinese art.<sup>31</sup> One of the most insistent claims in this regard is that the theory and practice of deconstruction is in some sense commensurate with Chinese Daoist and Chan Buddhist conceptions of the “emptiness” of linguistic representation and aesthetic affect.

The term “contemporary Chinese art” is used widely within an An-

glophone context to denote various forms of visual art produced as part of the liberalisation of culture that has taken place within the PRC following the death of Mao Zedong and the ending of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the subsequent confirmation of Deng Xiaoping's programme of economic and social reforms at the XI Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1978. Since its inception, contemporary Chinese art has been characterised by an often conspicuous combining of images, attitudes and techniques appropriated from Western(ised) modernist and international postmodernist art with aspects of autochthonous Chinese cultural thought and practice. In light of its combining of differing Chinese and non-Chinese cultural influences, contemporary Chinese art within the PRC has been interpreted within an international art world context as a localised variant of post-modernism whose hybridising of differing cultural outlooks/modes of production has the potential to act as a locus for the critical deconstruction of supposedly authoritative meanings.

This vision of contemporary Chinese art was established in the early 1990s through a series of exhibitions, including "China's New Art Post-'89", organised by the Hanart TZ Gallery as part of the Hong Kong Arts Festival in 1993, and "China Avant-Garde", staged at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin also in 1993, that first brought international attention to the genres of painting known as Political Pop and Cynical Realism.<sup>32</sup> These genres the former combining popular international capitalist and Chinese Communist Party imagery, and the latter depicting cartoon-like figures convulsed either by grimacing or disingenuous laughter were presented as (understandably) coded attacks on the authoritarianism of the Chinese Communist Party set against the background of the Tian'anmen incident of June 4, 1989 and the ensuing conservative crackdown within the PRC. Within Westernised contexts still in thrall to oppositional cold-war ideology and the persistence of liberal-democratic criticism of authoritarian Communist regimes, the early framing of Political Pop and Cynical Realism as a focus for localised political dissent entered rapidly into the public consciousness, informing a popular understanding of contemporary Chinese art that persists right up to the present day. In recent years, this view of contemporary Chinese art as a focus for political dissidence has been reinforced by the international reception of the artist Ai Weiwei. During the last two decades, Ai has gained a significant international profile not only through his involvement in art-making, architecture and art related

publications, but also his public criticism of the CCP through direct activist intervention and the use of new media.

Also symptomatic of the international art world's view of contemporary Chinese art as a focus for deconstructive counter-authoritarianism is the persistent inclusion since the late 1980s of works of contemporary Chinese art in international survey exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale, *Documenta* and the Sydney Biennale<sup>33</sup> whose curators have sought to uphold cultural hybridity in the visual arts chiefly in light of influential critical writings by Edward Said and Homi Bhabha<sup>34</sup> as a deconstructive Post-colonialist resistance to Western modernism's orientalisising belief in the historical ascendancy of the West over the East as part of the unfolding of modernity.<sup>35</sup> Included among those who have sought to frame contemporary Chinese art in this way is a group of Chinese artists and curators living and working in Paris. One of the most high-profile members of this group is the artist Huang Yongping who, since his relocation from the PRC to France in 1989, has produced numerous sculptures, assemblages and installations that are, as curator Alex Farquharson makes clear in promotional materials accompanying a recent exhibition of Huang's work at Nottingham Contemporary Gallery (UK), very much open to interpretation "as allegories for conflicts and convergences in traditions and beliefs under the influences of colonisation and globalisation."<sup>36</sup> One of Huang's most ambitious works in this regard is *The Bat Project* (2004), a large-scale assemblage comprising an aircraft fuselage whose cockpit has been hung with the stuffed bodies of dead bats. This assemblage can be interpreted as a double-edged commentary on a collision between a US surveillance plane carrying a bat logo on its tail fin, and a Chinese fighter jet that took place in disputed airspace near to the Chinese island of Hainan in 2001; the bat is variously a symbol of dread within the US and of good luck in the PRC.<sup>37</sup>

The framing of Huang's work as a locus of deconstructivist critique is not simply the result of the artist's direct exposure to postmodernist readings outside China. It also emerges in relation to writings and artworks produced by Huang within the PRC before his departure for Europe in 1989. During the 1980s, Huang produced a series of artworks, including *Non-Expressive Painting* (1985) and *Small Portable Roulette* (1988) that combine (with self-conscious reference to the work of John Cage) collage-montage techniques appropriated from Western Dada with traditional Chinese divinatory practices associated with the *I Ch-*

ing. Huang also wrote in relation to these neo-Dadaist works in two articles published in the Chinese art press, “Xiamen Dada – A Kind of Post-Modernity?” (1986)<sup>38</sup> and “A Completely Empty Signifier” (1989).<sup>39</sup>

In the first of these articles, “Xiamen Dada – A Kind of Post-Modernity?”, Huang makes five interrelated assertions: first, that modern art produced and exhibited in China between 1983 and 1986 “was obviously very ‘Dada’” because it had “turned the art establishment upside down and contributed to the emergence of a new generation”; second, that “the time to promote the Dada spirit explicitly in China” had therefore “arrived”; third, that the strain of artistic postmodernism exemplified by Western Dada can be understood to correspond in detail with aspects of traditional Chinese thinking and practice associated with Daoist influenced Chan Buddhism such as Zhuangzi’s notion of “the ubiquity of the Dao” and a Daoist belief in the “equality, sameness, and coexistence of everything”; fourth, that works by Western postmodernist artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage and Joseph Beuys therefore “embody the essence of Eastern thought – that is, greatness and vastness, non-attachment, and following nature’s lead”; and fifth, that Chan can thus be interpreted a modern “renaissance” of Chan Buddhism insofar as both uphold “the impossible reality of reality, as well as extreme doubt and disbelief”. As Huang would have it, neo-Dadaist postmodernism – as the perceived heir of the Western historical and neo-avant-gardes – is thus “the modern renaissance of Chan Buddhism”. Huang is thus led to assert that “Chan is Dada, Dada is Chan.”

In his essay “A Completely Empty Signifier”, Huang then goes on to bolster the arguments set out in “Xiamen Dada—a Kind of Postmodernity?” by arguing that signifying practices associated with Dada and Chan Buddhism can be interpreted through the use of structuralist theory as revealing the inherent emptiness of linguistic signification insofar as both leave the meaning of linguistic signs open to the meditations of the reader; an argument that Huang illustrates by referring to a passage from volume one of the Buddhist classic the *Collection of Five Lamps*, (*Wudeng Huiyuan* 五灯会元) in which Buddha holds up a flower as a sign to a group of his followers saying “I have the eye of the true law, the secret essence of Nirvana, the formless form and the ineffable Dharma which is not dependent on speech or words; a special transmission beyond all the other teachings.”

In Huang’s view, one of the most notable examples of this “empty”

form of signification within the Chan tradition is that of Shâkyamuni (释迦牟尼) wooden sculptures, which – in a manner not dissimilar to the Duchampian readymade – can, he attests, “be [both] Buddha and at the same time a piece of firewood.”<sup>40</sup>

Another key member of the Paris-based group is curator Hou Hanru, who has published a number of texts that seek to align postcolonialist discourse with aspects of traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice. Included among these is the essay “Entropy, Chinese Artists, Western Art Institutions: A New Internationalism”, which looks towards works by Huang Yongping such as *Non-Expressive Painting* and *Small Portable Roulette* that bring together collage-montage techniques appropriated from Western Dada with traditional Chinese divinatory practices associated with the *I Ching*. For Hou, this bringing together,

*... not only suggests a process of constant change in the universe, the duality and interconnectedness of necessity and chance, of the rational and irrational, culture and anti-culture, but also a strategy to launch ‘attacks’ on the legitimacy of the West-centric monopoly in intellectual and everyday life.*<sup>40</sup>

The implication of Hou’s reading of Huang’s work here is that non-rationalist aspects of traditional Chinese thought and practice associated with the *I Ching* can be understood to have presaged the conceptually uncertain outlook of Western(ised) deconstructivist postmodernism, thereby suspending any sense of the latter’s ascendancy over the former as part of the unfolding of modernity.

As the art historian David Clarke has indicated,<sup>41</sup> China’s relationship with modernity has always been a complex and conflicting one. Since the deposing of the last Chinese emperor Pu Yi in 1911 and the establishment of Republican rule under the provisional presidency of Sun Yat-sen in 1912, China has embraced modernising influences from outside while constantly fearing an uprooting of its own long-established civilisation-specific identity. As a consequence, Chinese artists and intellectuals have striven persistently to uphold traditional Chinese culture as a precursor to Western modernity. Hou’s assertion’s with regard to the historical priority of traditional Chinese thinking and practice over that of the Western deconstructive avant-gardes can be understood to reflect this resistant tendency.

As Huang indicates in his essay “Xiamen Dada – A Kind of Post-Mo-

dernity?"; traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice and the theory and practice of deconstruction can both be seen to proceed on the "basis" of what might be referred to in Western terms as non-rational dialectical thought. In the case of traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice, this finds its expression most notably in the symbolic form of the *taijitu*, with its rendering of a persistently dynamic interaction between the opposing forces of *yin* and *yang*. In the case of the theory and practice of deconstruction, it is the seemingly analogous figuring of *différance* whose performative undecideability as a spoken term<sup>42</sup> signifies a persistent movement of differing-deferring between linguistic signs. Furthermore, as Rey Chow has suggested,<sup>43</sup> non-rationalist dialectical thinking of this sort can be understood to provide common conceptual ground for what is arguably a convergence of traditional Chinese and deconstructivist positions with regard to the relationship between conceptual illimitability and aesthetic feeling. In the context of traditional Chinese thought, this involves the upholding of a resonance between the ultimately "vague and elusive"<sup>44</sup> standing of linguistic conceptuality – that is to say, the inability of language to represent truth and/or ultimate states of being (*xiang wai zhi xiang* 象外之象, or image beyond form) – and the potentially inexhaustible nature of aesthetic feeling (*yun wai zhi zhi* 韵外之致, or significance beyond charm),<sup>45</sup> and in relation to the theory and practice of deconstruction a renewed interest in the Kantian Sublime as a focus for uncertain aesthetic feeling exceeding the limits of imagination and cognition.<sup>46</sup>

On the face of it there are, therefore, strong conceptual grounds not only to support assertions that there is correspondence between traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice and the theory and practice of deconstruction, but also that the former precedes the latter historically as a cultural dominant. The upholding of these assertions is, however, based on a gross abstraction, one that not only detaches thought and practice from any relationship to the particularity of historical circumstances but that also overlooks the pervasively dislocating effects of cultural and historical translation.

The so-called theory and practice of deconstruction first emerged during the 1960s through a series of writings by Jacques Derrida that were put forward as a critical response to the Western rationalist/meta-physical philosophical tradition.<sup>47</sup> As previously indicated, the theory and practice of deconstruction can be understood to involve the appropriation of collage-montage techniques associated with the European

and American avant-gardes as means of demonstrating the chronic inability of philosophical language to close rationally on meaning. As such, the theory and practice of deconstruction should not, however, be envisaged simply as an attempt to negate the Western philosophical tradition, but as a critically unsettling though productive supplement to it.<sup>48</sup>

As Derrida has indicated, it is also important to situate the theory and practice of deconstruction in relation to the particular historical circumstances of its inception. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida describes the theory and practice of deconstruction not just as an attempt to critically undermine the rationalist certainties of the Western philosophical tradition, but also in more historically concrete terms as an attempt to critically displace – rather than synthetically transcend – the problematic impasse posed by the dialectically opposed positions of Marxism and Capitalism as part of the Cold War.<sup>49</sup>

In the case of the development of traditional Chinese non-rational thought and practice, the prevailing historical circumstances are somewhat different. As previously discussed, at the centre of the Chinese intellectual tradition is an abiding sense of non-rationalist reciprocity that diverges markedly from the Western philosophical tradition's persistent valorisation of the rational over the irrational since Classical antiquity. Arguably, the most telling example of this can be found in relation to Confucian thought where a sense of societal hierarchical harmony has been sought continually on the basis of the non-rational dialectics of Daoist thought and practice. Consider here, for example, not only the aforementioned symbolic significance of the *taijitu*, but also the Daoist conception of three related types of *qi* 气 (or “vital force”) – two of which, the *yin qi* 阴气 and the *yang qi* 阳气, are understood to overwhelm one another reciprocally, while the third is seen as the formation of the *yin qi* and the *yang qi* into a “harmonious realm.”<sup>50</sup>

Here, it is also important to understand the particular historical circumstances in relation to which Daoist non-rational thought and practice first became established as a cultural norm within China. Although examples of the *I Ching* can be traced back to the end of the second millennium BCE, it was not until China's Warring States Period (475–221 BCE) that the text was re-interpreted as a system of cosmology centred on ideas of dynamic reciprocation and acceptance of the inevitability of change. This is also the period during which the first known examples of the classic Daoist text the *Daodejing* appeared. As Wang Keping

indicates, it is therefore possible to interpret the establishing of Daoist thinking in China as an attempt to arrive at a conceptual basis for the reconciliation of conflict set against the background of the Warring States Period.<sup>51</sup> Following the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) Daoist thought was perceived to be an ineffective basis for practical social administration. Aspects of Daoist thought were nevertheless assimilated as part of the rather more autocratic, but still supposedly socially harmonising adoption of Confucianism as the dominant belief system.

It is therefore necessary to understand the non-rationalist dialectical thinking of the Chinese intellectual tradition as pointing in a somewhat different direction from that associated with the theory and practice of deconstruction. Although both can be interpreted as attempts to engage with and go beyond prevailing dialectical oppositions located in concrete historical circumstances, the former points, as Donald Wesling has indicated,<sup>52</sup> towards a state of harmonious reciprocation grounded in cosmological metaphysics, while the latter seeks to exceed dialectical opposition through a distinctly unsettling non-metaphysical linguistic productivity.

This difference in outlook also extends to conceptualisations of aesthetic experience. One of the recognised effects of a “deconstructive” use of collage-montage as part of artistic practice, particularly in relation to Duchamp’s development of the ready-made, is the suspension of any categorical aesthetic. By remounting everyday objects, images and texts within artistic settings as, or as part of, works of “art”, there is no longer any clearly defined boundary between what might be thought of as art and non-art. Consequently, as Duchamp has suggested, the aesthetic (the beautiful) is shown to give way, not to a non- or anti-aesthetic (as Dadaist attitudes suggest), but to a far less certain state of anaesthesia shuttling somewhere between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic. In the context of traditional Chinese culture, conceptual shuttlings of this sort are perhaps more of a norm than an aberration. Not only can they be found, as Huang Yongping has indicated, in relation to the Chan Buddhist tradition of Shākyamuni wooden sculptures, but also the Confucian literati conception of *i-ching* 意境 (idea realm) in which boundaries between the subject of poems and paintings and the subjectivity of the artist and the viewer/reader are constantly blurred.<sup>53</sup> However, within the Chinese tradition such uncertainties are not used as a way of revealing the fundamentally constructed nature of aesthetic feeling. Rather, they are more usually marshalled, for example in the case of

traditional Chinese *shan shui* painting, in the service of the heightening of aesthetic effect and, by extension, the promotion of harmonious empathy between human subjects and nature (a key aspiration of the Chinese literati intellectual tradition).

Notwithstanding the particular reading of Shâkyamuni sculptures put forward by Huang, we should therefore be sceptical with regard to the identification of a definitive link between traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice and the theory and practice of deconstruction. If we widen our field of vision to include a granular reading of the cultural and historical conditions surrounding the development of traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice and the theory and practice of deconstruction (that is to say, if we combine a synchronic framing of similarities in conceptual structure with a diachronic view of differential structuration), then any sense of a definitive link between the two simply evaporates. Assertions of a definitive link between traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice and the theory and practice of deconstruction can thus be understood to double the fatal ethnocentricity of Leibniz's earlier readings of Chinese writing by denying the particularity and complexity of localised cultural and historical circumstances.

Crucially, by placing traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice in the historical ascendancy over the theory and practice of deconstruction (as is the case with regard to Hou's reading of Huang's work) such a link can also be understood to involve a reversal of the relations of cultural dominance implicated in Western ethnocentric readings of Chinese otherness. Such a reversal does of course serve as a strategically useful form of resistance to the persistent hegemony of Western culture. However, in the final analysis, it is no less abstracting than the orientalist tendencies exhibited historically by the West.

One might go further in this regard by drawing attention to the pervasively dislocating effects of the translation of meaning from one cultural context to another. As indicated earlier in this essay, the theory and practice of deconstruction views meaning as being open to the continual possibility of remotivation in the face of changing circumstances of time and place, the effect of which is to both divide and displace meaning across unfolding networks of signification wherein each individual sign carries the traces of prior and future signification. Consequently, translation from one cultural context to another is made subject not only to problems of non-equivalence between dif-

fering cultural-linguistic systems, but also cumulatively deconstructive refractions and dispersals of meaning. Assertions of a definitive correspondence between traditional Chinese cultural thought and practice and the Western avant-garde's "deconstructive" use of collage-montage must therefore be seen as a *post hoc* intellectual conceit only made possible by the re-motivational intervention of the theory and practice of deconstruction. Moreover, they must be seen to involve a problematic occlusion of the traces of the insistently metaphysical outlook of traditional Chinese non-rationalism prior to deconstruction. This is not to deny the chronic openness of traditional Chinese cultural thinking and practice to multiple readings in relation to shifting circumstances of time and/or place. Nor is it to assert the historical ascendancy of the theory and practice of deconstruction over the irretrievably metaphysical tendencies of tradition Chinese cultural thought and practice. Rather, it is to acknowledge the way in which meaning is multiplied in relation to particular instances of cultural translation as well as how such acts of cultural translation constantly problematise the location of meaning both culturally and historically.

Admittedly, Huang goes some way to acknowledging the problematic effects of cultural translation in his essay "Xiamen Dada – a Kind of Postmodernity?". He writes,

*To regard art as the incarnation of Dao and Chan merely means that they are relatively close to each other, but not equal. The histories of Daoism and Chan Buddhism also show us that they are constantly facing change, just like everything else in the world. Thus, Dada is profound. Dada claimed that it was not adding another movement to the list but was opposed to all movements. This is a paradox: Dada is against itself. Thus, "wherever troops are stationed, thorns and brambles grow, in the wake of a great army, come years of calamities" (Laozi, Daodejing). Yet what comes in the wake of years of calamities?<sup>255</sup>*

Nevertheless, Huang's conflating of Chan and Dada and, by extension, his effective assertion of the historical ascendancy of the former over the latter, appeal inescapably to notions of "natural" historical identity that mitigate against any searching investigation of the uncertainly circumscribed and mutable condition of Chinese cultural tradition. Huang's position must therefore be interpreted as a provisional,

predominantly abstract strategy to gain intellectual purchase in relation to persistent asymmetrical east-west relations of power as part of a present-day international network of artistic interaction and exchange rather than as a searching exploration of the particular localised experiences and cultural horizons of Chinese artists and viewers. To borrow from the typographical suspensions of Derrida (who in turn borrowed from Heidegger): Dada is Chan, Chan is Dada!



### Endnotes

1. See Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1997).
2. See Shen Fuwei, *Cultural Flow between China and the Outside World throughout History* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2009).
3. See, for example, William Chambers' design for the Pagoda at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (built 1761), which bears only a superficial resemblance to actual Chinese architectural forms. It has been suggested that Chambers' design may have been based on a reproduction of a porcelain object from China published in a European source. See Ray Desmond, *The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew* (London: Harvill Press, 1995), 51.
4. For discussion of Chinese cultural influences on European literature and garden design during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Adrian Hsia ed., *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Hong Kong: the Chinese University Press, 1998).
5. Craig Clunas, *Art In China* (1997) 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), 129-130.
6. Mungello, David E. (1971). "Leibniz's Interpretation of Neo-Confucianism," in *Philosophy East and West* 21 (1), 3-22.
7. The *I Ching* (*The Classic of Changes* or *Book of Changes*) or *Zhouyi*, as it is otherwise known, is one of Chinese culture's oldest historical texts. The book, which upholds the concepts of dynamic balance between opposites and the persistence of change, contains a system of geomantic divination that is still widely used within modern Chinese cultural contexts.
8. Leibniz, *Zur allgemeinen Charakteristik*. Hauptschriften zur Grundlegung der Philosophie. Philosophische Werke Band 1 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1966), 30-31.

9. Peter R. Sedgwick, *Nietzsche: the Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2009), 26.
10. Katrin Froese, *Nietzsche, Heidegger and Daoist Thought: Crossing Paths In-Between* (New York: State University of New York, 2006).
11. Important contributions to the American appreciation of Chinese cultural thought and practice at this time include Okakura Kakuzo's *The Book of Tea* (1906), a text that discusses the Japanese tea ceremony with reference to Daoism and Zen Buddhism, Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People* (1935) and *The Importance of Living* (1937), and D.T. Suzuki's *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (1957).
12. Peter-Cornell Richter, *Georgia O'Keefe and Alfred Stieglitz* (Munich, London and New York: Prestel, 2001), 40–42.
13. Hwa Young Caruso, "Asian Aesthetic Influences on American Artists: Guggenheim Museum Exhibition", *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 11, 1 2009.
14. See Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 59–64 and Andre Breton, "The Exquisite Corpse" in Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), 93–95.
15. See Nadia Choucha, *Surrealism and the Occult* (Oxford: Mandrake, 1991), 39.
16. Choucha, *Surrealism and the Occult*, 39. Also see Antonin Artaud, "Address to the Dalai Lama" in Waldberg, *Surrealism*, 59.
17. Within the Chinese intellectual tradition, concepts of dynamic balance between opposites and the persistence of change are conventionally symbolized by the *taijitu* or *yin-yang* symbol. The *taijitu* symbolises the relationship between the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* – *yang* being associated conventionally with light and masculinity and *yin* with darkness and femininity. The *taijitu* pictures the relationship between *yin* and *yang* as a reciprocal one in which each term remains distinct from but in a state of mutual interaction with the other. As such, the *taijitu* is conventionally understood to signify the possibility of a metaphysically harmonious interaction between otherwise opposing qualities or forces. Within the *I Ching* the dynamic interaction between the opposites of *yin* and *yang* is further subdivided into eight principles known as the *Ba gua* 八卦, each of which is represented by a symbolic arrangement of lines. For further discussion of the historical development of the concept of *yin-yang*, see Zhang Dainan, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, Beijing, New

- Haven and London: Foreign Languages Press and Yale university Press, 2002), 83-94.
18. See William A. Camfield, "Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*: Its History and Aesthetics in the Context of 1917" in Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Francis M Naumann eds., *Marcel Duchamp: artist of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1989), 64-94.
  19. The New Culture Movement was initiated shortly after the establishment of the Chinese republic in 1912 through calls for social, political and cultural change issued in the journal *New Youth* (also known as *La Jeunesse*). The movement gained national prominence following a wave of student protests on May 4, 1919 initiated in response to the unfavourable terms forced upon China at the Versailles Peace Conference of the same year. The May Fourth Movement was a nationalist movement that also grew out of student demonstrations in Beijing on May 4, 1919. These student demonstrations, which protested against the Chinese government's poor response to the Treaty of Versailles, initiated an upsurge of Chinese nationalism and a move away from the dominance of intellectual cultural elites toward more populist forms of politics within China.
  20. See Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ken Lum and Zheng Shengtian eds., *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945* (Munich: Hatje Kantz, 2004).
  21. *Shan shui* (literally, "mountains and water") is a traditional style of Chinese landscape painting that uses ink and brush on rice paper or silk to depict natural scenes involving mountains, rivers, streams, waterfalls and lakes. *Shan shui* is strongly associated with the Chinese literati tradition of gentleman-amateur painting.
  22. See Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge Mass. And London England: The MIT Press, 1995).
  23. See Hwa Young Caruso, "Asian Aesthetic Influences on American Artists".
  24. See Brandon Taylor, *Art Today* (London: Laurence King, 2005), 11-12.
  25. See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass trans. (1972) (London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), 3-27.
  26. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 1-66.
  27. Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism" in Hal Foster ed., *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto, 1985), 83-110.
  28. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism", 99-107.

29. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967) (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 74-93.
30. See, for example, Hwa Young Caruso, "Asian Aesthetic Influences on American Artists".
31. See, for example, Fu Xiaodong's introduction to the exhibition catalogue *New Vista – The Phenomenon of Post-Tradition in Contemporary Art* (Berlin and Beijing: The Alexander Ochs Galleries, 2007).
32. "China's New Art Post-'89" subsequently toured to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Both of the exhibitions referred to included works outside the so-called genres of 'Political Pop' and 'Cynical Realism'. However, works belonging to those genres received most of the media attention and support from the market.
33. The first international survey exhibition of contemporary art, *Magiciens de la Terre*, was held at the Centre Pompidou and the Grande Halle at the Parc de la Villette in Paris in 1989. The exhibition, which was curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, included the work of three artists from the PRC: Gu Dexin, Yang Jiechang and Huang Yongping.
34. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1985) and Homi Bhabha *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
35. See, for example, Charles Merewether ed., *Zones of Contact: 2006 Biennale of Sydney* (Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 2006).
36. Alex Farquharson, Nottingham Contemporary Promotional Leaflet April-June, 2011 (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, 2011), no page numbers given.
37. See Philippe Vergne and Doryun Chong eds., *House of Oracles: a Huang Yongping Retrospective* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 2005), 61-69.
38. Huang Yongping, "Xiamen Dada – A Kind of Post-Modernity?" ('Xiamen Dada 厦门达达 – yizhong hou xiandai?' 一种后现代), *Zhongguo meishubao* 中国美术报, no. 46 (1986), 1.
39. Huang Yongping, "A Completely Empty Signifier" ('Wanquan kong de nengzhi' 完全空的能指), *Meishu* 美术, no. 3 (1989), 30-32, 72.
40. Huang Yongping, "Xiamen Dada," 1.
41. Hou Hanru, "Entropy, Chinese Artists, Western Art Institutions: a New Internationalism" in Hou Hanru, *On the Mid-Ground: Hou Hanru, Selected Texts* Yu Hsaio-Hwei ed. (Hong Kong: Timezone 8, 2002), 62.
42. David Clarke, "Revolutions in Vision: Chinese art and the experi-

- ence of modernity” in Kam Louie ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 274.
43. As Alan Bass indicates in his translator’s footnotes to Jacques Derrida’s essay “Différance,” the significance of the term *différance* as a spoken word within a Francophone context is undecidable. Within that context it can be interpreted as referring either to the concept of difference or deferral. Derrida deploys this phonic undecidability as a means of performatively acting out the inherent instability of linguistic signification. See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 8.
  44. Rey Chow, “Rereading Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies,” in Thomas Docherty, ed., *Postmodernism: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 471–89.
  45. See Wang, *The Classic of the Dao*, 40–41.
  46. This category of inexhaustible aesthetic experience is usually referred to in China as *yin* 隱, or “latent,” in contrast to that which is *xiu* 秀, or merely “outstanding.” See Mazhar Hussain and Robert Wilkinson, eds., *The Pursuit of Comparative Aesthetics: An Interface Between the East and West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 5–6. Hussain and Wilkinson use the spelling *hsiu* rather than *xiu*, the former relating to the now largely unused Wade-Giles transliteration system.
  47. See Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Geoff Bennington trans. (1979) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). For an extended discussion of the historical development of philosophical conceptions of the sublime, see James Kirwan, *Sublimity: The Non-Rational and the Irrational in the History of Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2005).
  48. Examples of these writings can be found in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass trans. (1967) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass trans. (1972) (London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), 3–27 and Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak trans. (1967) (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
  49. See, for example, Donald Preziosi ed. *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 397.
  50. See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (London: Routledge, 1994), 15.

51. Wang Keping, *The Classic of the Dao: A New Investigation* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), 59.
52. Wang, *The Classic of the Dao*, 1–21.
53. Donald Wesling, “Methodological Implications of the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida for Comparative Literature: The Opposition East-West and Several Other Observations” in John J. Deeney ed., *Chinese-Western Comparative Literature Theory and Strategy* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1980), 79-111.
54. Wang Yao-t'ing, *Looking at Chinese Painting: A Comprehensive Guide to the Philosophy, Technique and History of Chinese Painting* (Tokyo: Nigensha Publishing, 1996), 23.
55. Huang, “Xiamen Dada – A Kind of Post-Modernity?”, 1.

# BOOKS OF CHANGE: A WESTERN FAMILY'S WRITINGS ON CHINA, 1855-1949

BY TIM CHAMBERLAIN<sup>1</sup>

In the hundred years between 1843 and 1943, using the treaty port system which was established in China after the so-called Opium Wars, the Western world actively sought to shape and change China. Although China as a whole was never formally brought under colonial rule, the loose coalition of foreign powers who had managed to impose this system of foreign concessions and extra-territoriality upon the Chinese Imperial (and later Republican) Government came to be seen as exerting a system of quasi-colonialism or “informal empire” within the country. From the Chinese perspective it was a humiliating situation which deprived their Government of direct authority over a number of foreign settlements, as well as their inhabitants, within the bounds of their own country. The treaty port system only underlined the fact that China was in a politically weakened and economically impoverished state.<sup>2</sup>

One of the concessions ceded by the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858 was that religious liberty should be permitted to all Christians in China. In addition to permitting foreigners to travel and trade more freely, they would henceforth also be permitted to carry out missionary activities as well. One of the most notable of these missionaries to travel widely in China at this time was the Reverend Alexander Williamson.

Williamson was born in Falkirk, Scotland on 5 December 1829, into a prominent family of cotton bleachers based in Lochwinnoch, near Glasgow.<sup>3</sup> He was the eldest of seven brothers, two of whom also became missionaries.<sup>4</sup> Ordained in April 1855 Williamson began his missionary career with the London Missionary Society, leaving for China the following month with his wife, Isabelle. They sailed on the *Hamilla Mitchell*, a 540 ton wooden vessel with three masts built in 1850. The journey from London to Shanghai, via the Cape of Good Hope took them four months. Travelling with them was a fellow LMS missionary, Griffith John and his wife, Margaret. Griffith John would also go on to have a long and distinguished career evangelising in China.<sup>5</sup> They set sail from Gravesend on 21 May 1855, and were seen off by Isabelle's parents and grandparents. On the voyage out the 25 year old Alexander

kept a diary for his younger brothers and his wife's younger siblings.<sup>6</sup> The diary shows his keen interest in science and the natural world as well as the underlying piety of his religious conviction. In much of its tone and subject matter we are given a glimpse of Williamson, still only a young man himself, striving both to edify and perhaps also to impress his junior siblings as he discourses upon Galileo and Kepler having been shown the satellites of Jupiter through "a common ship glass" loaned to him one night by one of the ship's officers.<sup>7</sup> But there are some moments of levity in the journal too, where he makes light of some of the inconveniences of shipboard life:

*What would you think if your seat were to take it into its head to walk away to the other side of the room without a moment's notice while you were busily engaged at your desk? And then repenting of its evil deed to return as unceremoniously? ... Or what would you say if [at dinner] while you were handing the spices to your neighbour, your plate full of soup emptied its contents or part of them on your trousers, and a leg of mutton took up its abode on your knee!*<sup>8</sup>

Whilst the journey may not have been an easy one there were other more hazardous inconveniences to contend with; not least when it became apparent that the ship's captain had a tendency to seek solace in the bottle, especially at moments of greatest adversity in the voyage, and as a consequence on one occasion he managed to run the *Hamilla Mitchell* aground. When they eventually reached Woosung (Wusong) the Williamsons were given the fortuitous opportunity of a convenient exit by the captain of one of the opium receiving ships stationed there.

*[Captain Baylis] kindly invited us to breakfast with him on the Monday morning and promised to convey us to Shanghai in the forenoon. We went and enjoyed ourselves very much: the breakfast was served up in the very first style in a large room; and for the first time we were attended by Chinese servants with tails reaching nearly to the ground. It was rather novel. There are seven receiving ships of that nature lying at Woosung, and they are heavily armed and manned. The East India Company and other merchants dare not land the opium in China, and they have therefore adopted this subterfuge. Fast clipper ships from India bring the opium and it*

*is put on board these vessels, and then native Chinese boats and merchant's boats come and get it from them. It is a nefarious and deadly traffic. Would that it were stopped.*<sup>9</sup>

It is reported that Williamson threw himself into his missionary work “with far more zeal than discretion”, yet in less than two years as with many Western contemporaries unused to the ills of China’s climate, he succumbed to malaria, and his health broke down so severely that he had to be invalided home, almost dying in 1857.<sup>10</sup> Consequently he was discharged from the London Missionary Society, but he did eventually return to China in 1863, this time representing the National Bible Society of Scotland as its first agent in China. He later became one of the founders of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese.<sup>11</sup> Whilst working for the National Bible Society of Scotland Williamson travelled extensively throughout North China, visiting many places which hitherto had been off-limits to Westerners. Williamson described these remarkable journeys in a two volume work, entitled *Journeys in North China, Manchuria, and Eastern Mongolia, with some account of Corea*, published in 1870. *Journeys in North China* long remained an important and authoritative account of the country. The journeys described were primarily undertaken for the purposes of missionary work, preaching and distributing Christian tracts, but as Williamson states in his Preface:

*Travelling over districts near and remote from the Ports, I met with much that was interesting in the natural features of the country, in the character and aspect of the people, and not a little which was both new and important in reference to the products of the soil and the mineral resources of the different provinces. It appeared incumbent on me to make these things known, and therefore I hope this book will be looked upon, not as the offspring of any ambition for authorship, but as the result of a sense of duty.*<sup>12</sup>

Williamson also compiled lengthy sets of “Notes” on his various journeys which were read before the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1867 (relating to North China and Shan-tung (Shandong)); and the Royal Geographical Society in 1869 (relating to Manchuria), in which it is clear he never wavered in his forthright criticism of the iniquities of the opium trade.<sup>13</sup> In these journeys he paid

close attention to a range of geographical topics, carefully noting details of agriculture, topography, social customs, and in particular details of the mineral wealth, as well as the more commercial kinds of flora and fauna which characterised the various regions he passed through. He also collected specimens of various ores and plants. One collection of botanical specimens which he made whilst travelling through Shantung he presented to Edinburgh Botanical Gardens; and a second, collected whilst travelling in North China and Manchuria, he presented to the Edinburgh University Herbarium.<sup>14</sup> Williamson was by no means unusual in pursuing this kind of parallel mission. Indeed many other Westerners residing in China at the time undertook similar activities. It has been shown that this kind of zeal for empirical fact-finding was all part and parcel of the Western project of informal empire. The quest to “open up” and “civilise” China was justified at the time using the rhetoric of assisting China; helping to educate and enlighten the Chinese so that they might ultimately help themselves, whilst simultaneously exploiting and making best use of China’s natural resources in such a way that benefited the wider Western world.<sup>15</sup> Williamson’s Preface to his *Journeys in North China* shows in no uncertain terms his views with regard to this particular point:

*The truth is, China can never be truly or permanently opened up without inland residence among the people; and as Protestant missionaries are centres of light and truth and beneficence, better adapted for salutary pioneer work than any other class, acceptable to the natives, and never guilty of political intrigue, it is clearly the interest of all concerned that provision be made for their legal establishment and unfettered action. ... On the general question I make no remark further than that the history of the Chinese demonstrates that it is not only impolitic, but dangerous, to grant them all the privileges of civilized nations, and allow them to ignore all the responsibilities recognized by other powers.<sup>16</sup>*

Williamson goes on at length to discuss the contemporary obstacles to progress which he sees as having arisen in China’s past, and naturally many of these are rooted in the Chinese Imperial system and in Chinese culture itself. He cites the Inspector-General of the Chinese Customs Service, Robert Hart’s view that of those Chinese officials who had grasped Western notions of progress “not one is prepared to enter

boldly on a career of progress, and take the consequence of even a feeble initiative".<sup>17</sup> In this way Williamson's epic travelogue becomes a representative, if rather forthright, polemic of the prevailing foreign opinion at the time. His survey of the country is a curious mixture of both commercial and scientific "fact finding", as well as social observation, commentary, criticism, and practical suggestion; in this sense his personal mission is very much bound up with the Western project of informal empire. He acknowledges, however, that not all foreigners in China were of the same opinion as to how these ends were to be achieved: "Much has been said against missionaries going into the interior, lest they should complicate matters between the Chinese Government and our own. But what is a missionary or other traveller in China? Is he not a living volume on ethnology adapted to the capacities of the weakest of the people?"<sup>18</sup>

The task which Williamson and his fellow missionaries had set themselves was challenging in the extreme and not without very real personal danger. Whilst travelling through Chih-li (Zhili) with fellow missionary Jonathan Lees (LMS), he noted that "Everywhere we were welcomed by the people, curiosity leading them to purchase our books greedily; but to-day one of us was stopped in an address, which he fondly hoped was interesting the people, by an inquiry whether he had not brought foreign matches to sell. Fancy being mistaken for an itinerant match-seller!"<sup>19</sup> But, in such instances of Chinese passive resistance (intentional or otherwise), where the foreign merchants' encouragements towards progress through the notion of "free-trade" might have met with more success, missionaries and merchants alike could find themselves the individual focus of much more violent forms of Chinese opposition. Indeed, only the year before the publication of Williamson's *Journeys in North China*, Alexander's brother James had been murdered near Tientsin (Tianjin) by robbers. This was one of several attacks on foreigners at this time which eventually culminated in the "Tientsin Massacre" of 1870.<sup>20</sup> Such tragedies however only seemed to strengthen the resolve of many missionaries and spur them on to fight for greater provisions for foreigners in their calls for modifications to the treaties already imposed. Williamson was somewhat unusual in his approach, whereby he thought the aims of the Christian mission would be better served by appealing to the educated classes of the Chinese.<sup>21</sup> Williamson's wife, Isabelle (sometimes also referred to as Isabella), who accompanied him on his journeys, wrote of her own particular

approach towards the evangelisation of China:

*The object of these journeys was first to carry the Gospel truth to as many of the women of China as I could reach, and secondly to familiarise them with Western women, and so to render the visits of those who followed me more easy. ... Missionaries of the widest information and greatest experience, both in China and India, concur in affirming that missionary operations have reached that point when efficient zenana work is indispensable to satisfactory progress. They find that men will never be converted in any large numbers till the women are won over to the side of Christianity. The women conserve the ancient religions and superstitions of their country; and what can a man do when the women of the household are against him? The elevation, therefore, of the nations of the East, and the advancement of Christianity among them, depend to a large extent upon the women of Christendom.*<sup>22</sup>

*Old Highways in China* (1884), Isabelle Williamson's own account of their journeys through China is an invaluable work of historical ethnography, not least for its particular focus on the lives of Chinese women. In many ways the modern reader today might well agree that Isabelle's book is perhaps more sympathetic in its descriptions of Chinese culture than her husband's better known two-volume work. Indeed, although there was much that the Williamsons saw in China which they would wish to reform, there was also much to admire too. Alexander Williamson was clearly impressed by the figure of Mencius, whose descendants cordially received him when he visited the philosopher's hometown; although he rather negatively confesses to finding Confucius more of an "enigma."<sup>23</sup> Each of the Williamson's works still stand on its own merits as a valuable and insightful eye-witness record to the history and the culture (both East and West) of the period in which it was written.

This project of literary observation was continued by their daughter, Margaret, who wrote variously under the names Mrs Paul King, Madge King, Veronica King, or with her husband under the pseudonym of William A. Rivers.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps best remembered as Veronica King, her writings differ distinctly from those of her parents. Veronica did not follow them into missionary work. In 1881 she married Paul Henry King, who served in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service; the wedding was

conducted by Bishop George Evans Moule in Shanghai's Holy Trinity Cathedral.<sup>25</sup> The couple were prominent members of treaty port society, each with literary aspirations. In December 1894 the *Peking and Tientsin Times* reported that:

*Visitors to the Writers' Club or the Pioneers, says Hearth and Home, may remark a popular little lady surrounded by a crowd of friends all eager to claim her attention. To ask who she is argues oneself unknown in feminine clubland, where Mrs Paul King, authoress of "Cousin Cinderella," is a familiar figure. Mrs King has a singularly magnetic personality, and, talking well, invariably draws round her a circle of interested listeners. To a wide knowledge of life in many climes – for she has been twice round the world and once round the Cape of Good Hope, without reckoning various voyages to the Far East – Mrs King adds a very observant and sympathetic nature and a keen sense o' humour.*<sup>26</sup>

After becoming known for various pieces of journalism and criticism, Veronica King began to write fiction. Her first novel, *Cousin Cinderella*, was published in 1892. The book appears to have been greeted by favourable reviews in the foreign press in China, even prompting Robert Hart to remark in a letter to his colleague, James Duncan Campbell: "Have you read *Cousin Cinderella*? It's not an unwelcome addition to the host of novels – it is original, well written, and improves every page, winding up in a novel and capital ending."<sup>27</sup>

Veronica's husband, Paul King, had joined the Chinese Customs Service in 1874, following in the footsteps of his maternal uncle, John Alexander Man (later known as Man Stuart), who had served as private secretary first to Horatio Nelson Lay and then to Robert Hart, and later became a Customs Commissioner at Newchwang (Niuzhuang) and Takao (present day Kaohsiung in Taiwan).<sup>28</sup> Man was a military man at heart, having served with distinction in many parts of the globe, including China with General Gordon in 1860, and again as part of the force sent to suppress the Taiping Rebellion in 1864; he later served as Commandant of Local Forces (and possibly also for a time as Acting Governor) in Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>29</sup> Founded in 1854, the Chinese Maritime Customs Service was an agency of the Chinese Government, but in reality the management of this organisation was firmly held in foreign hands. Its officers, including the Inspector-

General, were mostly British, but the Service also included the nationalities of the other major foreign “powers” in China.<sup>30</sup> Further down the ranks there were a great number of Chinese clerks and writers. All of the foreign staff were required to pass a civil service type examination and were expected to learn and attain a basic proficiency in the Chinese language.<sup>31</sup> They were often moved from one treaty port to another where they were stationed for varying lengths of time, and all of them had to interact with local officials from the regional Chinese administrations as well as with the Chinese clerks and writers who worked for the Customs Service itself, which meant that they had a uniquely placed experience of Chinese officialdom, quite unlike the merchants and missionaries who made up the majority of the foreign population of the treaty ports. It should come as no surprise then that in time some of these foreigners took a different or more nuanced view of the Chinese compared to their missionary counterparts. Indeed, writing at the end of a very long career of nearly fifty years in the Chinese Customs Service, Paul King attempted to analyse the gap between East and West in his book, *Weighed in China's Balance* (1928).<sup>32</sup> In this work he examines at length the missionary project in China and tries to imagine, and thereby explain, the Chinese perception of Christianity. He is often at pains to stress that in so doing he is “not intending to criticize missionaries on the one hand, or the Chinese on the other.”<sup>33</sup> Yet, as contemporary reviews attest, it was almost impossible for him to walk such a narrow line. He was accused of expressing “nothing but the well-known prejudices of the Treaty-port foreigner suffering from the usual anti-missionary complex.”<sup>34</sup>

The first part of the book is an appreciation of the great antiquity of the Chinese system of government, Chinese culture and religion. And he attempts to give balanced observations:

*China has for millenniums been splendidly and solidly self-supporting and self-sufficing, and she owes this admirable quality, in the main, to her system of patriarchal government. The Chinese ideal is law and order first in the home, then in the village, the city, the district, the province and finally in the central government of the Empire. It is perfectly logical, and what is more to the purpose – it works, at least it has worked up to recent years. ... This form of government, of course, did not lend itself to enterprise or experiments, and as stability and maintenance were its principal*

*objects, it had to be chary of encouraging original ideas in case they proved destructive.*<sup>35</sup>

Yet it is clear to see why his views of the Western influence on China, and in particular the work of the various denominations of Christian missionaries working in China might not have sat too well with certain quarters of his Western readership. Particularly when he states that:

*Europeans have indubitably forced themselves on China, knowing for certain they were not wanted. And the Voice in the Wilderness, crying before them, and announcing their approach, was to the Chinese an oracle of dubious interpretation, hinting of amazing beliefs, and also at times insinuating that the whole world would come under the domination of their Deity. After this had been promised for centuries by advanced pickets, as one may call them, at last the main body of the invasion arrived with an iron determination to "Open up China!"*<sup>36</sup>

Such opinions, even if aired impartially (as King repeats), are a far remove from those expressed by his father-in-law, the Rev. Alexander Williamson.<sup>37</sup> To some extent it might be argued that these two writers represent the polarisation of opinion in the foreign communities residing in China. They are the two opposite ends of a single spectrum, who were in fact essentially aiming at largely the same ends; namely the assimilation of the Chinese people into the Western spheres of both commerce and social organisation. Yet we should bear in mind the fact that Williamson and King are both writing from distinctly different standpoints at markedly different times within this period of informal empire in China's history.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, the situations in which Customs officers and missionaries found themselves were broadly very similar. Customs officers, just as missionaries, were often stationed at remote and out of the way places. Some of these outposts were truly tiny and meant extended periods of isolation from the company of fellow Westerners. But the role of the Customs official was perhaps a more subtle and complex one, as it required them to negotiate a certain degree of antagonism on two fronts as they professionally tried to balance potentially conflicting loyalties. During his time as Inspector-General of the Customs Service, Horatio Nelson Lay's attitude towards his employers was clear: "My position

was that of a foreigner engaged by the Chinese government to perform certain work *for* them but not *under* them.”<sup>39</sup> Yet the work of these foreign Customs officials was frequently resented by their merchant compatriots and Chinese traders alike.<sup>40</sup> As with many of the Customs Commissioners, Paul King served in both remote outposts as well as the larger treaty ports, and in the course of his career he came into contact with both prominent and lower profile personages. Most notably he was known and appears to have been well liked by the prominent Chinese statesman, Li Hung-chang (Li Hongzhang); and whilst at Hangchow (Hangzhou) he was charged with looking after the visiting Prince and Princess Heinrich of Prussia in 1898.<sup>41</sup> He was decorated by the Chinese Court, receiving the Imperial Order of the Double Dragon, in recognition of his “loyal” work during the Boxer Rebellion, and also later on by the Republican Government, receiving the Order of the Golden Grain.<sup>42</sup> The fact that a Customs official in effect had a foot in each camp, so to speak, could well have influenced their personal perspective on the Westerners’ uninvited presence in China.

Paul and Veronica King’s fictional works on China certainly reflect their personal perceptions of both native Chinese society and the society of foreigners residing in China. Some of their plot themes mirror actual events and issues of the time. In one particular novel, *Eurasia* (1907), they address the issue of mixed-race offspring.<sup>43</sup> The Westerners of the treaty port system adhered to contemporary European social hierarchies which were grounded in strict Victorian and Edwardian principles of propriety and legitimacy. Whilst they certainly interacted with the Chinese on a day-to-day basis, living side-by-side even in the foreign settlements, employing Chinese domestic servants, there were strict social barriers maintained between the two communities. Yet it was a widely known and even an openly acknowledged fact of treaty port life that Western men would sometimes “condescend” to consort with Chinese women.<sup>44</sup> In some cases, especially in the early days, it was not uncommon that new recruits to China found themselves quietly encouraged to find native “concubines”, often euphemistically referred to as “sleeping dictionaries.”<sup>45</sup> Social ideas bound up in notions of gender and race were inescapable parts of treaty port life. It has been argued that racist prejudices were propagated as a defence mechanism against the perceived threat inherent in the dilution of colonial settler communities if their members integrated with the native population.<sup>46</sup> However, not everyone in the treaty ports adhered to these unwritten

rules, and although marriage of Western men and women to Chinese partners was distinctly frowned upon there were instances of this openly occurring.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Louis Magrath King, Paul and Veronica's fourth son, was just such an individual.

Louis was born in Kiukiang (Jiujiang) on the Yangtze on 16 December 1886, and attended Chefoo School (at Yantai) until the age of 10 when he and his brother Wilfrid were sent to Berkhamsted School in England. At Berkhamsted the two boys first experienced the reality of displacement which, having been born as expatriate foreigners in China would always set them apart from their English compatriots "at home". On their first day at Berkhamsted they were labelled as "Chinks" by their new schoolmates and duly endured the initial friction engendered by such an epithet.<sup>48</sup> Yet Louis clearly had fond memories of China which his education in England didn't wholly manage to eclipse. He later wrote of his years at Chefoo:

*I can remember holding converse with all sorts and conditions of Chinese, men, women and children; especially the farmers and their families working in their vineyards close by the school. ... And great was my joy when one summer a missionary going inland, over those very hills, took me with him, and I travelled for a week or so by hsien-tzu or mule litter, a swaying contrivance of a mat shed on a couple of stout bamboo poles carried by two mules, fore and aft. It was my first overland journey and I must have been about six years old.<sup>49</sup>*

After completing their schooling Louis and his brother Wilfrid both returned to make their careers in China. Wilfrid Tindal King had a long career working in various parts of China for Jardine, Matheson & Co. Louis joined the Consular Service in 1905, and initially his career progressed along the usual path – training as a student interpreter at the Legation in Peking (Beijing), then moving to Shanghai in 1910, he moved up the assistant ranks, serving at various ports, until finally being appointed Consul; his career, however, was cut short before he managed to reach the position of Consul-General.<sup>50</sup>

Early on he showed the literary tendencies of his forbears when he anonymously published a work titled *China As It Really Is* (1912).<sup>51</sup> The book, which some commentators have deemed showed more youthful self-assurance than insight, is an examination of China, its history,

politics and culture in the immediate aftermath of the revolution of 1911.<sup>52</sup> The revolution had brought to an end the Imperial system in China with the removal of the Manchu Qing dynasty which had reigned since 1644 and ushered in a time of massive upheaval and uncertainty for the Chinese nation. Louis was only in his mid-twenties when the book was published, yet the introduction grandly states that the author “has spent two-thirds of his life” in China, and that the book was “the outcome of personal observation.”<sup>53</sup> In his notes towards an uncompleted autobiography written almost forty years later, Louis reflects that the book demonstrated “the Treaty Port outlook before the days of ... [seeing the] moat (sic) in one’s own eye,” and, whilst acknowledging it was a “superficial” work, he notes that at the time it was published it did manage to impress some of his senior colleagues, such as Henry English Fulford, who was then Consul-General at Tientsin.<sup>54</sup>

In 1913 Louis King was chosen to establish a rather unusual Consular outpost. Following on from the Simla Conference which had failed to reach an agreement in establishing the territorial borders of British-India, China and Tibet, Louis was given instructions to travel to the remote mountainous region of the Chinese-Tibetan frontier in Szechuen (Sichuan).<sup>55</sup> Ostensibly he was sent as an assistant attached to the Consulate-General in Chengtu (Chengdu), to monitor the cross-border trade. His real mission, however, was to gather intelligence regarding Chinese troop movements in the area.<sup>56</sup>

He set up his base at Tachienlu, now better known as Kangding (Dartsendo, in Tibetan), a town set at an altitude of some 8,500 feet (2,600 metres) above sea-level in which a transient population of Chinese and Tibetan merchants came to trade with each other. The Chinese brought up on foot back-breaking loads of brick tea from the plains around Chengtu, trading it for Tibetan medicines, wool and hides, after which Tibetan caravans of yaks then carried the highly prized tea back to Lhasa and the other regions of Tibet. Louis was certainly successful in his mission. He befriended the local Magistrate, Mr Han Kuang-chun, and was on good terms with the local Chinese General, Ch’en Hsia-ling, who was by most accounts a somewhat unhinged personality whose tenacious grip on power, like most other warlords of those tumultuous times, was maintained through an unequivocal rod of iron.<sup>57</sup> Louis was also friends with many of the local Tibetan authority figures: the Lamas, living Buddhas, local Chieftans and regional Army Generals, and, most notably, the Kalon Lama, who was in charge of the entire Tibetan Armed

Forces in Eastern Tibet.<sup>58</sup> Although King's mission was to observe and gather intelligence in the region, these activities were not necessarily as covert as one might assume. Louis King, Oliver Coales, and Eric Teichman, two Consular Officers who later maintained the Tachienlu outpost when Louis was withdrawn (initially because he was suffering from malaria, but thereafter when he went on to serve with the Chinese Labour Corps in France during the last year of the Great War), each made extensive journeys in the surrounding country, drawing maps as they went.<sup>59</sup> This particular region of Eastern Tibet is where three major rivers originate: the Salween; the Mekong, and the Yangtze. In many of the areas they explored these were the first proper geographical surveys undertaken; and, like his grandfather before him, in some places he mapped Louis was the first Westerner to travel through those areas.<sup>60</sup> It was on one of these extended journeys that he met his future wife, Rinchen Lhamo.

Rinchen was related to the local Tibetan nobility. When asked about their romance Louis later joked that he'd had no choice in the matter, Tibetan women being famously independent, she had chosen him!<sup>61</sup> When he was withdrawn from the frontier in 1922 after his second period of duty there he applied for his marriage to be solemnised when he reached Chengtu. But W. Meyrick Hewlett, the Consul-General at Chengtu whom King had been tasked to relieve, was scandalised to discover that not only was King's partner Tibetan, they were also already parents to one child and were imminently expecting a second to be born.<sup>62</sup> Many of his superiors had already expressed worry that Louis had been left too long in such a remote spot, and here he had clearly stepped outside of the norms of treaty port society and the Consular Service rules for marriage were subsequently fully brought to bear upon him. His refusal to abandon his family, perhaps compounded by personal political differences he had stirred between the British Consular Service in China and the British Government in India, eventually meant that he was compelled to retire from the Service.<sup>63</sup>

During his early career in China, King was clearly drawn to all the usual aspects of the established expatriate lifestyle which characterised the treaty ports. He was a member of the Shanghai Club, and he held a lifetime membership of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, but his real passion was riding horses in the races held at Peking, Shanghai, and other race circuits in China; he was also a member of the Shanghai Light Horse Volunteer Corps.<sup>64</sup> It is interesting to note, however,

that in his first years after being posted to Shanghai in 1910, he shared a house with a Consular colleague, W.J.B. Fletcher, who had married a Chinese woman, much to the disapproval of his seniors, and like Louis he too was eventually compelled to retire from the Consular Service.<sup>65</sup>

Louis and his family left China in 1925 and settled in England where he and his wife, as his parents and grandparents before them, each set about writing books. Rinchen Lhamo's book, *We Tibetans* (1926),<sup>66</sup> which Louis assisted in translating, is a unique portrait of Tibetan life and culture; it is perhaps the first authentic ethnography of Tibetan society. Louis King's book, *China in Turmoil* (1927),<sup>67</sup> is a set of "character studies" of prominent Chinese and Tibetan persons of influence whom he had known during his time at the frontier. Many of these "pen portraits" were first published as individual sketches in *Blackwoods Magazine*. Curiously enough the book manages to be a highly insightful work, examining the wider situation of China's warlord era through these point-focussed studies of particular persons, whilst managing to remain very reticent as to the actual identities of the majority of the persons described. There may or may not have been a deliberate reason for this. In December 1925 Louis contacted the Foreign Office, hoping to put himself forward for intelligence work in Central Asia. Yet it was to no avail, as his offer was discretely turned down. A Labour Government came to power in 1929 and so Louis tried to seek reinstatement to the China Consular Service, complaining of unfair dismissal on the grounds of racial discrimination. In his letter he cited both works, but he was once again disappointed in this effort.<sup>68</sup> It is interesting to note that he was aided in his first approach to the Foreign Office by John T. Pratt, a former colleague from the Consular Service in China who had been transferred to the Foreign Office. John Pratt was the elder brother of Richard Septimus Pratt, who had joined the Service as part of the same intake group as Louis in 1905. John and Richard were themselves the off-spring of a racially mixed marriage, their father was English and their mother Indian. The brothers were said to have been subjected to racial prejudice themselves owing to their dark complexions; hence it seems natural to assume that John Pratt would have been understandably sympathetic towards Louis and Rinchen's situation.<sup>69</sup>

Although Louis never returned to China he never lost his interest in the changes which were taking place there. He continued to write commentaries and book reviews upon the subject, speculating as to

what kind of nation China would become. Shortly before he died he published a perceptive essay in *The Contemporary Review* (1947) in which he states:

*To follow what is happening in China it is necessary to go back to fundamentals. The basic factors here are the vigour, industry and high intelligence of this race and its abounding multitude, factors of the first promise for the future but operating at the moment to the general stress and turmoil we see to-day. The Chinese are, in fact, a very numerous and vital people, too numerous for the country as hitherto organised to support comfortably, too vital to take matters supinely. I would emphasise the nation's vitality. There would appear to be something in the air there that makes man be up and doing, the genius loci perhaps, or the economic situation pure and simple, the produce of the country relative to its population. Whatever it is, the Chinese are very much alive.<sup>70</sup>*

Louis King's tone here is far removed from that of his grandfather, who almost 80 years previously had declared that "China is like a man under a course of medicine, we have put him in this position, we dare not leave him alone far less trust him to his own ideas, for that would prove his ruin. We must take him in hand, point out the proper methods; and, as far as consistent, force him to follow them, until we have set him on his feet again in new health and fresh vigour, qualified to start on a new and glorious career."<sup>71</sup> Alexander Williamson clearly thought that China could only benefit from the colonial-style interventions of the West, consequently one wonders what he would have made of the following statement written by Paul King:

*... the West has made the first move to meet, the onus is on us to understand and appreciate the East. We shall not meet comfortably and securely until the West has other ideas besides making money out of the East, and, what is worse, deciding off-hand that Asia knows nothing and has everything to learn from us.<sup>72</sup>*

If we look specifically at the writings of the Williamsons and Kings with regard to their changing attitudes towards China it is clear that there was a marked difference in their perceptions. In many ways the writings of Williamson, the grandfather, sit entirely at odds with the

writings of King, the son-in-law, and King, the grandson; but perhaps it would be more accurate to say that their writings do not reflect so much a shift in the family's perceptions of China *per se*, but rather that they reflect the extent to which China itself had changed in the time span of just three generations. Indeed, it is important when looking at their writings to place them in their proper context. One could easily argue that what began as an approach based on well-meaning condescension or the assertion of patronising racial preconceptions – the colonial rhetoric of “the civilising mission” – did in time, through increasing familiarity, eventually become an awareness of, and a respect for, Chinese civilisation as it already existed on its own terms. Yet I would argue that it is not quite so clear cut. Western perceptions as a whole had to adapt over the first half of the twentieth-century because of the broader context in which the expatriate communities of informal empire existed. In particular, the decline of British power and its diplomatic influence in Asia, along with the enormous political changes which followed the revolution of 1911, and the turmoil which accompanied the rise of Chinese nationalism in this period, and the increasing perception of the treaty system as being “unequal”, eventually compelled the foreign settler communities to question, or, perhaps more accurately, strive to justify the *raison d'être* for their own continued existence. In analysing the writings of the Williamsons and the Kings one needs to avoid the temptation to generalise from such specific examples, for each member of the small, scattered foreign communities in China would have held their own personal opinions nuanced largely by their own vested interests according to the extent of their commitments to, and their personal investment in, the system of informal empire of which they were an active part. The political changes and upheavals in the power structures of Chinese Government and the different factions which were vying for control in this latter period of informal empire were rapidly reshaping the character of Chinese sovereignty. Those foreigners with enough foresight could see that in time if they did not adapt, their presence in China would become untenable; and so, in the interests of free trade – the original notion which had drawn most of them to China in the first place – they would have to seek to redefine their relationship with China accordingly.

Alexander Williamson had devoted his life entirely to China through the courage (or rather the tenacity) of his own convictions in seeking to influence China towards its improvement, but so too, his descendants

were devoted to promoting China through the more nuanced insights they had gained from interacting with China via their positions in the Customs and Consular Services.<sup>73</sup> Those foreigners who worked in the administrative services and had the closest contacts with the various Chinese political and judicial administrations were perhaps best placed to witness and perceive this change and the realities it would eventually bring once the revolutionary period of unrest and turmoil had finally passed. The West had forced itself upon China at a point in time when China was already ripe for dynastic change. In this regard then, these changes stemmed as much from within China itself as well as, to a certain degree, having resulted from the pressures placed upon China from without during the century in which it was prey to the external forces of informal empire.



#### **Endnotes**

1. I would like to record my thanks to my brother-in-law, Jonathan Rolfe, and his wider family for supporting my efforts in researching the lives and writings of his and their forbears. I would also like to thank Dr Jacqueline Young for a small suggestion which helped me to sharpen my focus on what was originally a very big and amorphous general idea for this paper. All opinions, as well as any errors, oversights, and/or omissions (although hopefully avoided) are, of course, my own entirely.
2. John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1943* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), Chapters 4 & 6.
3. Louis Magrath King, *The Five Coloured Clouds* (MS. unfinished autobiography, unpublished, c.1947-1949).
4. Paul King (ed.), *Voyaging to China in 1855 & 1904: A Contrast in Travel* (London: Heath Cranton, 1936), 17; James Sibree, *LMS Register of Missionaries, Deputations, etc. 1796-1923* (London: London Missionary Society, 1923), No.s 527, 601, & 604.
5. R. Wardlaw Thompson, *Griffith John: The Story of Fifty Years in China* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1907), 33-34; see also, Noel Gibbard, *Griffith John: Apostle to Central China* (Bryntirion: Bryntirion Press, 1998).
6. King, *Voyaging to China*, 20.

7. King, *Voyaging to China*, 49-50.
8. King, *Voyaging to China*, 53-54.
9. King, *Voyaging to China*, 68.
10. King, *Voyaging to China*, 22.
11. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 381-382.
12. Rev. Alexander Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1870), p. v.
13. Rev. Alexander Williamson, "Notes on the North of China, its Productions and Communications" and "Notes on the Productions, Chiefly Mineral of Shan-tung", both in *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. 4 (December 1867): 33-63 and 64-73; Williamson, "Notes on Manchuria" (Discussion), *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 13.1 (1868-1869): 26-39; "Notes on Manchuria", in *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 39 (1869):1-36.
14. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 2, Appendix D.
15. Fa-Ti Fan, "Victorian Naturalists in China: Science and Informal Empire," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 36.1 (March 2003): 1-26; see also, Fairbank, *Trade on the China Coast*, Chapter 1.
16. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 1, viii-ix.
17. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 1, 7-8.
18. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 1, 28-29.
19. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 1, 269.
20. H. N. Lay, *Note on the Opium Question and a brief survey of our relations with China* (London: M.S. Rickerby, 1893); G. T. Candlin, *John Innocent: A Story of Mission Work in North China* (London: The United Methodist Publishing House / The Magnet Press, 1909), 169-170; see also, Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 231-235. Williamson also appears to make an oblique reference to his brother's murder in the Preface to his *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 1, vii.
21. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 438-441.
22. Isabelle Williamson, *Old Highways in China* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1884), 6-7.
23. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, Vol. 1, 219-220 and 231-232.
24. Her full name was Margaret Alice Houston King (*née* Williamson).
25. *The North China Herald*, 8 March 1881, p. 240; Paul King, *In the Chinese Customs Service: A Personal Record of Forty-Seven Years* (London: Heath Cranton, 1930), 56.

26. *Peking & Tientsin Times*, 29 December 1894, 172.
27. John King Fairbank, Katherine Frost Bruner & Elisabeth Macleod Matheson (eds), *The I.G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868-1907* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), Vol. 2, Letter 852: Hart to Campbell, August 14<sup>th</sup> 1892.
28. China Imperial Maritime Customs Service List, Second Issue, 1 August 1876 (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1877).
29. King, *The Five Coloured Clouds* (MS.); The London Gazette, Issue No. 26188, 31 July 1891, Issue No. 26864, 22 June 1897 & Issue No. 26947, 14 March 1898; Fairbank et al., *The I.G. in Peking*, Vol. 1, Letters 53 & 59; and Vol. 2, Letter 879; *Who Was Who* (Oxford: A&C Black, 2007); he resumed the ancient family name of Stuart by Royal Warrant in 1898.
30. P.D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843-1943* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988), 137.
31. Donna Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China: The Chinese Maritime Customs Service, 1854-1949* (London: Routledge, 2006), 27-28 and 42-43.
32. Paul King, *Weighed in China's Balance: An Attempt At Explanation* (London: Heath Cranton, 1928); see also, King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*.
33. King, *Weighed in China's Balance*, 16.
34. Review in *The Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 7.3 (May 1928): 220-221; see also, Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 240-242.
35. King, *Weighed in China's Balance*, 83-84.
36. King, *Weighed in China's Balance*, 104; see also, Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 235.
37. See King, *Weighed in China's Balance*, 95.
38. Isabelle Williamson died in 1886, and the Rev. Alexander Williamson died in 1890; Paul King is here writing some 40 years after their deaths. See, *The North China Herald*, 4 September 1886, pp. 262-263, & 5 September 1890, pp. 288-289.
39. John King Fairbank, Martha Henderson Coolidge and Richard J. Smith, *H.B. Morse: Customs Commissioner and Historian of China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 28.
40. Frances Wood, *No Dogs and Not Many Chinese: Treaty Port Life in*

- China, 1843-1943* (London: John Murray, 1998), Chapter 10.
41. King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, Chapters 12 & 10. Paul King was also fluent in German; see, "Obituary," *The London Scottish Regimental Gazette*, 513, Vol. XI.III, September 1938.
  42. King, *In the Chinese Customs Service*, 168; *The London Gazette*, Issue No. 28223, 12 February 1909; Haileybury School website, "A Brief History of Haileybury – Medals and Awards," accessed 4 May 2012, <http://www.haileybury.com/medals/china.htm>.
  43. William A. Rivers [Paul & Veronica King], *Anglo-Chinese Sketches* (London: S.R. Menheneott, 1903); *Eurasia: A Tale of Shanghai Life* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1907); *The Chartered Junk: A Tale of the Yangtze Valley* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1910); Paul & Veronica King, *The Commissioner's Dilemma: An International Tale of the China of Yesterday* (London: Heath Cranton, 1929); see also, Jacqueline Young, *Western Residents of China and their Fictional Writings, 1890-1914* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, May 2011).
  44. Coates, *The China Consuls*, 10, 25, 100, and 125.
  45. Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London: Penguin, 2004), 81; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 225-227; Lise Boehm, *China Coast Tales: Of The Noble Army, No. 2* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1898), 121.
  46. Ann L. Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Colonial Cultures," *American Ethnologist*, 16.4 (Nov. 1989): 634-660.
  47. Coates, *The China Consuls*, 99-100, 396-397 and 441-443; Robert Bickers, "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai, 1843-1937," *Past & Present*, 159 (May, 1998): 161-211.
  48. King, *The Five Coloured Clouds* (MS).
  49. King, *The Five Coloured Clouds* (MS).
  50. Louis King was appointed a Consul on 1 December 1921, see *The London Gazette*, Issue No. 32668, 11 April 1922. See, *The North China Herald*, 4 September 1886, pp. 262-263, & 5 September 1890, pp. 288-289.
  51. A Resident in Peking [Louis Magrath King], *China As It Really Is* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912).
  52. Coates, *The China Consuls*, 418.
  53. A Resident in Peking, *China As It Really Is*, p. v.
  54. Louis Magrath King, *The Five Coloured Clouds: Framework* (note-

- book associated with the unfinished MS., c.1947-1949); see also, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Special Collections, Sir A.G.N. Ogden, PPMS 47, Box 17, File 141.
55. For more details on the Simla Conference, see Carole McGranahan, *Empire and the Status of Tibet: British, Chinese, and Tibetan Negotiations, 1913-1934*, in Alex McKay (ed.), *The History of Tibet*, Vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 2003).
  56. National Archives (NA), FO 228/2582 Alston to King 4 September 1913.
  57. NA, FO 228/2960, Tibet, Dossier 36, Vol. 5, King to Alston, 21 June 1920.
  58. Louis Magrath King, *China in Turmoil: Studies in Personality* (London: Heath Cranton, 1927), Chapter 15.
  59. NA, FO 228/2588, Jordan to F.O., 22 September 1915; NA, WO 374/39724, King, Capt. L.M., 1918-1921; Oliver Coales, "Eastern Tibet," *The Geographical Journal*, 53.4 (London: The Royal Geographical Society, 1919); "Economic Notes on Eastern Tibet," *The Geographical Journal*, 54.4 (1919); Eric Teichman, "Journeys through Kam (Eastern Tibet)," *The Geographical Journal* 59.1 (1922); *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922).
  60. King, *China in Turmoil*, 196-197; John Hanbury-Tracy, *Black River of Tibet* (London: Frederick Muller, 1938), 271 & 273. Hanbury-Tracy incorrectly gives the year of King's journey as 1925, it was actually 1922, see The British Library OIOC L/P&S/10/884, King to Alston, 12 October 1922, 'Route Report of Mr King's Journey on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier.' Louis King also collected and donated an important collection of Tibetan artefacts to the British Museum, see Tim Chamberlain, "Edge of Empires," *The British Museum Magazine*, 66 (Spring/Summer, 2010): 50-52. Similarly John Alexander Man donated a collection of artefacts which he collected in Taiwan to the British Museum in 1870.
  61. "Pioneer Woman from Tibet," *Evening Standard*, 12 August 1925.
  62. SOAS, Special Collections, P.D. Coates, PPMS 52, Box 5, File 29, "Notes of a Conversation with Ogden," 3 October 1973; Sir A.G.N. Ogden, PPMS 47, Box 17, Files 132 & 141; Coates, *The China Consuls*, 421-423.
  63. NA, FO 228/2963, Tibet Dossier 36, Vol. 8, King to Alston, 18 June 1922; Lamb, *Tibet, China and India, 1914-1950: A History of Imperial*

- Diplomacy* (Hertingfordbury: Roxford Books, 1989), 123-128.
64. King, *The Five Coloured Clouds* (MS), and other miscellaneous family papers; see also, C. Noel Davies, *A History of the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club, 1863-1930: With Complete Records of Hunts, Hunt Handicaps, Steeplechases and Point-to-Points* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1930).
  65. King, *Five Coloured Clouds: Framework*; Coates, *The China Consuls*, 441-443. W.J.B. Fletcher also published two collections of his own translations of Classical Chinese poetry: *Gems of Chinese Poetry* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1918), and, *More Gems of Chinese Poetry* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1919).
  66. Rinchen Lhamo (Mrs Louis King), *We Tibetans* (London: Seeley Service, 1926).
  67. Louis Magrath King, *China in Turmoil: Studies in Personality* (London: Heath Cranton, 1927).
  68. NA, FO 369/1885, 'Proposed employment of Mr L.M. King on Intelligence Work in Central Asia' (1925-1926); FO 369/2076, "Mr Louis King's Application for re-instatement in the China Consular Service" (1929); King made a final appeal to the Foreign Office in 1930 after the death of his wife in November 1929, FO 369/2129, 'Question of re-instatement of Mr Louis King in the China Consular Service' (1930).
  69. Coates, *The China Consuls*, 429-430; Martyn Atkins, *Informal Empire in Crisis: British Diplomacy and the Chinese Customs Succession, 1927-1929* (New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1995), 15. Another of the Pratt brothers, William Henry Pratt, achieved fame as an actor in Hollywood under the stage name Boris Karloff.
  70. Louis Magrath King, "Cause and Effect in China," *The Contemporary Review*, 172 (1947): 94-98.
  71. Williamson, *Notes on the North of China, its Productions and Communications*, 56-57.
  72. King, *Weighed in China's Balance*, 93.
  73. For more on Williamson's character and his life's work, see SOAS Special Collections, Sir C.S. Addis, PPMS 14/66, Box 7, Letter book 1890-1892, Letter 29: Addis to his sister, 2 September 1890.

# THE SCOTTISH SHANGHAILANDER ALEXANDER WYLIE (1815-1887)

**Missionary, Man of Letters, Mathematician**

BY IAN GOW

## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1840s, as a direct result of China's defeat in the first Opium War (1839-42), Protestant Missionaries, predominantly British and American, seized the long awaited chance to dramatically expand efforts to bring Christianity to the Chinese. Restrictions on missionary work, teaching and especially movement within China, were all gradually lifted. The establishment of the Five Treaty Ports was followed by even more lifting of restrictions due to the Treaties signed in 1858-1860. These two major developments triggered a major influx of diplomats, traders, teachers and translators as well as missionaries, all now able to enter China and from 1858 travel within mainland China relatively openly and freely.

This dramatic opening up of China accelerated the transmission of knowledge from the West to China. It was a product of "push" and "pull" factors. "Push" in terms of a missionary-led transmission of religious and secular knowledge and "pull", albeit at a much slower pace, in terms of the Chinese elite seeking knowledge of the West. However the transmission of knowledge was not simply one-way. The tremendous expansion of Chinese language competence required for this missionary "push" resulted in the creation of a deeper understanding of China being transmitted to the rest of the world. Leading this two-way transmission were the Protestant missionary-scholars from the West, who were not content to transmit "the word of God" but also in a sense "the word of man", as they stood at the forefront of a surge in the transfer of secular knowledge, in line with their overall conviction in the superiority of a secular West built on Christian foundations.

Shanghai, as a result of these developments, became the major intellectual centre for western missionary work and the introduction of western secular knowledge, especially in science and technology. Benjamin Elman has pointed out that this was "not just a missionary tactic" but a means to present "western wealth and power of western nations to the Chinese as inseparable from the Christian Gospel".<sup>1</sup> From the mid 1840s Shanghai thus became a virtual "Informational network"

and also created a Chinese intellectual community from all over China capable of operating in English and other major languages.<sup>2</sup> This was further boosted in the 1850s by large numbers of Chinese refugee intellectuals fleeing to Shanghai from areas controlled by the Taipings.<sup>3</sup>

The three major means of introducing western learning in China at this time were through dispatching Chinese students abroad, pushing forward institutional developments in basic and higher education, and translation activity. Translation enabled western learning to be more accessible to the Chinese ruling elite, many of whom had not acquired and had no interest in foreign languages. This imperial elite was closed at this time to those from western missionary colleges who, whilst they had acquired useful foreign languages, were not graduates of the Imperial Examinations system.

Translation can be viewed as part of the western “push” as either an offensive weapon of an external power wishing to open up and /or change another society or part of the “pull” as a defensive weapon for any country trying to repel a superior military and economic power by learning their strengths and implementing “self strengthening”. In the Chinese context the former of these effectively reflected the Protestant missionary efforts. The latter reflected the growing recognition of the Chinese ruling elite that they could no longer relegate western learning to an inferior category or at best a supplementary tool a change which would not be final until the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Missionary efforts to spread the gospels and transfer western knowledge required great linguistic and intellectual skills and thus generated a major group of Missionary-scholars who, along with Consular-Scholars, transmitted knowledge for, on and from China. However the ability to speak Chinese or indeed to have Chinese converts who could interpret was deemed totally insufficient for the task of spreading the “word” in such a vast country. What was required was the translation, mass printing and widespread dissemination of the Bible (and other religious tracts) in Chinese, in particular in a version of Chinese accessible to large numbers. A full translation of the Bible, the so-called Morrison-Milne Bible had been completed by 1823 but by the 1840s the missionary authorities in London had conceded that a new translation of the Bible was needed and should then be printed and disseminated from Shanghai, the so-called “Delegates Bible”.<sup>4</sup> The production and dissemination of this Bible was the priority task assigned to the staff of the of the London Missionary Press in Shanghai

(or Inkstone Press *Muhai Shuguan*). This printing establishment also itself formed an intellectual centre whose influence and efforts went far beyond this task. The Reverend Walter Medhurst (1796-1857) who had spearheaded the move to re-translate the Bible and had been responsible for setting up the printing press in Shanghai then sought the services of a printer to run the operations and a Scot, Alexander Wylie (Weili Yali 1815-1887) was appointed, a man who carried out this technical task but also through his translation work had a truly major impact on the secular two-way knowledge transfer between the West and China.

#### THE SCOTTISH SHANGHAILANDER ALEXANDER WYLIE (1815-1887)

In 1847 this modest, unassuming lay missionary, already middle-aged, landed in Shanghai. Although by training a cabinet-maker he had been interviewed, appointed and specially trained as a printer in London to become the supervising printer for the newly established London Missionary Society Press, Shanghai. In his capacity as printer, publisher, editor, writer and scholar he played a major role in the exponential growth in translation work emanating from Shanghai. This Protestant-led and financed translation effort in Shanghai, Beijing and other cities dwarfed the earlier efforts of the Jesuits. However, Wylie not only had a major role in transmitting religious and secular knowledge to Chinese but also played a significant role in transmitting knowledge of China to the West – and it is this, his two-way contribution that followed is still highly valued even today.

Wylie was, by any standards, a most remarkable man. He had only a secondary education and training as a cabinet-maker to prepare him for the intellectual challenges he faced in China. He was a devout Christian and a regular Sunday School teacher. In the 1840s, in keeping with the times, he saw and seized the opportunity to go to China for missionary work. This was done initially with the London Missionary Society (LMS) but later as an agent of the British Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). Prior to this employment opportunity in Shanghai, Wylie had already shown an interest in China and some early indication of his considerable linguistic aptitude. He had begun to learn Chinese in London prior to being offered the job in Shanghai, and would later acquire a number of other Chinese dialects and languages plus other Asian and western languages in order to further his studies on China. Wylie also displayed a very high ability in a range of technical subjects and most especially in mathematics, translating many major western mathematical works into Chinese for the

first time. Wylie also wrote on a broad range of aspects of Chinese history, ranging from early Christianity in China, the history of Protestant missionaries, the history of Chinese literature, archaeology, astronomy and Chinese mathematics – many of these writings are still quoted today. He was a bibliographer of some merit, especially in terms of terms of the history of Chinese literature and Chinese missionary history .

Wylie was a founding member of a number of learned societies such as the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (NCBRAS), the Shanghai Polytechnic, and the libraries of both institutions. He was an avid collector of Chinese books and his major collections formed the nucleus of two major library collections on China, the NCBRAS Library in Shanghai, in its time one of the finest in Asia, and the Bodleian Library at Oxford. He was also highly active as an editor of both Chinese and English language learned journals such as the *Chinese Recorder* and the *NCBRAS Journal*. Working for the LMS Press and also at the Shanghai Polytechnic and at the NCBRAS Wylie was a leading light in a lively and expanding intellectual society in Shanghai from the late 1840s, constantly consulted and always held in high esteem by western and Chinese intellectuals alike.

Wylie's contemporaries had no doubt of his talent and contributions. Wylie was included in two distinguished triumvirates operating in China in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First, he was one of a triumvirate of translator/scholar/philologist sinologists where he ranked alongside Robert Morrison (1782-1834) and Herbert Giles (1845-1935).<sup>5</sup> Second, he was listed in the triumvirate of distinguished 19<sup>th</sup> century British sinologists. Edward H Parker (1849-1926), a consular official and later Professor of Chinese at Manchester University, wrote in the mid 1880's that :

*there were only three men in England with quasi-eminence in Sinology, the brilliant but now blind and retired Wylie, the aloof unproductive Thomas Wade at Cambridge and the prolific 'giant' James Legge at Oxford.*<sup>6</sup>

Legge (1815-1897), the first professor of Chinese at Oxford and another Scot, told his biographer how “in some branches of scholarship he regarded Wylie as his superior”.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, Thomas Wade (1818-1895) the great consul-scholar and first professor of Chinese at Cambridge wrote

*A better man, I think, I never knew, whether in what he laid down what was to be done, or what he did. In his own province of Sinology, which was rather bibliography and archaeology, he was greatly valued, and I have heard scholars of note admit their obligations to him.*<sup>8</sup>

The passage of time has shown that Wylie's major contributions went far beyond the narrow confines mentioned by Wade, especially in the history of Chinese mathematics. Wylie was and is even today recognized, albeit insufficiently, beyond the confines of Chinese studies, especially in the history of mathematics and in missionary studies.

Wylie was truly an outstanding intellect who fully merits the appellation of "Missionary-Scholar". However there is, in English, apart from references to him in major works, no academic articles and no biography by western scholars to place him alongside those other 19<sup>th</sup> Century giants of Chinese studies such as Legge, Fryer and Wade.<sup>9</sup> Cordier's long obituary article, written shortly after Wylie's death, remains the closest thing to a biography in English<sup>10</sup> Cordier intended to write a full biography, which was never completed. There does exist a growing literature on him in Chinese by Chinese scholars, including an important biography by Wang Xiaoqin.<sup>11</sup>

#### WYLIE'S EARLY YEARS (1817-1847)

Wylie was born in London in 1815, the youngest of four sons of a son of a Scottish émigré. His father was an oil and colour merchant, indicating some of the technical aptitude that ran through the family. Frail health required that Wylie be sent to Scotland when only one year old to relatives in Drumluthie, Kincardineshire. He finished his schooling somewhere in Chelsea and was apprenticed to a cabinet maker. Wylie is usually referred to as English possibly as a result of his place of birth, London, and his connections with the London Missionary Society. His contemporaries however, no doubt reinforced in their belief by his strong Scottish accent, acquired from a childhood in Scotland, were clear that he was a Scot, through and through. One obituary stated that Wylie "had proved himself to be one of the most lauded of Scotland's sons in the Far East".<sup>12</sup>

Wylie's most significant job in cabinet making was to spend some months working on repairs to the extensively fire-damaged interiors of a stately home – Hatfield House. The damage was reported by a

young cub reporter on the Morning Chronicle by the name of Charles Dickens<sup>13</sup>. Hatfield House was the home of a distinguished family, the Cecil's. Interestingly, Lord William Gascoyne-Cecil later became one of the leading advocates of a British university in China based on the Oxford and Cambridge models, the co-called "United Universities Project" and himself wrote on China<sup>14</sup>.

Wylie was a regular Sunday School teacher, affiliated with the Albany Congregational Church near Regents Park, where the pastor was a Scotsman.<sup>15</sup> He was no doubt influenced by the growing enthusiasm of Congregationalist churches for the conversion of the heathen in a China. Wylie therefore decided in the early 1840s to try and learn Chinese, but could not find an English textbook on the subject. Poring through old books at a bookstall in London in 1845 he chanced upon a grammar by the Jesuit Josph Henri de Premare. By way of this "Notitia Linguae Sinicae" he decided to learn Latin in order to learn Chinese. He then, with the aid of a Chinese language version of the New Testament, proceeded, by use of recurrence ratio and vocabulary from a Latin grammar, to compile a working dictionary, acquiring a functional competence in reading the Bible in Chinese. At around this time the Reverend Dr James Legge had returned to London from China. Hearing of this Wylie obtained a letter of introduction. Legge was duly very impressed with Wylie's Chinese skills, especially his ability to read the Chinese translation of the New Testament<sup>16</sup>, and subsequently agreed to help him with his language studies. Around this time W. H. Medhurst, another great missionary-scholar, had contacted Legge asking him to find a printer for work in Shanghai. Medhurst had, for many years, argued for a new improved translation into Chinese of the Bible, and in recent years his arguments had won out. He was also founder of the London Missionary Press in Shanghai, an organization designed to massively increase the production and dissemination of Bibles throughout China, especially the new so-called "Delegates Version" which Medhurst had worked on and championed. Legge immediately recommended Wylie, who was then sent to study printing under Charles Reed, a lay congregationalist and prominent London businessman and owner of a successful type-founding business. At this point, armed with a sound training in printing, a basic knowledge of Chinese and a desire to convert, Wylie set sail for Shanghai arriving on August 26<sup>th</sup> 1847.

Wylie also had to sort out his personal arrangements. In common with many others he initially lodged with other missionaries in the

housing in the Missionary compounds purchased and bought by the LMS.<sup>17</sup> In 1848 Wylie married the recently arrived Mary Hanson. Mary had previously served as an agent for “The Ladies Society of London for the Instruction of Females in the East”. Ms. Hanson had spent seven difficult and dangerous years in South Africa doing missionary and educational work amongst the Hottentots, but had had to return home during the continuing and increasingly violent Kaffir Wars. She took part in a ceremony at Craven Chapel on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1848 where James Legge and another missionary great, Joseph Edkins, gave the farewell addresses to three young lady missionaries now off to China, where he lavished special praise on Mary Hanson.<sup>18</sup> It would appear from Wylie’s correspondence with London announcing his engagement and requesting she be allowed to come to China that he and Mary were probably already known to each other before he left England.<sup>19</sup> Mary Wylie gave birth to a daughter in Shanghai but died in October 1849 and was buried in the Shantung Road Cemetery.<sup>20</sup> Apparently Shanghai, never the healthiest place for westerners, was particularly badly hit that year by fever, taking both her life and other members of the missionary community.<sup>21</sup> Wylie apparently decided that his daughter was best looked after by relatives back in London. The LMS in 1854 granted him twenty five pounds for the maintenance of his “little girl”.<sup>22</sup> There is no trace in his business correspondence of his thoughts on the loss of his wife. However, in a letter of condolence dated 1863, written to the in-laws of his great friend the Reverend Joseph Edkins, whose young wife had just died in Shanghai, Wylie makes some touching comments on the fate of missionary wives:

*in the limited period of the Mission there are few in the field but have had to mourn the loss of some near and dear to them. The greater number of such are female martyrs to the cause and your daughter having now joined that band of faithful women.*<sup>23</sup>

#### WYLIE AS MISSIONARY

Wylie’s first major task was to assemble the newly arrived printing press and his correspondence to London is filled with technical drawings as he sought to obtain new parts for those damaged in transit.<sup>24</sup> Soon, however, he could report he had managed to get the printing machines working for six months without a breakdown.<sup>25</sup> Wylie’s technical abilities reflect in many ways the skill-set required of a cabinet maker.

Cabinet-making required amongst other things a very considerable knowledge of construction, technical equipment, materials, design and a good grasp of geometry, algebra and calculus. It was a profession which greatly valued attention to detail, and all of these qualities and skills were to form the cornerstone of Wylie's work in China, not just as a printer but also as a translator. Yet Wylie, despite a very short apprenticeship in printing, was no mere technician. His work as a printer was highly artistic, no doubt reflecting the talent for design required of a cabinet maker. Wylie was praised as a

*master of the art of printing. Some of his editions of the scriptures which he issued are beautiful specimens of typography and excited the admiration of Chinese as well as that of Europeans.*<sup>26</sup>

Settling into Shanghai was clearly a daunting task and applying himself to printing and distributing Chinese Bibles occupied most of Wylie's time. Devoted as he was to this work and with the clear intention of staying in China "for the rest of my life" he initially asked to be "released from any connexion with Shanghae [*sic*] Missionaries" and that his "connexion with the LMS be at an end". This was clearly due to internal politics within the LMS Press in Shanghai, since he stated clearly that despite being appointed "Superintendent of the Proofs...that office has never been committed to my trust".<sup>27</sup> Having early on lost his wife, his decision to repatriate his daughter, a sensible move in terms of her health and welfare, also released him from time-consuming family responsibilities and generated the space for his work outside printing. Wylie apparently faced criticism for spending too much time on secular especially scientific translations rather than missionary-related activities. Elman has shown that Protestant missionaries were just as careful as the Jesuits in censoring translations of certain things from the West that challenged their orthodox beliefs and this may have been a contributing factor or it may more likely have simply reflected the differing views of British protestant missionaries at the time on direct proselytization versus education and then conversion, the latter more favoured by their American counterparts.<sup>28</sup>

Coping with the normal printing duties was onerous, but Wylie was soon confronted with instructions to print and distribute one million copies of the "Delegates" version of the Bible in Chinese – and to do so quickly. He wrote in 1853 pleading for money to be allocated to

purchase a second and larger printing press. He argued successfully that the target could not be met in the time frame given to him if only one printing press was available.<sup>29</sup> In the mid-1860's, Wylie requested home leave, but claimed that he would not leave until the millionth copy had been printed, which was indeed managed by the year end.<sup>30</sup>

The opening up of China in the 1840s presented Protestant missionaries with a real opportunity to print and distribute the Bible but which translation of the Bible best suited this role was the nub of the problem. Major disputes between Protestant sects at home and in China on the merits of literal translation (even into English) and appropriate Chinese terminology had been carrying on for decades.<sup>31</sup> Medhurst, in overall charge of the printing establishment in Shanghai, had devoted years to producing a more suitable translation for the Chinese masses. He had been strongly encouraged by the American Presbyterian Missionary authorities, but had struggled for many years against stubborn opposition to a new translation and reprinting from leaders of the London Missionary Society and British Foreign Bible Society who did not want to impugn Morrison or Milne's work. Medhurst and others were strong critics of not only the use of a form of literary Chinese unsuitable for the ordinary Chinese but also poor Chinese translation and poor Chinese style which they perceived in the Morrison-Milne version.

Although a promising translator in the making, Wylie was not involved directly on the actual translations. Still, it is clear that his knowledge of Chinese greatly helped the printing. It was widely assumed that part of the problem of the older version was the quality of Chinese translators available to Morrison and Milne. Wylie himself had, early on, commented on this:

*The time would soon come when the missionaries would be able to procure native assistance of a far higher standard than could be got in the Straights Settlements or even Canton under the old arrangements.*<sup>32</sup>

Wylie also stated in his own essay on the Bible in China that "the chief drawback of the first translation was the exceedingly unidiomatic style and the great and needless abundance of barbarisms" the native translators "were not of very high standing in the literary scale."<sup>33</sup> Years later, Wylie became embroiled in arguing most strongly against

yet another effort (American) to provide a new translation of the Bible.<sup>34</sup> The massive task for the new Bible required major translating and coordination efforts involving missionary translators from the treaty ports and beyond. Coordination and agreement on texts was done via a team of “Delegates” mainly from the five treaty ports, who met regularly in Shanghai to thrash out agreements on translations, a painfully arduous and at times heated process. This Bible in Chinese was therefore referred to as “The Delegates Bible”. Most missionaries conversant with Chinese could not even agree on the translation of the word for God with most being placed in either the *Shangdi* or *Shen* (Alternative translations of ‘God’) factions.<sup>35</sup> This dispute was the most important but by no means the only point of difference in a continuing and often heated debate, widely referred to as the “The Term Question” Eventually, and after heated debate and some resignations, the missionary translators did somehow surmount the constant wrangling over literal translations, as well as the actual Chinese to be used, although other translations in other Chinese language styles and dialects continued to be developed and printed in China.

Wylie, though only the printer, willingly took on responsibility in helping with distribution, a role that expanded in the 1860’s when he resigned from the LMS Press and became a full time agent of the BFBS.<sup>36</sup> He travelled widely in China, often to places no foreigner had ever visited, covering eventually 13 of the 17 provinces. His reports, published in and outside China, are marvellous, detailed descriptions of China at that time.<sup>37</sup> He also recounted the great dangers he and his colleagues faced, often robbed and threatened by pirates who thought their boats contained opium and other more valuable commodities and often destroyed the Bibles when they found no treasure.<sup>38</sup> However Shanghai itself was a dangerous place to live, not only from a health point of view, but also because of violence from invading rebels. A close friend described two incidents in which Wylie had narrowly avoided being hit by a cannonball which crippled two Chinese people standing nearby and another when Wylie returned to a table on the veranda to collect his reading materials to find his chair had been badly damaged again by stray cannon fire.<sup>39</sup>

Wylie reorganised the colporteur system for distributing Bibles and insisted that Bibles were sold and not given away. He reasoned correctly that free Bibles would reduce the value of the Word greatly in the eyes of the Chinese. Wylie writes often of confronting resistance and

hostility not only from the Chinese authorities but also from Catholic missionaries in various places.

One of his most significant contributions to the history of Christianity in China was his work on the famous or at least until his time the “infamous” Nestorian Stele.<sup>40</sup> The Protestant churches and others even the likes of Voltaire had argued for decades that this was not, as the Jesuits had claimed, evidence of early Christian influence in ancient China but a Jesuit forgery.<sup>41</sup> Wylie, with his great interest in early Chinese history, was able to locate and translate a 7<sup>th</sup> century document confirming the stele as a genuine Nestorian artefact. This discovery was widely recognized as ending the debate by confirming that it was in fact genuine evidence of early Christian missionary work in China. Wylie’s interest in Christian missionary history resulted in a major annotated bibliography of missionaries in China up till that time, a source book still used by scholars.<sup>42</sup>

Wylie’s travels also included accompanying a very important military diplomatic mission led by Lord Elgin. He was the first missionary to be invited on such a mission.<sup>43</sup> This visit, in 1857-8, was a result of the problems arising from the impact of the Taiping Rebellion on British interests. This major uprising against the Chinese state, the so-called Taiping rebellion, was led by a charismatic mystic Hong Xiuquan (1813-1864) who had been greatly influenced by Christian teachings translated into Chinese.

The emergence of this new challenge to the Chinese state initially raised the hopes of western diplomats, traders and, naturally, missionaries. The last group were excited by the possibility that a Taiping success would bring a Christian leader to the Chinese throne. Alas, very quickly they began to realize that the Taiping leader’s interpretation had mutated into a highly blasphemous use of the New Testament. Hong now claimed he was also the son of God and brother of Jesus. Wylie wrote reports for journals and also for the Admiralty in which he dismissed their military threat (in this he was to be proved wrong), but his very critical assessment of the Taipings as being a long way from being true Christians was correct.<sup>44</sup> He referred to Hong’s belief he was a son of God as a “Monstrous doctrine”.<sup>45</sup> One report by an American missionary relates to the dangers of this trip stating that Wylie and his great Scottish friend the Reverend William Muirhead had apparently tried to infiltrate the insurgents, been discovered, had their false tails removed and the mob asked to vote on whether they be beheaded or

not!<sup>46</sup>

The Taping rebellion wreaked havoc in China, with millions killed. However, two developments arising directly from the destruction and chaos greatly benefitted Wylie in two important ways: first, the rebellion created a massive immigration of Chinese refugees especially intellectuals into Shanghai, who secondly brought rare books from their private libraries. This provided Wylie with access to brilliant young minds such as the mathematician Li Shanlan (1810-1882), who worked with him and other missionary-scholars on scientific, especially mathematical translations from English to Chinese. It also allowed Wylie to access and collect highly valuable and long forgotten volumes of Chinese history ranging from philosophy to science, especially mathematics, books never before seen by westerners – even the early Jesuit visitors.

#### WYLIE AS MAN OF LETTERS

Wylie was by any definition of the term worthy of the title “Man of Letters”. Interesting, then, that he was not known a “Lettered Man” despite being referred to then and now as either Dr or Reverend. One might add that as a printer he was technically a “Man of Letters” although his main role was to print documents in Chinese characters.

Wylie’s greatest claim to being a “Man of Letters” emerges from the breadth and depth of his own publications and translations, which cover a wide variety of subjects, ranging from astronomy, archaeology, geography to the history of China, missionary studies and numismatics. Wylie was particularly active in developing an awareness of pre-modern Chinese literature, Chinese fiction and non-fiction and also missionary studies, aside from his important work in the sciences. Many of his best works were printed in the special volume edited after his death by Cordier *et al.* In this work, still quoted extensively today in a range of fields relating to China, Cordier pointed out that they had only included some of his works and, although his friend Wylie had intended to publish more later, this plan had never materialized.<sup>47</sup>

Wylie wrote for and also took on major editorial responsibilities for key journals involved in the transfer of knowledge between the West and China. Especially important was his editorship of the short-lived *Shanghai Serial*, written in Classical Chinese. Wylie was also editor of the *NCBRAS Journal* (North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society) and the *Chinese Recorder*. His translations into Chinese, aided by the brilliant Li Shanlan, were numerous and published in the *Shanghai Serial*

as well as in book form, and his seminal essays on Chinese mathematics were published by the *North China Herald* and translated into at least three European languages. He is credited with major contributions to technical dictionaries and glossaries and is also credited with coining key scientific terms in Chinese, especially algebraic and other mathematical terms.

Wylie was, furthermore, a bibliographer of some note and his annotated bibliographies include the famous *Notes on Chinese Literature* with over 2,000 entries, which led Herbert Giles, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge write to write in 1901:

*Considering the date at which this was written, this book is entitled to rank among the highest efforts of its kind. It is still of utmost value to the student, though in need of careful revision.*<sup>48</sup>

Wylie made a very major contribution to various learned societies and institutions in Shanghai. Indeed, the LMS Press itself in the 1850s and early 1860s was such a magnet for Western and Chinese intellectuals that it might well be classified as a learned society, as could the translation department of the Jiangnan Arsenal, where Wylie was also employed as a translator. He is credited as a founder member of the NCBRAS and its library. During his absence in England the Society had almost collapsed, and Wylie played a major role its revival on his return in 1863.<sup>49</sup> He was eventually to become Vice President and on his final return home was made an Honorary member for his services to the NCBRAS in general and to its journal, its library and its museum. He was one of the founding members of the Shanghai Polytechnic, modelled on the Regents Street Polytechnic in London (now Westminster University) and assisted with the design of the reading rooms. He was also the founder of the Shanghai Branch of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

Wylie was a collector of books and a great friend and supporter of libraries. He was very active in advising on the book collection development of both the NCBRAS Library and also the Shanghai Polytechnic and Reading Room library. In addition, his personal book collections later formed a major part of the NCBRAS Library. The Bodleian Library Oxford acquired his other major collection in 1883, which windfall, according to the current website, “doubled in quantity and even more in quality” the Chinese collection.

Wylie can clearly be regarded as a philologist of note. He had shown through learning Latin in order to learn Chinese that he had a love of and considerable aptitude for language learning. He studied Manchu, a language apparently easier than Chinese and popular as an aid to translating older Chinese texts, under the guidance of Sir Harry Parkes. He also produced a Manchu Grammar, more a reading guide for Chinese speakers to understand the language.<sup>50</sup> He acquired a working knowledge of Mongolian, Uyghur, Sanskrit, as well as a functional understanding of Russian, French, German and Greek. Though Wylie did provide the first full European translation of the great Chinese Classic the Li Ki (transliterated as Li Jin, the *Collection on Treatises on the Rules of Propriety*) his version was never published. Legge, in his famous translations, did have access to this early translation, which he claimed was done very early on in Wylie's development as a translator and therefore was not of the same standard as his later translations.

Finally, this man of letters also contributed in a major way to the transmission of mathematical knowledge especially algebra and calculus, significant branches which extensively utilized alphabetical symbols, making him in effect a mathematical man of letters!

#### WYLIE AS MATHEMATICIAN (OR HISTORIAN OF MATHEMATICS)

Wylie favoured the transmission of secular knowledge to China as a great support for the conversion of the Chinese to Christianity. Nowhere is this clearer than in his numerous technical translations (and in the prefaces he wrote) of books and in articles in such key journals as the *Shanghai Serial* and the *Chinese Recorder*. Wylie saw western mathematics in particular as a highly valuable contribution to the modernization of China.

Wylie realized early on in his career that the deeper and more up-to-date understanding of western mathematical developments was central to China's modernization and conversion. As is well known, Chinese pre-modern mathematics was closely allied to astronomy, something the Jesuits knew and admired. The Chinese also had significant technological achievements in this area. Wylie apparently confounded an international conference in St Petersburg by revealing that a famous astrocope in the Beijing Observatory assumed to have been left by the Jesuits was actually built by the Chinese during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).<sup>51</sup> The Wylie/Li translation of Herschel's book on Astronomy has been described by one Chinese scholar as follows:

*In a sense Li Shanlan's Astronomy (with Wylie) is a turning point in the history and development of modern Chinese astronomy comparable to that of Copernicus's Revolutions of the Heavenly spheres.*<sup>52</sup>

There can be no doubt that Wylie's chance meeting and subsequent working relationship with the highly talented Li Shanlan was absolutely indispensable for his work in the area of transmitting modern mathematics to China. Wylie later commented on a "small work" on logarithms that Li Shanlan had written, using only an old Chinese work:

*as a result of four years thought, a theorem, which in the days of Briggs and Napier, would have been sufficient to raise him to distinction.*<sup>53</sup>

Li Shanlan did not speak or read English. Wylie would orally translate, Li Shanlan would put it down in written Chinese and then Wylie would check the Chinese whilst Li checked the mathematics.<sup>54</sup>

Wylie completed the first full translation of the last nine books of Euclid's *Geometry*, a project which the Jesuits had left unfinished. Wylie made it clear in the preface that "Mr Li's efforts counted more than mine". He went on to say that the old edition of the English version was not carefully corrected and contained sufficient errors to make for "seriously misleading" reading, and ventured to suggest that as a result of Li Shanlan's work in particular, "in future when western countries need a reliable text of the book they will have to come to China to get it".<sup>55</sup> It took Wylie and Li four years of their own time to complete this major work.

Wylie with Li also translated the first part of Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, the full translation of which Li Shanlan was to complete many years later. Sadly the manuscript was unpublished and then lost. A Chinese scholar has now traced the story of how it was lost, found and now is possibly in a library in Zhejiang uncatalogued.<sup>56</sup> Wylie had also previously translated parts of the *Principia* for the *Shanghai Serial*.

He and Li also translated De Morgan's *Elements of Algebra* resulting in "modern algebraic symbolism being reintroduced into China."<sup>57</sup> This symbolism had been firmly rejected by the Kangxi Emperor in 1712. The team of Wylie and Li also translated Loomis's *Elements of Analytical Geometry and Differential and Integral Calculus*, an achievement

which made the greatest impact of all. Not only had the Chinese not developed calculus but here was the mathematical breakthrough that was rightly regarded as an essential tool for the development of modern manufacturing. Again, in his preface, Wylie fully acknowledges Li Shanlan's help, stating that "Whatever degree of perfection this version may have attained, is almost entirely due to his efforts and talents."<sup>58</sup>

Despite these highly valued translation efforts into Chinese and their contribution to modern Chinese mathematics and science and technology, Wylie may well best be remembered for transmitting knowledge in the opposite direction. Wylie had by, virtue of an immersion in older Chinese mathematics, been able to find or create terms to make western mathematics understandable to Chinese mathematicians. In this he was of course greatly assisted and guided by the brilliant Chinese mathematician Li Shanlan. Wylie's writings in English brought about a significant revision in western views of the quality of pre-modern Chinese mathematical achievements. These had gone unnoticed and even dismissed not only by the Jesuits but by later writers including historians of mathematics right up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Not only had this often led to a dismissal of Chinese mathematics up until that time but a failure to consider whether the flow of mathematical developments to Europe might have had a significant Chinese dimension as opposed to the conventional wisdom that the ultimate origins lay in the Indian and Arabic cultures.

His contributions to making the West (and indeed Japan) aware of the considerable achievements of pre-modern Chinese mathematics was a seminal breakthrough. He successfully challenged many of the fallacies about China's failure to develop its own mathematics triggering an ongoing debate even today on the possible contribution of Chinese mathematics to the early development of western mathematics.

The Jesuits were almost completely unaware, as were perhaps many in Chinese court circles, of China's great past advances in mathematics. Europeans, in their ignorance, tended to credit China with developing higher level mathematics after the Jesuits arrived. The fact that the Jesuits and even the Chinese themselves at that time were unaware of the essential truth of early Chinese mathematical prowess is because major books on mathematics were lost through wanton destruction or else simply forgotten about. Catherine Jami in a seminal new book on the history of the Kangxi Emperor (1662-1722) and mathematics states:

*it is widely admitted that by 1600 some of the most significant achievements of the Chinese mathematical tradition had fallen into oblivion.*<sup>59</sup>

In addition to this, Chinese academies (*shuyuan*) had ossified and simply became preparatory schools for the Imperial examinations, with mathematics, always a minor subject, omitted from the syllabus and the examination's literary canon. The Tsungli Yamen (Forerunner of the Foreign Ministry) in 1887, in the midst of a move to introduce mathematics into the Imperial Examinations, noted that more than half the best mathematicians in China were attending the Shanghai Polytechnic where Wylie was a major influence.<sup>60</sup> No doubt this afforded Wylie even more access to Chinese mathematical knowledge.

It was Wylie's seminal article "Notes on Chinese arithmetic" in the *North-China Herald* that made the breakthrough.<sup>61</sup> Translated into German and French and even Italian, the article was widely distributed in Europe, although not apparently widely known in Britain.

Wylie made clear that his intentions in writing this series of articles were to refute western analyses of China's mathematics, especially the premodern variety.<sup>62</sup> At this time the conventional wisdom was that a) Chinese mathematics in the past lagged far behind western mathematics, b) what they had developed was derivative from the Jesuits and thus not worth learning, c) westerners were too fixed on the weaknesses of the abacus (which Wylie argued was a much later development than was assumed) and d) there was no algebra in Chinese mathematics. Wylie, using a number of older Chinese texts, showed that China had developed the theory of local values earlier than the west as well as the concept of negative numbers, the "famous Chinese Remainder Theorem" and various methods of representing a polynomial and solving polynomials up to a certain degree. He showed the Chinese discoveries had preceded Horner's 19<sup>th</sup> century algebraic breakthroughs and Hariots "placement methods" by some centuries, and that the Chinese Remainder Theorem was an early equivalent of that which Gauss had developed.<sup>63</sup> The impact was remarkable given that so little, and most of this erroneous, had been written on the subject in the West. Wylie, in a word, demolished previous studies, showing the significance of major developments in pre-modern Chinese mathematics, some of which was on a par or even ahead of developments in the West, even if it was "inductive" rather than "deductive". Wylie's views were always balanced and he

did, when necessary, make sure to fully acknowledge the contribution of western mathematics to the development of Chinese mathematics. He particularly drew attention to the view that the western obsession with the abacus, which was inferior in that any error and one had to start again by pointing, was misplaced in that the use of the abacus was relatively recent (16<sup>th</sup> century). Instead it was the nine rod plus symbol system which was key, a development today held to be possible evidence for the origination of the decimal system in ancient China.

The logical development of this and where the debate lies today is not so much that pre-modern Chinese mathematics was impressive but rather that major mathematical developments may have flowed from China to India and to the West, and not the other way around. This can be seen argued most cogently in a recent, well researched monograph, entitled *Fleeting Footsteps* which argues strongly that the decimal system may have its origins in the Chinese rod system.<sup>64</sup> Wylie's contribution to spreading knowledge of pre-modern Chinese mathematical achievements probably accounts for his high reputation in China. Again in terms of world history of mathematics, Wylie's series of articles and their translations resulted in most histories of mathematics from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century on containing a section or chapter on pre-modern Chinese mathematics.

#### WYLIE'S FINAL YEARS

Wylie, despite his considerable reputation, was a most modest man.

*There was Mr Wylie, the famous Chinese scholar, yet so modest that, while others were sounding his praises, he himself was profoundly unconscious of his fame. He would never read a line of what appeared in the public prints of his work, and any verbal compliment that was paid to him in a private way was treated as an insult.*<sup>765</sup>

Cordier too alluded to this modesty when Wylie responded to an inquiry about his background:

*Some years ago, as I intended giving some notices of celebrated Sinologists, Wylie, to whom I approached for particulars of his life, sent me his photograph, adding with characteristic modesty, "your notices of Sinologists will be interesting but it will be a long time*

*ere it comes to my turn. I really do not know what notes I could give you about myself, that would be of any interest to the public. I am essentially one of hoi poloi. My birthday was April 6<sup>th</sup> 1815 in London and I reached China August 26<sup>th</sup> 1847. The rest you know tolerably well.*<sup>66</sup>

Wylie was much loved for his amiable sense of humour, as well as being gentle and unfailingly helpful to all who met him – and of course phenomenally hard working. He never failed to respond to requests for help on translation or information about China. Those extremely long hours during which he worked on his official printing duties, examining print, and his long hours poring over translations and ancient Chinese texts both took their toll on his eyes. The first recorded note that he was having serious problems appears in a letter to the BFBS secretary in 1876, when his eyesight was now behind “the stopping of the stereotyping for the Delegates Testament”.<sup>67</sup> This was followed by a formal request for leave to return to Europe for help, dated December 1876, in which he now talked of the necessity of returning to Europe “to see if total blindness may possibly be avoided”.<sup>68</sup> Wylie was then granted leave of absence, but was never to return to his beloved Shanghai. His eyesight continued to deteriorate, although he still continued his translation work in London and his daughter took over his correspondence. He had a stroke in 1883 and was not expected to survive for long. He did, but unfortunately his mental capacities deteriorated terribly, and apart from an ability to remember elements of his faith, the great missionary, translator and connector of East and West faded rapidly and died in 1887. He is buried in Highgate Cemetery, beside his father.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite his eminence, Wylie was no self-publicist, always giving credit to others whilst seeking none for himself. Given that he had not had the benefit of any university education, his scholarly reputation did not result in any academic appointments on his return home, unlike Messrs Wade, Legge, and Fryer. Yet Wylie was undoubtedly a major figure in the intellectual developments taking place in China and between China and the West in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and might especially be described in today’s language as a mathematical modem providing a constant two-way flow of information between the two cultures. He certainly deserves recognition outside the small academic community of

Chinese missionary history and the history of science and mathematics in China. Wylie clearly played a major role in the two-way transmission of knowledge between China and the West. Wylie in Japan is credited, for example, with the introduction of a “differential and integral calculus, in its definitive western form, through his translation of Loomis”.<sup>69</sup>

Of course his pioneering work in mathematics, from the West to China and back again, would not have been possible without the major contribution of the great Chinese mathematician Li Shanlan. Wylie had mathematical talent, but like Needham many years later, he would not claim to be a mathematician of the first rank. Needham of course was a trained scientist with not inconsiderable mathematical ability, but still he, like Wylie had a brilliant Chinese mathematician to assist him in synthesising his findings.<sup>70</sup> Though Wylie never accepted the Chinese view that all mathematics originated in China, he did show that there was a case for seeing mathematics in the Middle Kingdom as highly advanced, many hundreds of years ahead of Europe in some cases. Prior to his article Chinese mathematics was ignored and dismissed as a derivative of western developments, all prejudices reinforced by the views of 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuits and missionary mathematicians and historians of mathematics often with no access to secondary, let alone primary Chinese language materials right up to Wylie’s time. Today, his name is best known outside China from the works of a small band of leading scholars such as Elman, who stand now at the forefront of the late imperial and modern history of Chinese science and mathematics. Wylie is known and becoming increasingly recognized amongst Chinese scholars of the history of science and the history of mathematics, who fully recognize his translations into Chinese and their major contribution to the modernization of Chinese mathematics. But his other contribution, the awakening of the “advanced” West to the great achievements of early modern Chinese mathematics has also guaranteed him continued recognition. His work not only provided a useful corrective to the prevailing wisdom that there was nothing to recognize in Chinese mathematics but also formed a corrective on the direction of the flow of mathematical concepts from East to West, and many of the origins of the cornerstones of mathematical knowledge today may well have emerged from early Chinese developments. It would not be unreasonable to say that any well researched academic article on the history of Chinese mathematics would almost certainly refer to Wylie’s *North-China Herald* articles, a remarkable achievement

for the man and indeed for this regional Chinese newspaper. Wylie is also widely recognized in western missionary history on China, a major established academic area currently undergoing a tremendous international revival.

Wylie is an interesting case study in the value of translators, a skill often undervalued within academia and especially in area studies of which Chinese studies is an important category. Wylie's gifts and his partnership with Li Shanlan enabled him to contribute as a member of that much smaller group who devoted themselves to this much rarer form of two-way knowledge transfer. Although his contributions across a range of subjects still merit attention and indeed recognition, it is perhaps the history of mathematics which will secure Wylie a respected place and greater reputation in history. Finally, for this Scottish highland-educated and effectively Shanghailands-educated multi-talented missionary, man of letters, and mathematician there is the possibility that further research will gain him greater acknowledgement and also help him escape from that small spot in history reserved for unrecognized prophets, not only in Britain but in his own land, Scotland.



### **Endnotes**

Special thanks to Miss Ni Wenyan (Shona) of the Sino-British College Shanghai for her assistance with sourcing Chinese materials and translating.

1. Benjamin Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science and Society in China 1550-1900* (Cambridge Mass Harvard University Press 2005), 296.
2. Liu Jianhui and Joshua Fogel "Demon Capital Shanghai: The "Modern Experience" of Japanese Intellectuals," *Sino-Japanese Studies* 16.7 (2009 ): 87
3. The Taiping Rebellion, whose leader believed he was the younger brother of Jesus and who tried to drive the Manchu rulers from power was a major ideological as well as military challenge to the already weakened Chinese regime combining an imported if distorted version of Christianity and western military technology. The result was a brutal civil war from 1847 in which around 30 million may have died. The capital of the Taiping Rebellion was established in 1853 in Nanjing and finally fell to government forces in 1864.
4. See especially Patrick Hanan "The Bible in Chinese Literature: Med-

- hurst, Wang Tao and the Delegates Version,” *Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63:11 (June 2003): 197-239.
5. David B Honey, *Incense at the Altar: Pioneering Sinologists and the Development of Classical Philology* (American Oriental Society New Haven 2001), 167.
  6. Norman Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge’s Oriental Pilgrimage* (University of California Press, 2002), 389.
  7. Mary Legge <http://www.ElectricScotland.com/history/Legge/Chapter05.html> (unpaginated)
  8. Alexander Wylie, James Thomas, Henri Cordier, *Chinese Researches* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Press 1897). James Thomas’s “Biographical Sketch”, 6.
  9. There is however one excellent very recently published proceedings paper in English: Man-Keung Siu , Yip-Cheung Chan “On Alexander Wylie’s Jottings on the Science of the Chinese Arithmetic” *History and Pedagogy of Mathematics* (2012:) 16-20. I am indebted to Dr June Barrow-Green of the Open University for this reference and many other helpful comments on the draft version of this article.
  10. Henri Cordier, “The Life and Labours of Alexander Wylie, Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in China. A Memoir,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* New Series 19.3 (July 1887): 351-368
  11. See especially Wang Xiaoqin, Wei Lie Ya Li, Zhong Xi Ke Xue Jiao Liu de Gong Chen (伟烈亚力-中西科学交流的功臣) *Alexander Wylie, Hero of Scientific Exchange between China and Western Countries*. (Beijing Science Press 2000): Wang Xiaoqing. “Wei lie Ya Li de xue shu sheng ya” (伟烈亚力的学术生涯) “The Academic Career of Alexander Wylie as a Sinologist”, *China Historical Materials of Science and Technology* 20 20 (2009):1999 and Lin Qin, “Weilie Yali yu ya zhou wenhui bei Zhong guo zhi hui tu shu guan (伟烈亚力与亚洲文会北中国支会图书馆) “Alexander Wylie and the North China Branch of Asiatic Society Library”, *Journal of Sichuan Library, Vol 172* (June 2009)
  12. Joseph Edkins “ The Value of Mr Wylie’s Chinese Researches” *Chinese Researches* 5
  13. *Morning Chronicle*, February 12, 1835
  14. Originally centred on Oxford and Cambridge, membership was later extended to a few other universities and the endeavour renamed the “United Universities” project. Lord Gascoyne-Cecil even tried

- to raise funds in the USA and this was publicised in the New York Times at the time but he failed and the project was scrapped.
15. Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge: Missionary and Scholar* (London The Religious Tract Society 1905), 64-65.
  16. Cordier, *Life and Labours*, 8
  17. He later lived on the ground floor of the premises owned by the LMS on Shantung Road where his extensive library was located: Cordier quoted in *the London and China Express (supplement)* November 27, 1908, p. 27
  18. *The Missionary Magazine and Chronicle* (10-12 May 1848): 30
  19. SOAS Library Wylie materials CWML-1702/05-17 hereafter SOAS Library Wylie LMS : Wylie to LMS 15/10/47
  20. I am indebted to Dr Lindsay Shen for providing a sourcebook confirmation of her burial there.
  21. Harvey Newcomb *A Cylopedia of Missions* (New York:Charles Scribner 1948), 269.
  22. SOAS Library Wylie LMS Wylie to LMS 26/6/1854 SOAS docs
  23. Jane R Edkins, *Chinese Scenes and People* (London : J. Nisbet, 1863), 37-38.
  24. SOAS Library LMS : Wylie to LMS 12/10/1847.
  25. SOAS Library Wylie LMS: Wylie to Browne 31/12/1853 request for a double cylinder printing machines.
  26. James Thomas “Biographical Sketch of Alexander Wylie” in *Chinese Researches*, 4.
  27. SOAS Library Wylie LMS: Wylie to LMS 07/09/49
  28. Benjamin Elman *A Cultural History of Modern Science in China* (Camb Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 117.
  29. Cambridge University Library, Bible Society/BSAX/1 hereafter Cambridge Library Wylie BFBS: Wylie to Browne 18/02/53
  30. SOAS Library Wylie LMS: Wylie to LMS 16 April 1860
  31. Hanan, Bible for an excellent discussion of this subject.
  32. Hanan, Bible, 200
  33. Wylie “The Bible in China” *Chinese Researches*, 100.
  34. Cambridge Library Wylie BFBS: Wylie to Rev Bourne 18/3/1868
  35. The Jesuits had used the term *Tianzhu*, i.e. “Lord of Heaven”.
  36. Interestingly an early request by Wylie to travel in China for BFBS was refused. See SOAS Wylie Library LMS: Wylie to LMS 3/3/1849.
  37. An Australian. David Jupp, has re-traced the steps of Wylie and his own web site also provides conversions of the various place names

into modern pinyin. David Jupp *Alexander Wylie's Travels on Shu Roads in 1867* September 2012 members.linet.net.au/~jupps-22@ozemail.com.au/....Wylie.pdf

38. Wylie's own reports were printed in Shanghai and for international organizations journals such as the Royal Geographic Society.
39. J Hudson Taylor, *A Retrospect* www.Wholesome Words 2005, p28-29. These events refer to a state of siege in Shanghai in 1854 when rebels called the Red Turbans (or Small Swords) attacked the city.
40. See Alexander Wylie, "The Nestorian Tablet of Se-Gan-Foo" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* V (1885-86): 275-336 and reprinted in Wilhelm Holm, Paul Carus, and Alexander Wylie, *The Nestorian Monument: An Ancient Record of Christianity in China* (Chicago: Open Court, 1909).
41. Francis Nichols *Through Hidden Shensi* (New York Charles Scribner and Sons 1902 ), 260 (reprinted in 2004)
42. Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Christian Missionaries to the Chinese, giving a list of their publications and obituary notices of the deceased with copious indexes* (Shanghae American Presbyterian Press, 1867)
43. Prescott Clarke and John Stradbroke Gregory, *Western Reports on the Taiping* (London, Croom Helm 1982), 206 Wylie's own reports are printed 219-223, Documents 47,48
44. Clarke and Gregory, *Western Reports* section 3, 206-223 contains two documents by Wylie, No 47 Report dated January 1859 Foreign Office PRO and Document 48 A Report by Rev A Wylie Missionary from *Magazine and Chronicle* XXXIII (July 1859): 179-181. Note here even a missionary journal referred to him as the 'Reverend Wyllie'.
45. Clarke and Gregory *Western Reports*, 221.
46. Ibid 61
47. Cordier, *Chinese Researches*.
48. Herbert Giles *A History of Chinese Literature*. (USA: Appleton and Co, 1901), 441 (reprinted 1923 and 2008). Of course there has been great progress since then but the book is still useful for any serious student of Chinese literature predating late Qing China.
49. Lin Qin, 61.
50. James Legge *The LI KI : A Collection of Treatises on the Rules of Propriety and or Ceremonial Usages*, 1885, Introduction, 9.
51. Lin Qin, 11.
52. Wang Yusheng "Li Shanlan: Forerunner of Modern Science" in Fan

- Dainian and R S Cohen, eds *Chinese Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology* 179 (1996): 354.
53. Wang Yusheng, 351. Wylie was referring to an original solution “similar to that of Gregory St Vincent in the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the quadrature of hyperbola”.
54. This is called *Xi Yi Zhong Shu* in Chinese the method itself was used extensively in earlier periods to translate Buddhist texts into a variety of languages
55. Wang Yusheng, 353.
56. Han Qi. *Shu li ge zhi de fa xian – jian lun 18 shi ji Niu dun xiangguan zhu zuo zai Zhong guo de chuan bo* (数理格致的发现兼论18实际牛顿相关著作在中国的传播)—The Discovery of the first Chinese translation of Newton’s *Principia*, *China Historian Materials of Science and Technology*, 19. 2 (1998).
57. Wang, 354
58. M. Lackner, I. Amelung, J. Kurtz (eds) *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 322-333 reprints Wylie’s English preface to the Loomis Book.
59. Catherine Jami, *The Emperor’s New Mathematics: Western Learning and Imperial Authority During the Kangxi Reign (1662-1722)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22
60. Knight Biggerstaff, “Shanghai Polytechnic and reading Room: An Attempt to Introduce Western Science and Technology to the Chinese” *Pacific Historical Review* .25 (may 1956) 149.
61. Alexander Wylie, “Jottings on the Science of the Chinese Arithmetic.” *North China Herald*, nos. 108-113, 116, 117, 119-121 (1852). Reprinted in *Chinese Researches* 159-194).
62. I rely heavily on the recent excellent mathematical analysis of Wylie’s Jottings article in Siu & Chan 2012.
63. Ibid 233-234
64. Lay Yong Lam, Tian Se Ang, *Fleeting Footsteps: Tracing the Conception of Arithmetic and Algebra in Ancient China* (World Scientific Pub Co Inc., 2004).
65. Ralph W Thompson, *Griffith John: The Story of Fifty Years in China* (New York: Appleby and Sons, 1906), 48.
66. Cordier, *Life and Labours* 8
67. Cambridge Library Wylie BFBS Wylie to BFBS July 27/1876
68. Ibid Wylie letter summarised (41) to BFBS 4/12/76

69. David Smith, Yoshio Mikami, *A History of Japanese Mathematics* (Chicago: Open Court, 1914), 274.
70. U. J. Libbrecht, "Joseph Needham's Work in the Area of Chinese Mathematics," *Past & Present* 87 (May 1980): 30-39.

# HARRIET MONROE, AMY LOWELL AND WITTER BYNNER: THE SCRAMBLE FOR CHINESE POETRY

BY ANNE WITCHARD

In 1910, having “raked and scraped and borrowed” enough money for the trip, Harriet Monroe (1860-1936) crossed the Atlantic on a steamship to London from where she boarded a train which took her to China.<sup>1</sup> It was here, while staying with her sister, Lucy Monroe Calhoun (1865-1950) in Peking’s Legation Quarter, that Harriet conceived her great project. She would start up a magazine entirely devoted to poetry. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* would be a major influence on the course and development of poetry for the twentieth century. The magazine was a flagship of modernism and the role of China in Monroe’s modernist vision was something she never failed to expound. However, modernist criticism has significantly underplayed this role, relegating it to the poetic innovations of Monroe’s infamous contributor, Ezra Pound. This essay will consider some of the lesser-known exchanges that took place in poetry’s multi-dimensional engagement with China at the beginning of the twentieth century. The race to publish translations and interpretations of Chinese poetry in the West and a concomitant aesthetic reciprocity in the East forces us to redefine the geographic parameters of literary modernism.<sup>2</sup>

Harriet Monroe was herself a frustrated poet although not without cultural connections and influence. In the 1910s she was Arts Correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* and an influential figure in the Chicago arts scene, just as her younger sister Lucy had been. Before her marriage in 1904 to the lawyer, William J. Calhoun, President Taft’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in China (1909-1913), Lucy Monroe worked as an editor in the firm of Stone and Kimball, the avant-garde Chicago publishers and pioneers of the “little magazine” movement of the 1890s. When her husband was posted to China, she became a leading socialite in Peking’s diplomatic community. As William addressed the political challenges of a deteriorating imperial court and fledgling republican government, Lucy immersed herself in Chinese art, which, unlike many Legation wives, she keenly appreciated.<sup>3</sup> When Harriet joined her sister in Peking, she too “took a sudden and very deep plunge into Chinese art”, her explorations expertly guided

by fellow guest at the Calhouns, the railroad magnate and renowned collector of Asian art, Charles Lang Freer.<sup>4</sup>

Like her sister, Harriet Monroe was an informed critic. In the 1910s, the Art Institute of Chicago was enthusiastically buying up French Impressionists, and having written on Gauguin, Cezanne, Van Gogh and many others, Monroe had a ready knowledge of recent innovations in European painting. She described how she was affected by the “subtle harmonies” of Chinese painting, sculpture and architecture which made her “feel dissatisfied not only with traditional Western forms” but also with the “twentieth-century schools – the cubists and other extravagant experimenters with abstract or symbolic design.”<sup>5</sup> Back in Chicago Monroe resumed her post at the *Tribune* and in her next Sunday column wrote about the difficulty of adjustment: “Something in modern art” she now felt “goes against the grain”. Chinese art with its “arresting power” and “quiet authority allures us; already the art of the West turns to listen and observe”.<sup>6</sup> Since she was an aspiring poet it was the art of poetry that was Monroe’s major preoccupation. While endowments and scholarships in the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture were backed by powerful trustees in each major US city, she felt strongly that poetry was in financial danger of becoming a “lost art” in America. The “well of American poetry seemed to be thinning out and drying up and the worst of it was that nobody seemed to care”.<sup>7</sup> In Europe too, particularly in England where the decadent strains of Aestheticism lingered, there was an indifference and “dry conservatism” that she set out to combat, “to refresh with living waters from a new spring”.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly Monroe turned her considerable energies to persuading Chicago’s “men and women of might and millions” to back her campaign to establish a magazine entirely devoted to poetry, while at the same time she addressed a far more difficult task - to attract for her magazine, poetry that was “of modern significance”.<sup>9</sup>

#### “A SEARCH FOR THE CHINESE MAGIC” – IMAGISM

In the spring of 1910, on her way to Peking, Monroe had “beguiled the long Siberian train with the strange and beautiful rhythms” of a new poet, Ezra Pound, whose “tiny volumes” *Personae* (1909) and *Exultations* (1909) she had picked up during her stopover in London.<sup>10</sup> Her empathy with the work of “this young American in London” and his unconventional poetic form led her now to contact him about her magazine.<sup>11</sup> Eager to promote his latest poetic project, Imagism,

Pound's response could not have been more enthusiastic.<sup>12</sup> By this time, as Monroe soon realized, Pound had established himself at "the dynamic center of the keenest young literary group in England".<sup>13</sup> She promptly engaged him as *Poetry's* official representative abroad and Pound brought immediate scoops, contributions from the celebrated Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (then visiting London) and from W. B. Yeats.<sup>14</sup> From November 1912 and throughout 1913, *Poetry* was dominated by Imagism, a movement which coincided entirely with Monroe's concept of poetic modernity and which to her delight provoked a "riot" among "Victorian-minded elders".<sup>15</sup>

In March 1913, in response to "many requests for explanation" of what, actually, Imagism was, *Poetry* published Pound's famous verse manifesto, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste." Its tenets were in fact strongly influenced by Pound's reading of the Sinologist Herbert Giles' accounts of Chinese classical poetics:

*Brevity is indeed the soul of a Chinese poem, which is valued not so much for what it says as for what it suggests... The ideal length is twelve lines ... the Chinese holding that if a poet cannot say within such compass what he has to say it may very well be left unsaid.*<sup>16</sup>

Amongst Pound's proscriptions for the modern poet were:

*Don't be descriptive; remember that the painter can describe a landscape much better than you can, and that he has to know a deal more about it.*

*Don't use such an expression as 'dim lands of peace.' It dulls the image. It mixes abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realizing that the natural object is always the adequate symbol.*

*Don't be 'viewy' – leave that to the writers of pretty little philosophic essays.*<sup>17</sup>

The following month's *Poetry* contained a number of verses by Pound including his best-known Imagist poem, the haiku-like 'In A Station Of The Metro'. The issue was read by Mary Fenollosa, widow of the Orientalist scholar, Ernest Fenollosa. Mary was in London preparing for press the manuscript of Fenollosa's posthumous *Epochs of Chinese*

and *Japanese Art* (1913). What Pound was doing suggested to her that here was the ideal person to edit her late husband's detailed cribs on the ancient Chinese poets, Li Po and Wang Wei. Ezra Pound, she decided, would be able to "finish this stuff the way Ernest wanted it done".<sup>18</sup>

When Pound began working from Fenollosa's notebooks (which included his drafts for an essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry") he had absolutely no knowledge of the Chinese language, and, beyond his reading of Giles, little of the textual or cultural conventions of Chinese poetry. What he read in Fenollosa's notes however, tallied uncannily with his own ideas about modern poetry and Imagism:

*The moment we use the copula, [a word used to link subject and predicate] the moment we express subjective inclusions, poetry evaporates. The more concretely and vividly we express the interaction of things the better the poetry. We need in poetry thousands of active words, each doing its utmost to show forth the motive and vital forces. We cannot exhibit the wealth of nature by summation, by the piling of sentences. Poetic thought works by suggestion, crowding maximum meaning into the single phrase, pregnant, charged and luminous from within. In Chinese character each word accumulated this sort of energy in itself.*<sup>19</sup>

Fenollosa's notebooks contained his transcriptions of Chinese poems made from notes taken at Japanese professor Kainan Mori's lectures on Chinese poetry by a former philosophy student of Fenollosa's, Nagao Ariga.<sup>20</sup> In making his own versions then, Pound was working at no less than "three removals from the truth".<sup>21</sup> Pound selected fourteen poems from the 150 or so in the notebooks, mostly by Li Po (or Rihaku in Japanese form) and published them in April 1915 under the title *Cathay: Translations by Ezra Pound*.<sup>22</sup> Whether considered as literary miracle or literary fraud, the quantity of critical discourse on Pound and his Chinese "translations" testifies to the monumental impact of *Cathay*, both as a founding text of Anglo-American modernism and for translation as a source of literary creativity. Sinologist Arthur Waley, his nose rather out of joint, would describe what Pound had done as "at most, a brilliant paraphrase".<sup>23</sup> Pound's opinion of Waley's translations was that they might be excellent transcriptions but were "marred by

his bungling English and defective rhythm”.<sup>24</sup> Pound’s ambition was greater than that of accurate translation or sinological scholarship. With an emphasis always on poetic expression over semantic fidelity, he managed, citing T. S. Eliot’s famous claim, to “invent” a Chinese poetry that represented the apex of what Imagism was striving for.<sup>25</sup>

There were those among *Poetry*’s contributors, like William Carlos Williams and Conrad Aiken (each of whom incidentally would be won over to Imagism) who resisted Pound’s dominance and accused *Poetry* of propaganda. To this Monroe responded with a spirited editorial:

*This is a cosmopolitan age, in spite of separative and medieval wars. Imagism is perhaps, in the last analysis, the beginning of a search for the Chinese magic, and this search will probably go on as we dig deeper into that long-hidden, far-away mine of jewels, in spite of Mr Aiken and other belated and provincial Victorians. More than half a century has passed since occidental painting and sculpture began to feel the subtly regenerative influence of oriental art. The great art of poetry has been shut in more than these by narrow boundaries of race and language; but like these it must come out in the open, lift its voice over the seas, and spread its wings to all the winds of the world.*<sup>26</sup>

In the February 1915 issue of *Poetry*, with *Cathay* just gone to press, Pound had argued that if poets used the Chinese for a model an American Renaissance would come. Among the first to take him at his word was Amy Lowell, even if this was with the intention “simply and solely to knock a hole” in the translations that Pound had made.<sup>27</sup>

#### AMY LOWELL’S WRITTEN WALL PICTURES

Amy Lowell (1874-1925) was a New England heiress, a published poet and an early contributor to *Poetry*. It was after reading poems by Pound’s protégé, Hilda Doolittle, “H. D. Imagiste” as Pound styled her, that Lowell discovered herself “too to be an *Imagiste*”.<sup>28</sup> In the summer of 1913, furnished with introductions from Monroe, Lowell travelled to London to ally herself with the new school. To begin with, her relationship with Pound was cordial. She bought him dinners and drove him about in a hired motor car and he was happy to include one of her poems in his anthology, *Des Imagistes* (1914). A second visit found her stranded during the first months of World War One and

their brief alliance collapsed after Lowell announced her intention to edit her own annual Imagist anthology, with poems selected by group vote rather than according to Pound's dictatorial say so. Their struggle over leadership of the movement is "the stuff of modernist legend".<sup>29</sup> A bulky and forceful woman, Lowell was cruelly referred to by Pound as the "hippopoetess", and he labelled those poets who seceded to her redoubtable lead (H. D. among them) "Amygists".

In recent years modernist scholarship has begun to reassess Lowell's critical neglect as "coloured by homophobia and misogyny".<sup>30</sup> She was a lesbian, opinionated and outspoken, publicly smoked cigars and she was fat. In the years surrounding the Great War, the fleshy female body had become "catastrophically declassed", thinness now signified a fashionable refinement rather than poverty and Lowell's weight was to be a constant target of her detractors.<sup>31</sup> Back home in Massachusetts, Lowell would edit and actively promote three editions of *Some Imagists* over the next three years, during which time Pound had anyhow moved his attention away from Imagism to its elaboration in Vorticism.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless rivalry rankled and when Lowell saw any opportunity to undermine her enemy she jumped at it.

Her undertaking "to knock a hole" in Pound's translations was prompted by a visit in 1917 from a childhood friend, Florence Wheelock Ayscough.<sup>33</sup> Florence Wheelock had been born in Shanghai in 1875, where she lived until she was fourteen when her family moved back to the US. It was after they were introduced by their local doctor, as Ayscough recalled, that "the little girl from China" and "the rather square little girl" from across the street became friends.<sup>34</sup> In her twenties Florence married Francis Ayscough, an Englishman connected with an established British import business in Shanghai, Scott, Harding and Co., and she returned to live in China. Unusually for an expat wife she took up the study of Mandarin and in 1906 was awarded an honorary post as librarian of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Ayscough would go on to become a prolific and popular Sinologue, giving lectures all over the world, but today she is remembered for her collaboration with Amy Lowell on *Fir-Flower Tablets: Poems translated from the Chinese* (1921).

Ayscough's trip back to the States in 1917 was made because the comprador with her husband's firm had died leaving his accounts with Scott, Harding and Co. in disarray. Badly indebted, they took possession of his collection of art as compensation and Ayscough was charged with

the task of finding buyers.<sup>35</sup> Among the works in her possession when she visited Lowell were a number of what she called “Written Pictures”. These she described as being:

*examples of that art which the Chinese consider the perfect medium of aesthetic expression ... the least known, and certainly the least understood, of all Oriental art forms – which is a pity as these “Hanging-on-the-Wall Poems” are highly characteristic of Chinese idea. A beautiful thought perpetuated in beautiful handwriting, and hung upon the wall, to suggest a mental picture.*<sup>36</sup>

“Miss Lowell” she recalls, “was immensely interested” in them.<sup>37</sup> In fact Lowell’s unabashed excitement at being shown these Chinese poems derived chiefly from the opportunity she perceived to best her adversary at his own game. Her first advantage over Pound as she saw it was that Ayscough could translate the poems directly, whereas “Ezra”:

*got his things entirely from Professor Fenelosa [sic] which having come through a Japanese source translated by Fenelosa [sic], they were not Chinese in the first place, and Heaven knows how many hands they went through between the original Chinese and Professor Fenelosa’s [sic] Japanese original ... although they are excellent poems they are not translations of the Chinese poets.*<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, Ayscough had suggested an idea that the pictographic etymology of Chinese ideographs added to the sum of their meaning. This Lowell saw as her trump card and so began an intense four year correspondence that would result in the collection, *Fir-Flower Tablets*. Ayscough worked diligently, sending Lowell batches of cribs (literal transcriptions) made with the help of her Chinese teacher, Mr Nung Chu. “Chinese poetry is much in people’s minds at present we must work hard and work quickly” Lowell pressed her.<sup>39</sup> She herself immediately got to work on Harriet Monroe, relaying back to Ayscough:

*I ... gave her a great song and dance about your qualifications as a translator. I told her you were born in China, and that it was, therefore, in some sense your native tongue (Heaven forgive me!) ... I explained that in getting you she was getting the ne plus ultra of Chinese knowledge and understanding; it being assumed of*

*course (though not by me expressed), that in getting me she was finding the best Englisher there was going. Anyhow, judging from the quick return upon herself evidenced by this post card, she is properly impressed with what she will get, as a result.*<sup>40</sup>

A collection of eleven of their translated poems duly appeared in *Poetry* in February 1919, under the title “Chinese Written Wall Pictures . . . . . Translated by Florence Ayscough, English version by Amy Lowell”. These were accompanied by an essay, “Written Pictures” printed under Ayscough’s name alone. “[I] Cannot write the article myself” Lowell had insisted:

*Not because I am busy but because my relations with Ezra Pound are such that anything I say in regard to Chinese work would be put down to pique, and, as I am perfectly known not to understand Chinese myself, it would carry absolutely no weight ... the fact that being a rival of Ezra’s, and in some sense his enemy, I cannot directly appear to criticize his work.*<sup>41</sup>

The following day she wrote again to Ayscough, urging her to:

*Please, incorporate that root theory of ours in your prose part. It is a brand new idea and will make Ezra and the whole caboodle of them sit up since it will prove that their translations are incorrect inasmuch as they cannot read the language and are probably trusting to Japanese translators, who have not the feeling for China that you have.*<sup>42</sup>

Ayscough’s “root theory” was based upon the pictographic aspect of Chinese characters and the idea that words began as closely related signs of the visible world and then evolved, or devolved, in increasing levels of abstraction:

*These marvelous collections of brush strokes which we call Chinese characters are really separate pictographic representations of complete thoughts. Complex characters are composed not of strokes, but of more simple characters, each having its own peculiar meaning and usage; thus, when used in combination, each plays its part in modifying either the sense or the sound of the complex; it is*

*therefore impossible to seize a poet's complete meaning unless each character is analyzed and broken up into its component parts; this can only be done by a careful study of the ideograph in its original form. Many have been so altered during the centuries which have passed since they were first traced, as to be almost unrecognizable.*<sup>43</sup>

Lowell saw that here was a brilliant way of theorizing Pound's ideas about the force of Chinese ideographs, their directness and simultaneity and their importance for Imagist poetry. Ayscough dutifully played up this aspect of their enterprise:

*While translators are apt to ignore this important matter of 'genealogy,' if one may so call it, of the characters, it is ever present in the mind of the Chinese poet or scholar who is familiar with the original form, indeed he may be said to find his overtones in the actual composition of the character he is using. ... It is only by digging until the very roots of the character are laid bare that Chinese poetry can be really understood.*<sup>44</sup>

Pound meanwhile had been working for some time on Fenollosa's speculations about the pictorial elements of the Chinese written character and the value of their "synthesis" for poetry. Due to what he described as "the adamantine stupidity" of recalcitrant editors it was not until September 1919 that "The Chinese Written Character As A Medium For Poetry: An Ars Poetica" was finally published in four installments in the *Little Review* (Sept – Dec 1919).<sup>45</sup> Lowell, with Ayscough's "Written Pictures" in *Poetry*, had most infuriatingly beaten him to it.

It is commonly accepted now that Ayscough's and Pound's conception of the "pictorial" element of Chinese characters is misguided. Even the most generous estimates allow that only a small percentage of Chinese characters conform to the ideographic principles outlined in their essays.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless Imagism would not have been the same without such "(mis)interpretations and (mis)explications" and, in a marvellously poetic irony, the Imagist method would revitalize China's young writers in their own quest for a literary revolution.<sup>47</sup>

The intensity of the correspondence between Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough did not let up following the publication of their *Fir-Flower Tablets* on Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, 1921. This was because a new contender

for “Chinese” poetic eminence looked set to steal Lowell’s thunder. An article entitled “Translating Chinese Poetry” by the American poet, Witter Bynner, appeared in the December edition of *Asia, the magazine of the American Asiatic Society*, hard on the heels of *Fir-Flower Tablets*. There was much in it to infuriate Lowell. Desperate to ensure credibility for their collection the indefatigable Lowell now demanded of Ayscough:

*can you not give me an account of Mr Nung – and make it sound as grand as possible – to show that we have a native Chinaman behind us, for, in Asia, Bynner said that he did not believe that any one, even though born in China, could really get the nuances of the poems ... he throws round a lot of big names of people he met in China, such as Dr. Hu Shih, whom he calls ‘an influential young modernist of Peking Government University and author of widely read poems in the so called ‘vulgar tongue’.*<sup>48</sup>

Apart from the fact that its author claimed the approval of the leading light of China’s New Culture Movement, Hu Shih, Witter Bynner had for some years now been a particular thorn in Lowell’s side.

#### WITTER BYNNER AND THE SPECTRA SPOOF (1916 – 1921)

Witter Bynner (1881-1968) had been an enthusiast of Eastern culture and philosophy from his Harvard days, something he shared with fellow student and poet, Arthur Davison Ficke (1883–1945). Ficke was a contributor to the inaugural issue of *Poetry* and he and Bynner would continue to be regular contributors and acknowledged representatives of the new American poetry. Ficke’s father was a wealthy Iowa lawyer and specialist dealer in Japanese prints, and as a boy he had travelled in Japan, developing his own lifelong interest in Japanese art.<sup>49</sup> Besides their interest in the arts and culture of the East, the two shared a disdain for what they saw as the pretensions of certain new schools of poetry, particularly Amy Lowell’s brand of Imagism and the vagaries of its Orientalist associations.

In the Spring of 1916, Sergei Diaghileff’s epoch-making *Ballets Russes* made its first American tour. Bynner attended the Chicago performance with Laird Bell, editor of the *Harvard Monthly* and the *Chicago Daily News* art critic, Howard Vincent O’Brien. The success of Diaghileff’s artistic endeavour, a triumph of international modernism,

provoked an interval discussion about the marketing of “Imagists and Vorticists and Whatnotists”.<sup>50</sup> Bynner, glancing down at his programme which happened to lie open at “Le Spectre de la Rose” asked his friends if they had heard of the Spectrists? They were the ones to watch he assured them, and so the Spectrist school was conceived. Ficke proved an eager collaborator and fuelled “by ten quarts of excellent Scotch,” as the story goes, their literary hoax was gestated over the following ten days.<sup>51</sup> Writing as Emanuel Morgan, an indigent American painter recently returned from Paris (Bynner) and Anne Knish, a Hungarian bluestocking whose one book had been published in Russian (Ficke), it took them very little time to find a publisher for *Spectra: A Book of Poetic Experiments* (1916).

Bynner himself gave it a tongue-in-cheek review (and cheekily got paid for doing so):

*There is a new school of poets, a new term to reckon with, a new theory to comprehend, a new manner to notice, a new humor to enjoy. It is the Spectric school ... it takes a challenging place among current literary impressionistic phenomena.*<sup>52</sup>

The hoax gathered momentum at a remarkable rate. In an anthology of contemporary poetry entitled *The Young Idea* (1917), editor Lloyd R. Morris made a comparison between Spectrism and Imagism, giving each movement equal weight. He referred readers wishing for “more light on modern trends” to “Miss Amy Lowell’s article, ‘A Consideration of Modern Poetry’ in *The North American Review* for January, 1917”, and to “the preface to ‘Spectra’ by Miss Knish and Mr. Morgan”. It was hardly surprising that these articles invited comparison because chief among those spoofed by *Spectra* was Amy Lowell, followed closely by Harriet Monroe. “Anne Knish” in *Spectra* declares herself pleased that:

*A growing acquaintance with Chinese painting is surely liberating in our poets and painters a happy sense of the disproportion of man to his assumed place in the universe, a sense of the tortuous grotesque vanity of the individual. By this weapon, man helps defend his intuition of the Absolute and of his own obscure but real relation to it.*<sup>53</sup>

Morris notes “how interesting” it is:

*That the poetry of both these schools emphasizes, each in its own way, a point touched upon in the contribution of Miss Harriet Munroe, [sic] the contrast between man's littleness and the greatness of the universe and the fantastic and ironic self-importance of man in his relation to the universe.*<sup>54</sup>

Yet overall, as William Jay Smith points out in his account of the hoax, *Spectra* is not so much a parody of any individual “although certainly Amy Lowell comes in for her share of the barbs – as it is of the style of a whole period”.<sup>55</sup> “Anne Knish” sets the tone with the opening poem, ‘Opus 50’:

In the depths of a tropic forest  
The sun is now setting, and the phoenix looks  
Mysteriously toward the gold.

I think I must have been born in such a forest,  
Or in the tangle of a Chinese screen.<sup>56</sup>

The intimations of intoxication and illicit love in the *Spectra* poems, the theatrics of Eleonora Duse, of Dionysus and the dance, of Isadora Duncan and the *Ballets Russes*, the noise of trolley cars, the instances of bobbed hair, cocktails, sin, and cigarettes, these capture the new-found excitements of early-twentieth-century modernity while they spoof their modernist expression. The *chinoiserie* around which the hoax is constructed, Smith notes, is “a delightful offhand, backhand take-off on the whole Chinese manner which was coming into vogue with the Imagists”.<sup>57</sup> In ‘Opus 6’ “Emanuel Morgan” declaims in alliterative rhyme:

If I were only dafter  
I might be making hymns  
To the liquor of your laughter  
And the lacquer of your limbs.<sup>58</sup>

Bynner and Ficke promoted their new “school” in reviews, lectures, conversations and interviews, to more or less general acclaim. Ezra Pound, unsurprisingly, wrote off the movement as “only another Imagist imitator with a different preface from Amy”.<sup>59</sup> What Pound failed to see

was that it was Lowell's version of Imagism rather than his own which was really the target of the Spectric attack.

Had it not been for the United States' entry into the war the hoax might well have continued longer than it did, but such jokes were becoming difficult to sustain. Later, Ficke would write from his posting in France that his mind was rather out of key with "such excellent fooling", although a brigadier general delighted him by confiding in all seriousness that he himself was Anne Knish.<sup>60</sup>

Just before the hoax was exposed, Harriet Monroe accepted five new poems by Emanuel Morgan for publication in *Poetry*. The bubble burst when the *Dial* exposed the Spectrists, stating that "the interruption of the war" had given 'Miss Knish' a commission as Captain Arthur Davison Ficke."<sup>61</sup> Unsurprisingly Monroe reneged on her editorial decision and refused to print the poems. Very soon "newspapers all over the country were regaling their readers with uproarious accounts of how learned critics and eminent poets had been duped, while their own editors and critics had seen through the hoax from the first".<sup>62</sup> Editors of advance-guard reviews, "squirring with embarrassment, turned on one another with recriminations".<sup>63</sup> Although Amy Lowell maintained a correspondence with Bynner for some time, she never truly forgave him for what he had done. It had been he incidentally who had originally dubbed her "the hippopoetess"; now she saw him as her "deadliest enemy".<sup>64</sup> Bynner would only realize the true extent of her resentment when the Ayscough-Lowell correspondence was published in 1946.

In March 1917, a three month trip to Japan, Korea and China afforded Bynner, Ficke, and Ficke's wife and baby son a chance to escape the heat of the hoax at its height. Bynner's next publication, *The Beloved Stranger* (1919), a collection of short imagistic odes was the product of that trip, during which he also translated with the help of a Chinese student, a few poems from the Confucian *Book of Poetry*.<sup>65</sup> Although like Pound and Lowell, Bynner had no Chinese, he would later insist, as Pound did, that his work with Chinese poetry gave him "a newer, finer, and deeper education than ever came to me from the Hebrew or the Greek."<sup>66</sup> Yet the shades of Spectrism, it would seem, were not so easily eluded. Despite the fact that the hoax had been revealed, Bynner sent these poems to the St Louis weekly, *Reedy's Mirror* under his "Spectrist" name, Emanuel Morgan. Editor William Reedy had been an enthusiastic, if slightly wary reviewer of *Spectra*, describing the collection as having "the beauties and the oddities of Chinese landscape

painting”.<sup>67</sup> Now Reedy found Bynner’s new poems “peppered all over with tremendously good things” but prevailed upon him to drop the name of Emanuel Morgan: “You killed him, let him stay dead”.<sup>68</sup> It was arranged that the *Mirror* would publish the poems anonymously as ‘Songs of the Unknown Lover’. When they were collected as *The Beloved Stranger*, Reedy provided a preface. Telling something of his part in the *Spectra* story, he admits to being duped by the hoax, but asserts that the phenomenon of the poetic doppelganger is of far greater interest than the deception:

*The hoaxers themselves were hoaxed, for some of their pseudonymous performances were better stuff than they had ever done under or over their own names. . . . Mr. Bynner has never been able to lose Emanuel Morgan. . . . and it is the voice of an authentic poet with a richer rarer, finer, more ethereal tone than anything we find in the earlier work of Witter Bynner.*<sup>69</sup>

Yes, “Mr Bynner went to the Orient with Mr Ficke” declares Reedy, but in these poems,

*We have the singing evidence of what Emanuel Morgan saw there – evidence in color, in sound, in scent – the windblown bells on temples, odors of wistaria, the statues of jade. The poet “holds the gorgeous East in fee” but passes it on to us in miniatures, or in little carvings of exquisite delicacy.*<sup>70</sup>

Reedy’s elision of Witter Bynner and Emanuel Morgan is something of a face-saving effort. Perhaps Bynner was confused too by this point. “The worst of it is that I can’t get rid of Emanuel Morgan!” he admitted. “I don’t know where he leaves off and I begin. He’s a boomerang!”<sup>71</sup> Critics have since suggested that Bynner, being homosexual, was attached to the persona because it allowed more freedom of expression in his poetry.<sup>72</sup> Be that as it may, his months in China were to prove fruitful beyond the efforts of *The Beloved Stranger* and the results even more antagonizing to Amy Lowell than the *Spectra* affair had been.

#### AFTER SPECTRISM

It was on their return from China that Ficke set off for France where he would serve as a captain in the Ordnance Department until 1919.

Bynner, as a pacifist, refused to serve in the military. He took up a position at the University of California, initially teaching public speaking to the Students Auxiliary Training Corps.<sup>73</sup> Here he became friendly with a Chinese scholar, Dr Jiang Kanghu and together they decided to undertake a major translation of Chinese Tang dynasty poetry. Jiang Kanghu (1883-1954) had been educational advisor to Yuan Shikai, China's Machiavelli who briefly tried to restore the monarchy with himself as its head during his short tenure as the second president of the republic in 1915, until his death in 1916. Jiang He was a political activist and early advocate of socialism in China. The Chinese Socialist Party developed in Shanghai from a study society Jiang had started in 1912. Under his leadership the party quickly established branches in other Chinese cities. Mao Zedong later stated that as a student Jiang's writings had been a major influence on his own political theories. When Yuan ordered the dissolution of the party in 1913, ahead of his presidential coup, Jiang fled to the United States. He was given a teaching post at the University of California where he presented his collection of 10,000 Chinese books to the library.

Jiang was a keen advocate of the political and social power of literature, citing translations of Balzac, Hugo, Byron and Shelley, Dickens and Twain, as fundamental in raising the consciousness of readers in China.<sup>74</sup> In the years following the Great War many in the West were turning in a similar spirit to the philosophies and ideals of the East. Bertrand Russell, back from a lecture tour in China in 1920, claimed that China was more civilized than the "civilised West" because "this was measured not in dollars and cents, but in refinement and in the cultivation of the soul".<sup>75</sup> Bynner's enthusiasm for Chinese poetry as a source of moral inspiration led to what would become an eleven-year long co-operative effort, bringing the *Three Hundred Pearls of the T'ang Dynasty*, a classic that was "in the hands and heart of every Celestial school-boy" to readers in the West.<sup>76</sup>

In 1918, when Bynner began making his translations with Jiang, Lowell and Ayscough were hard at work on theirs. Assessing his competitors in the field, Bynner later remarked that "170 Chinese Poems, the first book of translations by Arthur Waley had not then appeared and resounded, or I might have quit my project".<sup>77</sup> He did not see Pound's work as being of particular consequence:

*Ezra Pound's small sheaf, Cathay, printed in London three years*

*before, contained passages arrestingly fine, as well as prophetic of Waley's direct manner; but Kiang, wondering why the American poet should call Li Po only by his Japanese name, Rihaku, recited off-hand versions of the same poems Pound had chosen, which I found, even in Kiang's halting English, still finer.*<sup>78</sup>

They set to work, “believing that in a year’s time we could string the three hundred poems on an English thread”.<sup>79</sup> But by the summer of 1920, the task was still far from finished. Bynner and Jiang set sail for China, planning to work together throughout the holiday. By “a freak of fortune” they lost each other only to meet up again in the autumn, “by accident on a Shanghai street”.<sup>80</sup> In the *Asia* article that so incensed Amy Lowell, Bynner explains how he had spent the summer months “on a Chinese mountain-top, with a poet and his family ... It is no wonder that I became imbued with the spirit of the poets who had lived in just such places”. He also noted that “in all the chaos of contemporary China that spirit is alive”.<sup>81</sup>

In the meantime nine of his poems had been published in the May-June 1920 issue of the prestigious avant-garde magazine, *The Little Review*. It was at this time that Lowell and Ayscough first got wind of what Bynner was up to. Lowell had been driving Ayscough hard to meet their December publication deadline and Ayscough was evidently exhausted and exasperated. She wrote to Lowell from Shanghai expressing her distress at what she saw as Bynner’s slipshod working method:

*It makes me so angry to have him come out and gallop through a Tang anthology of 300 poems. He simply can't do such a thing as I told a little reportress ... When one realizes by sad experience and effort that every character carries weight and affects the sense, it is too absurd.*<sup>82</sup>

Ayscough was not a poet but her commitment to the method of translation she had devised was heartfelt. As well as speaking to the press about it, she wrote directly to Bynner himself. Lindsay Shen describes how her letter “was written with such emotion that it jammed in the typewriter. It is blotched, full of crosses and corrections; even her irrefragable grammar deserts her.”<sup>83</sup> The letter expresses her contempt for the “approximate” translations that Pound had done and accuses Bynner of the same thing:

*You see, so far, with the exception of Mr. Waley's, the translations have been very very poor & have misrepresented the Chinese poets in the most appalling manner, I had hoped that we had had enough of these approximations, this "giving of the idea". What I feel about your work is that if the Angel Gabriel himself under-took it he could not make a scholarly pices [sic: piece] of work. Therefore it must be another approximation. What I know of it bristles with inaccuracies. It is not your fault, it is that you are trying to do an impossible thing. Of course it may bring you a certain amount of "kudos" – but it – is very hard on the T'ang poets.<sup>84</sup>*

As the December publication deadline for *Fir-Flower Tablets* loomed, and Bynner seemed to be churning out Tang translations by the dozen, Lowell became increasingly concerned that his and Jiang's anthology would be published before their own. Bynner had replaced Pound as Lowell's implacable bugbear, but where Lowell thrived on such feuding, Ayscough took it to heart. She wrote from China:

*The other day the Literary Review of October 29<sup>th</sup> arrived with Witter Bynner's "translations" of Tu Fu. I happened to be working on the one he calls "A Song of Dagger-Dancing to a Girl Pupil of Lady Kung Sun" and – truly – words fail me. If he didn't call it translation it would be quite in order. Paraphrase if you like.<sup>85</sup>*

She wrote again the next day from the train to Peking where she was going to stay with Lucy Calhoun (née Monroe):

*Just for fun, I have been trying to calculate how long it has taken me to get this poem, and the preface, into condition to send to you. The typing and looking up alternative words have taken about seven hours. Getting it into shape with the teacher took about fifteen, or more. I should think I have spent 25 hours on it – and then Witter Bynner thinks he can do three hundred just off the reel.<sup>86</sup>*

As it turned out, *The Jade Mountain* would not appear in print until 1929, after another eight years of work. Many years later Bynner would recall:

*The publisher's announcement of The Jade Mountain for 1921,*

*when we had expected it to be ready, led to an amusing literary panic of which I knew nothing until 1946 when, asked to review a volume of correspondence between Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough, I discovered how hard Miss Lowell had driven her collaborator in order to issue their translations from the Chinese ahead of ours.<sup>87</sup>*

If Bynner really knew “nothing” of this “literary panic” he is perhaps disingenuous in his claim that he was unaware of any rivalry beyond the merely “jovial”.<sup>88</sup> His argument in the *Asia* article, “Translating Chinese Poetry,” had been unsparing in its assessment of the way in which Lowell and Ayscough had been working:

*It is surely as much an error in translating from the Chinese to drag out from an ideograph its radical metaphor as it would be in translating from the English to uproot the origins of our own idioms. It lands you in a limbo-language ... I cannot judge yet of the interesting translations by Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell; but, from the few I have seen, I should say that these authors ... tend to inflate the poems with too much pomp and colour.<sup>89</sup>*

Bynner not only undermined their ideographic method but in stating that his own work had been approved by the most up-to-date thinkers in China he knew he was bound to antagonise Lowell: “Sometimes I would lay before Dr. Kiang divergent readings from several Chinese whom I had the pleasure of consulting. Dr Hu Suh, [sic] ... was a patient listener.”<sup>90</sup>

#### ‘ALL THE WINDS OF THE WORLD’

Hu Shih (1891-1962) had been an attentive reader of *Poetry* from its inception. A precociously bright student, his extra curricular reading at the age of twelve included Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Huxley. He began his overseas studies at New York’s Cornell University in 1910, altering his name from Suh to Shih, the same Chinese character as “fittest” in a gesture to evolutionary science.<sup>91</sup> Reflecting the trust of his generation’s belief that Western science had the power to save China he enrolled in the College of Agriculture but soon switched his major to philosophy, deciding that to memorise the characteristics of 400 varieties of apple, few of which could be found in China, was a

waste of his time.<sup>92</sup> It would have given Amy Lowell no little satisfaction had she known, that in his diary dated Christmas Day, 1916, Hu Shih had attached a clipping from a *New York Times* review of her edited anthology, *Some Imagist Poets* (1915) that cited the six principles of her own Imagist Credo.<sup>93</sup>

Harriet Monroe's untiring efforts since the establishment of *Poetry* in 1912 had helped to realize Pound's anticipation of an American verse renaissance on the Chinese model. In 1917, Monroe's commitment bore fruit in a weighty anthology, *The New Poetry* (1917) which includes more than 400 poems by 100 different authors. Seeking to define what it was that encapsulated the spirit of "the New Poetry," Monroe observed in the preface that "the poets of today ... most important of all, have bowed to winds from the East".<sup>94</sup> The breadth of popular attention paid to "the New Poetry" is indicated by the fact that between 1920 and 1929, no less than 238 of Jiang and Bynner's translations from the Chinese were published in 48 different journals across the globe, including *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The London Mercury*, and the *North China Herald*. In a very short space of time poetry had established its place as "America's first national art".<sup>95</sup> However, in her preface to the anthology Monroe avoided any interpretation of modernism along lines of citizenship or nationhood, describing the poetic revolution as "an *international* movement of rejuvenation" (my emphasis).<sup>96</sup> While Monroe was keen to give *The New Poetry* a semblance of transatlantic balance, Imagism and *vers libre*, in a remarkably reciprocal turn, were proving to be more far reaching in their global effects than she might ever have imagined possible. In that same year, 1917, China's leading reform journal *New Youth* (*Xin Qingnian*) published an incendiary essay by Hu Shih which in rhetoric and content drew directly on Lowell's Imagist principles. The modesty of its title, "Some Tentative Suggestions for the Reform of Chinese Literature" belied the radical nature of the essay's prescriptions for China's poets: "Don't use literary allusions", "Don't eschew colloquial words and expressions and Don't imitate the ancients; let every word indicate your own individuality".<sup>97</sup> Hu Shih's controversial stand against classical Chinese quickly became known as the "Eight Don'ts", a primer for China's New Culture Movement that after May Fourth would ignite a revolution of unprecedented scope and importance, radically changing the future shape of China's own literature.

## CONCLUSION: A TEMPEST IN A CHINA TEAPOT

In 1922, at the invitation of Alice Corbin Henderson, Monroe's assistant editor on *Poetry*, Witter Bynner visited Sante Fe, New Mexico, where the Hendersons were among the vanguard of the town's now legendary writers' colony. For Bynner, the terrain and atmosphere of Sante Fe, along with its unique history and culture, held an aesthetic attraction similar to that of Peking. He moved into one of the traditional adobe dwellings which reminded him of Peking's enclosed courtyard houses, furnishing it in a stylishly eclectic mix of native Pueblo pots, Navajo rugs and blankets, gold-painted woodwork and Chinese scrolls and jade. Jiang had left California too, first for China and then to travel in the USSR, meeting with Bolshevik leaders, Lenin, Trotsky, Lunacharsky and Bukharin. The Soviet experiment in Russia offered a promising model to intellectuals in the aftermath of the war, in the West as well as in China.<sup>98</sup> Committed to Walt Whitman's notion of democracy as a universal brotherhood of man, Bynner believed in the need for Americans to tolerate Communism if the United States was to consider itself a democracy. He entered into Santa Fe politics, "running once for the state legislature as a Democrat" - though he failed to gain a seat.<sup>99</sup>

After the full-scale Japanese invasion of China in 1941, Bynner joined other notable figures who had promoted Chinese cultural affinity in working to raise money for the United China Relief Fund. Billboards across the United States demanded of its citizens: "3,000,000 Chinese have given their lives for democracy. What have you given?" As the Relief Fund's State Chairman for New Mexico, Bynner organised donation drives and rolled out his lecture on "Chinese People and Poetry" which he was working up into a book. But as war raged across the world the book got sidelined by a more pressing translation project, a version of Laotzu's *Way of Life*, or *Tao Te Ching* that Bynner wanted to make available to the modern American reader. "Eleven years work with Dr Kiang in translating *The Jade Mountain*" had convinced him, he wrote, that "no one in history had shown better than Laotzu how closely the principles of democracy relate to true individual conviction".<sup>100</sup> Adherence to Laotzu's Taoist philosophy was potentially "one of our chief weapons against tanks, artillery and bombs".<sup>101</sup> Bynner was right in so far as its influence on the principles of the Beat and hippy generations went. *The Way of Life According to Laotzu: An American Version* (1944) sold over fifty thousand copies in his lifetime and is still in print today.

Bynner's review of *Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell: Correspondence*

of a *Friendship* (1946), dismissively titled “Tempest in a China Teapot,” was published in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, March 30, 1946. Some twenty-five years after the event, Bynner was doubtful whether this moribund dispute regarding the pictographic method of translating Chinese poetry could have any interest for the general reader. Lowell had abandoned things Chinese after *Fir-Flower Tablets* to work on a biography of John Keats. She died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1925, aged 51. After Ayscough’s death in 1942, her widower arranged for publication of the letters which revealed to Bynner the extent of Lowell’s rancour. His review decided the letters’ contemporary relevance could only lie in their lesson of “misplaced industry”. Bynner reiterated the objection he had made in his *Asia* article, writing: “Should a Chinese in translating an English poem give the word breakfast its dictionary meaning, ‘the meal with which the fast of the night is broken’... For me the stretching out of the Chinese phrase into its ideographic parts definitely distorted its proportionate place in the poem for the sake of an interruptive quaintness.”<sup>102</sup> He accuses them of a romantic *chinoiserie*, Ayscough of refusing the “naked languages of Europe” for the “branching jewel-tree words of Cathay,” and Lowell of her colluding satisfaction in “our elegant little nosegay”. They “might have been manufacturing Christmas cards”.<sup>103</sup>

*I used to argue with Miss Lowell and Mrs Ayscough against their exaggerated use of root meanings in Chinese characters, so that under their hands what was natural, direct, every-day expression in the Orient would become in English odd or complex or literary. The temptation to dart towards such glitter is easy to understand [but] such translation does not give the reader or auditor in English the equivalent of what a Chinese reads or hears in the original. Poets write for people, not for etymologists.*<sup>104</sup>

Whatever the consensus on the poetry, Bynner’s selection of quotes from the letters demonstrates just how self-oriented and point-scoring Lowell’s conduct concerning *Fir-Flower Tablets* had been. He cites the letter in which, fuming about Bynner’s *Asia* article and desperate to discredit him, she had written to Ayscough demanding:

*There’s one thing I wish you could find out, and that is something about the man who taught him, Dr. Kiang Kang-hu, because*

Witter Bynner is going around blowing like anything, saying that he had no idea until he reached China how highly his collaborator was considered by scholars, that he is one of the most considerable of present-day Chinese journalists, is, in short one of the important people in China, none of which I do believe, and I should like some data to be able to refute his statements when people remark that neither you nor I are Chinese. ... I think it would be a great mistake to pay any attention to him [Bynner] whatsoever. I should merely like to know these facts about the people he mentions in order to punch his pretensions to powder.<sup>105</sup>

The pugilistic Lowell must have felt soundly “punched” herself when an excited letter from Ayscough pre-empted her own with news of her visit to Lucy Calhoun in Peking. It had been “very valuable”, Ayscough wrote, on account of having met “Dr Hu Shih of whom Witter Bynner speaks in his article in the December *Asia*, which I suppose you have seen. He is quite remarkable and is leading a strong movement among the youth of the country in the revival of letters”.<sup>106</sup>

Lowell was as dismissive of Young China as she was of Kiang, of whom she remarked the only “service he is performing for China is to act as a newspaper correspondent in Moscow”.<sup>107</sup> A bad review of *Fir-Flower Tablets* in the *Chinese Students’ Monthly* prompted: “It is such a silly paper that it could not hurt a flea; besides which, the *Chinese Students’ Monthly* goes nowhere except to Chinese students, so far as I know.”<sup>108</sup> In fact the *Monthly* had a diverse readership that included American professors and businessmen as well as Chinese scholars in the United States, Europe, and Asia.<sup>109</sup> Stewing over the review nonetheless, Lowell was soon considering it in the light of a diplomatic incident. She wrote a cross letter of complaint to Wellington Koo who had commissioned it. A founder editor of the *Monthly* when a student at Columbia, Koo was now China’s Minister of Foreign Affairs. Lowell’s letter objected to the reviewer’s “patronising and sneering” tone, inquiring: “I wonder whether you think such writing is liable to promote a pleasant feeling between our two countries”.<sup>110</sup>

Today Witter Bynner is pretty much forgotten. *The Jade Mountain; A Chinese Anthology (Being 300 Poems of the T’ang Dynasty 618-906)* generally considered to be his major contribution to American literature was completed and published in 1929, but after that poetic accolade eluded him. His biographer Kraft suggests this was because he went on

to out himself in the poem *The Eden Tree* (1931). “I am sick of literary glazing over the truth”, Bynner wrote, perhaps in defence of this poem which frankly addressed his homosexuality. “Most writers do it. Poets at any rate shouldn’t. So much the Chinese have taught me”.<sup>111</sup> He is no longer included in anthologies while Lowell’s reputation has benefitted from feminist scholarship and the modernist recovery of marginalised figures. Bynner clearly deserves his place in this story. Unlike Amy Lowell, he did not conform to “the fashion, still widely prevalent in his time, of patronizing his material by investing it with a deliberately quaint or exotic tone” neither did he court controversy as Pound did by simply substituting as he thought fit “a line of his own invention”.<sup>112</sup> What Bynner shared with Lowell and Pound was that he read no Chinese and relied on an interpreter. Unlike either of them, and unusual in one of their shared New England (w.a.s.p.) heritage, he was an advocate of civil liberties, actively espousing women’s suffrage and racial equality.<sup>113</sup> Neither Pound nor Lowell ever visited China. Bynner made frequent trips becoming “personally familiar with the life and landscape of the country whose poetry he translated” and he was strongly committed to socio-cultural understanding between the two nations as central to America’s future good.<sup>114</sup>

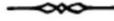
One indication of how out of step both Pound and Lowell were with the contemporary concerns of Chinese people was their indiscriminate use of the word “Chinaman”. Florence Ayscough, although generally demurring to Lowell, had been pushed to admonish her about this:

*There is only one thing I would suggest – that is that you don’t say “Chinamen.” For some reason or other the Chinese resent this very much, and as there are probably always young Chinese in your audiences it seems a pity to annoy them without need.*<sup>115</sup>

While an unthinking usage of the designation was of course prevalent during the period it was by no means ubiquitous. As early as 1896, the American reviewer of *A Peep into a Chinaman’s Library* (1896) by James Ware, commented:

*We deplore the use of the word Chinaman for Chinese ... Educated Chinese despise the name as much as the intelligent colored man of the South does the term “nigger.” Besides, the term is ungrammatical and inelegant. Then, too, it carries with it the idea of ridicule.*<sup>116</sup>

The conclusion of “Tempest in a China Teapot” gives the last word to Lowell: “I do not find it easy to understand these Chinamen; nor do they find it easy to understand me”.<sup>117</sup>



### Endnotes

1. For their comments on this essay thanks to Paul French, editor of the Royal Asiatic Society China, Hong Kong University Press China Monograph series, to my colleague at the University of Westminster, Dr Michael Nath and to the helpful suggestions of the anonymous peer reviewer.

Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life: Seventy Years In A Changing World* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), 222. After 1903 it was possible to travel overland from London to Peking via the Trans-Siberian railway in about a fortnight, “war, derailment and other inconveniences permitting” see Robert Bickers, *The Scramble For China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 357. Monroe gives an account of her round the world trip in the poem ‘A Letter From Peking’ (October 15th 1910).

2. Work in this field has expanded in the last decade: Shu-Mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Steven G. Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Yunte Huang, *Trans-pacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds., *Geographies of Modernism: Literature, Culture, Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2005), Christopher Bush, *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Mary Ann Gillies, Helen Sword, and Steven Yeo eds., *Pacific Rim Modernisms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), Urmila Seshagiri, *Race and the Modernist Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), Rupert Richard Arrowsmith, *Modernism and the Museum, Asia, African, and Pacific Art and the London Avant Garde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

3. As a member of the Art Institute of Chicago's auxiliary organization, the Antiquarian Society, Lucy Calhoun had dealings with impoverished court officials and other nobility keen to sell their treasures. With funds cabled to her by the Society she acquired extraordinary secular and Buddhist robes as well as temple hangings and wall panels. These pieces, together with others that she later presented to the Art Institute, remain some of the museum's most important Chinese textiles. Calhoun served in the war effort in France in World War I. Upon her return to Chicago, she lectured on Chinese art and architecture and helped organize Chinese exhibitions for the Institute. In the early 1920s, several years after her husband's death, she returned to Peking and established her home in an ancient temple. She studied Mandarin and hosted weekly gatherings for Chinese and Western scholars, becoming a "darling institution" in the city. She remained in Peking until the Japanese occupation in 1937. She retired to Chicago in 1941 having witnessed some of the earliest and most dramatic turning points in modern Chinese history. See Elinor Pearlstein, "Color, Life, and Moment", *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 26.2 (2000): 86, and Julia Boyd, *A Dance With The Dragon: The Vanished World of Peking's Foreign Colony* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 194.
4. Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, 234. During the late 1880s Freer had begun to collect paintings by James McNeill Whistler and was to amass one of the most significant collections of this artist's work. Whistler had become passionately interested in and influenced by Japanese prints and Chinese decorative arts and turned Freer's attention to the arts of East Asia. By 1915 Freer had built an outstanding Asian arts collection and was engaged in his enterprise of creating the United States' first Asian Arts museum.
5. *Ibid.*, 235.
6. *Ibid.*, 239.
7. *Ibid.*, 250.
8. Clarence A. Andrews, *Chicago in Story: A Literary History* (Iowa City IA: Midwest Heritage Publishing Company, 1982), 152.
9. Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, 252.
10. *Ibid.*, 223. She got them from his publishers, Elkin Mathews, who ran a congenial small shop in Vigo Street, a crooked lane connecting Regent Street to Piccadilly.
11. Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, 223.
12. Imagism began with a group of poets in London in 1909 led by T.

- E. Hulme and including F. S. Flint, Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), Richard Aldington, John Gould Fletcher, and later Amy Lowell.
13. Ian Hamilton, *The Little Magazines: A Study of Six Editors* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976), 46.
  14. Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, 259.
  15. *Ibid.*, 29, 266.
  16. Herbert Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press Inc. 1923 (1901)), 145-6.
  17. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, March, 1913. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/article/335>
  18. "An Interview with Ezra Pound" by D. G. Bridson, *New Directions* 17 (1961): 159- 84.
  19. Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, *The Chinese Written Character As A Medium For Poetry: A Critical Edition*, ed by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 28.
  20. For a discussion of the mediating influence of Japanese scholarship on Pound's translations of Chinese poetry see Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002). Huang argues that Japanese nationalist discourse and the concomitant Japanese interpretation of the "foreign" origin of Chinese characters gave shape to Fenollosa's studies, 74. Nagao Ariga would go on to become Japan's leading scholar of international law and was enlisted by the Meiji government to justify "legally" its attack on the Qing in 1894. He would reputedly be involved in Yuan Shikai's anti-republican coup and the negotiations of Japan's Twenty-One Demands. See Lydia Liu ed., *Tokens of Exchange: The Problems of Translation In Global Circulations* (New York: Duke University Press, 1999).
  21. Steven G. Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 36.
  22. The names for the Chinese poets in the collection include Rihaku in place of Li Po, Omakitsu for Wang Wei, Kakuhaku for Guo Pu, Rosho-rin for Lu Zhao Lin, and To-Em-Mei for Tao Yuan Ming. The titles and text of the poems also present names in their Japanese forms, for example 'Poem by the Bridge at Ten-Shin', 'Leave-Taking Near Shoku', Sennin Poem by Kakuhaku' and 'Old Idea of Cho-an by Rosho-rin'.

23. Arthur Waley, *The Poetry and Career of Li Po* (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1950), 11.
24. Letter to Margaret Anderson, editor of the *Little Review*, 2 July 1917, in Scott, Thomas L. and Melvin J. Friedman, eds. *Pound/The Little Review, The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence* (New York: New Directions, 1988).
25. T. S. Eliot, *Introduction to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), 14. For two excellent discussions of Pound's "foreignizing" translation in *Cathay* see Barry Ahearn, "Cathay: What sort of Translation?" and Christine Froula, "The Beauties of Mis-translation: On Pound's English after *Cathay*" in Zhaoming Qian ed., *Ezra Pound and China* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2003).
26. *Poetry*, September 1915, 310.
27. Letter from Lowell to Ayscough, 24 July, 1918 in *Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell: Correspondence of a Friendship*, ed. Harley Farnsworth MacNair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 43.
28. H. D. was Hilda Doolittle.
29. See *Amy Lowell, American Modern*, ed by Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), xiii.
30. *Ibid.*, 167. Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era* is particularly horrid about Lowell and patronizing about Ayscough.
31. See Bradshaw, "Remembering Amy Lowell" in Munich and Bradshaw, eds, *Amy Lowell, American Modern*, 169.
32. For the distinction between the stages of Pound's Imagism and Vorticism see Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971). Some months before war was declared Pound wrote to James Joyce that Wyndham Lewis was "starting a new Futurist, Cubist, Imagiste Quarterly ... mostly a painter's magazine with me to do the poems". This was *Blast* which proclaimed itself as the organ of the Great London Vortex. Vorticism included sculptors and painters as well as poets, distancing Pound from secessionist Imagists or "Amygists", Fletcher, Flint, Aldington and HD.
33. Like Pound, Lowell had no Chinese but had some connection with the Far East through her brother Percival Lowell, the astronomer who had travelled in Korea and Japan in the 1880s and whose books had inspired Lafcadio Hearn to go there.
34. MacNair, 15.

35. See Lindsay Shen, *Knowledge is Pleasure: Florence Ayscough in Shanghai* (Hong Kong: RAS Shanghai HKUP China Monograph, 2012)
36. MacNair, 25-6.
37. Ibid.
38. Letter from Lowell, 24 July, 1918, MacNair, 43-4
39. MacNair, 76.
40. Ibid., 38.
41. Letter 27 July, 1918, MacNair, 48.
42. Letter 28 June, 1918, MacNair, 38.
43. February *Poetry* 1919 and *Introduction to Fir-Flower Tablets* (1921).
44. Ibid.
45. (*Selected Letters*, 61) The essay is responsible for Pound's "ideogrammic" method which he would go on to develop in *The Cantos*.
46. Some scholars like John DeFrancis argue that not only is the Chinese writing system not ideographic, but "[t]here never has been, and never can be, such a thing as an ideographic system of writing" in *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 133. Today, a wide variety of scholars of Chinese literature (Rey Chow, Michelle Yeh, and Zhang Longxi, among others) accept the DeFrancis argument, more or less rejecting "ideographic" as a classifying term for the Chinese writing system.
47. Guiyou Huang, *Whitmanism, Imagism, and Modernism in China and America* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1998), 19.
48. Letter 9 January, 1922, MacNair, 175-6.
49. Arthur Davison Ficke, *Chats on Japanese Prints* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1915).
50. Samuel Foster Damon, *Amy Lowell: a chronicle, with extracts from her correspondence* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935), 453.
51. William Jay Smith, *The Spectra Hoax* (Ashland: Story Line Press, 2000 (1961)), 31.
52. Witter Bynner, *New Republic*, 1916, see Smith, *The Spectra Hoax*, 35.
53. Anne Knish and Emanuel Morgan, *Spectra* (New York: Mitchell Kennelly, 1916), Preface.
54. Lloyd R. Morris, *The Young Idea: An anthology of opinion concerning the spirit and aims of contemporary American literature* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1917), Introduction.
55. Smith, *The Spectra Hoax*, 79.
56. Ibid., 93
57. Smith, *The Spectra Hoax*, 80.

58. Ibid., 82.
59. Letter to Margaret Anderson at the *Little Review*, 10 August, 1917.
60. Max Putzel, *The Man In The Mirror: William Marion Reedy and His Magazine* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 239.
61. "Casual Comment," *Dial*, 64, no. 18 (25 April 1918): 411.
62. "Soulful Spectricism Nothing But a Hoax," *New York Times Magazine* (June 2, 1918): 11. Also see Putzel, 239.
63. Ibid.
64. Putzel, 242.
65. See *Asia* article.
66. Witter Bynner, Kianghu Jiang, *The Jade Mountain: A Chinese Anthology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), xiii.
67. Putzel, *The Man In The Mirror*, 237.
68. Ibid., 241.
69. Witter Bynner, *The Beloved Stranger: two books of song and a divertimento for the unknown lover*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919), Preface.
70. Ibid.
71. Putzel, *The Man In The Mirror*, 237.
72. See Suzanne W. Churchill, *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), also David Brooks, *The Sons of Clovis: Ern Malley, Adoré Floupette and a secret history of Australian poetry* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press 2011).
73. James Kraft, *Who is Witter Bynner?: A Biography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 49.
74. Kiang Kang Hu "Socialism in China", *The Masses*, October, 1917. <http://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/kang-hu/1917/socinchina.htm>
75. Published in the *Chinese Students' Monthly: Vol 17*, (1922), 174., cited in Stacey Bieler, "Patriots" or "Traitors"?: *A History of American-Educated Chinese Students* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 143.
76. Bynner turned again to China in World War Two when he began his translation of Laotzu based on other English translations. *The Way of Life According to Laotzu* (1944) sold over fifty thousand copies in his lifetime and is still being sold.
77. James Kraft, ed., *The Selected Witter Bynner: Poems, Plays, Translations, Prose and Letters* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 228.

78. Ibid.
79. Ibid
80. *Asia* article.
81. Ibid.
82. Letter, 24 March, 1921, Macnair, 122.
83. Shen, *Knowledge is Pleasure*, p84-5.
84. Cited in Lindsay Shen, Ayscough, letter to Witter Bynner, 9 April [1921], MS Am 1891 (46) Houghton Library, Harvard University.
85. Letter, 8 December, 1921, Macnair, 169.
86. Letter, 9 Dec, 1921, Macnair, 171)
87. Kraft, ed., *The Selected Witter Bynner*, 229.
88. Witter Bynner, 'Tempest in a China Teapot', *The Saturday Review*, March 30, 1946.
89. *Asia* article
90. *Asia* article
91. In 1909 the United States government began to return the Boxer Indemnity funds to China to be used to send Chinese students to study in the U.S. In 1910 Hu Shih passed a competitive examination and was sent by the Chinese government to Cornell where he began a degree in agriculture later changing to philosophy. He received his B.A. in 1915 and his PhD. from Columbia in 1917. From 1917-1925 he was Professor of Philosophy and later Chairman of the Department of English Literature at Peking University. From 1930 to 1937 he was Dean of the School of Letters and from 1945 -1949 Chancellor. He was Ambassador to the United States from 1938 -1942 during the Sino-Japanese war years. After 1949 he lived in New York City and later Taiwan.
92. For an account of Hu Shih's student days see Bieler, "Patriots" or "Traitors"?: *A History of American-Educated Chinese Students*.
93. Yoon-Wah Wong, *Essays on Chinese Literature: A Comparative Approach* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1988), 46.
94. Alice Corbin Henderson, Harriet Monroe, eds., *The New Poetry: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Verse in English* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), xi.
95. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1921), xxxi.
96. Barbara Korte, Ralph Schneider, Stefanie Lethbridge, eds., *Anthologies of British Poetry: Critical Perspectives from Literary and Cultural Studies*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 50.

97. The essay was also published in the *Chinese Students' Quarterly*, a reform journal written in Chinese and printed in Shanghai (IV, 1 in March 1917 pp1-14). For an exploration of Hu Shih's indebtedness to Imagism, see Wong Yoon Wah, *Essays on Chinese Literature: A Comparative Approach*, and Guiyou Huang (1997) *Whitmanism, Imagism and Modernism in China and America*, Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press (*New Youth*, II, 5 Jan 1 1917, 11).
98. Unlike the Western powers, Russia abrogated the unequal treaties with China in 1920.
99. Kraft, ed., *The Selected Witter Bynner*, 58.
100. Witter Bynner, *The Way of Life According to Laotzu: An American Version* (New York: The John Day Co., 1944), Preface.
101. Ibid
102. Witter Bynner, "Tempest in a China Teapot", 42.
103. Ibid.
104. Kraft, ed., *The Selected Witter Bynner*, 229.
105. Letter 9 January, 1922, Macnair, 176.
106. Letter 7 January, 1922, Macnair, 172-3. When she did reply to Lowell's questions she reiterated her opinion of Hu Shih he "is a brilliant young man; only 29. A professor at the Government University, Peking". Of "Kiang Kang-hu I can't find out anything definite. Mr Nung knows him but will say little about him", Letter, 24 March, 1922, Macnair, .
107. Letter 9 January, 1922, MacNair, 175-6.
108. Letter 17 February, 1922, Macnair, 186.
109. From its inception in 1907 the *Monthly's* audience had grown such that by 1922 it "spanned the globe" with readers in "Paris, Liverpool, Germany, Honolulu, Burma, Siam, Philippine Islands, Dutch East Indies, Federated Malay States, and the two Straits Settlements of Penang and Singapore" (Bieler 190).
110. Letter 18 February, 1922, Macnair, 189-90 and quoted in "Tempest in a Teapot".
111. Bynner, *The Way of Life According to Laotzu*, Preface.
112. James Kraft ed., *The Chinese Translations: The Works of Witter Bynner*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1982), introduction by Burton Watson, 30.
113. Lowell had no time for left-wing causes or feminism. She identified with the ruling class and with men rather than women. See Cheryl Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) *Masks Out-*

- rageous and Austere: Culture, Psyche, and Persona in Modern Women Poets*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press .
114. James Kraft ed., *The Works of Witter Bynner: Prose Pieces* (New York: Farrar Strauss, & Giroux, 1979),15.
115. Letter 30 June, 1922, Macnair, 201.
116. Review by Samuel Isett Woodbridge in *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, October 1896, Vol 27, No 10, 510.
117. Bynner, “Tempest in a China Teapot”, 44.

## LU XUN'S THOUGHTS ON PARENTAL INFLUENCE

BY SOPHIE LEACACOS

*This essay is inspired by Lu Xun's work "What is Required of Us as Fathers Today,"<sup>1</sup> which argues against the traditional Chinese father-son relation of favour and expectation as opposed to the ideal relation of sincere love and understanding. Whether we are the product of Eastern or Western cultural traditions, we all have the need to reflect on, and question, our modern standards for parental behavior. Lu Xun inspires us to look – once again – at how we deal with this all-important social responsibility.*

The danger, says Lu Xun, is that if a father-son relationship "is based on expecting favor instead of love, in addition to destroying the proper relations between father and son, this will reverse the true parental affection and sow the seeds of hatred." What he seems to be saying is that this relationship probably destroys the father's affection as well as that of the son. He goes on to argue that what is given to the child must be given with no expectation of reward; otherwise, "morally speaking, it is worthless."

If Lu Xun tells us that our judgmental attitude of expectation toward our child is both destructive and without moral virtue, what does he consider to be the better approach? In nature, he says, animals nurture and protect their young, and teach them survival skills. At a higher level, we humans are assumed to want this also for our children: we want them to be better than us, stronger, more clever and happier. The prerequisites for achieving such parental success are: 1) understanding, or allowing a child to exist in a child's world with a child's perspective; 2) guidance, giving advice without judgment to encourage lofty principles and acceptance of new ideas; 3) emancipation, enabling the child to become independent; and 4) protection of the child's well-being and good health.

Of course, we all agree with this. Or do we? Are those of us with a western background truly honoring these principles of guidance on how we nurture our young? Natural experience and observation, our best guides to our own understanding, do not need a religious or philosophical explanation; yet it is useful to reflect on traditional western values as one source of wisdom in this matter.

The ancient Judeo-Christian foundation for one view of father-son relationships is the age-old argument of judgmental discipline versus loving discipline. If we try to create a comparative description of the two, the list is long. Some examples to describe judgmental versus loving discipline would be: quick or time consuming; impatient or patient; distracted or attentive; uncompromising or compromising; no freedom to make a mistake or freedom for error; anticipates fear or anticipates confidence; punishment not forgotten, or punishment forgotten because it is forgiven.

We assume we know the natural consequence of loving discipline, but do we know equally well the consequence of judgmental discipline? A child (by definition) is innately innocent and, in nature, innately loving. If subjected to judgmental discipline, because he is too young to apply an adult standard, he is left to create his own idea of rewards and expectations. He must resort to falsehood as a measure of self-defense, and must watch his own actions with great caution. In adulthood, this child's false expectations will be disappointed, and his love will eventually turn to anger unless he has somehow managed to learn forgiveness. He will probably have lost the capacity to trust, which is the first principle of love, and thus he ends up deprived of knowing even how to love.

This is a frightening scenario, and most of us would consider it an extreme exaggeration of a child's experience. If we analyze our personal behavior in choosing to impose loving or judgmental discipline, we will say: "Well, I put myself somewhere in the middle. I always love my child, but I can't be the same way every time!" Lu Xun would respond: "Yes, you can!" We must discipline ourselves in order to do so, as a fundamental obligation to society. If we cannot set a disciplined standard for ourselves, how can we pretend to set a standard for another person? Do we forget that a child is a person?

Another issue involved in the argument of the father-son relation is the question of the virtue of a father's "good" intentions. A classic example of this is the story of the man who brings water to quench his neighbour's thirst. If the cup is solid, it will be filled with water; but if the cup has a hole, the water will leak out almost to the bottom. So, what is the value of the man's generosity? Is it the satisfaction of his intention, or is it the satisfaction of the thirst of his neighbor?

Value, or virtue, is again an age-old matter of deliberation. Socrates, as recorded in Plato's *Protagoras*<sup>2</sup>, asks whether an unjust act can have virtue, or be "good," if it is beneficial. He eventually arrives at the idea

that what is beneficial is what gives pleasure. If we apply this to our discussion of judgmental versus loving discipline, an action would have value, or virtue, as “good” or beneficial, if it gives pleasure to whom? Perhaps to the father committing the unjust act, but certainly not to the son, the victim of the unjust act. Lu Xun says that virtues “should be universal, required of all, and beneficial to others as well as one’s self.”<sup>3</sup> This would imply that a virtue is learned behavior, and can be taught. Interestingly enough, Socrates says the same thing: virtues such as justice, moderation and courage are a form of knowledge, which is teachable.<sup>4</sup>

Looking at the father-son relation in terms of Lu Xun’s prerequisites for success, the concerns of weighing loving versus judgmental discipline, and the moral question of virtuous intentions and action, we arrive at a precious moment of realization: is a father more of a father when he calls himself one, or when he is called “father” by his child? This is not an intellectual question, but a question of the heart. Somehow the word “father” has much more meaning and power when it is spoken by the child, than when it is spoken by the father himself. The child’s love and trust are what give the name “father” its value. Lu Xun says a man must earn the right to be called “father” through his love, wisdom, compassion and patience. The son’s love for his father, the true meaning of “fatherhood,” is measured by trust, not by land, power or money. A son who behaves like a servant working for a reward, praising outwardly while secretly covetous and proud, is a product of the judgmental discipline of reward and punishment. The son who grows by the loving discipline of kindness and patience will truly trust his father, accepting what he is given with humility and only caring about being in the presence of his father.

Lu Xun assumes that if we are truly persuaded, we are capable of changing our behavior; and that we cannot hope to understand social acceptance (i.e. “brotherhood”) unless we understand the ideal father-son relationship, and are committed to making it real. To accomplish this requires changing our habitual view of ourselves.

If we are fortunate to have a child, hopefully we have time to re-write our own history by seeing the truth of our father-son relationship and taking action against our old habits by creating new ones. For those of us who are advanced in years, we are now living in the future of our own making, and possibly must accept our son as we have moulded him. Lu Xun asks us, no matter what our age, to see our father-son relationship

truthfully, and with a determination to respect the consequences of our actions.



**Endnotes**

1. Lu Xun “What is Required of Us As Fathers Today” (1919) *Lu Xun Selected Works*, trans. Yang Zianzi and Gladys Yang (Foreign Languages Press: Beijing, 2003) vol 2, 56-71.
2. Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. B.A.F. Hubbard and E.S. Karnofsky (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
3. Lu Xun “My Views on Chastity” (1918) *Lu Xun Selected Works* Vol. 2, 13-25.
4. Plato *Protagoras*.

## COLLECTING RESEARCH MATERIALS IN SHANGHAI:

### A Qing Dynasty Astrologer's Predictions for the Future

BY RONALD SULESKI<sup>1</sup>

#### COLLECTING MATERIALS

In January 2012, I was in Shanghai and naturally sought out several markets where I hoped to find research materials of the type I have been collecting since 2004. Every Sunday the Confucius Temple in Shanghai (*Shanghai Wenmiao* 上海文廟) holds a book fair in the main courtyard of the temple grounds, so that was an obvious place for me to explore. The majority of books for sale were produced in China after liberation in 1949, especially in the 1970s and 1980s when book publishing expanded as China pulled away from the years 1966 to 1976 of the Cultural Revolution. Publications from the Cultural Revolution seem to sell well since they support a good many book sellers in Shanghai and Beijing. Those publications carry nostalgia of a more simple time for people who don't remember the period too well. Middle-brow books of novels, standard biographies of past emperors or heroes and translations in modern Chinese of classical stories published since the 1980s constituted a majority of the works being offered for sale. Under a cold, cloudy sky threatening a drizzle, the temple grounds were filled with rows of long tables covered with old books and magazines, rolled-up posters, albums of stamps, and how-to books on cooking and travel.

Happily for me, I noticed that one or two of the book sellers had small piles of old-fashioned Chinese style books, sometimes bundled together in plastic bags. The materials I seek are often found in small bundles because that is how they are acquired by the urban book sellers. Merchants who buy old items, and sometimes those who collect trash from farm households in the rural villages, gather together the unwanted written materials they find and sell them to a network of used-book sellers. For many farm families, the old books once belonged to a grandfather or an old aunt and were kept in the bottom of a trunk or even on the shelves of a stable or work room. It is not unusual for me to find materials where a goat or perhaps a rat has taken a bite out of the paper. The younger people who cannot easily read the old style characters written in the traditional form (*fanti zi* 繁體字) and cannot understand the unpunctuated classical Chinese texts discard these materials when

十



壬

四

偏印

庚子

利財

年

己甲二年八月十二日子時交脫

依書理取身煞兩停

〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇〇

the old relative dies.

Although the book-sellers circulate old books toward the larger cities where there are more active book markets, in my experience the materials tend to circulate within geographical areas. For example, the book markets in Beijing tend to have materials from regions in north and northeast China such as Liaoning and southern Jilin, Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Shandong. While in Shandong I found a number of old books in Ji'nan and in Qufu, the birthplace of Confucius, all of which seem to have originated in the province of Shandong. A few years earlier, books I found in Guilin all seemed to have been from Guangxi, the province where the city of Guilin is located. It is exciting to find materials that can be identified as coming from the region where they were acquired.

On the day of my visit to the Shanghai Confucian Temple on 8 January, 2012, I bought a number of materials that interested me. The book that I describe in this article is a hand-written horoscope. Collectively, materials of this sort are referred to as *shou chaoben* 手抄本, hand-written books. This one is 9 ½ inches (24.1cm) tall and 5 ¼ inches (23.5 cm) wide, giving it the typical oblong shape of traditional Chinese books. The paper is hand-made and unbleached resulting in a yellowish or tan coloring, and it appears to have been cut by traditional methods since it has fuzzy upper and lower edges, not the sharp cuts that would have been made by a machine. Each sheet was folded in the middle (resulting in the size mentioned above) and the sheets were bound along the right hand margin, since traditional books opened from the left to the right and the lines were read top to bottom, beginning on the right side of the page. Because of the very typical, inexpensive quality of the paper and the use of twine to bind the pages, I conclude that this book was intended to be used by the common people of the time. They were people who accepted the matter-of-fact presentation of the fortune-teller's horoscope on inexpensive paper without any trappings of refinement in the calligraphy or artisan workmanship in the paper and binding. Those are exactly the people whose lives I want to better understand.

This thin book has eleven sheets of paper, folded to make twenty-two individual pages counting the front cover as page one. I usually write a page number in pencil on each sheet to help me when analyzing the work. I purchased this book as part of a bundle of three works of similar size and composition.<sup>2</sup> I paid RMB200 (roughly US\$30) for all three, which I felt was slightly higher than the market price, but I did not

feel like bargaining and thought that the fair price would be appreciated by the seller, which it was.

AN ASTROLOGER'S PREDICTIONS: THE MECHANICS

The work to be discussed here which I bought that pleasant Sunday morning was produced by a fortune-teller who was an astrologer. He had calculated the movement of the stars which would influence the fate of the infant he was writing about. The front cover of the book, which would have been a folded sheet and which I would have numbered pages 1 and 2, had fallen off sometime in the past, so the earliest page I have was probably the first inside page of the actual book. (It ought to have been numbered page 3, but I have counted it as page 1.) As the sheet most likely to receive rough treatment with every handling, it is not unusual to find that the front cover has disappeared from these bound works. Had it been intact, the front cover and inside page might have given me crucial information about the work, such as its title, the



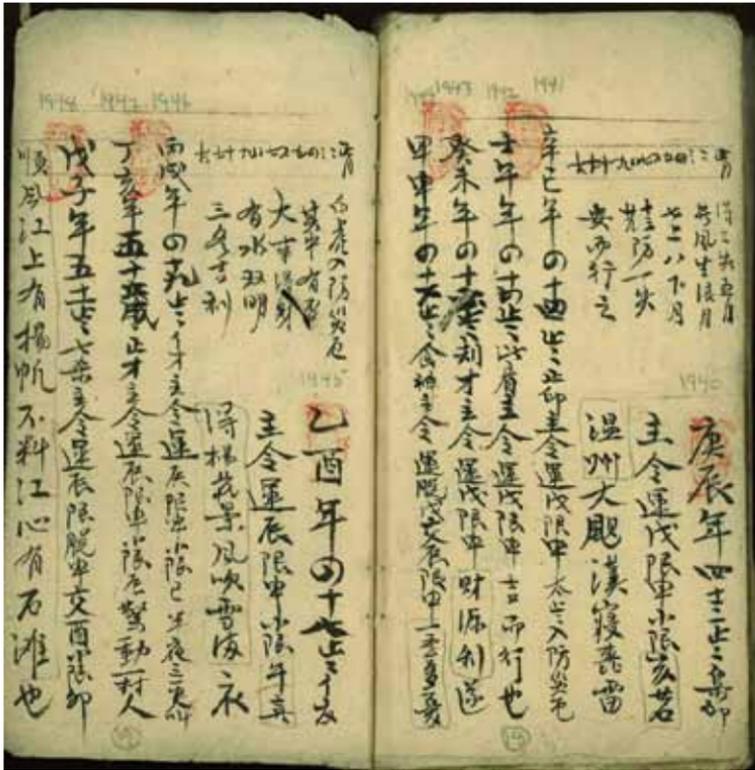
studio (*tang* 堂) or temple name of the astrologer, and on the inside cover possibly the name of the client for whom the work was written. If I had been really lucky and found the book intact, that page might have had the name of the astrologer and the date the work was produced.

Looking at page 1, the partial phrase “year 14” (*shisi nian* 十四年) is written horizontally across the top. I believe if we were able to read the entire phrase, it would be “Twenty-fourth year of the Guangxu Emperor (*Guangxu ershisi nian* 光緒二十四年), which would be 1898, the year in which the subject of this horoscope was born. It appears the subject of this horoscope was born late in the lunar calendar year of 1898, so that when the year changed a few months later, the infant gained a year and was suddenly listed as two years old. The fact of the subject being two years old in 1899 is given on page 8.<sup>3</sup>

Detailed horoscopes are given beginning on page 8 with the year 1900. This is referred to in the second horizontal phrase on page 1 which makes reference to the *gengzi* 庚子 year of 1900 and says that is when the yearly predictions begin (*pian yin* 偏印). (It could be that this phrase is part of the preceding sentence which has been lost.) We can assume this horoscope was written between 1899 and 1902, since a partial phrase on page 1 refers to the *renyin* (壬寅) year of 1902, meaning that possibly the complete phrase would have revealed that as the year this booklet was compiled.

According to the astrologer, 1902 was also a crucial year for the young two or three year old whose fortune was being written. Thus the first vertical phrase on page 1 makes reference to the *jenyin* 壬寅 year of 1902. In that year the negative influences of the *ji* 己 year in which the boy was born would begin to give way slowly to the more positive influences of the next *jia* 甲 year, which would arrive in 1904. The horoscope for 1904 on page 10 lists the child as “seven and eight years old” (*qi ba sui* 七八歲), which reflects the idea, I believe, of the child being given an additional year of age shortly after being born because of the quick arrival of the new lunar year. The calculation of an additional year soon after the baby’s birth seems to have confused the astrologer in some of his predictions, such as that above, where he lists a single lunar year, but then sometimes gives two ages for the subject.

The idea of a change of fortune every few years based on the *jia* (more positive) and *ji* (more negative) years, is indicated in the third horizontal phrase on page 1, which reads “The changes in fortune will take place on 12 August of the *ji* and *jia* years” (*jijia liangniang, bayue sihsi hao, zishi*



*jiaotuo* 己甲二年, 八月十二日, 子時交脫). In the Chinese calendar, lunar years are each given a two-character designation, based on a system of twelve earthly branches *dizhi* 地支, and ten heavenly stems *tiangan* 天干. Every few years a year containing either the *jia* or the *ji* character will appear, and the astrologer calculated that these would be years of a change in fortune for the subject of this book. According to this work, the boy's fate will change gradually from the most negative, to lesser negative, to a little positive, to the most positive. Then it begins to swing back the other way, with changes coming every six years.<sup>4</sup>

This book begins its commentary in 1899 when the boy was two years old, and it continues with year-by-year predictions until 1955, when the subject would have been 58 years old. (The astrologer was confused about the age of his subject by this point, and crossed out “57” to write over it “58.” He showed a similar confusion for earlier entries as well.) It is not unusual for a cycle of predictions to contain a 60 year cycle. The sixtieth year is known as a complete cycle (*huanli* 還曆) when all of the possible combinations of the heavenly stems and earthly

branches used to designate years have been completed, and the grand cycle is ready to begin again. The 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration is of special importance because of this, and possibly would have called for a new set of predictions for the upcoming years, so ending the predictions at this point, age 58, did not mean the subject would die, but rather than a new set of predictions should be obtained.

The second vertical column on page 1 reads “*pianyin gengzi ren jiecai* 偏印庚子, 刃 劫財...” This partial phrase can be taken to read, “beginning with the *gengzi* year of 1900, the book will explain the blade that cuts off wealth...” (The blade *ren* 刃 is a baleful force.) This probably means that changes in fortune, and probably health, will be indicated. The remainder of the phrase is lost, but all of these words are “underlined” by means of round circles placed to their right. This fortune-teller prided himself on being able to be fairly specific about changes in critical areas such as income and health.

Finally, on page 1 written in larger letters down the left margin of the page are the words “This book explains about both the body and baleful forces ...” (*yishu liqu shensha liangting* 依 書理取身煞兩停). Indeed, the commentary given inside for each year tends to comment on the health of the subject and on the dangers that might be encountered. This further indicates the fortune-teller promising to predict critical areas of the subject’s future.

What struck my eye when first glancing though the book at the temple fair was the double-page spread (on pages 2 and 3) of a large circle constructed by the fortune-teller to be used as a guide to determining the subject’s fortune. The circle, called the Chart of Fate (*mingpan* 命盤), has five concentric rings. In the center of this circle, the “hub” is a listing of the eight trigrams *bagua* 八卦 that form a basis of traditional Chinese philosophy. The trigrams are based on eight sets of three lines each, with unbroken lines being elements of *yang* 陽, roughly considered to be positive elements. In contrast, broken lines are said to represent negative aspects of *yin* 陰. But only two of the trigrams represent pure *yin* or pure *yang*. Rather, most are combinations of *yin* and *yang*, negative and positive. It is not clear if these trigrams are meant to apply precisely to the reading of the elements in the circle, or are more a decoration for the center of the ring.

The innermost ring contains the 12 earthly stems that appear in the year designations of the lunar calendar. For example, to read one of the “spokes” in the ring, the reader can locate the designation *shen*

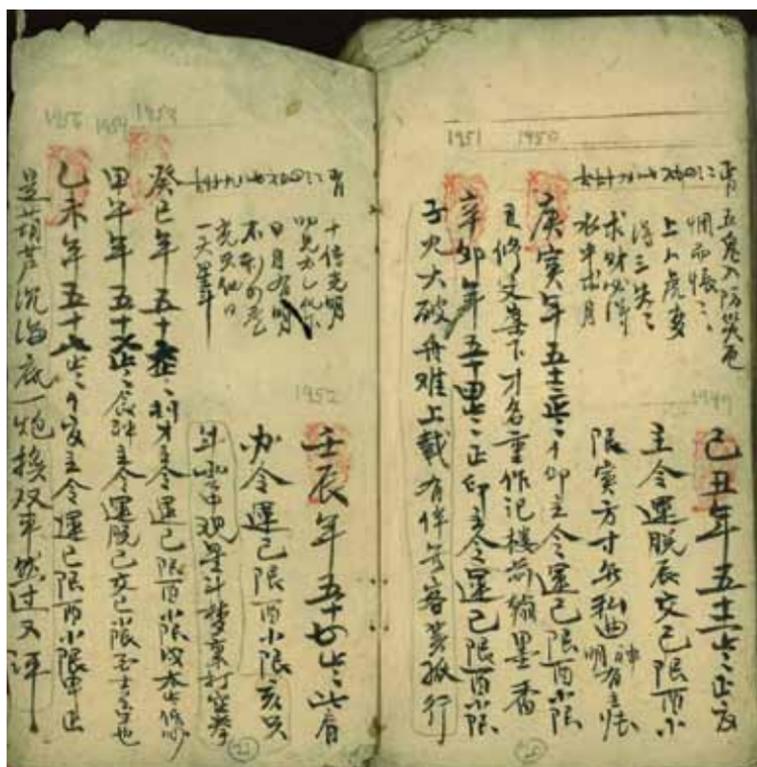


申 in the inner-most circle (it is roughly at the two o'clock position). Proceeding outward from the middle, ring two is a larger box with the words “official fortune” (*guanlu* 官祿). This indicates good fortune in one’s career or occupation. In traditional Chinese thinking, to achieve an official position with government rank was the sure path to good income and social status, so the phrase has only positive connotations. Ring four has a red seal placed inside this box reading “strong” (*qiang* 強), meaning that years with this stem in their designation will be years of good fortune. Also in that box is written “Heavenly Dog” (*tianquan* 天犬), which refers to the negative element that will need to be overcome. Folk beliefs in Chinese astrology say the heavenly dog, also written as *tiangou* 天狗, needs to be beaten back in order for the good fortune to take place. Conversely, the Heavenly Dog was seen by some as a protective star.<sup>5</sup>

The overall positive strengths of this stem designation are listed in the outermost ring five which gives a number of influences and star

deities that preside within this *jia* designation. The influencing element is *huayin* 化印 (using the seal [This is a positive sign because the seal on a document can produce good results]), meaning that decisions will be made and the good fortune put into effect. Next are several star deities: *changeng* 長庚 is the evening star Venus when seen in the west, a star brighter than the others; *yima* 驛馬 courier horses, means this star has the power to effect change; *bazuo* 八座 this god of the constellations brings brightness and clarity; *wenchang* 文昌 this deity, The God of Literature and Learning officially known as the *Wenchang dijun* 文昌帝君, brings a successful professional career. Each of these deities is often portrayed in colorful imagery, which is the way they spring into my mind. They appear in the popular imagination as colorful decorations in the outermost ring of the Chart of Fate.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in order to read the Chart, the subject begins by identifying the earthly stem in each year designation in the innermost ring, and then reads outward to discover the forces that will determine their fate for the year with the *jia* designation.<sup>7</sup>



The other colourful images that the reader finds on the Chart are the various red seals and stamps placed by the fortune-teller, such as the seal for “strong” (*chiang* 強) mentioned above. In this same chart one can find some rings marked “weak” (*ruo* 弱). Some seals are in the form of a cartoon-like scholar figure. More important for our purposes would be the seals in the shape of a leaf placed on the pages with the chart and on every page over the year prediction. This seal has the words “spreading virtue” (*guangde* 廣德). This is possibly the studio name or the trademark of the astrologer who prepared this set of predictions. Such trademarks used in this manner were not registered or controlled, so it is almost impossible to trace this trademark back to its owner.

#### AN ASTROLOGER’S PREDICTIONS: TELLING THE FUTURE

In attempting to analyse the contents of this book my goal is to have the book tell us a story reflective of the times in which it was produced, the people who made reference to it, and to the degree we can understand it, the veracity of the information in the book. The book contains a text, and I infer from the text the role of the book in the late Qing and early Republican period. My approach is to be creative in the meanings I assign to the book. At each point in the text I encounter several possibilities of meaning, and I choose from among them one meaning, with the proviso that it must be a logical point and consistent with all of my other choices. There is speculation in determining the importance of each item, but if each point is logical and consistent with the others, the result is a compelling story that illuminates the book and the people who made it and used it.

To begin, we should assume the subject of this horoscope was a male because it must have been expensive for the parents to commission an astrologer to prepare this prediction of the future. Unfortunately few families would consider it to be of sufficient import to predict their daughter’s future since her future would be tied to a different family and their fortunes. Thus most likely the subject of this prediction was a male and we might assume that this male was expected to take over the family business and/or to eventually control its assets. In that case, an outline of the probable future of this son became very important to the family and the prediction was no doubt eagerly read by all of the adults in this household.

The astrologer most likely considered all the signs of this child, such as the year, month, day, and time of day of the child’s birth, and then

compiled the astrological chart that appears on pages 2 and 3. Having compiled the chart, he then prepared an overview of the child's strengths and the general prognoses, which he wrote on pages 4 and 5. He said that the child was born under the sign of water (*ren* 壬). This indicates bounty, but if not controlled, too much water can overwhelm. Fortunately there is also the earth element *wu* 戊 in his set of heavenly and earthly signs for the child, since the year of birth, 1898, was a *wuxu* 戊戌 year, and earth is able to control water. The good combination of elements means that the child can even “control the flooding of the three rivers” (*kesai sanjiang zhi yi* 可塞三江之溢). Being in such a strong position, the astrologer wrote that one could expect this child to be successful whether he undertook an official career (*dang guan* 當官) or followed business (*cong shang* 從商). When young, the boy will be “intelligent and with a delicate beauty” (*congming junxiu* 聰明俊秀), and as an adult he will “stand out from the crowd” (*wanzhong chaoqun* 萬眾超群).<sup>8</sup>

The astrologer's conclusion was that the boy will find his fortune, not in an official career, but from the world of business. It seems likely from looking at the astrological chart, the fortune-teller wrote, that this child will be embroiled in some struggles in life (“gathering the wind and the clouds” *fengyun zhihui* 風雲之會), but will be able to overcome these difficulties. Both parents will live long and fruitful lives and the family will flourish.

#### YEAR-BY-YEAR PREDICTIONS

Pages 8 to 21 contain the year-by-year predictions for this subject's life. In most cases the astrologer used words taken from poetry or analogies from nature to convey his meaning. For example, for the boy in year 1906 at age 9 (on page 10), the astrologer wrote, “In this year the winds cause the pines to bend and the apricots to fall” (*zhinian fengchui songxiazi yuda xingfeihua* 只年，風吹松下子，打杏飛花), the meaning of which indicates a natural progression of the seasons. On page 17, for the years 1935 and 1936 when the subject would be 38 and 39 years old, the astrologer advised that when helping others, be careful in how you help them so as to avoid later difficulties. (This expression, as written by the fortune-teller, echoes an aphorism well-known in China: “don't invite the wolf into your room *buyao yinlang rushi* 不要引狼入室.) He expressed this by using the phrases “a person crossing the river announces his intentions” (*gejiang ren jiaodu* 隔江人，叫渡), and

“people on boats must exercise caution” (*chuanren yaoxiaoxin* 船人, 要小心).

It was striking to me the emphasis the astrologer placed on analogies related to water. He could have used such analogies simply because the child was born under the water element. But he might have favored water analogies because the boy’s family was engaged in the river and coastal shipping trade along the east central coast of China, south of Shanghai near the city of Wenzhou (溫州). This idea jumped out at me when I read the analogy on page 18 for the year 1940 when the subject would be 43 years old. The fortune-teller indicated this would not be a good year for the subject by writing, “it will be as if a bad typhoon strikes Wenzhou with flashing thunder and lightning” (*ming Wenzhou dafeng hanqin* [unclear character] *lei* 茗溫州大颶漢寢口雷). I then began to notice the frequent use of water and river analogies, such as this phrase written on page 19 when the subject would be 49 years old: “for good sailing in the river we hoist a sail, but if not prepared might hit a submerged rock” (*shunfeng jiangshang youyangfan, buliao jiangxin you shitan ye* 順風, 江上, 有揚帆; 不料, 江心, 有石灘也). The fortune-teller was giving a warning to be on the lookout for unseen danger.

Wenzhou is a famous port city south of Shanghai. Its inhabitants are known as very entrepreneurial people who not only engage in trade but are also willing to travel far afield for the sake of their business. Water and coastal shipping plays a critical role in the fortunes of the city and its people. The mighty Ou River (甌江), the largest in the region, flows into the city from the west, and is joined by the Nanxi River (楠溪江) flowing down from the north. Wenzhou Bay (溫州灣) dominates the city to its east and greatly affects its weather. Could these be the “three rivers” (*sanjiang* 三江) poetically referred to above by the astrologer? Moreover, Wenzhou is in the path of many of the powerful typhoons that spawn in the South Pacific where they buffet the Philippines, pass over Taiwan, and slam into the east China coast, often at Wenzhou. Thus the astrologer’s reference to typhoons at Wenzhou would not have been lost on any resident of the city. This strong connection in the region to water-borne shipping is another reason I feel the subject’s family was engaged in business, possibly in river and coastal shipping.<sup>9</sup>

#### WERE THE PREDICTIONS ACCURATE?

When this set of predictions was prepared between 1899 and 1902 for the newly born child, no one knew if they would be accurate. Given the

generalized and allusive nature of each prediction, the forecasts could be interpreted to fit a variety of circumstances. Since we don't even know who the subject of these predictions was, we have no way to know if they were accurate or useful to the subject of the study. However, we do know something of the history experienced by the people who lived in and near Wenzhou during that half-century, so it is possible to judge, in a very general way, the accuracy of the predictions. For example, we know that in the year 1911 a series of uprisings broke out that was to see the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912 and establishment of the Republic of China. At that time our subject was 13 and 14 *sui* (歲 years old by traditional counting) and seems to not have been affected in any special way by these events. Many of China's people were not directly or immediately affected by that great political change. Our subject's fortune for 1912 does not indicate any disruption of normal life.

The Japanese occupation of parts of China that began in earnest in 1937 affected greater numbers of the Chinese people. Thus I was surprised to find that the predictions for our subject's life course for the war years show only the usual pattern for swings from good to bad, and they do not indicate any traumatic events. This made me look at Wenzhou during the war years in order to try to judge how severely our subject's life might have been impacted. Japanese military forces occupied Shanghai, about 300 miles north of Wenzhou, in 1937, but they never occupied or fully controlled Wenzhou. From 1938 to 1940 they heavily bombed Wenzhou in an effort to disrupt the river traffic there and to blockade the port with sunken ships. They patrolled the coast and had a garrison on one of the islands in Wenzhou Bay.<sup>10</sup>

But as the war continued on, shipping through Wenzhou flourished, because the Japanese needed some of the goods that could be taken from the Chinese countryside into the city, while even Chinese forces in the countryside could use goods taken out of Shanghai. Smuggling was brisk, involving both the Chinese Nationalist forces and the Japanese military. Much of the smuggling was carried out by Chinese (perhaps by our subject?) sailing small wooden boats along the coast like those that had been used in the river trade. Some of the Chinese smugglers in the Wenzhou area earned very high incomes from the trade. Perhaps given that context the predictions in this fortune-teller's book for the war years should not be surprising. For example, on page 18, in 1942 our subject was 44 years old, and his fortune was predicted to be generally good because all the heavenly forces were in good alignment.<sup>11</sup>

The event that spared virtually no Chinese was the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. At that time the land reform campaigns against property owners to redistribute their wealth to landless peasants had already started in areas under communist control. The campaign would expand in the markets and cities against business owners, who were classified as being part of the exploiting capitalist and petty bourgeois class. If the subject of these predictions was the son of a small business family that perhaps owned some boats and warehouses in order to engage in river and coastal shipping near Wenzhou, then they were surely targets of the criticisms formulated by Communist Party cadre and shouted out by the masses. Could the astrologer writing at the turn of the century fifty years earlier have foreseen these events? We can look at the predictions on page 21 that cover the years 1952 to 1955.

For the year 1952 when the subject was 55 years old (on page 21) and the anti-business campaigns in China were at a height, the subject's fortune was given as, "This is a year in which nothing can be accomplished, as if one sits on the clouds looking at the stars, or raises one's fist while in a dream (*zhinian yunzhong guanxingdou, mengli dakongquan* 只年, 雲中觀星斗; 夢裡, 打空拳). We know from historical records that those accused by the authorities were given no opportunity to defend themselves or to justify their years of work to build a business, and justice was as defined by the authorities in charge. The subject's position as a scapegoat and target of continuous criticisms seems to be reflected in this prediction.<sup>12</sup>

Such attacks continued against peasants until all land was reclaimed by the government, and eventually turned into people's communes. Privately owned businesses were likewise claimed by the government until they no longer existed. For the subject of these predictions, the astrologer's final comment was written on page 21 to follow the year 1955, when the subject was 58 years old: "Sink a gourd to the bottom of the ocean; Trade one cannon for two chariots. You will be criticized for either" (*Zhengshe, hulu chenhaidi; yipao huanshuangche; ranguo youping* 正式, 葫蘆沉海底; 一炮換雙車; 然過又評). An empty gourd is light in weight and will have air trapped inside, so it is not possible to sink it in the ocean. To trade one cannon for two chariots is a move in Chinese chess. Some say it is a favorable exchange since a chariot is of higher value than a cannon. Nevertheless, one sacrifices a canon and can be open to criticism. "You will be criticized whatever you do" is

the ultimate meaning of this prediction. The prediction indicates total failure and the impossibility of success, which is the position our subject could likely have been in during the 1950s.<sup>13</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: EVALUATING THE DOCUMENT

When evaluating the hand-written book discussed in this article, there are two broad perspectives from which to appreciate its importance. The first is to consider the document as if it were a photograph from a time past. The photograph is static, it is one-dimensional. It lacks specific information about the people who took the photo or who appear in the photo. We do not know the precise year or date or place of the photo. Nevertheless it is a concrete image of a moment in the lives of the people who were associated with the photograph, or in this case the fortune-teller's book. From the information given in the book, we are probably fairly accurate in guessing the time it was written as 1899-1902, we can infer the geographical area in which it was written as the China east coast south of Shanghai, and we can form in our mind an idea about the person whose life was laid out in the text as a member of a family involved in inland river or coastal ocean transport.

Photographs, especially those taken with the convenient box cameras of the pre-World War II era, were much used by people who did not otherwise leave a detailed written record of their lives. Those people usually took photos of commonplace scenes that had some meaning in their lives. In a similar vein, this fortune-teller's book was not produced by a literary scholar, and most likely its recipient was a person whose work did not involve intellectual or literary pursuits. In lieu of a written record of the subject's life course, we have this fortune-teller's guide which was no doubt important to the adult who paid for it to be written, most likely one of the subject's parents, and it is equally likely to have been consulted frequently by the subject as he grew up. For the common people of China who did not have full literacy in the early 1900s and so could not themselves leave a written record, this book is like the photograph they might have taken if they had a box camera (which were only then becoming available in the United States and were hard to obtain in China in 1900).

In many ways looking at a photograph of the past is frustrating, because it rarely can resolve all of the detailed information we would like to have about it. On the other hand, those old photographs leave very specific and accurate images in our minds. We should appreciate this

astrological guide for the information it does tell us, as I have tried to indicate in this article.

The second way to appreciate these hand-written books is to respect them as cultural objects created by the common people of China. In the views I hold, human beings always create their own culture. They take the cultural images and values and explanations they have heard, and modify those elements to construct a culture that is real and has meaning for them in their daily lives. The grand cultural narrative, for example stories about China's great traditions, is shared by many within Chinese culture. But the specific daily cultural meanings and practices of a local culture, such as how the people of China's central east coastal towns lived in the early 1900s, will be those practices important to the people of the central east coast towns at that time.<sup>14</sup>

This point of cultural specificity is most likely reflected in the imagery chosen by the fortune-teller to convey his sense of how the subject's future should be viewed. The fortune-teller chose many images dealing with water and boats because his writing was produced in an area of China where water-borne traffic and communication was prevalent, and where the winds and rain of the regular typhoons had an impact on the life and health of the people. That is not the only imagery used in the text, but it is a recurring imagery which, when placed in the context of the reference to Wenzhou, gives it added meaning.

Regardless of how accurately or inaccurately we are able to reconstruct the milieu in which this fortune-teller's set of predictions was constructed and circulated, we should respect the work as a cultural artefact that reflects the culture of the people who created it. When this single work is combined with other examples from the same region and historical period, we can begin to get a fuller idea of the people of that time and place.

My goal is to understand the lives of China's common people (*ping-min* 平民) between 1850 to 1950, a crucial transition period between the end of the imperial Qing dynasty, the politically chaotic Republican period, and establishment of the People's Republic. The materials I am collecting fall within this chronological range. Among the other types of similar hand-written cultural artefacts that I am finding in the markets in China are books of medical advice and herbal recipes, books of legal advice listing sample cases of wrongful actions, funeral eulogies in which the life of the deceased is recounted by a bereaved family member, land contracts which show how families disposed of land to relatives or

to neighbours and the conditions including the prices imposed on the transaction, fortune-teller guides for dealing with the ghosts which will affect human beings during a wedding or in a home where sickness is present, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Through these writings, similar to photographs taken by the people themselves, we are learning in surprising and concrete detail about the daily lives of these common people. Although disadvantaged by having only partial or no literacy and by engaging in physically demanding occupations that were not given much respect by most of society, we know that they lived in a cultural world rich with imagery and symbolism.<sup>16</sup>



### Endnotes

1. I wish to thank two colleagues at Suffolk University, Boston, for their help and advice with this article: my research assistant Yang Xi 楊曦 and the Director of our Asian Studies Program Professor Zheng Da 鄭達. I am also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions and observations have allowed me to improve this article.
2. The other two materials were similar in that both were hand written manuscripts of few pages. One was a religious text honoring the Daoist Three Officials (*sanguan* 三官 or *sanyuan* 三元), titled *Tianshang xiuzhen chenke* 天上修真晨課 (Morning Prayers to the August on High). It was identified as having come from Wujin xian 武進縣 near Changchuan City 常川 in Jiangsu Province 江蘇省, and it probably dates from the late Qing or early Republic. The other was a booklet of hand-drawn maps of a number of provinces in north, northeast and northwest China, with the geographical characteristics of each province listed. Judging from the place names in this booklet, it was most likely drawn between 1929 and 1933. It was drawn by a man named He Weizhen 何維楨, who placed his seal on every map. It is interesting to note that the third character in his name (*zhen* 楨) is identified in *Matthews' Chinese-English Dictionary* (Taipei: DaZhongguo tushu gongsi 大中國圖書公司, 1984 edition), p42, as “an evergreen shrub common in north China,” which could indicate that the person drawing the maps, which are all of north China provinces, was himself from the north.
3. At the time these predictions were written, the traditional lunar calendar was much in use in China, but the Western solar calendar was also known. It seems likely the fortune-teller personally knew the

child and his family, so he grew confused in calculating the age of the child, because the actual number of months since the child's birth according to the solar calendar and the number of years the child had according to the lunar calendar were different. The pages of this book show that the fortune-teller was repeatedly confused about the proper age to assign to the child, and he regularly crossed out one set of age numbers and re-wrote a new set of numbers over them. The differences between the traditional lunar calendar and the newer Western solar calendar in China is nicely explained in Nara Yukihiko 奈良行博, *Chūgoku no kichijō to dōgyō: Shukusai kara shiru Chūgoku minshū no kokoro* 中国の吉祥文化と道教; 祝祭から知中国民衆の心 [Chinese Festival Culture and Daoism: Understanding the heart of the Chinese people through their celebrations], (Tokyo: Myōseki shoten 明石書店, 2011), see Chapter Two on pp48-78.

4. The method used by the fortune-teller to calculate our subject's fortune in this work seems to have involved a combination of two popular approaches. First was to determine the basic *yin-yang* symbols and their related signs under which the subject was born. The resultant Eight Hexagrams (*bagua* 八卦) are based on the year, month, day and hour of the subject's birth. Each of these is connected to one of the calendrical calculations based on the traditional system of ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches. It is a system that indicates one's destiny in life, one's situation in any given day or month, and how to find the most successful occupation. The fortune-teller then linked these results to an astrological system, sometimes called Determining Fate (*piming* 批命), that depended on a detailed knowledge of the Chinese symbolic calendar and astrology in which the influence of all the elements considered result in an outline of the subject's fate in the future. Some of the methods mentioned here are briefly outlined in *Zhongguo lishi wenhua changshi tongdian* 中國歷史文化常識通典 [Popular Cyclopaedia of Chinese History and Culture], Kunming: Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe, 2010. On calendrical forms and stars, see pp292-294; on birth stars and the life-related trigrams, see pp321-322.
5. On the Internet I found a comment from Bill Yeung, president of the Hong Kong Astronomical Society concerning the solar eclipse of 2009: "In ancient China it was a heavenly dog that ate the Sun. Whilst the heavenly dog is devouring the Sun (or moon during a Lunar eclipse), people would set firecrackers, beat the drums and shout to

chase the dog away. Of course, that was the past and people no longer believe in the heavenly dog. However, the term *tiangou shiri* 天狗食日 ‘Heavenly Dog Devours Sun’ is still commonly used, retaining a romanticized sense of mystery in this rare astronomic spectacle.”

<http://dantesheart.blogspot.com/2009/07/myths-attending-total-solar-eclipse-of.html> . Accessed 2 Aug 2012. The way the fortune-teller calculated the fortune is only one of several methods of calculating fortunes. There is a vast literature in Chinese, Japanese and English on Chinese divination methods, and there are many methods in use, though most share a similar set of basic assumptions when making their calculations. For two explanations in English which are clearly presented, see: Peter Shen, *The Traditional Art of Chinese Fortune Reading*, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia, 1998; Smith, Richard J. *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society*. (Boulder, Colorado and Oxford England: Westview Press, 1991). Chinese language websites in Taiwan delve into this topic with much detail. Not all fortune-telling methods give precedence to the role of star deities. For example, one very popular method for divining the future consists of casting dominoes. I have a book in my personal collection detailing this method: *Yapai shenshu bazhong* 牙牌神數八種 [Eight methods for divine readings by casting dominos], (Taipei: Wenhua tushu gongsi 文化圖書公司, 1961).

6. A brief though useful encapsulation of the Wenchang diety can be found in Kubota Noritada 窪徳忠 , *Dōgyo no kamigami* 道教の神神 [The Gods of Daoism], (Tokyo: Hirakawa Publishing 平川出版, 1986), 166-168.
7. Explanations of many of the symbolic deities used by the astrologer can be found in *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology* by E.T.C. Werner (Taipei: Cave Book Co, 1961). Keep in mind, however, that the star deities are substantial interpretive elements used to determine the composition of the subject’s fate, so they ought not be seen merely as decorative. Should the reader wish to construct a chart of fate, highly detailed instructions can be found at “August and Accurate Chart of Fate” (*ziwei mingpan* 紫薇命盤.) at <http://baike.baidu.com/view/6066456.htm>. Accessed 3 April 2012.
8. Traditional Chinese beliefs conceived of all the forces in the natural and the cosmological world as being interdependent. The stars in the skies became associated with Daoist deities, and they could determine the fate of humans living on earth. This highly integrated concept,

based on an examination of classical texts, is set forth in Lu Xishen 呂錫深, *Daojiao yu minzu xingge* 道教與民族性格 [Daoism and National Character] (Changsha: Hunan University Press, 1996).

9. By all accounts Wenzhou society developed in a way noticeably different from most other parts of China. Because of the many mountains surrounding the city, overland transportation to the inland areas, such as the provincial capital at Hangzhou, was difficult and not highly developed. A train line from Wenzhou to Hangzhou was only opened in 1993! This made river and coastal shipping an important aspect of commercial activity. As a method of survival, many Wenzhou people were willing to travel as needed in order to find work and secure an income, and earning money through river and coastal shipping was one result. Wenzhou people had an entrepreneurial spirit, and the businesses they formed were generally small-scale, organized with funds and labour from family members and relatives. The influence of local government was not strong, allowing local people to exercise their own ingenuity in social and commercial matters. It is logical therefore to suggest that the male whose life is covered in this horoscope came from a family involved in small-scale shipping and trading. These characteristics of Wenzhou people were so pronounced by the 1980s and 90s, when commercial and economic development was encouraged by the PRC government, that economists refer to the complex of local values and the resultant pattern of commercial development as the Wenzhou Model. These characteristics of Wenzhou people are given in Jianjun Zhang, "State Power, Elite Relations, and The Politics of Privatization in China's Rural Industry: Different Approaches in Two Regions," *Asian Survey* 48.2. (2008): 215-238. Also see the concluding section of Bin Wu, (Henry) Wang Huiyao, "Going Global of Chinese Private Enterprises: Wenzhou Model and Its Impact on Home Development," (A paper prepared for the Globalization of Chinese Enterprises Conference, Harvard University, 9 to 10 October 2008). <http://www.ccg.org.cn/ccg/ccgen/2011/0721/590.html>. Accessed 12 April 2012.
10. An outline of the early days of the war and the Japanese destructive bombing in the early years of the war as given in standard Chinese language accounts follows. It emphasizes the Japanese bombings and the resultant destruction: 抗日战争期间的温州: 七、七、事变后半年, 温州因孤处一隅, 非兵家必争之地, 因而成为东南沿海地带罕有的偏安城市。所受到日寇军事侵扰最

早是空袭，从 1938 年 2 月至抗日战争胜利止，日机对温州轰炸，扫射，投燃烧弹，杀害手无寸铁的无辜人民，时间之长，损失之重，破坏之极是史无前例的。接着是敌舰侵犯炮击；1938 年 9 月 22 日，乐清湾口有二艘日舰，平阳南麂亦有日舰停泊，对我领海进行测量，并巡视全岛一周。（现存日本昭和十五年即 1940 年《温州港附近图》就是这次测量绘制的大海图）。1939 年 4 月 23 日，日舰在瓯江口向永嘉，乐清黄华，屿头等处发炮。9 月 28 日，日舰泊南麂洋面，以小汽艇入港，与杨屿门守军接战，我守兵伤 2 人。10 月 4 日，鳌江口外有日舰向我开火，6 日鳌江口外仍有日舰继续开火，有日舰十一艘，至晓仅留三艘。后又来航空母舰一艘，鳌江人民搬徙一空。1940 年 3 月 26 日，鳌江口外有日舰汽轮四艘，如欲登陆。1941 年 3 月 19 日，瑞安沙园有敌小汽艇，多人登陆，与我守军攻战数小时。直到 1941 年 4 月 19 日，为了“掠夺与骚扰”，才开始登陆与占领，13 天后退去。1942 年 7 月 11 日，从金华，丽水第二次入据，35 天后退去。为了“实现其内陆交通计划，破坏盟军空军根据地和企图控制闽浙沿海港口及重要据点以防盟军利用”，又从金华，丽水第三次入据，281 天后退去。共计侵占三次，总共 369 天。This can be found at: <http://www.703804.com/thread-1246106-1-1.html>. Accessed 31 March 2012.

11. An overview of Wenzhou during World War II and the flourishing of river and coastal smuggling that brought large fortunes to some Chinese in the area is given in R. Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness; Refugees During the Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011): 232-279. Perhaps because of its mountainous hinterland combined with small islands scattered along the coast, Wenzhou had the reputation of being home to bandits and pirates, who were natural precursors to the wartime smugglers. On this aspect of Wenzhou's reputation see Kristen Parris, "Local Society and the State: The Wenzhou Model and the Making of Private Sector Policy in China," PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 118-119. The active presence of gangs and secret societies in Shanghai to the north of Wenzhou is commented on in Norman P. Ho, "Organized Crime in China: The Chongqing crackdown (重慶打黑行動)," in *Law and Policy for China's Market Socialism*, edited by John Garrick, (London: Routledge, 2012), 203.
12. The Five-Anti Campaign (*wufan yundong* 五反運動) was launched in January 1952. It was designed to target the capitalist class. The

Communist Party set a very vague guideline of who could be charged, as it became an all-out war against the bourgeoisie in China. An estimated 20,000 cadres and 6,000 trained workers began spying on the business affairs of fellow citizens. The media encouraged compliance with the government policies. In the case of Shanghai, to the north of Wenzhou, up to 15,000 trained propagandists were working in Shanghai by late 1951. By February 1952, parades of anti-Capitalist activists went door-to-door to visit business leaders. This created immense psychological pressure. Shanghai wards were set up to receive criticism letters from employees of private companies. Some big companies would voluntarily make 1,000 confessions a day to try to protect themselves from the government. The victims of the antis campaigns (there was a related earlier Three Antis Campaign – *sanfan yundong* 三反運動 – against government cadre and bureaucratic waste) were mostly terrified and humiliated, some were killed, and others were sent to labor camps around China. There were hundreds of thousands of suicides (though it is debatable whether many of these were voluntary) that were a direct result of these campaigns. Eventually the Communist Party revealed that it would no longer protect private business, and that Chinese capitalists would receive treatment no better than foreign capitalists. See Norman P. Ho, *ibid*, p203 on the Five-Anti Campaign, and p204 for a comment on Wenzhou in the 1980s.

13. Among the American scholars who have examined these large-scale government movements was Gordon Bennett, *Yundong: Mass Campaigns in Chinese Communist Leadership*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1976). For an explanation of how the Chinese government took away the ability of the business owners to control and grow their own businesses, see: Toby Ho, “Managing Risk: The Suppression of Private Entrepreneurs in China in the 1950s,” *Risk Management: An International Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2000): 29-38. Unfortunately this article fails to capture the passion and frustration felt by small business owners at the time.
14. There are hundreds of anthropological theories about human beings and culture, and lists of them can be found on the Internet. Some theories hold that human beings accept a received culture and adopt their actions in order to fit into a received set of values and priorities. Other theories postulate that when people re-interpret the received culture, they are misinterpreting the accepted cultural pattern and

produce lesser forms of it. This is a top-down view which for decades was widely held by cultural anthropologists, but is less in favor today. I hold the relaxed view favored by Arthur Kleinman about how humans create and modify their own lives and values in numerous ways to create their own culture. He says the culture they create is meaningful for them and is a legitimate culture in its own right. Kleinman endorsed this view of culture in Roberto Lewis-Fernandez & Arthur Kleinman “Cultural Psychiatry: Theoretical, Clinical, and Research Issues,” *Cultural Psychiatry* 18.3 (Sept. 1995): 433-448, see p434; See also Arthur Kleinman “How is Culture Important for DSM-IV?,” Chapter 2 of *Culture and Psychiatric Diagnosis; A DSM-IV Perspective*, edited by Juan Mezzich, et. al.. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1996), 15-25.

15. Many informative and well-presented studies on how the “common people” in villages in south China interacted with the written materials in their world, often materials prepared by the villagers themselves, have been published by James Hayes. He has commented on many of the categories of materials I am collecting. See for example James Hayes, “Specialists and Written Materials in the Village World,” pp75-111 in David Johnson, et al. ed., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985). He writes about divination and fortune telling on pp98-100.
16. For those interested in my approach to these materials and the wide range of types of materials available, I invite readers to see my article *WanQing Minguo shiqide minjian chaoben* 晚清民國時期的民間抄本 [Popular copied books in the late Qing and Republic]. *Shandong tushuguanxue qikan* 山東圖書館學刊 [The Library Journal of Shandong], 2.124 (2011): 89-93, 115.

## FINDING ELIZA IN THE BIBLIOTHECA ZIKAWEI

BY LINDSAY SHEN

*“Setting out one day for a birthday party, I noticed the streets were full of presents.”<sup>1</sup>*

Jorge Luis Borges, that connoisseur of libraries and reading, wrote a short story, “The Library of Babel”, about a vast library containing all books that might be imagined – the detailed history of the future, the true story of your death, the autobiographies of the archangels.

In certain libraries – those with exceptional histories – it seems not improbable that the wandering reader might chance upon a cache of Reginald Johnston’s photographs of the boy-Emperor Puyi, thought to have been burned on a Scottish island by Johnston’s fiancée. Or a short story penned by Noël Coward in the Cathay Hotel, as a break from writing *Private Lives*. Or the two missing chapters of Shen Fu’s *Six Records of a Floating Life*.

The Bibliotheca Zikawei in Shanghai is one such place – with its own almost mythical history – in which one might, like Rilke’s readers in the Bibliothèque Nationale, sink oneself in pages like a sleeper between dreams.<sup>2</sup> And in that space one might, in this former Jesuit treasure house, discover at least the uncatalogued diaries of saints, if not of archangels.

The library was built as part of the Jesuit mission in southwest Shanghai in 1847, and was to grow into one of the two foremost Jesuit libraries in China.<sup>3</sup> Its holdings included pre-1800 rare editions, manuscripts in Chinese by Jesuit missionaries, reference books from around the world, complete runs of important Chinese newspapers, and precious archival material encompassing letters, journals and manuscripts. After 1951, when the remaining foreign Jesuits left the mission, the complex was taken over by the Chinese government, and the Jesuit library became part of the Shanghai Municipal Library. Over the following years, other specialist Chinese and foreign libraries were absorbed into the collections, including that of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. This organisation, which had been established in 1857 as the Shanghai Literary and Scientific Society, had been amassing one of the finest foreign language library collections in

East Asia. During the Japanese Occupation, several other large library collections were sheltered in the RAS building on Museum Road, which functioned outwardly as a Sino-Japanese Cultural Center, to which its Japanese supervisors also donated collections.<sup>4</sup> The collections that entered the possession of the Shanghai Library, then, were multi-lingual, multi-faceted, had survived wars and occupations, and in the case of the NCBRAS journal collection, had been retrieved from Tokyo, where they had been spirited in 1943.<sup>5</sup> Given that the efforts of missionaries did so much to create accessible libraries in a country where the concept of a library was almost entirely private, it seems fitting that these library collections are housed in a former mission, now open to all.

For five years since my arrival in Shanghai, I had read and dreamed in the Bibliotheca Zikawei, pondered the pencil sketches that sometimes fell from 1930s travelogues, the random hand-addressed envelopes slipped between pages as bookmarks, the names of borrowers carefully recorded on the 1920s lending cards stuck to the endpapers, the ephemera that had somehow cheated its transience. One afternoon, browsing through the *Shanghai Almanac* from 1857 to 1861, in search of the weather in January 1859 to flesh out an endnote – “Snow that fell in the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> remained on the ground and house tops three days. Ice of more than an inch in thickness formed on the ponds” – I realised that the type was interspersed with cursive handwriting.<sup>6</sup> Sections of the *Almanac* had been reserved as diary and memoranda pages, and these pages were covered in 19<sup>th</sup> century script. The front papers gave little clue as to the writer; there was a by now familiar purple ink stamp ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY NORTH CHINA BRANCH. The borrowers had been “Miss Lester, 12/4/13”; “Dr. Pott, 2/2/28”; “Mrs Hoibart, 28 March 1939”. By the time I held this volume in my hands, its binding had broken and its pages were out of sequence; I wondered if this had been one of the precious volumes covetously packed into crates, sent on a salt-tossed sojourn to Japan, then retrieved as part of Japanese war reparations.

Deciphering the handwriting of another age is an exercise that obliterates time. In such cases, it's not possible to read a diary—only to reread it, to clip the hurdles of words that send you right back again to the start of the sentence, to retreat up the wrong turns, to learn new turns of phrase, to re-learn the alphabet. Fragments of a life only fall into a narrative by the end, and only if the reader is very lucky, and if the events of a random few years fall into a coherent pattern.

This diarist's days unfolded with reports of sickness and emotional unease: "Much anxiety, cannot sleep"; "several days in bed with influenza"; "severe nervous headache this month"; "somewhat weak and depressed"; "In bed all day with pain in my teeth and head." But none of this helped identify an author writing in a city where, according to this very *Almanac*, languor and depression commonly felled foreigners in the summer months.<sup>7</sup>

That the writer was religious was a clue, but not much of one, given the influx of missionaries after the Treaty of Nanjing: "Have suffered from depression this week. Believe it proceeds from indigestion but prayer and abstemiousness have made me more cheerful this evening."<sup>8</sup>

That the writer was a woman was made more probable by references to teaching Chinese girls. There are scattered references to Dr. Elijah Bridgman, the pioneer American missionary sent to China in 1829 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In 1847 Bridgman had been seconded to Shanghai, initially on a six-month assignment involving the translation and editing of scripture.<sup>9</sup> Apart from a furlough to the United States between 1852 and 1853, he had remained in Shanghai, as a missionary, translator and editor. On Sunday July 8<sup>th</sup> 1860 the diarist records: "Went on board the Hartford with Dr. Bridgman who preached to officers and seamen on this text "Seek first the kingdom of God" and it was such a pleasant change from everyday life."

Tantalisingly, the diarist scatters clues to her identity on almost every page; only by the end does it seem, like a detective novel, seeded with pointers to an answer that is obvious. Surely all the names she writes must reveal her own name. The name of her foster daughter is Margo; the name of the orphan who is delivered to her door in 1860 is Bessie; the names of the women with whom she corresponds are Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Gillett, Mrs. Gould; the names of friends who came to tea on July 10, 1860 are Mr. and Mrs. Taylor of Ningbo.

It is only close to the end of the five-year *Almanac*, in October 1861, that she gives herself away. Dr. Bridgman, who had been mentioned sparingly and objectively, had fallen gravely ill; but by now, the intimacy of the description of his symptoms renders the identification inevitable: "My husband went into the guest chamber and lay on that bed... I think my husband cannot survive this sickness."<sup>10</sup> And three days later, disconsolately, "This Sabbath dawns on me a widow."<sup>11</sup>

Elijah Bridgman's wife, Eliza Jane Gillett had publically professed

her faith as a 16-year-old in New Haven, but obligations to a widowed mother delayed her dedication as an Episcopal missionary to China until 1843.<sup>12</sup> On June 28<sup>th</sup> 1845 she married Bridgman in Hong Kong. When it became apparent that their move to Shanghai would be for longer than anticipated, in a spirit of what she termed “usefulness” she opened the city’s first school for Chinese girls in April 1850, receiving first day pupils, then boarders by that September.<sup>13</sup>

Both husband and wife kept diaries and memoranda;<sup>14</sup> Eliza quoted from hers selectively in her two publications – a biography of her husband *The Life and Labors of Elijah Coleman Bridgman*, and her ostensible work on Chinese women *Daughters of China; or sketches of Domestic Life in the Celestial Empire*. In both publications, fragments of daily experience from these diaries are lifted out of the quotidian, and elevated into integral passages in the grand narrative of evangelism. Small episodes that are recorded with no further comment, are worked hard in print into homilies or demonstrations of character, particularly in passages concerning her husband. Not that she herself was unaware of the inventive nature of the narration. In her preface to her husband’s biography, she herself identifies the dangers of “undue partiality” and “unnecessary timidity” in attempting to maintain objectivity.

It would be naïve to read Eliza Bridgman’s diary as a sequence of unstructured moments of unmediated experience – journaling is so obviously a reflective, selective activity. But still, it seems possible through this diary to take one step closer to the daily experience of a missionary woman in Shanghai between 1857 and 1861.

The preface to *Daughters of China* is addressed “To the friends and patrons of female education in China” – those who may be inspired to contribute financially to the school Bridgman had founded in Shanghai. The book that follows is a polemic against the “idolatry” that had imprisoned the bodies and minds of Chinese women, told through episodes relating, primarily, to the salvation of Chinese girl orphans. The objective of educating girls falls under the all-encompassing aim of redemption of families, through the “immense” influence of woman.

What becomes clear in the diary, though, was the more terrestrial business of running a new Chinese girls’ school in Shanghai, and particularly the unceasing necessity for funding, and the daily endeavours required to secure it. Throughout are perfunctory lists of reminders of pledges made, and letters of acknowledgement sent. While the classroom was the preferred sphere of Eliza’s activities, much of her

time – just like that of modern directors of non-profit agencies – was spent drawing up accounts, sending out appeals for assistance, and reporting to donors. The girls in her charge were taught basic literacy skills, some English, sewing, singing, and received religious instruction. While she might write in print about the education of women as a vehicle for revelation and redemption, and of “the glorious work of reclaiming [China’s] millions from the thralldom of sin and Satan”<sup>15</sup>, in her diary she was carefully noting:

for Chinese children  
1,000 needles 7,8,9,10  
2 doz. Check pocket hdkfs  
1 [ditto] scissors  
½ doz small dolls<sup>16</sup>

The Bridgmans were childless; that she loved some of her young charges, particularly her foster daughters, is evident in *Daughters of China*; her diary, though, contains many moments of joy, as well as anxiety in relation to these children. She notes when they fall sick with smallpox; she notes the anniversaries of some of their arrivals at her school. In October 1855, the Bridgmans took charge of a five-month-old baby, Margo Kloeckers, the daughter of a young missionary wife who had just died.<sup>17</sup> Eliza writes about this episode in *The Life and Labors of Elijah Coleman Bridgman*, and goes on to explicate: “It may be asked, What has this to do with Dr. Bridgman’s life and character? Well, it is one of those golden links in the chain of providences that developed a ‘perennial spring’ in the heart’s depths, and a new fountain of blessing.” Margo lived with the Bridgmans until she was four, when she left for her father’s homeland. Eliza recorded on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1859: “This day my darling foster child went on board the Yangtse for Hong Kong, on her way to Holland.” And those words conveyed not the influence of a child on her foster father, but the fact that her foster mother loved her daughter, and shared a common anguish with parents who endured separation from their children while stationed in China.

Mentioned briefly in Bridgman’s biography was a six-year-old Japanese girl, Bessie Kickomartz, who joined the household in December 1860. In her diary Eliza (possibly still keenly missing Margo) is effusive about the child’s arrival. Early on a winter morning, a chair delivered the child alone to the house. The child was unable to explain what had

happened to her family, but it became clear to the Bridgmans that she was from a Christian family; Eliza was convinced that she had been sent specially to her for refuge.

The *Almanac* covers part of the period of the Taiping Rebellion, and specifically the threat to Shanghai by Taiping troops in August 1860. While Eliza records her husband's position on the purportedly Christian uprising in *Life and Labors*, what she records in her diary is the impact on the children in the ensuing confusion. Foreigners had been guaranteed some degree of immunity from rebel attack, but what of the Chinese children in their charge? On 16<sup>th</sup> August Eliza recorded, "The rebels having arrived near Shanghai, Dr. Bridgman thought it prudent to take the Chinese girls and go on board the ship Swallow"; 17<sup>th</sup> August, "On board ship Swallow, children had 2 state rooms"; 18<sup>th</sup> August, "returned home, staid a couple of hours, another alarm, returned on board ship Swallow. Miss Jones' school arrived. Much alarm from rebels"; 19<sup>th</sup> August, "On board ship Swallow"; 20<sup>th</sup> August, "Returned home with Dr. B. resolved to remain with him. Children on board. Had a good night's rest"; 21<sup>st</sup> August, "Dr. B. went off early and brought off the Chinese children. Quiet through the day."

Not all the Bridgmans' young charges survived. Margo Kloecker's father remarried, but his new wife also died, leaving an infant, Emily, whom the Bridgmans fostered until her own death at 20 months old. Premature death was, of course, a frequent episode for early missionaries. Eliza's books document many such deaths; writing in retrospect, she appears stoic over traumatic events such as the suicide of Bridgman's younger cousin, James, who had followed Elijah to Canton. Ordained in 1846, he had been left alone in Canton the following year. His isolation seems to have contributed to a complete breakdown in mental health.<sup>18</sup>

The greatest loss, though, was that of her husband in November 1861. In his biography, the description of his death is opportunity for a teleological explanation of its place in a grander plan. The diary entries written each day of Bridgman's illness are a painfully immediate, and impactful, record of death from dysentery. Like many sojourners, both had suffered from previous outbreaks of the illness. On October 29<sup>th</sup> Dr. Bridgman was unwell enough to require a doctor; his decline was swift and catastrophic:

October 30<sup>th</sup>: "Today no better, very active measures being used. Mr. Brown came in to tea. My husband wished him to stay all night – he did and assisted me in watching. I was afraid my husband would not live till

morning. Sent for Bp. Boone about midnight... The will was arranged and signed by three witnesses. Dr. B. very, very ill.”

October 31<sup>st</sup>: “I think my husband cannot survive this sickness tho he still continues hopeful about himself. I took down notes of his state of mind. Resigned to the will of God, full of faith... Bp. Boone and Mr. Brown alternate in watching tonight. I slept a little.”

November 1<sup>st</sup>: “Had all removed out of the next room that my husband might have perfect quiet. Dr. Henderson directed wine to be given at intervals... I could not sleep. About 3 o’clock in the morning hands clammy and cold.”

November 2<sup>nd</sup>: “Evidently sinking, on attempting to rise fainted twice. Very restless, we dissuaded him from rising. I staid by his bed, sat on it by his side, lay down by him at his request, wet his lips constantly with tea... Dr. Henderson called, no pulse, incurring coldness in hands and feet which I kept rubbing. Conscious of all about him. We sung with failing voices *Rock of Ages*... Mr. Brown prayed and commended his spirit to God. Turning upon his breast he turned his eyes to Heaven. I kissed his lips they were cold but he responded. He breathed gently shorter and shorter and just as the clock struck ½ past twelve at midday, his spirit was at rest forever. I had done all I could. I left the rest to other hands.”

November 3<sup>rd</sup>: “This Sabbath dawns on me a widow desolate and lone... tears will flow, it is right they should. I spent some time in the study with the corpse of my husband today. Kneeled by his coffin, thanked God for such a gift, and gave him back”.

The *Life and Labors of Elijah Coleman Bridgman* ends with a sermon preached on the occasion of Bridgman’s death, by the Reverend William Muirhead of the London Missionary Society; Eliza meanwhile had to continue with the painful business of living. She returned to the United States in 1862, but came back to China two years later; her achievements in advancing women’s education in China are well known – the Bridgman Academy she founded in Beijing was the precursor to the Women’s College of Yenching University. What the diary reveals, though is a small, unknown interlude in her life that propelled her towards recovery after her husband’s death. On November 12, 1861, she writes, “It is proposed that I go to Japan. I accept I feel I need a change.” After three harrowing weeks at sea, she arrived in Yokohama on December 7, 1861. She was sustained and supported by friends, including Julia Brown, the daughter of the minister who had sat up at night with her

husband as he died. They brought her into the hills, coaxed her to ride – at first in a sedan chair as she feared she would never mount a horse again. Finally on December 11, she records, “Took a ride today on horseback, with Rev. Mr. Ballagh, who walked”. She noticed for the first time that the countryside was beautiful, and that the hillside temples were tranquil, and with that ride stepped back into life.

To return to the epigraph, the artist Robert Rauschenberg taught the musician John Cage to notice that “Beauty is now underfoot wherever we take the trouble to look”, the streets are full of presents, and gifts lie in the most ordinary of places. In a book about the weather, that most ordinary of subjects, lies the unanticipated present and presence of Eliza in the Bibliotheca Zikawei.

*This paper was presented at the 2012 Hangzhou International Symposium on Sinology and Sino-West Cultural Relations and Exchanges.*



#### **Endnotes**

1. John Cage, “On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and his Work,” reprinted in Harrison and Wood, eds, *Art In Theory 1900-1990* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 719.
2. See Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. M.D. Herter Norton (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992) 40.
3. Gail King, “The Xujiahui (Zikawei) Library of Shanghai,” *Libraries and Culture* 32.4 (Fall 1997): 456, 459.
4. Librarian’s report, *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JNCBRAS)* 72 (1946): iii.
5. Librarian’s report, *JNCBRAS* 72 (1946): iv.
6. *Shanghai Almanac [SA]* (Shanghai: North China Herald Office, one volume bound with years 1857-1861).
7. SA July 1857.
8. SA 7 July 1860.
9. Eliza Gillett Bridgman, ed. *The Life and Labors of Elijah Coleman Bridgman* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1864) 165.
10. SA 29 October 1861; 31 October 1861.
11. SA 3 November, 1861.
12. Ann White, “Counting the Cost of Faith: America’s Early Female Missionaries,” *Church History* 57.1 (March 1988) 20.
13. Eliza Gillett Bridgman, *Daughters of China; or sketches of Domestic*

*Life in the Celestial Empire* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853).

14. Holdings in Yale University Library, China Records Project.
15. *Daughters of China* 35-6.
16. SA 6 January [1859?].
17. *Life and Labors* 208.
18. *Life and Labors* 187-8.

# MANAGING CINEMAS IN OLD SHANGHAI

BY TESS JOHNSTON

A year ago I found in a local antique market an old ledger covered in brown wrapping paper and with a handsomely-penciled inscription on the front:

Daily Report

October 1<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>, 1948

It was a bookkeeper's daily log for the two top movie theatres in old Shanghai, ones that featured only English-language films. The Grand Theatre was on Nanking Road just north of the race course (now People's Square) and the Cathay Theatre on Avenue Joffre (Huaihai Zhong Lu). Both are still there and still showing films, although now seldom in English.

I was intrigued by what the ledgers revealed, in addition to each day's take (i.e., the money earned). Both cinemas had a daily "Report" (all numbered sequentially). I chose the ledger's first entry as a fairly representative example of what a wide range of details this tattered log reveals. It provides us an intriguing insight into Chinese cinema management – and its meticulous daily record keeping – in a period of the increasing chaos that was to end only six months later with the defeat of the Nationalist forces and the Communist take-over of the city.

No. 3745 for Friday, October 1, 1948, "the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the show" [presumably meaning of the film], records for the Grand Theatre:

Feature: "The Perils of Pauline" (a Paramount film) - 10 reels

Short: Pathe News No. 130 - 1 reel

Trailer [Preview]: "Winter Time" - 1 reel.

There were four shows, the first starting at 2:15p.m. The late show, at 9:00p.m., cost slightly more. The most expensive tickets were GY [Gold Yuan] 1.60, with two more categories below that, and the cheapest seats were GY 0.40. Although the top three categories had higher prices for the late show, the prices for the cheapest seats never changed. For morning shows there were GY 0.40 tickets, but there was no morning show that day.

# CATHAY

THEATRE

Commencing Thursday, February 24, 1938.



THE MOST DANGEROUS  
INTRIGUE THAT EVER  
INVOLVED A WOMAN  
IN LOVE!

THE MOST GLAMOROUSLY EX-  
CITING PERSONALITY WHO EVER  
SWEEPED TO OVERNIGHT STARDOM!

## ANNABELLA

*Dinner at the Ritz*

PAUL LUKAS  
DAVID NIVEN  
ROMNEY BRENT  
Francis L. Sullivan • Stewart Rome  
Norah Swinburne • Tyrell Davis

A New World Picture Released by 20th-Century-Fox



When I read how many people attended this particular film on a Fall Friday, and a work day at that, I had to check the figures several times as I simply could not believe them. There under “Tkts. Sold” were these figures:

First show (2:15)	1,542
Second show (4:30)	1,097
Third show (6:45)	1,038
Fourth show (9:00)	1,949
Total Day's Attendees	5,626

I don't know what cinema attendance in the USA is these days, but I suspect any manager would be delighted to get that kind of attendance in a week (or even a month?), versus in just *one* day in one cinema in Shanghai in 1948. The take for the day was GY 4,113.40 (Gross), GY 3,126.18 (Nett), and the total for the six previous days GY 23,771.81: all this from ticket sales alone.

One could make telephone reservations for all shows. On this Friday, however, only 29 telephone reservations were made and, surprisingly, 15 of those were in 4<sup>th</sup> class, the cheapest ticket category. There were obviously some bad seats in the cheap section and the poorer attendees especially wanted to be sure they got one of the better seats for this popular film.

There was additional income, although more modest (only GY 43.90), from “Programme and Movie Story Booklet Sales” either in the theatre or in its bar. Both of these sold for pennies: GY 0.03 and GY 0.05, respectively. (There was also a more elaborate “11 inch” Movie Story Booklet at GY 0.40, but only one was sold that day.)

On the right-hand side of the Report's first page there is some mind-boggling information under Film Cumulative Record of Attendance/Receipts. For “7 Days Thru Today”: Attendance: 45,005, Receipts: GY 26,897.99. Their Tax Statement shows a complicated formula by which their “Nett Receipts”, GY 3,126.18, presumably represented taxes paid on income (about 11.6%). In the large blank square at the bottom of the page is a notation in blue pencil: 66.5%, perhaps representing the percentage of capacity of seats sold that month – or perhaps that day?

On the reverse side of the page it gets even more informative – and interesting. At the very top we see that the weather was fair and sunny

and that exit doors and fire hydrants were examined at 9:20a.m., with three exit doors out of order; they were presumably repaired in time for the first showing at 2:15p.m.

More surprising, perhaps, was the attendance breakdown for the four shows, early to late:

Foreign Attendance %: 2% 3% 5% 10%

Chinese Attendance %: 98% 97% 95% 90%

Most of these English-language films were being seen by local Chinese. These figures may not, however, have been quite so skewed in the earlier years when there were far more foreigners in the city; by late 1948, with the deteriorating economic situation, many Westerners had given up and left Shanghai. Since foreigners never comprised even 4% of the total population, however, these figures were probably not widely in variance even in the early 1930-40s.

The Equipment Report had five categories: Projection, Sound, Neon, Generators and Film; the first four were "O.K." but the film was "slightly scratched & strained". Interestingly, on every day for the whole month that exact wording appeared. Mr. H.C. Crawford, the House Manager, initialed on all of them, so these notations were obviously important in dealing with the films' distributors. If this was not merely a negotiating ploy and all the films were indeed in that poor condition, it probably indicates that no new films were being imported at that late date and this is what they were left with.

The Audience Reaction to Film was "Good". In examining previous days' notations, this seems to be the middle category, the other two being either Excellent or Fair, with nothing lower than the latter.

The Temperature is noted, Inside and Outside: at 3:30pm: 79 and 78; and at 10:30pm: 79 and 76; and the Cooling Hours for the cinema totaled "2 hrs & 45 mins". As for "Complaints: Report ALL [sic], whether Verbal or Written", there were none. In fact, for the entire month of October there was not one complaint – quite a feat for any theatre manager.

But even more interesting were the "Lost Articles FOUND" and "Lost Articles CLAIMED" – also none. And, unbelievably, throughout all that month's reports there was never a single item either lost or found. It is simply not human nature for this large an audience never to leave anything behind in a cinema for a full 31 days. Probably the ushers, or perhaps fellow attendees, were scooping up anything left behind and

# GRAND THEATRE

Commencing Wednesday Night at 8:45, Febr. 9th 1938

SONJA TYRONE  
HENIE • POWER

*Thin Ice*

with  
**ARTHUR TREACHER**  
**RAYMOND WALBURN**  
**JOAN DAVIS**  
SIG RUMANN • ALAN HALE  
LEAH RAY • MELVILLE COOPER  
MAURICE CASS • GEORGE GIVOT

Directed by Sidney Lanfield  
Darryl F. Zanuck in Charge of Production  
From the play "The Enemy" by Julius Zeltz

Lovely to look at  
leveler still as  
you listen to these  
songs!

'My Secret Love  
Affair', 'Over Night'  
'My Swiss Hill Billy'  
by Lew Pallock and  
Sidney D. Mitchell  
'I'm Olga From the  
Volga' by Mark  
Gordon and Harry  
Reval

20  
5x

the items never made it to the Lost and Found office.

We learn a lot about the frustrations of running a cinema by reading the large block noting “Staff Changes and the Staff Absentees”. Every single day there were a number out sick, which is not unexpected in that era in pestilential Shanghai. In reading these notations over a 31-day period it is obvious that, with the large numbers either out sick or on leave, it was necessary to have replacements on hand to keep cinemas functioning.

The employee listing is really illuminating: house managers (one foreign, one Chinese), asst. managers, supervisors (perhaps for personnel?), cashiers (who signed off on all these reports), “Captains” (duty unknown, all Chinese), interpreters, ushers and usherettes, door boys, film operators, ticket sellers, carpenters, electricians, fitters, messengers, watchmen and even coolies. The Grand and the Cathay were obviously sister-cinemas, as the staff was shifted back and forth between them to cover for absentees.

The employees were mostly Chinese, with a smattering of English and a few Russian names, usually the usherettes. There was a fairly high personnel turnover in the lower jobs. This probably meant that the wage scale was relatively low; having a work place that was both heated and air cooled – plus an occasional free pass or two? – could not have been such a bad work environment.

On the right of this page was a section called Competing Features with the names of Shanghai’s seven major cinemas: The Astor, Cathay, Carlton, Majestic, Metropol, Nanking and Roxy. All but two always showed foreign films such as “The Dolly Sisters”, “San Antonio” and “Three Daring Daughters” in October. The Astor showed “The Soul of China” for the first half of the month, followed by Chinese films, and the Metropol only Chinese films (no names supplied). The distributors for all but these latter two were Hollywood’s four major studios: Twentieth Century Fox (2), Columbia, Warner Brothers and MGM (1 each).

Finally, we get to Advertising Slides Shown Today. Appended to the report is a listing on tissue paper consisting of two pages containing the names of advertisers and status of their contracts. Their names represent a cross-section of Shanghai’s smaller businesses that were still functioning in 1948’s sharply declining commercial environment. They were about half foreign and half Chinese, advertising restaurants and cafes, small shops, photo studios, clothing, cigarettes, commodities, tailors, drug companies and even “Great Bible Lectures”.

And how many slides were shown at each performance? “180 Free Slides, 21 Nett Slides.” That must have meant quite a wait before the audience got to the main feature – which was, by the way, introduced that day by the Overture: “Beer Barrel Polka”.

Not only a fascinating insight into life in the declining days of the Western presence in the city, this detailed documentation also reveals how one ran a cinema in old Shanghai.

# THE STORY OF THE SKETCHBOOK

BY SARAH KEENLYSIDE

Wandering around Baoguosi antiques market in the autumn of 2009 I came across a stand selling old sketchbooks and photographs. Due to the mass migration of families from their homes in the hutongs it was quite common for those moving out to have large sales of their household items on the street. Canny antiques collectors and market stallholders would then snap up anything they thought could be sold on.

When I came across this book I was just struck by how lovely the drawings were. The fact that the sketchbook also has a number of experimental drawings done in pastels and a child's careless scribbles in the back made it a very human artifact. So I purchased it for the rather too expensive sum of 80RMB (that's how much I was taken by it) and have treasured it ever since.

Many of the drawings are of the hutongs around the famous (now gentrified) Qianmen Street. A bit of detective work revealed that one particular drawing of a Qianmen restaurant in the book was done in 1991.

Just in case I was sitting on a gold mine ("You may have discovered the Lucian Freud of China – look at the hands!" said one friend), I decided to show the book to my art critic friend Karen Smith. Her opinion was that they were very "heartfelt and melancholy observations of people, stylised (the emphasis on the hands) by someone who is clearly not academy-trained (which is more compliment than insult!) but who has chosen drawing as a pleasure, as a hobby, as a means to capture something of the world around him." Moreover, the content was fairly typical for its look at the common people, "who would have been the guiding principle in the era (the artist) grew up in".

But perhaps the most heartbreaking thing about the sketchbook is the passage on the last page, written in the calligraphy of the elderly male artist, who seems to feel acutely that he has become useless. Repugnant. Decrepit. It's a sad end to the book, and one that makes the sketches all the more poignant in retrospect.

He writes:

*There are 360 days in a year, and another year has passed again;*

*the grain having turned from green to yellow.*

*The sun and the moon have been shuttling back and forth, which ages people. Several decades have gone without me noticing.*

*Flesh getting old or heart staying young? I am unable to work in the fields.*

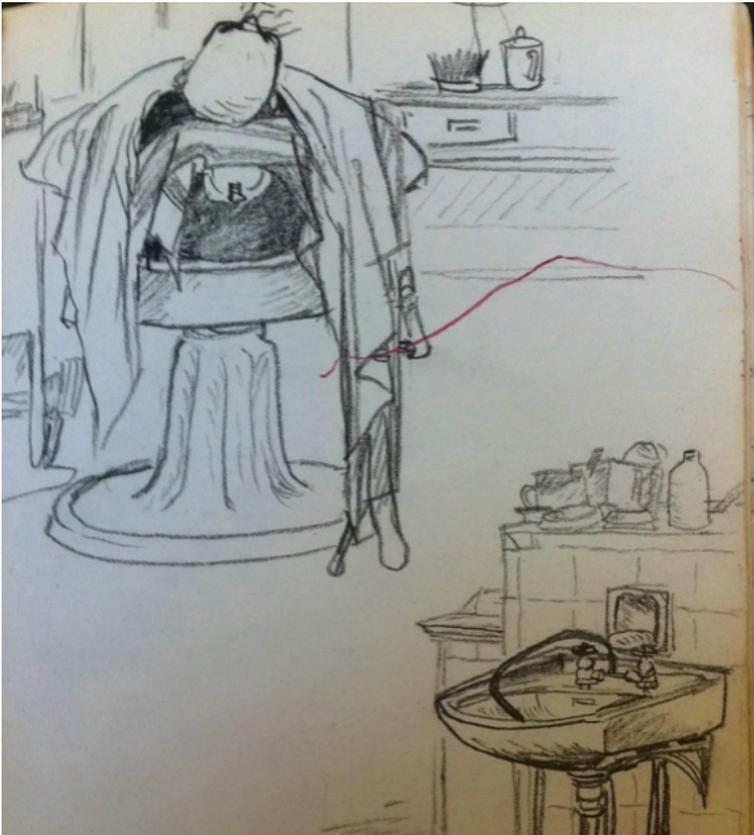
*When I am walking, my legs fail me. When I am talking, my breath fails me.*

*My snot and phlegm are filthy, making my children and grandchildren hate me.*

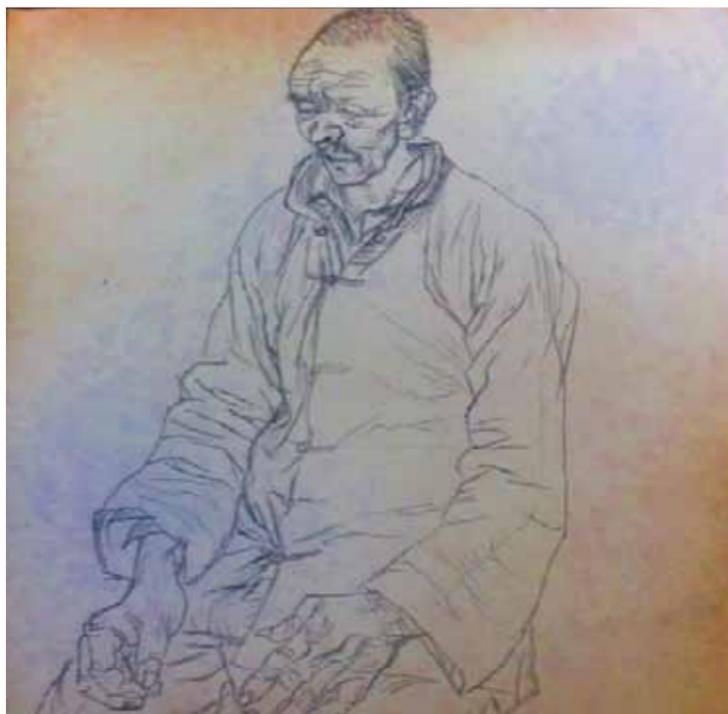
*I'm now waiting until the day when I can reach the Promised Land, allowing my life to ebb away, going to the underworld.*

*My children and grandchildren will be grieving and send me to my ancestral grave. A foot of yellow earth will cover me.*

*It is always the same when people get old. It is extremely hard to keep from dying.*







## THE EARLY HOTELS OF THE SHANGHAI FOREIGN SETTLEMENT

BY ERIC POLITZER

Shanghai was opened to foreign trade and residence by the 1842 Treaty of Nanking between Great Britain and China. The first group of British merchants arrived to take up residence in November 1843. They accompanied the first British Consul, George Balfour, and were preceded by both Catholic and Protestant missionaries, as well as opium receiving ships moored off Wusong.

It was only a year and a half after the opening of the port that Shanghai's first western hotel opened for business. In those first years, however, visitors were rare, and they normally came with introductions or connections to the residents and thus did not require the services of a hotel. Some lived on shipboard. Outfitting and supplying a hotel was hugely expensive, and it proved impossible to maintain one. It was only in 1852 that hotels became a permanent feature of settlement life.

The Shanghai settlement's first hotelier was Peter Felix Richards. He arrived in Shanghai in 1844, and opened the Victoria Inn in early 1845 on the south bank of the Yangjingbang (modern Yanan Road), in what is now the block between Xikou lu and Jiangxi nan lu. Fredet tells us that the hotel was half-Chinese, half-European in appearance, that it was "assez comfortable," and "possédant une table excellente," and that the building lasted until 1898.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the hotel's opening, there was as yet no French Concession, and the English Settlement, although demarcated, had no English inhabitants.

The *Hongkong Register* of April 15, 1845 reported that a steeplechase was held at Shanghai to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, and "Afterwards, about 30 gentlemen dined together at the 'Victoria Inn,' and spent a very happy evening." This was a month before the hotel's formal opening.<sup>2</sup>

Four weeks later (May 13) the *Register* gives us a more detailed account of one of these early celebrations: "Wednesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> being St. George's Day, a dinner took place at the Victoria Hotel, at which 36 sat down together in honor of the occasion, given by the English residents to the gentlemen of Scotland, Ireland and America. Kenneth R. McKenzie, Esq., presided, who proposed the following toast, which was heartily responded to by the company, - viz: "The Queen" (a salute of 21 small guns was fired in the courtyard), "Prince Albert, and the rest of

the Royal Family,” “The glorious memory of St. George,” “The Ladies,” “Merry England,” “the citizens of the United States,” – the remaining toasts were given by different gentlemen. Several appropriate songs were sung during the evening and great hilarity prevailed, the company did not finally retire till past one o’clock.”<sup>3</sup>

“Much credit is due to Mr. Richards, the proprietor of the Hotel, for the polished style in which he provided the dinner, wines, &c., and the tasteful decorations of the Banqueting room.”

When Richards opened his hotel, the French Concession was four years in the future. The first houses in the new English Settlement were several months from completion. The foreign residents of Shanghai mostly rented houses outside the city walls near the riverfront, with a few living within the walls.

When the English Settlement began to come to life in late 1845 and 1846, it became clear that the hotel was poorly situated. Richards closed it, after about a year of operation, to relocate to the new settlement. In the (Hongkong) *Friend of China* of May 13, 1846, he announced - notice dated April 16 - that the Victoria Hotel would open in Shanghai around June 15, from which we know that it had closed. The notice ran until sometime in August, after which there is no further word of the hotel until the issue of November 13, 1847, in which the reader is informed - notice dated November 1 - that the hotel is now completed. Since the first public meeting in the English Settlement had been held at Richards’ Hotel on December 22, 1846, we tentatively conclude that the hotel at that point was operating in an unfinished state, or perhaps was adequately furnished for hosting a meeting, but not yet for serving as a hotel.<sup>4</sup>

The hotel was not Richards’ exclusive means of livelihood. His later ads in the *North-China Herald* read: P.F. Richards & Co., Ship Chandlers, Storekeepers and General Commission Agents, established in 1844, shipping supplied with fresh provisions.”<sup>5</sup> Directories normally listed him as a storekeeper.<sup>6</sup>

The new site of the Victoria Hotel was at the northwest corner of what is now the intersection of Nanjing and Jiangxi Roads (see below).

One of Richards’ guests was Charles de Montigny, who arrived on January 25, 1848, to serve as France’s first consul at Shanghai. Richards proposed to charge Montigny, who was accompanied by his mother, wife and two daughters, \$600 per month, almost triple Montigny’s salary. Montigny bargained Richards down to \$450, and was out within

six weeks, when the Jesuits rented him a dilapidated shack within what became, the following year, the French Concession. The shack, after renovation, became the first French Consulate.<sup>7</sup>

Richards admitted Charles Melville Donaldson as partner January 1, 1848, but offered the hotel for sale June 30. The latter notice states that the hotel had opened June 1846.<sup>8</sup> Nothing further is heard of the hotel, which must have closed soon after. When the Boston physician and world traveler Benjamin Lincoln Ball arrived at Shanghai on May 20, 1849, he noted, “After accepting Mr. G.’s (John N.A. Griswold, head of the Shanghai branch of Russell & Co. and U.S. Consul) invitation to return and dine with them, I went and surprised Mr. and Mrs. (Nicholas) Baylies by my sudden appearance there. (Baylies also was from Massachusetts.) I soon found that I was to remain their guest while in Shanghae, and I was made welcome to a room in their house and a seat at their table. As there are no hotels in Shanghae, a stranger is under the necessity of quartering on some of the residents, among whom generosity and hospitality seem never to be wanting... Mr. B. occupies a part of the large building formerly the hotel. The citizens are so hospitable towards strangers that a hotel cannot be sustained, and now they have none.”<sup>9</sup>

In January 1852, we read that auctioneer Wellington Ayer was temporarily running his auctions “In the basement story of the building known as the Victoria Hotel.” The wording is significant. Shanghai residents continued to refer to the building as the hotel, after it had ceased to serve as one. Thus the occasional references to the hotel found in the pages of the *Herald* in this period must be considered as referring only to the building.<sup>10</sup>

Nothing more is heard of hotels until the spring of 1852.

#### CHARLES M. DONALDSON AND THE COMMERCIAL HOUSE

In the *Herald* of April 17, 1852, we read of a Commercial Hotel, “with a water frontage” and “an excellent billiard table upon the premises.” After a mere six weeks, the proprietor, John Miller, announced that the hotel would close May 29.<sup>11</sup> Its reopening was announced on July 10 of the same year, with “billiard tables, a bowling saloon,...on the site of the late Victoria Hotel, on the street leading from the 2nd (or Tuckee) stone jetty.” Tuckee (pinyin Deji 德記) was the *hang* name of the U.S. firm Wolcott, Bates & Co., at the south corner of Park Lane (the later Nanking Road) and the Bund. The Tuckee jetty would thus have been at

the foot of Nanking Road.

We find one other mention of a hotel in the early years of the settlement. In August 1852, the Eagle Hotel opened, with "...bowling allies... on the lot next to the dockyard, Hong que landing."<sup>12</sup> The Eagle Hotel also did not last long.

The 1853 *Shanghae Almanac* lists Charles M. Donaldson, Peter Richards' former partner at the Victoria, as "Shipping Provisioner and Commercial House," and we conclude that Donaldson took over the Commercial Hotel from Miller in 1852 and moved it to the site of Richards' late Victoria Hotel. By March 1853, Donaldson's Commercial House was advertising itself as the only hotel in the settlement.<sup>13</sup>

Donaldson (1821?-1892) came to China in 1845. He joined the Masons in 1847, and rose to be the highest-ranking Mason in China at the time of his death.<sup>14</sup> His activities during his first years in China, before he joined up with Richards, are at present unknown (if, indeed, the source is correct about the date). It appears that his association with Richards came to an end when Richards put the hotel up for sale in 1848 and then closed it. In the list of foreign residents published in the first issue of the *North-China Herald* (Aug. 3, 1850), Donaldson, with family, is listed as a Shipping Provisioner, in business for himself, and thus competing with Richards.

One of Donaldson's guests was the novelist Ivan Goncharov, who was traveling as an observer on the Russian frigate *Pallada*, sent to open Japan to Russian trade. He arrived in Shanghai Friday, November 27, 1853, and checked in at the Commercial House. He commented:

*Our inn, called Commercial House, resembled a country house, as did all the other houses in Shanghai. It was a large, two-storied stone edifice with a stone verandah or gallery all around, with a wide entrance, and a garden of myrtle and cedar trees, various bushes, and so on. All the windows had shades; obviously, when the house was built, one thought more of the summer than the winter. The walls were thin, no more than two bricks wide, the windows were large; draughts were everywhere, everything was loose; the house shook if one person walked through a room; talk could be heard through the walls. But at the time we came, it was cold. We crowded around the fireplaces, but out of them came a bitter, black smoke...*

*Our host, Donald[son], obviously the most despicable sort of Englishman, probably a beggar in England – otherwise how did he come to decide to go to a strange country to run a public house, where he had no chance at any success – this Donald[son], according to Tikhmenyev, once beat one of the Chinese, a servant in the pub, so hard that “pity overcame me,” as good old Tikhmenyev added.<sup>15</sup>*

In this period, before the establishment of the Shanghai Club, the Commercial House was perhaps the center of social life in the settlement. Theatricals were staged in a godown adjoining the hotel. The chess club met at the hotel Tuesday and Saturday evenings. Dancing classes were held there. There was also a bowling alley and billiard table.<sup>16</sup>

Donaldson put the hotel up, for sale or lease, in December 1855.<sup>17</sup> He succeeded in passing it to two Frenchmen, Messrs. Barraud & Barrazie, at the end of May 1856, and left Shanghai shortly after.<sup>18</sup> Barraud & Barrazie’s partnership lasted six months, after which M. Barraud carried on with the hotel.<sup>19</sup>

We don’t know exactly when the hotel closed. Barraud was still running it at the beginning of 1858, according to the *Shanghai Almanac* for that year. He was either leasing it, or did not succeed in paying it off. Donaldson returned to Shanghai sometime in the spring. In the *Herald* of July 31, 1858, Donaldson offered for let “the dwelling house and godowns on Lot 32,” which was the hotel. Finding no takers, he put it up for sale in October. The notice deserves quotation:

### **For Sale**

by Public Auction

(Unless previously disposed of by private bargain.)

On Monday, the 15<sup>th</sup> November.

The Lot No. 32 measuring 5 m. 6 f. 4 l. 1 h.<sup>20</sup>

With the Dwelling House (containing 18 Rooms) and Godowns erected thereon.

Also,

On *Tuesday*, the 16<sup>th</sup> November, and following Days, the whole Furniture and Stock, including Billiard Tables, Ten Pin Alleys, Flag Staff, Sedan Chairs, Wines, Spirits, &c., &c. Or, any party Desirous of continuing the Hotel business and

Purchasing the Furniture and Stock in one Lot.  
Can obtain a Lease of the premises.  
For further particulars apply to  
Chas. M. Donaldson.  
Commercial House  
Shanghai, 8th October, 1858.

The auction was held as planned, with the American auctioneer Hiram Fogg performing the duties. The real estate went for £4200 sterling.<sup>21</sup> Donaldson departed in December, and did not return to Shanghai until 1864.<sup>22</sup>

#### JOHN MILLER AND HIS HOTEL

The ambiguous career of John Miller, from whom Donaldson bought the hotel in the spring of 1852, deserves a brief excursus. Miller is first listed at Shanghai in a directory in 1849. In 1850-52 he is listed as an auctioneer. No occupation is given in 1853. In 1854-57 he is listed as the proprietor of a billiard room. In 1858-59 he is back in the hotel business, as the proprietor of Miller's Hotel.<sup>23</sup>

A note in an unpaginated U.S. Consulate record book offers us a clue to Miller's location in these years. In May 1861, the U.S. government prosecuted Henry Burgevine, an American, for recruiting British seamen to desert and serve the Chinese government. The trial was held in the U.S. Consular Court. An entry dated May 18, 1861 mentions that Burgevine and Nicholas Cleary "boarded together first at Miller's hotel kept by Smith on the Yang King Pang & then at Dato's until the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> Feb last."<sup>24</sup> (William Dato, store-keeper and auctioneer, was also on the Yangjingbang, at the corner of the Rue du Mausolée.<sup>25</sup>)

That Miller's Hotel in 1861 was on the Yangjingbang, while the advertisement for his brief experiment with a hotel in 1852 merely mentioned an unspecified "water frontage" suggests to us that he was in Richards' original 1845-46 hotel site, probably continuously. The building was built to serve as a hotel, and it would have been cheap, because of the undesirable location. If Miller was not using Richards' old site, he would have had to either erect a building himself or adapt another building to the purpose, either of which would likely have been more expensive. In 1852, it is unlikely that there would have been other available buildings to choose from on the Yangjingbang, although this situation had almost certainly improved by 1858.<sup>26</sup>

In 1858, large numbers of Westerners were arriving at Shanghai in conjunction with the Anglo-French expedition: diplomats, journalists, photographers, camp-followers, etc. The prospects for a hotel would have been greatly improved from six years earlier.

If Miller's claim of a "water frontage" was based on the hotel's overlooking the Yangjingbang, then he has a claim to be considered the father of modern real estate advertising in Shanghai.

#### P.F. RICHARDS IN THE 1850S

P.F. Richards, after closing his hotel in 1848, continued his somewhat checkered career as a ship chandler and storekeeper. In August 1850 he announced that he had opened a reading room expressly for shipmasters.<sup>27</sup> In June 1852, he moved to "the house lately occupied by Sillar, Bros., until new Premises are built." This was the month before Donaldson opened his hotel in Richards' former hotel building.<sup>28</sup>

Richards' location from June 1852 to April 1853 is indicated in an announcement in the May 14, 1853 *Herald*: "To Be Sold by Public Auction The Bungalow belonging to G.F. Hubertson, Esq., lately occupied by Messr. P.F. Richards & Co. as a store, and now tenanted by E.A. Reynolds, Esq., containing eight rooms with offices and Out-houses attached. Marked B79 on the Consular plan." Lot 79b was at the southeast corner of Mission and Church Streets (modern Fuzhou and Jiangxi Roads, later the sight of the Hamilton House office tower). His establishment was burgled in October.<sup>29</sup>

In April 1853, Richards moved again, "to the Godown formerly ALAM Godown, fronting James MacDonal, Esq.'s property, & quite close to the river."<sup>30</sup> This would put Richards' new site on the north corner of Guangdong lu and the Bund, in the lot where the old Nisshin building now stands, i.e., No. 5 on the Bund.

Richards appears to have prospered in this period. In April 1854 he took on James Mackenzie as a partner. Mackenzie ran the store while Richards took some trips. In December, he opened a branch in Fuzhou, and served as auctioneer for a ship.<sup>31</sup>

One project which cost him a good deal of trouble began when a Scottish merchant vessel, the *Margaret Mitchell*, ran aground off Wusong on February 1, 1855, with severe damage. It was refloated on April 4, hauled up to Shanghai, but ran aground again in the Huangpu, with additional damage. The cost of repairing the ship in Shanghai was prohibitive, while the cost of docking it while waiting for instructions

from England was also prohibitive. The ship's captain, after getting legal advice and consulting with the insurer's agent in Shanghai, determined to auction it off. At the auction, the ship was bought in when the bids were too far below expectations. Inquiries determined that no better price could be had, and the ship was awarded to Richards, at about £7,000. He had the ship repaired (an estimated £13-14,000), loaded it with a cargo, and hired one Dewar Stiles to sail it back to England and discharge the cargo. Richards gave Stiles the power of attorney to, if circumstances dictated, sell the ship, for not less than £10-13,000. En route, the ship stopped in Canton, where additional repairs were required. Stiles apparently advanced the money to cover these repairs, and took a 1/8 interest in the ship. At some point during the voyage, Richards lost confidence in Stiles, and notified him of his intention to replace him, both as captain and attorney. In England, Stiles attempted to turn the ship over to Richards' agent, who refused it. Stiles then sold the ship for £4,000, pocketing £3,000. The case eventually went to the British High Admiralty Court. Evidence indicated that Stiles and others had conspired to defraud Richards. The Court awarded the ship to Richards' creditors, as Richards & Co. had failed in the meantime.<sup>32</sup>

In March 1856, Richards made a trip home, departing March 9, first for New York, on the *N.B. Palmer*, dispatched by Russell & Co.<sup>33</sup> In New York in June, he would have seen the famous Astor House, and probably stayed in it.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, back in Shanghai, in May 1856 Richards & Co. was unable to pay its bills, and was declared insolvent by the British Consular Court. The Court put the operation under the supervision of the creditors, and announced "J. Mackenzie has been authorized to carry on under inspection, the Store & Ship Chandlery business as heretofore, for the benefit of creditors."<sup>35</sup> The business recovered, and Richards was allowed to resume management in August 1857. James Mackenzie ended the partnership and David Mackenzie ceased his employment with Richards the following month, and the two started their own firm.<sup>36</sup>

In February 1858, Richards moved across Soochow Creek to Hongkew (modern Hongkou). His announcement merits quoting:

#### NOTICE OF REMOVAL

We beg to give notice that we have removed  
From our Establishment to the Premises  
expressly built for us; immediately after crossing

the New Bridge between the British and American Consulates. The Premises command a beautiful view of the whole front settlement and of the surrounding country and down towards Woosung as far as the eye can reach. They have also a commanding and central river position remarkably well adapted for Shipping Business; we have spared no expense to make the Store convenient and safe for Goods. Arrangements were made by P.F. RICHARDS while he was in America and England for regular supplies of Goods suitable for this market. We hope by attention to business and moderate charges to merit a share of the Public Patronage.

P.F. RICHARDS & Co.

Shanghai, 5<sup>th</sup> February, 1858.<sup>37</sup>

We note that there is no hint that Richards at this time – or at any time in the previous nine years - was engaged in the hotel business. Almost five months later, in the *Herald* of June 26, 1858, Richards offered, in a one-sentence ad., “Furnished rooms in a pleasant locality.” Although some might equate this with being in the hotel business, if Richards were actually running a hotel, rather than offering a few spare rooms, we would expect him to have declared it.

#### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ASTOR HOUSE

In attempting to tease out the origins of the Astor House, we need to look at the relationship between Richards and one Henry Evans, principally a baker, but sometimes a brewer and store-keeper. Evans announces himself in a notice in the *Herald* of September 29, 1855, as a bread and biscuit-maker and confectioner. Readers are requested to place orders at P.F. Richards’. In the 1856 *Shanghae Almanac*, Evans is listed as being in Richards’ employ. Sometime in 1856, Evans went home to England. In the 1857 *Almanac*, Richards is employing J.S. Baron, another baker who also sometimes had his own shop. Evans returned to Shanghai in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 1857, and in November opened a bakery “at the back of P.F. Richards.”<sup>38</sup> Evans also formed a partnership with Henry Sutton, a sail-maker, and they built and in early 1858 opened the Union Hotel & Restaurant, with a Private Quoit Ground, Bowling Green, and an

Ice Cream Saloon in the summer, “Premises opposite to the British Consulate.” The hotel “was on the site formerly occupied by the late Charles Wills.”<sup>39</sup> (Wills, in Shanghai from 1846 with Jardine, Matheson & Co., had organized the Bridge Company, which built the toll bridge over Soochow Creek, opened in December 1856, known as Wills’ Bridge. Until then, passage across Soochow Creek was by ferry.) Evans and Sutton had taken care that their hotel was listed in the Shanghai section of the 1858 edition of the *Hongkong Directory*, apparently before the hotel actually opened.

When we compare the Union Hotel’s location, “Premises opposite to the British Consulate,” with Richards’ description of his new location, “immediately after crossing the New Bridge between the British and American Consulates,” they are indistinguishable. The two establishments could have been tooth-by-jowl with each other; they could even have been on the same lot, or perhaps in different wings of the same building. The currently available sources don’t allow us to locate them precisely, but do suggest the intimacy of the relationship.

Evans and Sutton seem to have found managing a hotel more than they could handle, and we can only read between the lines and guess what happened. The advertisement for the Union Hotel ceases to appear in the *Herald* after July 10, 1858, and we find no further mention of it anywhere else. The *Hongkong Directory*, which listed it in 1858, omitted it in 1859. Sutton perhaps was already fatally ill. He passed away in January 1860.<sup>40</sup>

Richards was very energetic in this period, constantly looking for opportunities to expand his business. In May 1858, he announced that he has “soda water & Lemonade.” In September, he now has “two waterboats to supply the shipping with pure filtered water which will be in constant readiness to attend all orders.” His “reading room is well supplied with newspapers.”<sup>41</sup> The September 18 issue of the *Herald* features four separate advertisements by Richards, a hint that he perhaps is not managing his resources efficiently. (In April, he had also offered his Foochow property for sale.<sup>42</sup>) There is no mention of a hotel in this period; only that he has furnished rooms. It seems more than a coincidence that Richards’ new store and the Union Hotel both opened in February 1858, and that Richards began to offer rooms just two weeks before the Union Hotel notice disappears from the pages of the *Herald*. We guess that the Union Hotel passed into Richards’ hands, and he rented rooms while preparing to re-enter the hotel business.

The 1859 *Hongkong Directory* lists the Astor House, but this appears to be only a statement of Richards' intentions, unfulfilled. Richards ended the year 1858 out of business. In the *Herald* of January 1, 1859, Richards declared, "Having disposed of the Stock in Trade and Goodwill of my business *from the 1<sup>st</sup> December last*, the Firm of P.F. Richards & Co. or Richards & Co. ceased from that date." Directly below Richards' notice, we find another which indicates the fate of his business: "Messrs. Knoop & Co. beg leave to intimate that they have commenced business as *Shipchangers and General Merchants* in the premises lately occupied by Messrs. Richards & Co.; and hope by strict attention to business to secure a share of the custom of Vessels coming to this Port, and also of the Foreign Community.

Mr. Franz Knoop is authorized to sign for the Firm per procuration."

One week later (Jan. 8), the *Herald* published two more notices from Knoop & Co., which throw more light on their operations, and a bit on Richards'.

The first tells us that, aside from taking over Richards' store, Knoop & Co. have another store of their own: "The undersigned offer for sale at moderate prices a large invoice of Europe Rope from 8½ in. to 9 thread, Manila Rope, Canvas, Repairing Canvas, Stockholm Tar and Pitch, Oakum, all kind of Paints (dry and ready made), Paint and Lamp Oils, Varnish, Lime Juice, Vinegar, and a variety of Articles for ships use.

*Also*, Fresh Cheese, Hams, Butter, and Salt Provisions; Pale and Brown Brandy; Port, Sherry, and a variety of wines, &c. &c. Knoop & Co. *Corner of North Gate & Bridge Street.*"<sup>43</sup>

The second notice tells us what could be found in Richards' store:

#### PUBLIC AUCTION

There will be sold by Public Auction on *Monday next, the 10<sup>th</sup> instant.*

A quantity of Masts, Spars, Sails, Bower Anchors, Chains, Standing Rigging, Running Gear, Blocks, Cooking Stoves, a lot of old Iron, new Water Casks, best Hamburg Salt Beef in tierces of 336 lbs., Salt Pork in 300 lbs. Casks, Mustard in small Kegs, Lime Juice in 5 gall. Jars, fine Table Salt in 3 ½ doz. Jars each Cask, Cabin Bread, &c., &c.

Sale to commence at 11 o'clock A.M., on the premises of P.F. Richards. Goods on view *To-day*. Knoop & Co.

From this time Knoop & Co. took the Richards & Co. firm name of *Lung-tae* (隆泰). Franz Knoop had been an employee of Richards in

1857.<sup>44</sup> From the hints in the notices and directories, we guess that he came over to China as a junior member of a soundly-financed family firm. He served an apprenticeship with Richards, and established a branch of the family business as soon as he felt competent. In the January 1 notice quoted above, he “is authorized to sign for the Firm per procuration.” In other words, he was not his own boss. Knoop and Co. was still in business in 1879, but they appear to have occupied Richards’ space in Hongkew for only a brief period.<sup>45</sup>

In trying to piece together from these notices what happened to Richards in this period, we cannot avoid making some common-sense conjectures. If Richards had not sold his firm to Knoop under duress – if, for example, he was merely trying to raise capital to go into the hotel business – he most likely would have retained his firm name of *Lung-tae* (隆泰), which he had been using from the early years of the Shanghai settlement.

If Knoop had been planning to take over Richards’ business, he most likely would not have simultaneously opened another store at the other end of the settlement. Thus we guess that Richards woke up one day and realized that he would not be able to pay his bills. If no solution was found, he was on his way to court. Perhaps Knoop had advanced him money, and was first in line. Perhaps Richards went to him because Knoop had capital, and, as a former employee, knew Richards’ business, knew the value of his goods and how to realize a profit on them, and could give him as good or a better price than could be had elsewhere.

After the sale, Richards disappears from the pages of the *Herald* for five months. He got back on his feet, and was back in business by June 1859, manufacturing soda-water & lemonade.<sup>46</sup> Almost a year later, in a new advertisement for soda-water and lemonade in the *Herald* of May 12, 1860, he gives his location as the Astor House. In the same issue of the *Herald*, the passenger arrival lists begin to separately mention those arriving at the Astor House. The passenger lists continue to mention the Astor House only into mid-August. Perhaps Richards had been paying the *Herald* to do this. Perhaps he had been paying the P&O and other passenger ships to land travelers at his hotel. We don’t know.

We find no formal announcement of the opening of the hotel. Lacking such, we naturally take the appearance of the notices in the *Herald* as a significant marker, considering Richards’ normally heavy use of the paper.

Richards stayed in the hotel business for some eight months. Watch-

ing the Anglo-French expedition withdraw from China, he perhaps surmised that the hotel business was entering a dry period. In December 1860, he sold the Astor House to Henry W. Smith, with Smith taking over January 1.<sup>47</sup> The 1861 *China Directory* tells us that the Astor House's Chinese name was Li-cha (禮查), a representation of Richards' name, from which we know that for the second time in two years Richards had surrendered his firm name along with his business. By 1862, such was the transience of hotels in Shanghai, that Smith was advertising the Astor House as the "oldest established hotel in Shanghai."<sup>48</sup>

#### THE U.S. CONSULATE AT P.F. RICHARDS'

In 1858, the U.S. Consulate was going through a period of extraordinary instability, as six men – five serving only as Acting Vice Consul – performed the duties in a period of nine months. Finding a site for the Consulate was the personal responsibility of the Consul, and a matter of no concern to the government in Washington (and thus not normally a subject in the consular reports). That it was impossible to live in Shanghai on a consul's salary was a matter of indifference to the Congress. This disturbing situation provoked the *Herald* in early May to observe, very tartly compared to its normal tone when commenting on the governmental affairs of the Powers, "We observe the American Consulate Flag has taken another flight and is now perched on the top of the staff of Messrs. Richards & Co., ever *going a head*; whereas the British Flag has been *flying* for years on its staff and does not get any further. John Bull is proverbially *slow*."<sup>49</sup>

The Acting Vice-Consul at the time of the *Herald's* comment was George B. Glover of Nantucket, Massachusetts. He arrived from Hongkong, having been recruited there by the new U.S. Commissioner to China, William B. Reed, and assumed the duties on March 8, performing them until the new regularly-appointed Consul, William L.G. Smith of Buffalo, N.Y., took over on September 20.<sup>50</sup>

Further light on the state of the Consulate in this period is shed by Everett Frazar, a U.S. merchant who first arrived at Shanghai in October 1858, and, with occasional interruptions, resided there into 1872. In 1879, he testified before the U.S. Congress that when he arrived, the U.S. Consulate was "in one of the ante-rooms of this hotel (i.e., the Astor House). It was the resort of the floating population of Shanghai, all the naval and mercantile officers from ships; and had a billiard-room, a bowling-saloon, &c." He further stated that the consulate had

no courtroom or jail, and when Consul Smith needed to imprison a U.S. citizen, he “was obliged repeatedly to make a friendly requisition upon the British consulate for the use of the British consulate jail...” According to Frazar, the Consulate was situated at the Astor House until the arrival of the next consul, George F. Seward, in the spring of 1862.<sup>51</sup>

Another description, in an 1863 letter, fleshes out our picture of the Consulate in this period: “The late incumbent (i.e., Consul Smith) occupied rooms, and had his offices at an hotel, principally frequented by mercantile captains, whose front yard was adorned by two flagstuffs, one bearing the stars and stripes, the other the flag of the hotel. There was no separate entrance, and the hotel and the consulate were one.”<sup>52</sup>

Frazar’s statement above, read literally, cannot be reconciled with the chronology laid out here, and thus requires some interpretation. Recalling in 1879 the circumstances of 20 year earlier, he perhaps did not recall the evolution of Richards’ establishment and its nomenclature, if he had ever been familiar with them. He remembered the location as having remained constant through his first years in Shanghai, but the image of the place he retained in his memory was perhaps characteristic of the place in 1860-61, and not necessarily in late 1858, when he arrived.

Based on this incomplete information, our best guess is that when William L.G. Smith arrived in September 1858, he took over Glover’s modest consular establishment, behind or beside or above Richards’ store, and kept it there. When Richards lost his business at the end of 1858, Smith and perhaps other tenants continued to reside there, perhaps paying rent to Knoop. Knoop sold off Richards’ merchandise, and vacated Richards’ building in order to continue his business in the store he had opened just as Richards’ business collapsed. Meanwhile, Richards began to rebuild his business. Eventually, when Richards had accumulated or borrowed some capital, he recovered his building, with tenants including the consulate, and converted the building into the Astor House. After a mere eight months, Richards, needing to repay his loans, or perceiving dimming prospects for the hotel business, or lured by opportunities beckoning at the newly-opened ports, sold the Astor House to Henry Smith.

#### HENRY SMITH

We meet Henry Smith, about whom we otherwise know nothing, in the U.S. Consular Court, where he had filed charges against one of his guests for assault and battery:

(Transcription)

The United States Consular Court  
Shanghai March 29, 1861

The United States

Vs. Charge of Assault and battery on Henry W. Smith  
Robert Newlin on the 25<sup>th</sup> instant at this port.

The defendant appeared in Court and was arraigned.

Plead not guilty and asks for a trial.

The trial proceeds.

William Lester being duly sworn says that the complainant is proprietor of the Astor House, I am his bookkeeper. Last evening I was in my bedroom attached to the office, and I heard the defendant ask Mr. Smith if he struck his Negro, and he replied no, that he had pushed him aside for striking the Chinese servants in the house. I then heard a scuffle and as I stepped into the office, I saw Mr. Smith on the floor and the defendant on top of him and striking him with his fist. Mr. Smith said, "Haul him off." One bystander said "Stand aside." I said it is best to separate them, Mr. Smith at the same time calling, "Haul him off." As I attempted to do so, Judge Cleary came up and said "Separate them," and we did so. Then Mr. Smith remarked, "Did you see the like? It is a disgraceful thing to occur, dam sweep," and then the defendant rushed at him again. They clinched and reeled on the floor by the window, Smith under, the defendant struck him with his fist again, and they were again separated and that ended it. I can't say that the word "dam sweep" was intended for the defendant; they were generally used. After both scuffles and just as the defendant was going out of the office, he remarked that the next time he interfered with him, he would put a bullet through him, or words to that effect.

Cross-examined: "The complainant Smith, when I first came out of the office, was not on the floor but was reclining back on a form or stool."

Frederick Lewis Martin being duly sworn says, "I am a merchant and am stopping as a boarder at the Astor House. At the dining table last night the defendant's servant and the complainant's servants who are Chinese had some disagreement about the plates. Mr. Smith stepped up and pushed the defendant's servant aside and told him to let the servants alone. The next I heard of the matter, I was in Mr. Smith's private room right opposite the office, and he was sent for and went

out, and I immediately heard a crash as if glass was broken. I stepped out and saw the defendant on top of Smith, and Judge Cleary stepped up and separated them. As the defendant was going out of the office, he said, "By God, the next time I will not strike you but I will put a bullet through you." The parties then separated."

Cross-examined: "The door was partly open and according to the best of my recollection, some person called out, "Mr. Smith, I wish to see you," or words to that effect. There were other words used in addition. In pushing the defendant's servant aside, Mr. Smith caught hold of his arm and shoved him one side. I don't know that the Chinese servant was Mr. Smith's servant. I have never experienced any difficulty in getting what I wish to eat at the table. I have been here ten days."

#### WITNESSES FOR THE DEFENDANT.

Nicholas Cleary being duly sworn says that "After the parties were finally separated the defendant said that if the complainant interfered with his servant again or him, he would not strike him but would put a bullet through him. I separated them twice. After the first separation the complainant called the defendant "a god dam sweep" or "a dam sweep." This is a disgraceful business. The second time the defendant had the complainant down, I did not see him strike the complainant. All this occurred, I should say, in about five minutes. I did not see either strike the other. It was more like a clinch or chastle(?). I have never seen Mr. Smith drive the Bengal servants out of the dining room. The steward once spoke to my boy very harshly and I told the steward he must not do so, and I have had no trouble since the steward is a Chinaman.

Manuel being duly sworn says, "I am the defendant's servant. I am not allowed to go to the kitchen. They do not have clean towels. The napkins used at the table are sometimes dirty. I have heard the defendant say to Dinsmore that I should have to flog him, if he annoyed him in that way.

Christopher Dinsmore, being duly sworn, says that, "about two weeks ago the defendant sent his servant down after the bill of fare at the table. Mr. Smith sent word back that Mr. Newlin could not have the bill of fare. The defendant then spoke across the table, "Will you please send me down that bill of fare." There was no reply. The defendant's servant was standing alongside of Mr. Smith at the time. The defendant then said to his servant, "Manuel, bring me that bill of fare here." The boy was about taking it and Mr. Smith put his hand on it. Then the

defendant said, "You are no gentleman." There was no reply. Mr. Smith remarked (that) there was one at his end of the table and that he could not have the one at that end of the table. There was no bill of fare at the defendant's end of the table, it was in Mr. Chamberlain's room. No person was using the bill of fare at the complainant's end of the table. The note offered in evidence was received by the defendant about a week after the defendant went into Mr. Pickrell's room. The note is a notice from the Complainant that he could not board the defendant any longer. The defendant has board at the Astor House about five weeks. He went into Pickrell's room about one week and four days after.

The complainant did not receive much bodily injury, he says. The case is submitted.

#### DECISION

The Court doth decide and adjudge that the defendant is guilty of the charge and that he pay a fine of \$100 to cover Court expenses and damages.

Recd \$25 March 29, 1861

W.L.G. Smith

Paid complainant \$5 for his damages April 1, 1861

U.S. Consul

Acting Judicially<sup>53</sup>

Smith, like Richards and Donaldson before him, found a hotel a difficult business to dispose of. He offered it for sale in June 1863, wishing to retire due to ill health. A notice in the (Hongkong) *China Mail* of 31<sup>st</sup> March 1864 tells us that John D. Mahon was now the proprietor of the hotel. We don't find this notice in the *Herald*, and guess that the deal fell through very quickly, or perhaps was stillborn. Smith was still there in November 1865, appealing to the Municipal Council for a reduction of licence fees. In this period, the hotel's residents included the Prussian Consul General.<sup>54</sup>

The 1866 *Directory & Chronicle* tells us the Astor House was under the management of G. Smith. Perhaps a relative of Henry Smith, but we don't know.

In October 1867, we find the Astor House closed briefly, its furniture sold off, and then reopening under the management of S.H. Schmid and George Baker, and suppose that it was at this time that Smith finally succeeded in disposing of it.<sup>55</sup>

The Astor House went through many more vicissitudes of which we have only a faint inkling. By 1870, Schmid had left, and the firm name of

“Lee-cha” belonged to Baker & Co., wine and spirit dealers, soda water manufacturers and water boat proprietors. The hotel is not mentioned, and we guess that it had been temporarily closed due to poor business. By 1873, however, Baker & Co. was again running the Astor House.<sup>56</sup>

#### PETER RICHARDS: LATER YEARS

Peter Richards in the spring of 1861 moved to the newly-opened port of Tientsin and set up there. In his notice, he mentions 21 years experience in business in China, and “being acquainted with the language sufficiently to transact business without the assistance of Compradors.”<sup>57</sup> It must have been his personal charm that persuaded his former associates in Shanghai to extend credit to him. By August of that year, at least a half-dozen of his suppliers were suing him for non-payment, and winning uncontested claims in the British Consular Court in Shanghai. By September, he was insolvent again. He made his way back to Shanghai, and started up again. However, times were bleak in Shanghai, and Richards’ charm was no longer sufficient to secure the credit that in the past had been readily available to him. According to Shanghai researcher Peter Hibbard, Shanghai Municipal Council records show that in 1865 he was running a “fifth-class establishment,” which was the terminology for a brothel.<sup>58</sup> We find no more mention of him, until an obituary notice appears in the *Herald* of November 24, 1868, which reports that he died “at the Shanghai General Hospital, on the 14th instant, of Acute Dysentery,.. aged 53.”<sup>59</sup>

David Rennie was a British Army Surgeon who was assigned to the British Legation during its first year at Peking. He wrote two memoirs of his time in the Far East. In March 1862 he encountered Richards at Tientsin, when Richards had just returned from a long trip beyond the Great Wall and into Mongolia. Rennie reports that Richards had observed Russian munitions being sold to the Chinese government, but tells us nothing about Richards, only describing him as “an enterprising speculator.”<sup>60</sup> Based on the information reviewed here, this seems a fair assessment of the man.

\*\*\*

This brief survey has relied largely on newspaper notices and directory entries. The early years of the Shanghai foreign settlement are now so obscure to us that it seems a reasonable proposition that,

by careful attention to these surprisingly rich sources, one can hope to make a modest contribution to our knowledge and clear up some long-standing misconceptions. The hazards of this approach, however, are readily apparent. In filling in the gaps in our knowledge, it is difficult to avoid occasionally resorting to inference and conjecture. It will not be a great surprise if some of these inferences and conjectures are shown to be mistaken, when additional information comes to light.

More troubling is the fact that even a source so seemingly straightforward and matter-of-fact as a directory listing cannot be taken at face value. To take only one example, anyone could be excused for looking at the 1859 *Hongkong Directory*, and assuming that the Astor House was in business at the time of its publication. The additional evidence adduced here, principally from notices in the *Herald*, leads us to conclude that Richards placed a listing in the directory because he planned to open a hotel at that time, but his plans were disrupted by the failure of his business.

Other examples in the text can be cited to support the same point. It follows, as any beginning history student learns at some point, that we can assume nothing, that undertaking historical research requires us to learn to disembarass ourselves of our assumptions, and that we require sufficient familiarity with our sources to enable us to assess their reliability. With these *caveats*, we conclude, based on the evidence laid out here, that Peter Richards operated a hotel on the south bank of the Yangjingbang in 1845-46; on the later Nanking Road in 1847- (or perhaps 1846-) 1848; and the Astor House for some eight months in 1860. His first hotel site was taken by John Miller, and his second by Charles Donaldson. If the Astor House has any direct predecessor, it appears to be Evans' and Sutton's short-lived Union Hotel of 1858.

If this somewhat labored effort to construct a chronology for Shanghai's early hotels has any broader application, it may be to suggest the care and effort required to ascertain much of what we think we know about Shanghai.



### **Endnotes**

1. Jean Fredet, *Quand la Chine s'ouvrait... Charles de Montigny, Consul de France* (reprint Paris: 1953), 30-31, map after p. 32, and p. 39. Fredet, using early Jesuit sources, locates it between the later Rue Chu Pao-san and the Rue Petit. If the building lasted until 1898, then there

should be photographs. The problem would be how to identify it, if we held them in our hands.

2. The announcement of the hotel's opening, dated April 16, appeared in the *Register* of May 6. As Shanghai did not have a newspaper until 1850, the Hongkong papers sporadically reported events in Shanghai, and regularly published business notices for Shanghai firms, most of which were branches of Canton and Hongkong firms.
3. The only Americans known to be living at Shanghai at that early date were Henry Griswold Wolcott, formerly of Litchfield, Connecticut and Boston; and his partner Edwards Whipple Bates, from Jefferson County, New York. They formed Wolcott, Bates & Co. at Shanghai in October 1844 (*Friend of China* 1844, Nov 16). There may also have been American merchants visiting from Canton.

For Kenneth Ross Mackenzie, the host of the gathering, we find an obituary notice in the *North-China Herald* of 1873 Nov 20, p. 435: "Nagasaki. The same paper (i.e., the *Express*) records, in feeling terms, the death of one of the earliest pioneers of British commerce in Japan, a name well known from the very opening of the port, at which he was for some time French Consul, a name well known in China to many residents now there, and well known in India to residents of a past period,- Mr. Kenneth Ross Mackenzie, who died on Wednesday last, in his seventieth year. Few people, even living to the same age as Mr. Mackenzie, have gone through such varied experiences of life, and it is allowed to very few to attach such warm friends to himself as he did. His experiences embraced the recollections of a long residence in India, a long residence in China, and a long residence in Japan, the enjoyment at home of fortunes made, and the enjoyment again in the East of hard work (and this he thoroughly enjoyed) to rebuild those fortunes. His associates out here, and they were all his attached friends, although of a newer generation, looked upon him as their most sympathizing chief, their willing adviser in young and enthusiastic ideas, and their best companion in amusement or trouble. Always genial, always anxious to help, always capable of advising and ready to advise, always the best type of a fine old English gentleman, Mr. K.R. Mackenzie has left among us a name which we, when our time comes, may feel proud if we have been able to emulate. After some years absence in Osaka, Mr. Mackenzie returned to the port a short time back, in failing health; and also, we cannot doubt, with the wish to be near his oldest and best friend in what he must have

looked upon as his last moments. And the appreciation he showed of the untiring attentions and affectionate anticipation of every want shown by his old partner, must always, to that attached friend, remain a pleasant reminiscence in his own life.”

Mackenzie’s partner at Nagasaki was Thomas Blake Glover (1838-1911), the subject of a recent biography, *Scottish Samurai*, by Alexander McKay.

After the restructuring of the early Shanghai firm of Mackenzie Bros. & Co., two of Mackenzie’s brothers later worked with Peter Richards (below).

4. See, e.g., Lanning & Couling, *History of Shanghai*, I: 290-291. Earlier meetings and church services had been held at the British Consulate on Yaojia Lane within the walled city.
5. e.g., *North-China Herald (NCH)*, October 12, 1850.
6. e.g., *The Anglo-Chinese Calendar* for 1850, p. 100; 1851, p. 123; 1852, p. 110; 1853, p. 129; 1854, p. 116; 1855, p.121; 1856, p. 115. The 1852 *Shanghae Almanac* identifies his firm as “Ship-Chandlers & Store-Keepers” with the firm name *Lung-tae* (隆泰). The listings are similar in the Almanacs for 1853-57 and the *Hongkong Directory* for 1858, with the firm having from three to seven employees. No details were found in earlier directories.
7. Ch.-B Maybon, and Jean Fredet, *Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai* (Paris: Plon, 1929; reprint NY: AMS, 1975), 24-26.
8. *Friend of China*, January 4, August 2, 1848.
9. B. L. Ball, *Rambles in Eastern Asia* (Boston: James French & Co., 1855), 225-6.
10. *NCH* January 24, August 21, October 7, 1852. Wellington Ayer failed later that year and went back to his former occupation of river pilot. Mentions of the hotel, which we infer to mean only the building, can be found in the *Herald* of Aug 3, 1850 p. 1, c. 3; Aug 24, p.14, c.1; and 1851 Jan 11, p.94, c.1. The August 24 notice reveals a bit about the state of the hotel at that time: “DEATH.- At the Victoria Hotel, Shanghae, on Sabbath morning, the 18<sup>th</sup> August, Walter Lowrie, son of the Rev’d. M.S. and Mary D. Culberson, aged ten months and five days.  
“The circumstances of his death were deeply distressing. On Saturday afternoon he fell from a stair case, (one side of which had been left without any railing) and plunged headlong about twelve feet upon a brick pavement. He recovered partially from the shock and

hopes were entertained of his recovery, but he expired, a little more than eight hours after the accident.”

11. *NCH*, May 29, 1852.
12. *NCH* July 10, 1852.
13. *NCH* March 26, 1853.
14. Frederick M. Gratton, *Freemasonry in Shanghai and Northern China* (Shanghai: 1900), 45.
15. Ivan Goncharov, *The Frigate Pallada*, transl. Klaus Goetze (NY: St Martin's, 1987), 351, 370.
16. *NCH* July 10, 1852; July 1, 1854; Oct 20, 1855; Aug 9, 1865.
17. *NCH* Dec 15, 1855.
18. *NCH* May 31, June 21, 1856.
19. *NCH* Nov 29, 1856. M. Barraud was later at the now-forgotten Imperial Hotel, according to the 1861 *China Directory*.
20. 5 m. 6 f. 4 l. 1 h: 1 mou (亩 mu in pinyin) equals roughly 1/6 acre; 1 分 fen = .1 mu; 1 釐 li = .1 fen; 1 毫 hao = .1 li.
21. *NCH* Nov 13, 20, 1858.
22. *NCH* Dec. 25, 1858; Apr. 2, 1864.
23. *Anglo-Chinese Calendar* for 1849, 1851; *NCH* Aug. 3, 1850; *Shanghai Almanac* for 1852-57; *Hongkong Directory* for 1858, 1859.
24. U.S. National Archives, Shanghai Consular Archives, Vol. 0846, titled “Archives 1852-1860.” Burgevine had also sometimes lodged at the Astor House. His later career with the Ever Victorious Army and his unfortunate end while in the custody of the Chinese government are well known. See, e.g., Caleb Carr's *The Devil Soldier*.
25. *NCH* Jan. 5, 1861, notice dated Oct. 6. The Rue du Mausolée was the later Rue Montauban, now Sichuan nan lu. Whether the Smith mentioned here was Henry Smith who later took over the Astor House is unknown.
26. See, e.g., the May 1855 “Ground Plan of the Foreign Settlement at Shanghai” by F.B. Youel, R.N., with buildings drawn to scale, reproduced in Eric Politzer, “The Changing Face of the Shanghai Bund, c.1849-1879,” in *Arts of Asia* (March-April 2005): 66-67. Although this map shows buildings only on the English side of the Yangjing-bang, it is nevertheless suggestive of the state of the neighborhood. For the French Concession c.1851-53, see the map following p. 152 of Maybon and Fredet, which the authors confess contains many inaccuracies.
27. *NCH* Nov. 16, 1850 (notice dated Aug. 14).

28. *NCH* July 24 (notice dated 6/26), 1852.
29. *NCH* Oct. 16, 1852.
30. *NCH* May 7 (dated 4/19), 1853.
31. *NCH* April 29, Aug. 12, Dec. 9, 1854.
32. The preceding paragraph is a highly condensed summary of “The Margaret Mitchell,” (1860) in *Swabey’s Admiralty Reports*, 382 (online at books.google.com).
33. *NCH* Mar 15, 1856, p. 132.
34. Swabey, op. cit. (see Note 32), p. 397. The report cites a letter from Richards in New York dated June 30.
35. *NCH* May 17, 1856.
36. *NCH* Aug. 22, Sep. 12, Oct 3, 1857.
37. *NCH* Feb. 6, notice dated Feb. 5, 1858.
38. *NCH* Nov 21, 1857.
39. *NCH* Feb 27, Mar 6, 1858.
40. *NCH* Jan 21, 1860.
41. *NCH* May 15, Sep. 18, 1858.
42. *NCH* April 17, 1858.
43. The location is now the corner of Sichuan and Guangdong Road.
44. 1858 *Hongkong Directory*, p. 26. The 1858 *Shanghai Almanac* lists Knoop as an employee of Wetmore, Williams & Co., an American trading firm. The most likely explanation is that he switched employers in the period when the two directories were being compiled, to broaden his experience.
45. *North-China Desk Hong List* for 1879. Knoop & Co.’s notice that they were using Richards & Co.’s former premises ran in the *Herald* through July 2, 1859, after which we here no more of it. We find a Bremen- and Manchester-based merchant banking and trading firm of Knoop & Co, probably the same.
46. *NCH* June 4, 1859.
47. *NCH* Dec. 29, 1860; June 7, 1862.
48. *NCH* May 24, 1862.
49. *NCH* May 8, 1858, p. 163, c. 1
50. U.S. National Archives Microform M112 (Despatches from U.S. Consuls at Shanghai), Reel 4, Glover Despatch No. 2 of 1858 March 31; Smith Despatch No. 1 of 1858 Sep 20
51. U.S. Congress 45:2 H.Mis. Doc. 31, Pt. 1, pp. 824-5 (Serial Set Vol. 1816).
52. from a letter of 1863 Aug 1 from American merchants at Shanghai

to U.S. Secretary of State Seward, reprinted in *ibid.*, Pt. 2, p. 470. A photograph of the Bund in 1860 shows the Astor House in the distance, with two flagstaffs. The image, in the collections of the Peabody Essex Museum, is reproduced in Matsumura Shin's 1998 *Zusetsu Shanghai*. p. 30.

53. *Op. cit.*, note 24

54. *NCH* June 20, 1863; Nov. 25, 1865, p.186, c.5; Nov. 26, 1864.

55. *North-China Daily News* Oct. 2, 19, Dec. 3, 1867.

56. *Chronicle & Directory for China*, 1870, 1873.

57. *NCH* April 6, 1861.

58. Personal communication from Peter Hibbard

59. *NCH* April 6; Aug. 24, 31; Sep. 7, 21, 1861.

60. Rennie, *Peking and the Pekingese*, p. 304.

# GYPSIES OF SHANGHAI: THE ROMA COMMUNITY OF LATE 1930S AND 1940S SHANGHAI AND ITS ROLE IN THE CITY'S ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

BY PAUL FRENCH

## GYPSY JAZZ

The 1930s saw the musical style Gypsy Jazz (alternatively known as Gypsy Swing or Hot Club Jazz) gain strong popularity across Europe. The trend started in the early 1930s in France known as *jazz manouche* and was perhaps best exemplified and known through the music of Jean “Django” Reinhardt (1910-53) and other gypsy musicians based largely in Paris.<sup>1</sup> The style was typified by *bal-musette* and *Java* waltzes that had their inspiration in popular café, or *boîtes*, music of the 1880s where dancers held each other close and spun around extremely fast within a small space. Gypsy Jazz, following on from the *bal-musettes* and *boîtes* (gypsy bands played in both types of venues regularly) was to appeal strongly to, “the working men and women, sailors, soldiers, pimps and prostitutes with elements of the apache, the underworld...”<sup>2</sup>

By the later 1930s elements of traditional gypsy music and the popular swing music came to further define this style. Typically guitar and violin were heavily featured as well as elements of Auvergnat bagpipe, East European hurdy-gurdy music, Italian accordion melodies and light opera blends followed by a distinctly more urban influence in jazz. The musician most identified with the rise of the gypsy and jazz styles was the Belgian-born Roma guitarist and composer Django Reinhardt. Additionally non-Roma musicians, such as Stephane Grappelli (1908-97), born in France to an Italian father and French mother, became closely identified with gypsy music and gypsy jazz. Indeed Reinhardt and Grappelli together formed the seminal Quintette du Hot Club de France in 1934 in Paris. The distinctive guitar strumming technique known as *la pompe* typified the sound. Cymbalon (an instrument in the 1930s most closely identified with Roma musicians) and/or drums were also common. Among the standard repertoire of gypsy swing/jazz bands were various numbers originating from the *bal-musette* bar era as well as well-known songs such as *Limehouse Blues* (written in 1922 with lyrics by Douglas Furber and music by Philip Braham) and *Dinah* (1923, with music by Harry Akst and lyrics by Sam M. Lewis and Joe

Young) as well as jazz versions of Roma songs such as *Dark Eyes* (1843 with words by the Ukrainian poet and writer Yevhen Hrebinka). Gypsy Jazz rapidly spread from France through the Benelux countries and to North America, Great Britain and Scandinavia. Gypsy bands and jazz even became popular in Nazi Germany, where both jazz and Roma were deemed “degenerate”, in the mid- to late-1930s before their more severe repression under the Third Reich.

It was also the case that gypsies, or at least various stereotypical images of gypsies, appeared in popular culture in Europe emphasizing music, dancing and sexual attractiveness, particularly of female Roma. For instance, the highly successful and acclaimed 1937 Julien Duvivier film *Pépé le Moko* featured a gypsy character (Inés) played by the French actress Line Noro. Prominent popular culture representations of gypsies like Inés also created the female ‘gypsy’ look of large ear rings, darkened skin and dark hair.<sup>3</sup>

This paper looks both at the transmission of this popularized gypsy aesthetic to the entertainment economy of Shanghai’s International Settlement between the wars in the Republican period and, in particular, the presence and role of the small, and under-researched, Roma community in the city.

#### SHANGHAI GYPSIES

With its large European population, including a sizeable number of White Russians as well as Western Europeans, North Americans and, from the mid-1930s, a growing number of Jewish refugees from across continental Europe, Gypsy Jazz/swing found a receptive audience in the nightclubs, cabarets, bars and cafés of Shanghai. While jazz had become popular in Shanghai’s International Settlement and French Concession, Gypsy Jazz also came into vogue as a sub-genre around the mid- to late-1930s. Along with the rise in popularity of Gypsy Jazz and Roma music came a fad for stylised gypsy costume and dance.

While there have been any number of excellent studies of Shanghai’s foreign population as well as the International Settlement’s nightlife and entertainment economy, none have looked at the presence and role of either gypsy-style entertainment or the Roma community in Shanghai in the Republican period.<sup>4</sup> An examination, however challenging due to the illusive nature of information on the Roma community, of the extent and contributions to Shanghailanders society and life of Roma people in the Republican period is important as, by their very nature, Roma tend

to live outside of mainstream society and, as Roma were often transient, historians lack the bureaucratic resources that are more widely available to those researching other communities. It is also important to note that those Roma working in the entertainment industry had specific commercial reasons to draw attention to themselves and their culture via the media and so more is known about them than Roma engaged in other occupations. It is also the case that Roma communities globally have traditionally suffered from various exclusionary legislation, intolerance by mainstream society that has often led to acts of violence and forced exclusion and a general lack of understanding of Roma culture and traditions. While foreign Shanghai's authorities practiced no official discrimination against Roma it is the case that there were, as noted below, issues of discrimination and prejudice by other foreigners in Shanghai towards Roma.

In the late 1930s Shanghai is thought to have had a Roma population, invariably referred to in Shanghai's English language media simply as gypsy or *cigany/tzigane*, of approximately 300 people.<sup>5</sup> Most of these appear to have belonged to three large extended families of Russian Roma origin; the Petroffs, the Minersk and the Vishnevsky "clans". There were thought to also be some other Roma living in Shanghai not attached to either one of these three clans, though their numbers were small. The majority of identified Roma in Shanghai appear to have worked in the entertainment industry as either musicians, singers or dancers ("troubadours" or "tabor") in the cabarets, restaurants and cafés of the International Settlement, Frenchtown or the External Western Roads entertainment district (commonly known as the "Badlands"). Others were engaged in such activities as cooking, gem dealing and fortune telling ("prognosticating for money"). The majority were thought to live concentrated in the French Concession on Route Vallon (Nanchang East Road), Rue Bourgeat (Changle Road) and Route Pere Robert (Ruijin No.2 Road).<sup>6</sup> Most were practising Roman Catholics and the majority were either from the Lovari sub-group ("tribe") of the Romani people (with their own dialect, influenced by Hungarian) or the invariably more traditional and conservative Kalderash sub-group or Kelderasa, originating mostly from Romania or the Ukraine and usually more conservative and traditional.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the gypsy families and extended families ("clans") came to Shanghai from either Tsarist Russia (including what is now Ukraine) or Romania and the majority had been established in the city since joining

the exodus of White Russians following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. In that sense their route to Shanghai was similar to the bulk of other White Russians (of which the Russian and Romanian gypsies essentially formed a sub-set in Shanghai and were not classified as a separate ethnic group or nationality by either the Shanghai Municipal Council or the Shanghai Municipal Police) through north-east China. Smaller communities of Roma survived in Harbin, the major White Russian enclave in China outside Shanghai, and also the treaty port of Tientsin (Tianjin). The Russian theatre director and writer Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858-1943) noted the presence of Russian gypsies in the city of Harbin around the time of the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War: "Conversations in numbers, dreams in multiplication tables, thoughts in arithmetic calculations. Such was Harbin before the war, and such it remains. Only now the pioneers have been joined by new arrivals who have rushed here from every corner of Russia with a sole goal - to snatch a large sum while avoiding the military courts and get away in time, in one piece. Armenians, Georgians, Germans, Jews, Russian kulaks, and even gypsies all rush into the mad hurly-burly, thinking in thousands at the least, without fear of the sums reminiscent of the vast distance from Earth to Mars."<sup>8</sup> Similarly gypsies were present in both Harbin and Tianjin as fortunetellers - the Hollywood actress Natalie Wood was born Natalia Nikolaevna Zacharenko in San Francisco to Russian immigrant parents. Her mother Maria Stepanovna (née Zudilova; 1912-1998) had grown up as a White Russian refugee in Harbin where she recalled having her fortune told regularly by a Russian gypsy.<sup>9</sup> Most Shanghai Roma are thought to have spoken Russian as well as Roma dialects and often good English and basic functional Chinese too.<sup>10</sup> While Tsarist Russia had not had any targeted or specific exclusionary laws against Roma, such as those pertaining to Jews, there had been traditional distrust and discrimination against the indigenous Roma community (usually referred to as the *Russka Roma*) which accelerated after the formation of the Soviet Union that, in general, quickly came to suppress all nomadic communities including the Roma. With the rise in popularity of Gypsy Jazz and more traditional forms of Roma music and dance, Shanghai's Roma community moved from the margins of the city's entertainment industry to become one of its central components. Initially this meant more work for Roma entertainers and troubadours, a higher profile and more secure income as work previously had usually been highly

erratic and fickle. As well as dancing, and performing traditional Roma music and the new variants such as Gypsy Jazz and Swing, the larger Roma entertainment groups also included jugglers, magicians and comedians (who told jokes in English, French or Russian depending on their audience's majority language). Well known Shanghai Roma entertainers included Shoora Petroff who was considered one of the city's best dancers.<sup>11</sup> Though gypsies in Shanghai hailed from a variety of Roma sub-groups including the Lovari and a few Machwaya, the traditional gypsy costume favoured by all when performing was that most associated with the Kalderash - wide bright skirts, wide sleeves, fringed shawls worn around shoulders or hips etc.<sup>12</sup> The male "gypsy costume" was invariably less traditional and more Russian Cossack in style with blousons, knee high leather boots etc. For many Roma their entry into the entertainment industry appears to have occurred after arrival in Shanghai or China. For instance, the Lovari Vishnevsky clan, who came to have the largest gypsy dance band in Shanghai and to own a number of venues from the late 1930s until they left China in 1949, had undertaken various occupations in Russia including primarily the traditional *Russka Roma* male occupation of horse dealing. Quite simply the opportunities for dealing horses in Shanghai were limited; the opportunities for providing entertainment comparatively plentiful.<sup>13</sup>

Though Shanghai was by far the largest market in China for gypsy entertainment, prior to the Japanese invasion in 1937, Roma entertainers travelled the country providing entertainment. The major destinations were port cities and treaty ports such as Tientsin (Tianjin) and Tsingtao (Qingdao). In this sense they followed long established tour routes for many entertainment acts appealing to foreign audiences in China. Touring gypsy troubadours were popular in Harbin, Tientsin and Tsingtao as well as Peking (Beijing). These destinations were not surprising - Harbin, as previously noted had a large Russian population as did Tianjin (which had included a formal Russian Concession until it was renounced and "handed back" to the Chinese after the creation of the USSR), while Qingdao had both a White Russian population, was a resort destination for many Europeans from across China in the summer months, and was also where many leading Shanghai and Beijing nightclubs and cabarets retreated for the summer when business was slower and the weather humid (and air conditioning still relatively rare in many smaller venues) in the cities. For instance, the Hungaria Club, a popular and relatively long established venue at 272 Yu Yuen Road

on the “Badlands” was a nightclub-restaurant that regularly booked “gipsy musicians” and decamped for Qingdao every summer. In 1940 the Hungaria departed for Qingdao as normal holding a “Gala Farewell Soiree” featuring, among others Hartmann’s Gipsy Swing Band.<sup>14</sup>

There had been roaming groups of gypsies in China since the White Russian exodus. In September 1922 several American newspapers carried articles from Beijing recounting the arrival of a “group of gypsies” setting up tents and “fortune telling booths”. They claimed to have come from Central Europe but were apparently actually from Harbin but trying their luck on pastures new. The newspaper reported that the gypsies were successful, attracted large crowds of Chinese who believed them to have “the magic of good luck”. However, problems occurred when the local Chinese Beggars’ Union intervened and complained that the newcomers were eroding their takings. The gypsies were moved on, reportedly heading to Korea and Japan. The reporter noted their colourful traditional (i.e. Kalderash) gypsy costume and that “their bright handkerchiefs were the envy of every coolie.”<sup>15</sup>



The image shows a rectangular sign for the Hungaria Night Club and Restaurant. At the top, the word "HUNGARIA" is written in large, bold, serif capital letters, flanked by two stylized, heart-shaped portraits of women's faces. Below the name, the words "NIGHT CLUB" and "RESTAURANT" are printed in smaller, spaced-out capital letters. A line of text in italics reads "will be closed from June 12, 1940". Below this, a horizontal line is followed by the text "During the Summer Season see us at". The address "2 HWEI CHUAN ROAD" is printed in large, bold, serif capital letters, with "(formerly Cafe Courort)" in smaller italics underneath. The city name "TSINGTAO" is printed in large, bold, serif capital letters. At the bottom, the text "Same fine food, gipsy music and management under Miss Szirmay" is printed in a smaller, bold, serif font.

**HUNGARIA**

NIGHT CLUB                      RESTAURANT

*will be closed from June 12, 1940*

During the Summer Season  
see us at

**2 HWEI CHUAN ROAD**  
*(formerly Cafe Courort)*

**TSINGTAO**

Same fine food, gipsy music and  
management under Miss Szirmay

In the 1920s gypsy music and culture was beginning to permeate the International Settlement's popular entertainment and fashion trends, though Roma people themselves in Shanghai were being demonized as criminal. Commenting on a general rise in "professional beggars" in Shanghai, *The North-China Herald* reported in the summer of 1921 that, "At the present time there is a gang of gypsies going around calling themselves Rumanians (sic), about 26 in number and residing off the Seward Road. On investigation it was found that they were professional beggars and, comparatively speaking, wealthy."<sup>16</sup> Other professional beggar gangs were noted, including one organized group of beggars from "the Urals". In October 1921 the paper also noted that "a gypsy girl outside a theatre" had helped a man recently escaped from prison to find a lodging house. Again while no names were mentioned the implication of criminality was clear.<sup>17</sup>

By the later 1920s gypsy beggars were vexing *The North-China Herald* even more than a few years earlier. In 1926 the paper reported a new Romany "family" in Shanghai reputedly using children as beggars importuning businessmen in the International Settlement with, "Pleese. No fadder, no mudder, no eat." The paper's reporter believed these Roma to be Russian and to have been in China since the Bolshevik Revolution moving from city to city with foreign populations professionally begging. Another gypsy professional begging group was also reported in 1926, about 20 in number and claiming to be "Galicians".<sup>18</sup>

Still, Romany or gypsy entertainment was also apparent and popular at the highest levels of Shanghailander society in the 1920s too. In March 1923 the popular Canadian violinist Kathleen Parlow appeared at the Olympic Theatre on the Bubbling Well Road and performed a number of popular works including the Spanish composer Pablo de Sarasate's "Song of the Spanish Gypsies" to great critical acclaim.<sup>19</sup> Also in 1923 *The North-China Herald's* "Woman Page" noted that the trend for wearing "gypsy earrings" had come from London to Shanghai.<sup>20</sup> Still by the later 1920s, while gypsy beggars were still regularly appearing in the pages of the English language China coast newspapers, gypsy music was popular. In November 1926 L'Alliance Francaise organized a night of music at the Cercle Sportif Francaise attended by a long list of notable French Shanghailanders and others. Among the night's entertainment programme featuring Chinese jugglers and a "modern dancer" performing "Danse de la nymphe des fleurs" between dancing and a buffet supper was a recital of gypsy music. The same weekend Miss

Alice Bourke married Mr William Rutley Mowll at St Joseph's Church. According to the newspapers, "The little flower girls were dressed in pale blue pleated georgette and carried silver gypsy baskets from which they strewed rose petals."<sup>21</sup>

However, the twin attributes popularly given to gypsies in Shanghai – as entertainers and as criminals – had been combined in 1922 as *The North-China Herald* noted the arrival in Shanghai of a troupe of Persian gypsy singers who were expected to be popular with local audiences. However, the paper also noted that the troupe had allegedly (it was claimed but there was no actual evidence offered) been expelled from the Japanese treaty port of Yokohama for defrauding shopkeepers, palming change and having stolen "Yen 15,000". The paper wrote in an overtly accusatory and mildly racist tone:

*Shanghai is very fond of gypsies. A year or so ago two of them entertained the credulous with whispered fortunes told down dark alleys, and sold marbles in little bags as amulets. And now a new crowd is coming with an entirely fresh line of business. Exactly where the singing comes into operation as an adjunct to the apparently more lucrative form of business is not clear, though it might be that, being discovered in their trickery, they charm the savage breast of the irate shopkeeper with a little ditty. Shanghai shopkeepers who have no particular taste for music in business would be well advised therefore, to count their change before handing it out to anybody who looks like a Romany lass, or even a Romany lad.<sup>22</sup>*

In Shanghai there were occasional bouts of anti-Roma sentiment, largely taking the form of casual racism, among the rest of the foreign community in the Settlement and Frenchtown. Roma were associated by many with crime, in particular the "ringing the changes" fraud (a long standing traditional scam whereby shopkeepers or clerks are persuaded to give back more money than they are given by means of confusing them over change - a fraud long associated with travelling gypsy gangs across Europe at the time). There were also apparently quite substantial feuds both between and within Roma clans as well as family feuds that did occasionally spill over into public violence involving a large number of people. In general it was believed that the Shanghai Roma community showed no interest in politics and in part was able to remain out of the ideological clashes around the

Second World War by not openly taking sides. It was also common, as recounted in Victor Vishnevsky's memoir, for gypsy boys to not attend any formal school, though Victor, encouraged by his entrepreneur entertainment industry father did attend school, the Roman Catholic St. Jeanne d'Arc, and later a White Russian-run Catholic school, in the French Concession. Vishnevsky maintains in his autobiography that the Kalderash (the Vishnevskys were of the less conservative and traditional Lovari sub-group) never sent their children to school in Shanghai. This may have been because Victor's father was more entrepreneurial and settled (a "modern gypsy") than some other Roma, or that Victor was his only son.<sup>23</sup> Victor's sister Lida was not formally educated though became a noted performer herself as a young woman in the family entertainment business. Though regarded as belonging to a highly self-contained community, many Shanghai Roma (perhaps most obviously children) did have friends from other communities. Born in 1938, Victor Vishnevsky recalls English boys and girls, as well as White Russian children, who were his friends and lived on the same streets as he did (Route Pere Robert and Route Vallon). Most Roma children were involved in the entertainment industry from a young age and learnt musical instruments and other performing skills when children (Victor Vishnevsky was an accomplished accordion player by his early teens). It appears that most Roma married other Roma in Shanghai often within their own sub-group though inter-clan marriages were not unknown. Some Roma, particularly those younger Shanghai-born ones, did marry out, mostly to members of the White Russian and Eurasian community. While there are reported instances of this not being popular and leading to trouble it certainly seems to have been common enough and mostly accepted within Shanghai Roma families.

#### SHANGHAI GYPSIES AS ENTERTAINERS

Most "gypsy entertainers" were hired by nightclubs, restaurants or cafes and were effectively self-employed on an engagement-by-engagement basis. However, some prominent members of Shanghai's Roma community did move into business ownership. Victor Vishnevsky recalls the whole of the Vishnevsky clan as being involved in the entertainment industry, and Victor's father owned and opened his own nightclub called The Black Eyes. He then went on in 1945 to open several successful bars employing the whole extended family and catering to Allied troops stationed in the newly-liberated Shanghai. During the

Japanese occupation of the Shanghai International Settlement (1941-45) the majority of the Roma community remained at liberty avoiding internment. Most had some sort of nationality papers; for instance the Vishnevsky clan, though having come to Shanghai from Russia, had obtained Iranian nationality due to some of the family “elders” having been born in Iran and then moved to Russia. This placed them in the category of “second-class enemies” and, though they were required to wear a red armband by the Japanese military police, they remained at liberty. However, many Roma were reduced to poverty and destitution during the War as the entertainment industry collapsed after the occupation of the International Settlement following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Unlike in continental Europe where the Nazis held sway, there was no targeting of the Roma community for special persecution by the Japanese forces as long as they were not involved in politics or black market dealing. Some were caught up in events - one prominent Roma dancer, and friend of the well known Russian singer, cabaret performer and nightclub entrepreneur Alexander Vertinsky (1889-1957) was accused of spying for the Russians. Vertinsky often booked gypsy acts at his Badlands nightclub, Gardenia on the Great Western Road (now Yanan Road West), and often performed with them showing a cross-fertilisation of traditional Russian and *Ruski Roma* cultures in exile. Similarly the Russian-managed Red Rose nightclub in Hongkou offered “Russian Gypsy” music nightly, though this appears to have been performed by non-Roma Russian musicians.

Indeed a major niche sector of the Shanghai entertainment industry where gypsy entertainers and non-Roma entertainers intersected were the city’s Russian cabarets, *Cabaret Russe*, of which Vertinsky’s Gardenia club was one of the best known. This had also been the case in the *Cabaret Russe* of Paris that had, since the mid-1930s, highlighted gypsy bands. As in the West, since the formation of the Quintette du Hot Club de France by Reinhardt and Grappelli in 1934, non-Roma musicians, such as Grappelli, had been a “passport” for Roma entertainers and musicians to move up from the *boîtes* and *bal-musettes* and to enter higher class establishments. Grappelli helped Reinhardt gain access to the high class venue Le Croix du Sud in Paris while Louis Vola (1902-90), a double-bassist and another founding member of the Quintette du Hot Club de France, helped book Reinhardt at the exclusive Hotel Claridge on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. In 1937 Reinhardt was playing solo at Ada “Bricktop” Smith’s legendary Paris club The Big

Apple, sharing the top billing with the vocalist Mabel Mercer.<sup>24</sup> It seems Alexander Vertinsky was one nightclub owner in Shanghai who appears to have performed the same function for gypsy musicians in China.

#### THE DEMISE OF GYPSY SHANGHAI

With the end of the Second World War and the liberation of Shanghai many Roma in the city went into the bar business while many gypsy bands changed style to perform songs popular with the Allied liberation forces, largely American. The vogue for Gypsy Jazz, swing and the gypsy style had rather passed. Many Roma, like Victor Vishnevsky's father, went into the bar business which was profitable, but competitive and rough. Large scale and regular fighting between foreign sailors and soldiers led to many of the bars, including the ones owned by Vishnevsky, being designated "out of bounds" by the US Military Police. Additionally, as the Cold War set in, many Roma-owned establishments and businesses came to be perceived with some distrust by the American forces in Shanghai as being pro-Soviet. This led many *Russka Roma* to join the exodus of White Russians in Shanghai to Stalin's USSR - Victor Vishnevsky recalls that most of the Kalderash Roma in Shanghai opted to go to the USSR. In general it seems that life for the Roma returnees in the USSR was harsh, many were purged or imprisoned in Siberia while their traditional ways of life were highly circumscribed. However, some seem to have survived and several were reported as having been sent to Moscow to provide entertainment as gypsy musicians; gypsy music enjoyed something of a renaissance and fashionability in post-war Russia if not the west. However, traditional Roma lifestyles were severely curtailed by the imposition of the Decree of Nomadic Life Interdiction in 1956, which effectively outlawed nomadism in the USSR. Other Shanghai Roma families went to non-European destinations including Hong Kong, Macao, Australia, as well as various Western European and Scandinavian countries, and the United States and various Latin American destinations, primarily Brazil. One large group of Shanghai Lovari, including the Vishnevsky clan, travelled to western China and left across the border into Burma before a prolonged stay in India, on to Tehran and then finally to the United States or Brazil. Along the way they performed their family gypsy music and dance shows to raise funds. Many other Shanghai Roma remained stateless for many years with a community still awaiting exit visas from Hong Kong, where they were housed in a refugee camp (and later refugee-only hotels) organised

by the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) in the mid-1950s. Conditions in the camp were far from ideal as it was monitored by the police, and residents were subject to a midnight curfew. Many of these former Shanghai Roma eventually secured visas to leave for Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil; both Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo have communities of resettled Shanghai gypsies of both Kalderash and Lovari sub-groups. Some other Russian Roma stayed in Yokohama, Japan for some time into the mid-1950s before mostly leaving for the United States.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can see that Shanghai was both in step with, and perhaps slightly ahead of (in many but not all cases), the international acceptance and adoption of a form of stylized “gypsy entertainment”. Shanghai had any number of venues across the International Settlement, French Concession and the “Badlands” that employed, advertised, promoted and in a limited number of cases were owned and managed by, Roma, who were themselves a small, but distinctive, community in Shanghai. While the interest in gypsy-themed entertainment, or what the journalist Joseph Roth, encountering supposedly gypsy entertainers in France in the 1930s, termed “balalaika Russians” (romanticized gypsy styles of music performed by non-Roma, invariably Russians, in stylized gypsy costume) was strong, it was indeed often, if not in the majority of cases, in Shanghai performed by actual Roma as opposed to non-Roma artistes and performers.<sup>25</sup>

While the presence of Shanghai’s 1930s taste for gypsy jazz and entertainment venues was noted through advertising in newspapers and flyers, the role of the city’s Roma community has since been marginalised. Roma culture was celebrated in a popularised and romanticised form through music, dance and costume though it appears that the Settlement’s small Roma community remained somewhat ignored, sometimes discriminated against and became somewhat marginalised. The result has been that the community has been almost totally overlooked by historians of foreign Shanghaiander Society yet, small as the community was, the Shanghai gypsies were a particularly vibrant part of the city’s entertainment scene in the late 1930s and 1940s.



## Endnotes

1. *Manouche* being a French term for Gypsy or Roma people.
2. The “apache” (pronounced “ap-ash”, though from the Native American Apache) was a *belle époque* Parisian criminal subculture closely associated with the city’s nightclubs and nightlife mostly in the Montmartre, La Villette, Bastille (most famously on the most infamous Rue de Lappe) and Belleville districts. Though often violent criminals, they were glamourised through their trademark “apache” shirts, caps, neckties and the popular “dance apache” that reenacted an argument between a pimp and a prostitute and became well known for its energy and physicality. Quote is from *Gypsy Jazz*, a digital booklet (author unknown) accompanying the CD *Gypsy Jazz*, Various Artists, (Proper Records, 2007).
3. Ginette Vincendeau, *Pépé Le Moko* (London: British Film Institute, 1998).
4. There are numerous studies of the various communities of foreign Shanghai and the entertainment industry though none include any significant references to Roma. However, Marcia Ristaino’s *Port of Last Resort: The Diaspora Communities of Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) is particularly helpful regarding the wider Jewish and East European communities in Shanghai of which many Roma were allied, while Andrew Field’s *Shanghai’s Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919-1954* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010) is useful.
5. “Roma” is in fact the endo-name for various groups that were previously known as “Gypsy”, as well as being politically correct today.
6. ‘Shanghai Gypsy Community’, *North-China Daily News*, June 17, 1940.
7. Or Kelderasa, originating mostly from Romania or the Ukraine.
8. Quoted in David Wolff and Nicholas Riasanovsky, *To the Harbin Station: the liberal alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
9. Suzanne Finstad, Natasha, *The Biography of Natalie Wood* (Three Rivers Press, 2002). The Harbin gypsy told Wood’s mother that her second child (Natalie) would be famous throughout the world and should “beware of dark water”. Natalie Wood of course later drowned.
10. From the memoirs and sources consulted it is not clear which Romani dialect/language (s) were spoken in Shanghai as they are usually just referred to as “Romany” or “Roma”. However, while all

Romani languages are Indic in origin there are generally agreed to be seven varieties divergent enough to be considered languages in their own right - Vlax Romani, Balkan Romani, Carpathian Romani and Sinti Romani are the largest currently. There are additionally a number of creole or mixed Romani languages that have developed among Roma communities and/or “clans” in locations as disparate as the British Isles, Scandinavia, Armenia and Portugal. Most Russian Roma spoke one or other of the so-called Northern Romani dialects.

11. ‘Shanghai Gypsy Community’, *North-China Daily News*, June 17, 1940.
12. The Lovari sub-group speak their own dialect based on Hungarian and come mostly from Hungary, Romania, Poland, France, Germany, Italy and Greece. The Machwaya sub-group originate in the main from Serbia and the former Yugoslavia and throughout the Balkans.
13. Victor Vishnevsky, *Memories of a Gypsy* (Cheverly: Salo Press, 2011).
14. Advertisement for the Hungaria Club, *North-China Daily News*, June 1940.
15. “Pekin Invaded by Gypsy Band,” *The Schenectady Gazette*, Sept. 28, 1922.
16. “Professional Beggars,” *The North-China Herald*, July 9, 1921, p.109. Seward Road is now Dongdaming Road in Hongkou.
17. “Muncie’s Wanderings After Escape,” *The North-China Herald*, Oct. 1, 1921, p. 60.
18. “Some of our Daily Importunists,” *The North-China Herald*, Sept. 4, 1926, p. 451.
19. “Miss Parlow’s Concert,” *The North-China Herald*, March 3, 1923, p.589. Bubbling Well Road is now Nanjing Road West.
20. “Triangular Fars,” *The North-China Herald*, April 28, 1923, p. 275.
21. ‘L’Alliance Francaise Entertainment” and “Weddings: Mowll-Bourke,” *The North-China Herald*, Nov. 27, 1926, p. 402.
22. “Coming Visitors,” *The North-China Herald*, Feb. 18, 1922, p.425.
23. The term “modern gypsy” appears to have come into use in 1930s France and Spain to refer to Roma who moved into apartments and settled.
24. There are a number of books detailing this rise up the social ranks of Gypsy Jazz and Roma performers in France. See, for instance, Michael Dregni, *Gypsy Jazz: In Search of Django Reinhardt and the Soul of Gypsy Swing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The

cross-fertilisation also led to the writing of the classic Gypsy swing recording “Bricktop” by Reinhardt and Grappelli.

25. Joseph Roth, *The White Cities: Reports from France, 1925-1939*, (London: Granta Books, 2005).

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF SHANGHAI'S FUTURE

BY JEFFREY WASSERSTROM

“[I]t is the destiny of Shanghae to become the permanent emporium of trade between [China] and all nations of the world.”

To Our Readers, *North China Herald*, August 3, 1850 (inaugural issue).

**The Future Capital of China** – Headline accompanying an August 29, 1900, *North China Herald* article on Shanghai's post-Boxer Uprising prospects.

“It has been an event-packed, fast-moving year since Shanghai awoke from a nightmare of oppression...a year of learning... We have learned about the future.”

Song Qingling (Madame Sun Yat-sen), “Shanghai's New Day Has Dawned,” 1950.

**The Twenty-First Century Starts Here** – Headline for a February 18, 1996, *New York Times Sunday Magazine* on Shanghai as a “city of the future.”

“Shanghai looks like the future!”

Paris Hilton, as quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 23, 2007

### PART I: BACK TO THE FUTURE, 1850 TO 1950

Historians are supposed to focus on the past, though it is not unusual for members of our guild to end our books with epilogues that bring the story we are telling up to the present. Moving into the future, however, is generally taboo, something best left to political scientists or better yet the authors of sci-fi novels – several of whom, incidentally, will be mentioned in the pages that follow. So, I guess I hoped that including a reference to a year that had not yet arrived in the title of my 2009 Routledge book, *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010*, would earn it a bit of “man bites dog” attention: “historian of Chinese metropolis doesn't just look backwards, but also does some crystal ball-gazing, details at 11p.m. on our nightly newscast.” I did not, though, choose to put 2010 in the title just because of that. I had four other, more substantial reasons to end the book at a point that was then still not in the past but in the near-future:

1) Visits to Shanghai at the end of the last century and the start of this one had convinced me that it had become a metropolis inordinately focused on both what it used to be and what it might be down the road.

2) I had been struck by how often local and global commentary on Shanghai had begun to focus on its futuristic qualities. Since I was determined to make *Global Shanghai* a work in which representations of the metropolis were seen as part and parcel of the story of the actual place, I felt I needed to come to terms with things, such as references to Pudong reminding visitors of “Blade Runner” come to life, showing up continually in travel pieces.

3) As I wrote the chapters of *Global Shanghai* dealing with the past, such as one devoted to 1850 that focused on the founding of the city’s first newspaper (the *North China Herald*), I realized that while there is much that is novel about the current obsession with the city’s future and its futuristic qualities, ruminating on what the metropolis will be, should be, or could be, as opposed to simply what it has been before and has become, is nothing new. Shanghai has long been a city with a special ability to inspire predictions (the *North China Herald* began to make them in its very first issue, as the quote from 1850 provided above indicates), and it has long been touted as giving at least some visitors a sense of what lies ahead – though only in the current era has it been regularly seen by foreigners as opposed to Chinese residents and visitors as truly futuristic.

4) The build-up to the World Expo, which was in high gear when I finished *Global Shanghai*, gave me a natural forward-looking event around which to structure the book. Anticipation of the Expo (touted as “China’s First World’s Fair” and an “Economic Olympics”) was one thing that had made the city seem so focused on the future during the years I was completing the book. There were the Expo countdown clocks and forward-looking Expo posters. More than this, however, there was the fact that World’s Fairs have always been designed to showcase not just the international but also futuristic technologies, as illustrated by the fact that the telephone got its public debut at the 1876 Philadelphia World’s Fair and the first major showing of IMAX films was at the Osaka Expo of 1970, the first event of its kind ever held in Asia.

This long prefatory explanation behind me, the rest of this opening segment of my two-part look at Shanghai and the future will be devoted to sketching in the way that forward-looking approaches to the city figured in its history between 1850 and 1950, which happen to be two of

the seven individual years spread out at quarter-century intervals that are the subjects of chapters in my book. The second half of this piece will then focus on recent visions of Shanghai – and how these visions parallel and diverge from those of earlier periods.

The most interesting thing to say about 1850 prognostications of Shanghai's potential for future greatness, such as that made in the *North China Herald's* inaugural issue, is that they argued for the inevitability of the port surpassing Canton (Guangzhou) as a center for trade with the West. This was certainly what happened in the end. But Shanghai had only been open to trade with the West for just under seven years when the *North China Herald* went into operation, whereas for over a century prior to that Guangzhou had been the only Chinese port open to European and American merchants (aside from Macao, that is, the neighboring Portuguese colony). Guangzhou circa 1850 was still a much busier international port than was Shanghai. And some might have speculated that Guangzhou's most important rival in the near-term would be Hong Kong (ceded completely to British rule in 1842) rather than Shanghai (in which Britons and then soon French and American traders as well had secured the right to set up small self-governing enclaves).

What 1850 predictions tell us is that the kind of bravado that shows up in so many later writings by Shanghailanders (as English speaking residents were sometimes known) was present from the start of the city's century-long incarnation as a subdivided treaty port (1843-1943). In the December 28 issue of 1850 (the last of the year), for example, the publisher of the *North China Herald* was not content to simply muse on how far the Western-run districts of Shanghai had come since the Opium War (1839-1842). He also insisted that "it needs no spirit of prophesy to enable us to see that Shanghai is rapidly leaving her sister ports behind, and will soon be the first port in China...ultimately attain[ing] such an importance compared with which its present position is as naught."

The following decades would see many other instances in which Shanghailanders moved from noting how far the city had progressed in recent years, to stating with certainty that the best was still to come. On February 22, 1881, for example, the *North China Herald* ran an editorial devoted to the theme of "Municipal Progress," which states, in language not unlike that used in recent years in Chinese government publications about Shanghai, that "every ten years" the city witnesses "improvements that would seem incredible if we could be shown them at the beginning

instead of the end of the decade.”

That same commentary continues with this line: “if one of us could be shown a picture of Shanghai in 1921” – forty years in the future – the viewer would probably “turn away laughing at the credulity of the artist.” As a result, the author wrote, it is “difficult to over-rate the importance in the world that Shanghai will at no distant period assume.”

Western commentators of the 1800s and the early 1900s as well had, in short, plenty to say about where Shanghai was headed and what it might become – and sometimes got things very wrong indeed (as when Sir Robert Hart predicted in 1875 that the port would lose its regional primacy soon, or when some Shanghailanders mused that their city might replace Beijing as China’s capital – two things that didn’t come to pass). Shanghailanders did not, however, think of their city as futuristic, nor did foreign visitors.

When Westerners enthused about the metropolis, it was because it offered up so many of the conveniences that were available in European and American cities of the day, despite being located in exotic China. Going to Shanghai for a visit or living there did not give Westerners a sense of traveling into the future – as some now claim spending time in the 21<sup>st</sup> century city does. If Shanghai seemed to have a time travel dimension then, it lay in its having districts that felt up-to-date (the foreign-run ones with macadamized roads and gas or later electric lighting) that were but a short walk from districts that felt like they belonged to the distant past (the oldest parts of the Chinese-run municipality that were imagined to be, and sometimes genuinely were, untouched by the standard accoutrements of modernity).

The situation was quite different for Chinese living outside of Shanghai who visited or simply read about the treaty port. To them, the most exotic thing about the city was likely to be precisely the things that Western tourists viewed as surprisingly familiar. Gas lamps, for example, which inspired a limerick (printed in an 1872 issue of the city’s leading Chinese language newspaper, *Shen Pao*, a periodical that has been the subject of important recent studies by Rudolf Wagner and Barbara Mittler) that referred to “[r]unning fires beyond the skill of man,” and contraptions such as bicycles and telephones (two things that began showing up in Shanghai around 1900). To step into the foreign-run districts of Shanghai, for at least those Chinese who had never before ridden in an elevator or seen a tram, could seem a venture into the future – a move into a place that was located in China but a step

ahead of every other city in the country.

Song Qingling had something very different in mind, though, when she alluded to the “future” in “Shanghai’s New Day Has Dawned,” a speech that was given to mark the first anniversary of the Communist Party’s May 1949 take-over of the city and was published in many periodicals, including the first issue of *The Shanghai News*, a Communist Party-run English language daily founded almost a century to the day after the British-run *North China Herald*. When Song, who was given an honorific position within the Communist Party’s governing structure, said that local residents had “learned about the future” in the preceding months, she did not mean that they had been exposed to foreign objects with marvelous capabilities. Rather, they had begun to familiarize themselves with a “New Shanghai” that would be unlike the old one. Just how it would be different was not yet clear; as I argue in *Global Shanghai* there was an in-between, indeterminate quality to 1950 that is sometimes overlooked due to the power of our images of the heyday of Maoist rule (ca. 1956-1976). But it was sure to be a city unified where the treaty port had been divided and one whose modernity was tied to socialism rather than capitalism.

The inaugural issue of the *Shanghai News*, in addition to running Song’s speech, carried a “To Our Readers” feature that hinted at some interesting continuities and discontinuities with the past relating to thinking about the future. On the side of continuity, the new newspaper, using words that could have come straight from the old *North China Herald*, said that its goal was to report faithfully on a city that had just changed enormously and was destined to “continue to advance in an accelerating tempo.” On the side of discontinuity, whereas the newspaper founded in 1850 always treated the metropolis as moving to its own rhythm, the one founded a century later insisted that the “new Shanghai and the new China as a whole” would be venturing forward together into a shared national future.

## PART 2: SCI-FI FANTASIES FROM LATE QING TIMES UNTIL THE DIAMOND AGE

“Pudong’s special economic zone [is] highlighted by the multi-scitillating Jetsons-style Oriental Pearl TV tower...”

Pepe Esobar, “Shanghai Rocks!” *AsiaTimes Online*, October 29, 2003

“To call the city science fictional is correct but too general...the landscape offers a full spectrum of sci-fi echoes and allusions...”

Mark Kingwell, “The City of Tomorrow,” *Harper’s Magazine*, February 2005

In this second part of my essay, my focus will shift, as these scene-setting quotations suggest, to the topic of science fiction, the most future-oriented of genres. Shanghai’s ties to this genre are many and varied. Consider these links to film and other visual arts alone:

1. The contemporary cityscape routinely inspires journalists, travel writers and critics to site parallels to television shows and films set in either futuristic versions of real cities (e.g., *Blade Runner*, the action in which unfolds in the L.A. of 2019) or completely made-up places (the Jetsons call Orbit City home).

2. The Pearl of the Orient Tower and other space-age structures located in today’s Pudong sometimes pop up in works of entertainment set in a Shanghai of the future – as is the case with *Code 46*, a cloning film directed by Michael Winterbottom.

3. Stylized versions of Pudong’s future skyline are featured in Wong Kar-wai’s sci-fi inflected film *2046*, as well as in “Five Centuries of Progress, 1974-2474,” a World’s Fair-themed poster by fantasy artist Steve Thomas, blogged about and shown recently at *Shanghaiist*.

Turning from the visual arts to literature, we again find plenty of diverse Shanghai connections. Here are three relating to Western sci-fi luminaries whose literary careers began between the mid-1800s and mid-1900s:

1. Jules Verne mentioned Shanghai in passing in his 1873 novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* and used the city as the main setting for his lesser-known 1879 novel *Tribulations of a Chinese Gentleman*.

2. Aldous Huxley – not just a sci-fi writer, of course, but the author of *Brave New World*, a classic in the genre – included a description of the city in his 1926 book *Jesting Pilate*, using phrasing that still gets quoted in some Shanghai guidebooks.

3. J.G. Ballard was born in Shanghai in 1930, and the action in one of his best-known books, 1984’s *Empire of the Sun*, takes place in and just outside of the metropolis.

I should note before proceeding that these three figures, all of whom are known in part for their futuristic takes on other settings, only described Shanghai as it was when they were writing (in both Verne and Huxley’s cases) or had been in the past (in Ballard’s case). This means they can only be of marginal interest in an essay on the city and the future.

The situation is quite different, however, with a different trio of major sci-fi authors of a later generation: *Neuromancer* author William Gibson, *Islands in the Net* author Bruce Sterling, and *Snow Crash* author Neal Stephenson. Here is what links these leading lights in the sci-fi subgenres of cyberpunk and steam punk to the history of Shanghai's future:

1. Gibson contributed a "Foreword" to Greg Girard's 2007 photography book *Phantom Shanghai*, in which he said he had never been to the city, but felt from these images that it was a place where features of the urban futures conjured up in sci-fi came to life.

2. Sterling has not yet written about Shanghai (as far as I know), but he did sign on to serve as an adviser to the BH & L Group, which sought (unsuccessfully) to secure the right to create the American pavilion for the future-oriented 2010 Shanghai Expo. (Full disclosure: I was another adviser to the BH & L Group, though, alas, this neither gave me a hand in planning the American pavilion nor an opportunity to meet Sterling, an author I admire).

3. Stephenson, last but far from least, set his Hugo Award-winning 1995 novel *The Diamond Age* in Shanghai. He also – as Salon.com blogger and self-confessed Stephenson fan Andrew Leonard pointed out to me in an email – included some Shanghai scenes in a later book, *Cryptonomicon*. It is *The Diamond Age*, though, that matters most to us here, since it takes readers forward to a Shanghai of the future where the main form of entertainment is interactive super-high-tech virtual reality performances (called "ractices" for short), while *Cryptonomicon*, like *Empire of the Sun*, time travels readers back to the city as it was during World War II.

In light of this quick synopsis, the logical starting point for a discussion of Shanghai and sci-fi visions of the future might seem to be the year 1995. That was when the Pearl of the Orient Tower (the first Pudong structure to be dubbed futuristic) was completed. It was also when *The Diamond Age* (the first novel by a canonical sci-fi author to be set in a Shanghai of days to come) was published.

To go back no further than 1995, though, would be a Western-centric move. There is, after all, a whole different set of texts to take into account: *Chinese language* forays into sci-fi. And with these – as we learn from recent books on late Qing fiction by scholars such as Jing Tsu, David Der-Wei Wang, Theodore Hutters, and Alexander des Forges – the key decade was the one that opened, not closed the twentieth century.

For example, *Yueqiu zhimindi xiaoshuo* [*Tales of Moon Colonization*], often called China's first sci-fi novel, was published in Shanghai in 1904. And two years earlier *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* [*The Future of New China*] appeared – a 1902 work that some might not call sci-fi, yet fits the bill for me, since it is set in the Shanghai of the then far-off year of 1962.

\*\*\*

*The Future of New China* is a novel or story fragment (critics can't decide which to call it) that has been analyzed in detail in a fascinating *Thesis Eleven* article by John Fitzgerald titled "The Unfinished History of China's Future" (1999). And it is one well worth lingering on here for two main reasons.

The first is that its author was none other than Liang Qichao (1873-1929), a leading intellectual figure of the late Qing era (1644-1912) and the early part of the Republican period (1912-1949). A major influence at different points on everyone from the great writer Lu Xun to a young revolutionary-to-be named Mao Zedong, Liang is often remembered now as a political thinker and a proponent of radical reform.

He was also, however, many other things – including a champion of the educational value of fiction in general and, for a time, Western sci-fi in particular. This helps explain why the first major writing project undertaken by Lu Xun was a translation of Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*.

Liang's interest in Western sci-fi also helps explain why *The Future of New China* borrows a narrative device from a major nineteenth-century work in the genre, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*. In his text, Liang is clearly more interested in philosophizing than in the kind of technologic speculation often associated with science fiction, but his tale is framed, like Bellamy's, as a reflection on varied issues from the perspective of a point in the future.

The second thing that makes *The Future of New China* worth close consideration is that some points in it are intriguing to contemplate just now, with the Beijing Games and the Shanghai Expo just behind us. For example, the Shanghai of the future that Liang describes is one that is playing host to an international gathering that brings dignitaries from around the world to the city – something that local leaders hoped the mega-event of 2010 would accomplish.

The gathering that Liang describes is not quite like the Expo that

actually took place in 2010. The one he imagined was presented as a large-scale conference focusing on the exchange of ideas about religion and politics, not a series of displays of the latest technologies combined with pavilions showcasing different nations and cultures. Still, both Liang's imagined event and the real one that took place in 2010 were part of the same lineage that stretches back to early World's Fairs – the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, for example. That event did not just witness the debut of the Ferris Wheel and feature high-tech displays. It also incorporated, as an affiliated event, a "World's Parliament of Religions" – an influential and widely publicised gathering that included representatives of Asian as well as Western faiths.

What brings the 2008 Olympics rather than the Expo to mind, by contrast, is what Liang presents as a highpoint of the 1962 event he conjures up: a speech by a descendant of Confucius who claimed that the ideas of the sage had continuing relevance. For on August 8, 2008, dignitaries from around the world were exposed to an Opening Ceremony in Beijing that began with a quote from *The Analects* and the appearance of 3000 actors dressed to represent the sage's disciples.

\*\*\*

Is there any common thread that connects Liang's story, which was reissued in a compilation published to coincide with the start of the 2010 Expo, to much more recent works such as *The Diamond Age*, the film *Code 46*, and the Steve Thomas poster that looks ahead to the 25<sup>th</sup> century? I think there is at least one: the centrality of the international.

Cities that attract unusual amounts of attention from the creators of science fiction works tend to be those that look in some way futuristic, as Shanghai of the early 1900s with its neon lights and macadamized roads did to many Chinese, and as Shanghai of the present with its giant video displays and magnetic levitation trains now does to people of many nationalities. But one distinctive thing about most – perhaps even all – works set in a Shanghai of times to come has been that, whether or not these imagined cities are filled with futuristic technologies, traces of the cosmopolitanism of the local past are carried forward into them as well.

This shows through in Liang's choice of an international gathering as a plot device and in the focus on World's Fairs in the Thomas poster. *The Diamond Age* is filled with references to Shanghai as a past and

present meeting point of cultures and peoples. The Shanghai of *Code 46* is one in which both forms of speech and modes of entertainment are decidedly hybrid and cosmopolitan. And when the architecture of Pudong is celebrated or decried, you can count on two features of the skyline being mentioned: that the new buildings look pleasingly or disturbingly futuristic, and that foreign as well as domestic money and designers are responsible for their creation.

Will Shanghai actually be a robustly cosmopolitan place several decades or even centuries from now, the kind of city where people and fashions from different parts of the world intertwine? Looking back over the last century-and-a-half or so of Shanghai's past, it is tempting to say that it will very likely continue to be that sort of place, for it has so consistently been an internationally minded city throughout that period. Indeed, even during three decades of the modern era when it turned most inward, 1949 through 1979, it was still viewed by many in China as retaining more traces of cosmopolitanism than other major Chinese cities. And we should remember that in that period, while largely cut off from the Western capitalist world, it was still being influenced by people from other countries, thanks to such things as exhibits that featured Central and Eastern European artists and the coming of exchange students and tourists from non-aligned countries in Africa and Asia.

Still, the historian in me knows that all predictions are dangerous, since we never know what will happen next, in a city, in a country, or in the relationship between different states. So, I will end with one more mention of a notable piece of Shanghai architecture whose past reminds us of why everyone except those writing science fiction should be wary of expressing certainty about the future. I have in mind the birthday cake shaped Exhibition Hall on Yan'an Road. When originally completed in the 1950s, it was called the "Sino-Soviet Friendship Building" and was supposed to be a permanent monument of the eternal bond between the people of China and Russia. Within a few short years, though, the name had to be changed, as talk of a Sino-Soviet split made all talk of a long-lasting Sino-Soviet friendship suddenly obsolete.

# THE SEVEN AGES OF DONGJIADU: URBAN FORM IN SHANGHAI'S OLD DOCKS

BY KATYA KNYAZEVA

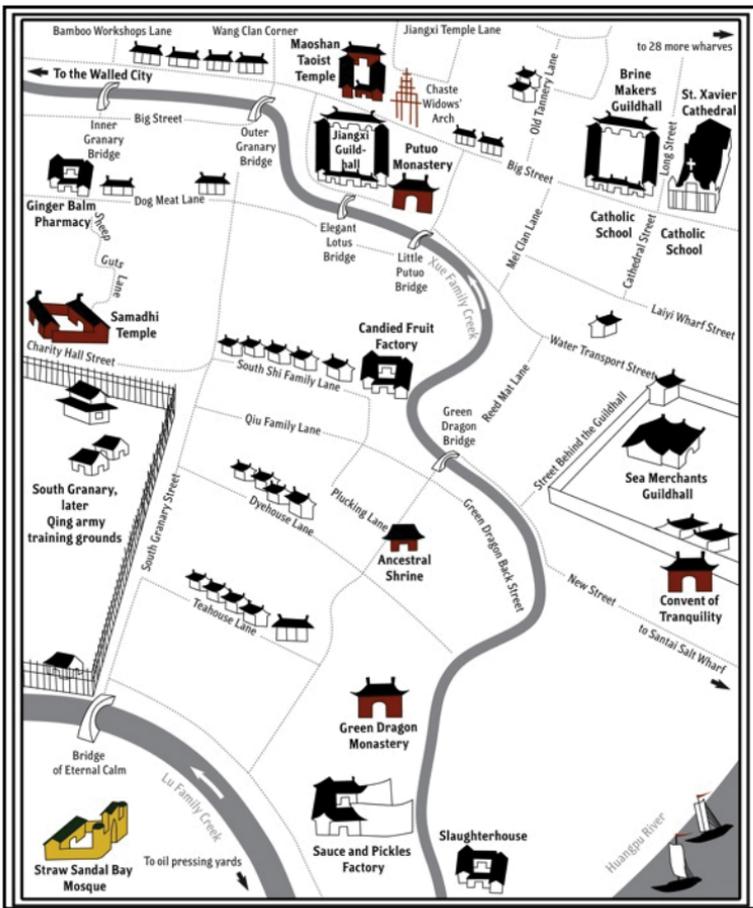
(WITH PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAP BY THE AUTHOR)



The great cities of southeast China – Suzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou – had political power, cultural pedigree and scenic splendour. Shanghai had none of these, and never would, yet it eclipsed them all, thanks to its port. Port business was conducted on a tiny stretch along the Huangpu River, from Fangbang Creek in the north to Lujiabang Creek in the south. This zone was the economic engine that drove Shanghai and much of the Yangtze delta for centuries. Today, the old docks are a diminishing strip of residential slums. The north end – Shiliupu – has been replaced by a new ferry terminal and a traffic belt; the south end – Dongjiadu – is presently being cleared away. In a few years most, of Shanghai's original street fabric and neighbourhoods will disappear, but for the present, the lanes in the old docks still exhibit remnants from every age of the city's history, going back almost a thousand years. We will look here at seven artifacts, each representing a cardinal stage in Shanghai's history.

## THE BRIDGE AND THE CREEK. MEDIAEVAL SHANGHAI

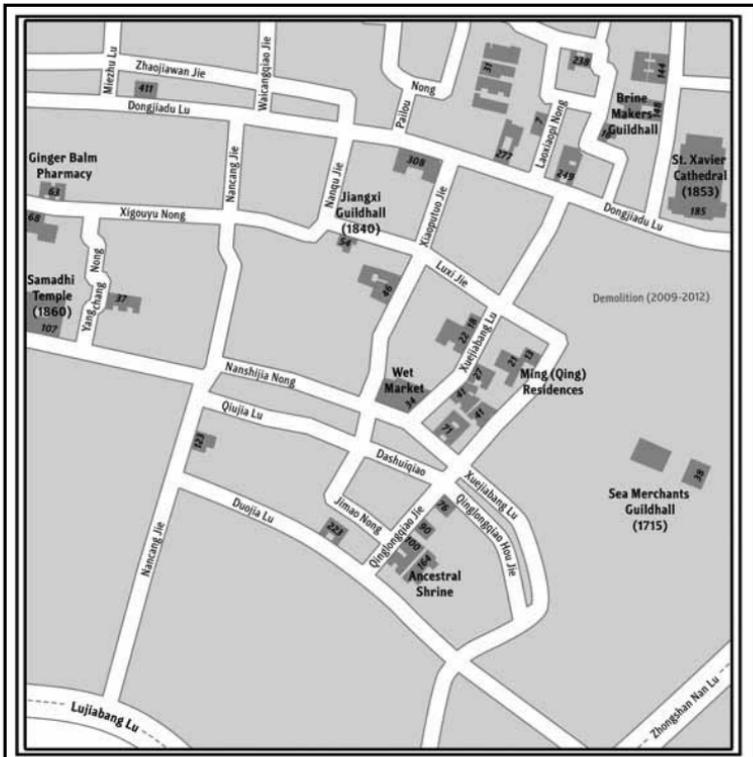
Two thousand years ago, the Yangtze delta was the northern frontier of



the State of Chu. Minister Huang Xie (later one of the four lords of the Warring States) supervised the dredging of a waterway that would be named after him, the Huangpu River.<sup>1</sup> Forests lining the Huangpu were cleared to extend the pleasure-hunting range for the local gentry. Fishing villages appeared on the banks of the new river. Since the eighth century, a market town called Green Dragon (*Qinglong*) was the trade gateway for the region. Located on the Wusong River (modern Suzhou Creek) that connected Lake Tai directly with the sea, Qinglong was a port on a natural estuary. By the end of the eleventh century the Wusong River silted and the route from Lake Tai became unnavigable. At the same time, the village of Shanghai, closer to the mouth of the Yangtze, began to accommodate port traffic. In 1074, the ever-expanding Shanghai

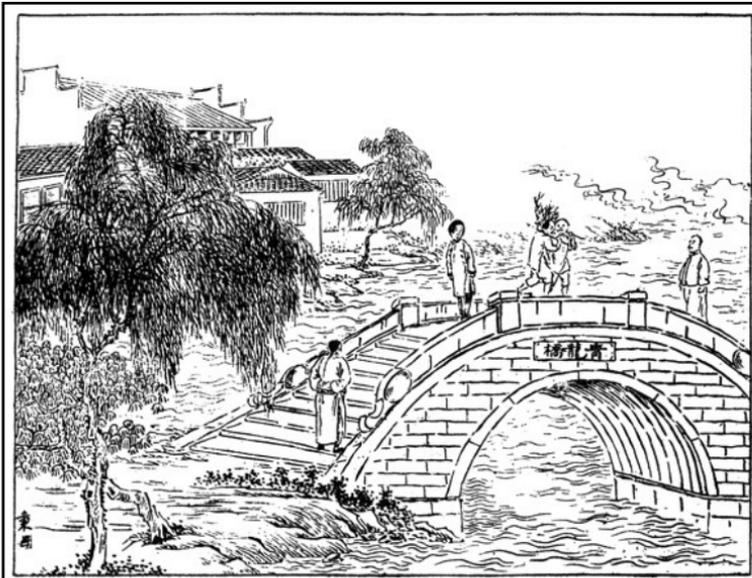
was reclassified as a market town (*zhen*), though still subordinate to Qinglong.<sup>2</sup> Two centuries later, Shanghai was the region's main port, and in 1291 it was pronounced a county seat (*xian*). The rise of Shanghai – or the fall of Qinglong – was reportedly authorised by supernatural forces: a dragon climbed into the air from the edge of Lake Tai and the torrential downpour that followed flooded farms and ruined crops.<sup>3</sup> Qinglong was forgotten; its location is now in the western part of metropolitan Shanghai, in Qingpu District.

At the turn of the fifteenth century the Huangpu River was dredged again and rerouted to bend around Shanghai's eastern edge, and to flow north towards the Yangtze rather than east towards the East China Sea. This stabilised the riverbanks and turned Shanghai into a deep-sea port. The city saw enormous growth and much residential construction on the banks of various creeks that fed into the Huangpu. These creeks would alternately silt up and overflow. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the authorities finally began to drain and pave the city waterways. Xuejiabang, a creek that had run through south Shanghai



for close to a thousand years, was the last to disappear. Eight bridges that crossed it are still recorded in the street names: Flood Bridge (*Dashuiqiao*), Little Stone Bridge (*Xiaoshiqiao*), and Outer Granary Bridge (*Waicangqiao*), among others. One of them was called Green Dragon Bridge (*Qinglongqiao*). The early 20<sup>th</sup> century newspaper *Daily Pictorial* (*Tuhua Ribao*) described it as an imposing stone bridge with a round arc underneath and steps leading up to the flat platform. It seemed to invite visitors to pause at the top and admire the artistry of the construction and the cleverness of the design.<sup>4</sup> The green dragon (*qinglong*) – namesake of Shanghai’s forgotten predecessor – continued to represent Shanghai’s cosmic link with sea and fortune.

Today’s Xuejiabang Lu and Qinglongqiao Jie are diminutive alleys that cross each other. Brick *shikumen* houses from the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic era face the road. Inside the courtyards one still can see old stone wells that drew ground water, sealed with concrete since the 1980s. The gateway at 100 Qinglongqiao Jie is guarded by a stone tablet inscribed with Taoist trigrams (*bagua*) to ward off evil. These were everywhere in Qing Shanghai; now there is only one. The courtyard’s original owners claimed ancestry with Tang Dynasty chancellor Gaoyang Xu: the four-character inscription over the entrance states their clan motto “Gaoyang’s blessings reach across generations.” The northern end of Qinglongqiao Jie has the oldest buildings in the area – possibly in Shanghai. The sunken three-bay courtyards at No. 21 and



No. 13 date back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Somewhere here was the location of the turn-of-the-century Grass Cottage Literary Society (*Chengnan Caotang*), the villa at the bank of Xuejiabang Creek made famous by the patronage of Buddhist monk and artist Hong Yi (1880–1942). Hong Yi was a flamboyant spiritualist: one photo shows him in flowing robes, parasol in his hand, dramatically turning away from the camera, pretending to be on his way to the Grass Cottage. He is posing on a wide dockside street, in front of an intersection formed by two-story wooden shops, of a kind that still can be found in this neighbourhood. The streets in the docks are extensions of old watercourses, bridges, pedestrian roundabouts and markets. Residential blocks used to cling to auspicious sites like monasteries and temples; the streets wove around them all. Today, the neighbourhoods still develop organically. Despite the municipal directive to keep all wet markets indoors, a daily bazaar occupies all the small streets and flows up Xuejiabang Lu, Wangjiazuijiao Jie, Nanqu Jie and Nancang Jie.

#### SEA MERCHANTS' GUILDHALL. THE QING PORT

Xuejiabang Lu touches the corner of the largest and most magnificent structure in the docks – the Sea Merchants' Guildhall (*Shangchuan Huiguan*). This 300-year-old architectural ensemble is an emblem of the multicultural community that built and inhabited the docks since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Sea Merchants' Guildhall was the headquarters of the association of commercial sailors, “sand boat” owners from Chongming and Nantong located north of Shanghai at the mouth of the Yangtze. Cargo junks, known as “sand boats” (*shachuan*), had been in use since the Southern Song Dynasty (beginning 1127), but it was after Kublai Khan moved the capital to Beijing in 1271 that massive fleets from Shanghai began to sail north to transport tribute rice. Junks were not made for heavy seas and always sailed within sight of the coastline. They had flat bottoms and multiple sails to increase manoeuvrability and avoid beaching in shallow waters. To stabilise the empty boats on their return journey, sailors would tie sand bags along the hull, leading people to think that “sand junks,” transported sand.

Coastal commerce was slow during the Ming (1368-1644), but as soon as the Qing emperor Kangxi lifted the ban on marine trade in 1684, Shanghai port traffic exploded. Ships from the north brought beans and fertiliser and sailed back loaded with tea, cotton and grain. Lumber and sugar arrived from the south; cotton and finished textiles

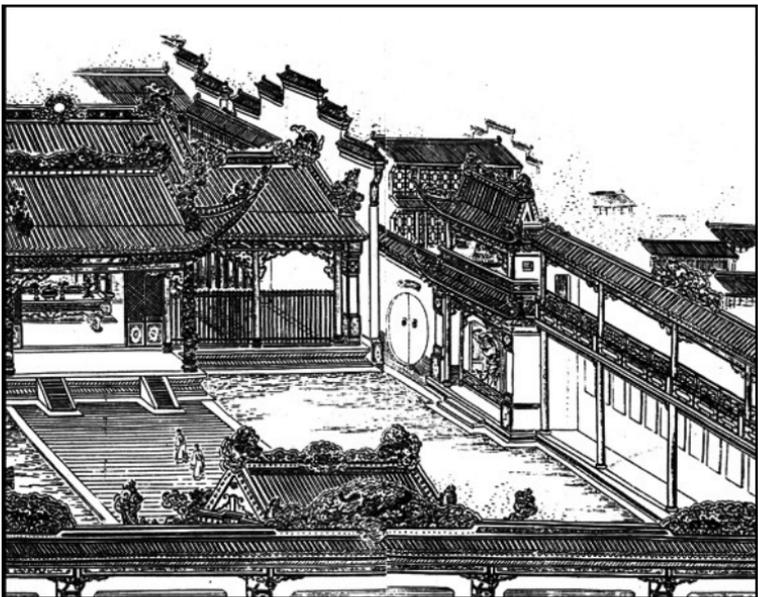
were transported back. Apart from local junks, “guard boats” from Tianjin and “eggshell” vessels from Zhejiang swarmed the docks. “Black boats” from Fujian and Guangdong were so large that they had to anchor in the middle of the river and unload in stages. Goods travelled from the riverfront into the walled city via the creeks – Zhaojiabang, Fangbang and Xuejiabang – that ran under the three east-facing gates. Fleet owners and immigrant merchants began to change and expand Shanghai. The land between the river and the walled city became a matrix of wharves, warehouses, hostels, stores, boat-building yards and workshops. By the late Qing the wharves had extended north and south, transforming marshy land into a dense commercial suburb. There was as much “city” on the water as there was on the shore: thousands of vessels were anchored on the Huangpu River, conjuring the popular image of the “sea of masts.”<sup>5</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century Shanghai had become one of the leading ports in the world, with a volume of shipping – largely domestic – equal to that of London.<sup>6</sup> After the massive commercial fleets from Fujian, Guangdong and Zhejiang came merchants from landlocked Anhui and Hunan, trading tea, silk, fruit and piece goods. The number of “outsiders” in the port city continued to rise. By the end of the nineteenth century, only one in six Shanghai residents hailed from Shanghai; the rest were immigrants from other provinces.<sup>7</sup>

The immigrants were separated from the Shanghainese and each other by customs, culture, cuisine and language. In the absence of the unifying mandate for *putonghua* (standard Mandarin) people from different parts of China spoke mutually incomprehensible dialects. Just as their ethnicity set them apart in Shanghai, the chain of associations from their home province was essential to their living. In order to network among familiars and collectively strategise for market share, immigrants formed industry associations, or guildhalls. Guildhall buildings were their business centres, hotels, restaurants, temples, legal courts and cemeteries, all under one roof. A council of directors adjudicated on property issues, customs fees, inheritances, bankruptcies and even disputes over purchased concubines. Membership of the guilds was restricted to the “oligarchs” – fleet owners and powerful traders – but services extended to everyone from the home province. Guilds would help hard-up labourers and their families with jobs, loans or burials. To validate their presence in Shanghai, guild patriarchs financed city charities and did public works like road paving, river

dredging and firefighting. In the close-packed utilitarian cityscape of the Qing commercial city, only guildhalls and temples offered free public spaces.<sup>8</sup> In 1709 when the private garden Yuyuan was offered for sale, the transport merchants purchased it and then donated it to the Temple of the City God for public use. Guilds and trade associations were the pioneers of Shanghai's civic development, as well as the organisers of processions and festivals. *Yulanpenhui*, the festival for "feeding wandering ghosts," was celebrated with special enthusiasm; most immigrants viewed themselves as orphaned souls stranded far away from home.<sup>9</sup>

The Sea Merchants' Guild was the largest and most influential business alliance in Shanghai for two centuries. It owned swaths of property at the riverfront: warehouses, shipbuilding yards, wharves and residential blocks for lease. In 1715 guild members built the guild headquarters, the Sea Merchants' Guildhall. The compound at the end of a wide road leading straight from the docks was showpiece architecture, with a wide interior courtyard surrounded by a two-storey gallery. A large hall in the west wing enshrined the statue of Mazu, the Fujianese folk goddess known to chastise coastal pirates and protect honest sea merchants. The imperial Board of Rites promoted the "anti-piracy" goddess and helped spread her cult all over the coast. Mazu



received the official status of Heavenly Empress (*Tianhou*), and each year on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the guildhall held extravagant celebrations for the goddess' birthday. In 1842, during an attack on Shanghai at the end of the First Opium War, British soldiers ransacked the guildhall and used it for barracks. The buildings were painstakingly restored so that later foreigners often mistook it for a temple.

Theatres did not appear in Shanghai until the end of the nineteenth century,<sup>11</sup> and opera performances in the guildhalls were important community gatherings. The Sea Merchants' Guildhall had a grand theatre stage, the largest in the city. Performances in the native dialect suited the tastes of dockworkers who enjoyed plots with martial arts and romantic love; the upper classes liked stories about loyalty and filial piety. At the shows, guild leaders in colourful silk robes would sit on balconies around the stage while common folk pressed into the lower courtyard, glancing up at their richly dressed betters, as much as at the actors on the stage.<sup>12</sup>

During the Small Swords occupation (1853-54) and the Taiping siege (1861), the riverside suburbs were burned and devastated repeatedly, but each time the warehouses were quickly rebuilt, the docks repaired and the guildhalls expanded. The twelve guilds at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century grew to thirty by the First Opium War and to one hundred at the beginning of the Republic. In his *Handbook for Travelers* (1904) Rev. C. E. Darwent describes the luxurious surroundings of the Timber Merchants' Guildhall (*Mushang Huiguan*) at Shengyi Wharf:

*Farther along the street, away back among squalid tenements, like a jewel in a swine's snout, is one of the most magnificent guild-houses in Shanghai. In many respects it is far more tasteful than the better-known Bankers' Guild-house. The temple and theatre are resplendent with gold and red. The shrine of [Tianhou] is more cunningly carved than any I have seen: halberds, storks, incense-burners are of the best pewter; on the walls are reliefs of mythological subjects done first in wet clay, as are the figures over so many doorways. They are exquisitely executed. The walls are in lozenge and chequered pattern [...] Finer examples of work in Chinese style are not to be found anywhere.<sup>13</sup>*

Recently, a drab recycling yard on Hehuachi Nong was the last depository of original wood carvings from another 19<sup>th</sup> century



guildhall belonging to Zhejiang and Ningbo grain merchants (*Zhening Huiguan*). The guildhall built in 1859 suffered much damage in the early Communist years, but the few structures that have survived to date are a breathtaking showcase of Qing design and construction. Crescent-shaped beams displayed the attributes of the Eight Taoist Immortals, the pictorial motif on perimeter lintels – “release the falcons and unleash the dogs” – praised the hunting skills of the guildhall’s young patrons (and suggested some decadent leisure within these walls). The leaders of the guild – Ningbo natives Brothers Wang – brought a hundred of their junks to Shanghai and by the 1850s became one of the “Big Four Names” in the hierarchy of Shanghai port. The guildhall buildings stood in a lavish garden, facing a pond, where “lotus blooms perfumed the air and flowers floated like clouds.”<sup>14</sup> Towering pillars inscribed with magic symbols lined the pond. The street in front is still called Lotus Pond Lane (*Hehuachi Nong*).

#### HOUSE OF SHEN. MULTICULTURAL SHANGHAI

The Wang Brothers – the chairmen of the *Zhening Huiguan* – lived near their guildhall, in a compound of three mansions accommodating their extended families. The street in front of their estate is still called Wang Clan Corner (*Wangjiazuijiao Jie*) and the street running to the Wang-owned wharves became Wang Clan Wharf Road (*Wangjiamatou Lu*). This neighbourhood with its stores, restaurants, brothels, teahouses, workshops and markets was Shanghai’s “little Ningbo.” In his book



*Guide to Shanghai* (the chapter “How To Go Whoring”) Wang Dingjiu remarked: “There are many Ningbo people sojourning in Shanghai and they are extremely powerful although not everyone can take the taste of their food. Ningbo courtesans have a special position in the prostitute world. When non-Ningbo people hear the speech of Ningbo girls they get gooseflesh and shiver. But they suit Ningbo appetites. Thus the customers of Ningbo prostitutes are mainly their own countrymen.”<sup>15</sup>

Ningbo natives had to compete with better-established immigrant communities. After the opening of the treaty port, the “kings of the sea” – merchants from Guangdong and Fujian – owned the best lots in the docks. Long association with foreigners in Canton (Guangzhou) translated into domination of the trade in Shanghai. In 1847 Rev. George Smith observed: “Shanghai is a second Liverpool in the extent of its commerce and in the various races of people attracted thither by gain. Whole streets are tenanted by the men of Fokeen [Fujian] – the Irishmen of China – men of ardent, impetuous, and enterprising minds, but turbulent and irascible withal.”<sup>16</sup> After the suppression of the Small Swords and Taipings in 1864 these “Irishmen of China” were accused of supporting the rebels (who also hailed from Fujian) and fell out of favour with the city administration but continued to dominate the port economy.

A Fujianese residence from the 1860s occupies the whole block at 213 Wangjiamatou Lu. The architecture is a parade of styles, from ancient Anhui to Neoclassicism. The house belonged to a shipping tycoon Shen

Yisheng, another of the “Big Four Names” in the Yangtze delta sea trade. In homage to the source of his wealth, Shen built his courtyard palace to face east, toward the sea, and had ship’s wheels adorn all balcony railings. Other Fujianese properties in Shanghai docks also face east (in spite of the common belief that south is the only direction that brings money into the house). A mosaic of linked courtyards accommodated Shen’s household; he also had a host of servants and kept tons of inventory. Shen’s prosperity did not extend to his grandsons. In the 1920s his fortune had evaporated and the residence was sold to Yan Tongchun, a practical man who cashed out of the river trade and switched to real estate. Yan added a western wing with a red and gray courtyard gallery and plaster balustrades. He divided the manor and rented out individual apartments; he was the first landlord in the Chinese City to install modern flush toilets.



## THE CATHEDRAL. WESTERNERS IN DONGJIADU

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dongjiadu Lu was the widest, busiest road in the docks, known simply as Main Street (*Da Jie*). Rows of stores and workshops along the north side were interspersed with the grand gateways of several guildhalls, as well as Taoist temples, memorial arches and, after 1853, a French-built Catholic cathedral. Nothing from those days is left except the cathedral – the only remnant of the first International Settlement in Shanghai.

Immediately after the treaty port opened, Westerners began to arrive in Shanghai. In late 1843 British officer George Balfour rented a Chinese courtyard house in the walled city and inaugurated a British consulate. Stuck in the middle of the crowded walled county town, he could not have been more conspicuous if his property walls were made of glass. British diplomats endured three years as foreigners on public display before moving out to the newly charted British Bund. Other foreign merchants and military men clustered in rented houses in the docks outside the walled city; in 1844 there were about fifty men living there. Traders liked the proximity to wealthy Chinese merchants and the convenience of boats landing directly at their waterside doors. They despised everything else about their condition: the crowding, drafts, and snowdrifts in their bedrooms on winter mornings.<sup>17</sup>

While the traders could not wait to leave, the missionaries anticipated a permanent presence in the Chinese city. William Boone, the first Anglican Bishop of Shanghai, believed “the best way to acquire the Chinese language was to go and live with a Chinese family.”<sup>18</sup> He and his colleagues rented houses on Wangjiamatou Lu and set about learning the Shanghainese dialect. While the British consul was still lodged in the walled city, Boone would hold Sunday services at Balfour’s “consulate.”<sup>19</sup> The missionaries went to great lengths to assimilate. Following the example of Jesuits, Protestant preachers donned Chinese gowns. Young missionaries took to knotting their long hair in a queue, Manchu-style.<sup>20</sup> By the end of the decade, the marshland north of the Chinese wharves was drained, a British Settlement was rising, and the foreign merchants gratefully moved in. Yet the missionaries remained in the old docks. They set up chapels and schools in rented houses, bought land and made plans for the construction of churches and orphanages.

French Jesuits were also keen to restore the Chinese connection they had lost generations earlier. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Catholics actually had a fine church inside the walled city. In 1640 Candida Xu

(the granddaughter of Xu Guangqi) converted the Pan family manor, Ever-Spring Hall, into a Catholic cathedral. When the Catholics were effectively thrown out of China during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1723-1735) the cathedral was converted to a shrine to the God of War (*Guandi*). Now that Shanghai was a treaty port, the French decided the 120-year-old confiscation was an issue in need of immediate redress. In exchange for their “lost property” Daotai Lin Gui was forced to give away three parcels of land for the construction of Catholic churches – two inside the walled city and one in Dongjiadu – “valuable compensation for a church that was turned into a pagoda a century and a half earlier.”<sup>21</sup> This clerical land grab encouraged the French government to make more extravagant demands, and in 1846 France received its own autonomous zone north of the walled city – the French Settlement.

St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Dongjiadu became the first foreign-built church in Shanghai. Italian painter Nicholas Massa and Spanish sculptor Joannes Ferrer supervised the design and construction and built a scaled-down imitation of an Italian baroque cathedral.<sup>22</sup> Francis Xavier was an appropriate patron saint: the 16<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit spent years in Asia and died dreaming of preaching in China. To better execute St. Xavier’s evangelism, the Jesuits let their cathedral’s decoration go native. The walls and doors were adorned with scripture quotations hung vertically like the Taoist epigrams (*duilian*) outside Chinese homes. The apostles inhabiting the Stations of the Cross had shaved heads and Manchu queues; female saints were depicted with bound feet. To Western visitors, the eerie sound of a great bamboo organ made the services as exotic as any heathen festival.<sup>23</sup>

The opening of the cathedral in March 1853 was celebrated by cannon salutes from French gunboats anchored on the Huangpu. François de Plas, captain of flagship Cassini and a passionate Catholic, expected a multitude of Chinese Christians to flood to the ceremony, and sent a detachment of marines to control the crowd. The soldiers far outnumbered the handful of Chinese who showed up. A few months later the Small Swords invaded the walled city and de Plas had to use his gunship to provide artillery cover for the French waterfront to the north and the cathedral to the south.<sup>24</sup> French troops landed in an attempt to recapture the Chinese City. While they were unsuccessful behind the wall, they did manage to burn down most of the Chinese warehouses and residences in the northern wharves, presumably punishing local merchants sympathetic with the rebels. “All the suburbs were one mass

of ruins. Shanghai has known no desolation like this,” recorded Rev. Joseph Wight.<sup>25</sup> The Small Swords were evicted in 1855 and the docks were mostly rebuilt by the time the Taiping army approached Shanghai in 1861. Once again, the Qing army and the French strategically burned down the docks. After this crisis passed the neighbourhood was rebuilt, again, but this time the expanded French Settlement opportunistically absorbed Chinese river frontage.<sup>26</sup>

St. Xavier’s made it through the chaos undamaged, but most foreign missionaries had abandoned the docks and moved to districts north of the Suzhou Creek (Hongkew and Chapei, now Hongkou and Zhabei) where masses of rural refugees uprooted by the Taipings offered greater evangelical potential. Nevertheless, the Chinese Catholic community in Dongjiadu was growing. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were about three thousand converts living in the vicinity of the cathedral. Some missionaries claimed that there were 80,000 Catholics among the 310,000 inhabitants of the Chinese City.<sup>27</sup> Catholic schools under the auspices of the cathedral fostered some of the most successful businessmen in Shanghai – Joseph Lo (Lu Baihong) and Nicolas Tsu (Zhu Zhiyao) – who in turn subsidised scores of Catholic projects.

#### THE DYER’S STONE. TRADE STREETS

In 2011, a trapezoidal stone weight was uncovered in garbage pile at Huayi Jie. The slab weighs 140-kilos and is engraved with the signature of the Tingzhou dyers’ guild. Cotton-Dyeing Street (*Huayi Jie*) housed



workshops that produced indigo-dyed cotton fabric, the famous “nankeen,” Shanghai’s primary export in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indigo dyeing was a specialty of Hakka natives from Tingzhou in Fujian province, and the heavy stone was used as a counterweight to hoist sodden fabric from vats of dye. A small dyers’ guildhall was nearby, on Dongjiadu Lu, but as more Fujianese artisans fled the Taipings and resettled to Shanghai, the guild expanded and moved south of the walled city.

Western missionaries and Chinese guilds had the resources to leave imposing architectural landmarks in Dongjiadu, but it was the middle class – artisans, dockworkers and shopkeepers – that left deeper traces. The present-day street map of the docks is a diagram of urban form created by the port business and trade distribution. Every street name in Dongjiadu suggests the commercial profile of each district. One can still trace the path of raw bamboo unloaded at Bamboo Wharf, dragged along Bamboo Wharf Street (*Zhuhangmatou Jie*), stored in the warehouses lining the street or carried further inland to be cut into strips at Bamboo Lathing Street (*Miezhu Lu*), woven into mats and baskets at Mat-Weaving Street (*Luxi Jie*), or made into utensils at Chopstick Lane (*Kuaizhu Nong*).

At the turn of the century, boats navigating the confluence of Xuejiabang Creek and the Huangpu River would pass a giant slaughterhouse. It was built at the mouth of the creek after the increasingly influential Muslim community lobbied for the eviction of butchering businesses from the center of the walled city.<sup>28</sup> Pig carcasses would be sent up the creek to shops on Pig Cutting Lane (*Zhuzuo Nong*), close to the Little South Gate (*Xiaonanmen*), and from there the pork was transported to inner city markets. Following meat along the creek, one would pass other water-reliant businesses on Teahouse Lane, Dyehouse Lane and Pickled Fruit Lane (where stores made candied treats and dry pickled snacks from fresh fruit). The entire lot west of Xuejiabang Creek belonged to the ancient Green Dragon Convent, built in the Yuan dynasty. A turn-of-the century drawing in the Daily Pictorial (*Tuhua Ribao*) presents the convent as a scattering of white-walled courtyards in a bucolic willow grove; a path with round flagstones descends from the gate to the creek. In the next fifteen years, the area became packed with warehouses and workshops; smokestacks lined the creek that was still flowing long after other old town waterways were filled. A huge factory sprang up beside the convent. Its white wall had two giant characters –



“sauce” and “shop” – painted on either side of the black gate with brass knockers resembling lion heads. This was the famous soy sauce factory “Eternal Youth” (*Wanchun Jianyuan*) opened by a father and son from a Zhejiang village called Haiyan (“sea salt”) where their ancestors had a thousand years of experience making sauces with brine. “Eternal Youth” products were labelled with tags featuring an elephant carrying a potted evergreen plant – a rebus for the company name.

The “Eternal Youth” factory produced soy sauce, vinegar, rice wine, malt sugar, marinades and fermented tofu. It was the largest manufacturer of condiments in Shanghai, but it was no monopoly. By the 1930s, over sixty sauce-making companies lined Wanyu Jie, Zixia Lu, Huayi Jie and Doushi Jie. They operated inside courtyard houses with workrooms in the back and sales space in the courtyard. A sauce factory might employ 25 to 30 workers, mostly migrants, who slept in the back rooms. All the work was done by hand: hauling bean sacks, measuring, grinding, stirring, carrying great baskets of jars to retail

markets all over the city. Workers made and repaired their own tools, including wooden barrels, bamboo carrying poles and pressing stones.<sup>29</sup> The most famous product of such round-the-clock labour was thick soy sauce (“old sauce,” or *laochou*) whose dark red colour and briny richness is still the signature flavour of Shanghai cuisine. Further along Xuejiabang Creek, under the Green Dragon Bridge, was the candied fruit factory Zhangxiangfeng. The factory grounds now house a wet market, but the foundation of a brick mansion at 27 Xuejiabang Lu still has a stone incised with the factory owner’s name, Zhang Yunqiao – a confectioner from Suzhou.

#### THE RED WALL. COMMUNIST CHINA

Shanghai immigrants during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were enterprising opportunists, “well-off merchants, absentee landlords, frustrated bureaucrats, literati, skilled workers and adventurers.”<sup>30</sup> But as China faced a cascade of disasters in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the migrants were mainly rural refugees, much poorer than their predecessors. When the Communists marched into Shanghai in 1949, they found the city vastly overpopulated and on the verge of starvation. The new government redrew the boundaries of Shanghai to include much of the countryside, forcing the local growers to feed the city population (as opposed to trading further away for better prices). Now the river port was only a speck on the map of the new Communist city and its trade economy was crushed. Nationalisation of large industries was followed by de-privatisation of small businesses. China stopped



trading with the world. For the first time in the history of Shanghai, river business stopped. The sea of masts disappeared. Neighbourhoods bombed in the war (1937-1945) were patched up with haphazard construction. Concrete shacks clung to the walls of sturdier buildings and invaded the wide dock streets, making them irregular and narrow. Without port activity, Dongjiadu became a residential slum, subject to the worst overcrowding in an overcrowded city. The housing shortage saw opulent properties subdivided into workshops and tiny apartments.

The last consecration at St. Xavier Cathedral took place in 1950; afterwards Bishop Ignatius Kung (Gong Pinmei) went to prison for thirty years and the cathedral became an internment camp for “reactionary” priests.<sup>31</sup> The cavernous courtyards of the House of Shen became a mannequin factory and workers’ dormitory. The Ningbo neighbourhood on Wangjiamatou Lu lost its ethnic character; today it reflects mostly decades of poverty. In the first two decades after Liberation, the Communists built virtually nothing except makeshift housing, but they left old structures standing. Then came the Cultural Revolution with its collective assault on anything characteristic of the old society. Red Guards ransacked and pulled apart the splendid Timber Merchants’ Guildhall together with the nearby Chaozhou Guildhall. They dismantled the 1840 guildhall for Jiangxi province tea merchants (*Jiangxi Huiguan*), so all that remains today is a damaged gateway at No. 50 Nanqu Jie. Scores of historic buildings were ruined. Most of the Sea Merchants’ Guildhall was torn down and the guildhall’s name was gouged off the gate. The main hall became a dormitory with a cheap



vener ceiling. The ceiling inadvertently protected the intricate gold leaf woodwork overhead, hiding it for the rest of the decade (and then another 40 years). St. Xavier's Cathedral literally disappeared from sight under the mountain of sheds; a lamp-bulb factory had its boiler room behind the altar.<sup>32</sup>

The Shiliupu area (the northern docks) retained an echo of its commercial character as an impoverished but busy market neighbourhood anchored by the long-distance boat terminal. Memoirs of Communist years describe lively traffic between the piers, local crowds lingering in waiting rooms, dockworkers in straw sandals shuttling from wharves to warehouses, and vendors out-hawking each other in efforts to sell their buns, dumplings and smoked poultry. Announcements of arrivals and departures competed with revolutionary anthems and red movie songs blasting from loudspeakers. Recollecting the 1950s and 1960s, residents agreed that Shiliupu was the center and the heart of Communist-era Shanghai.<sup>33</sup>

#### HIGH CAPITALISM AND ANONYMOUS CHINA

In 1996, St. Francis Xavier Cathedral was unburied from the slums, cleaned, and designated as an official place of worship. This solitary restoration was accompanied by the total demolition of the surrounding neighbourhood. Since the removal of Neoclassical buildings of Catholic schools across the street, the cathedral is an isolated curiosity in a growing wasteland. In 2004, the Shiliupu passenger terminal was pulverised with explosives. All long-distance passenger traffic was rerouted to Wusongkou at the mouth of the Huangpu, putting the knife into a 150-year-old commercial neighbourhood that had survived even the extremities of Maoism. Shiliupu residents were relocated, businesses closed down, and the northern docks ceased functioning. Using the pretext of the World Expo 2010, developers accelerated the destruction of the southern docks. The poor were evicted from Dongjiadu. The House of Shen is falling down; all three courtyards are vacated and awaiting scheduled demolition. Zhening Guildhall was demolished in early 2012. In the past two years, numerous historic structures were torn down and the complete sets of their artful wooden carvings were sold by the state to private collectors from outside Shanghai.

*Although merchants and commoners are not so inclined, modernisers feel they must tear old houses down. Besides*

*demolishing walls, there is 'cleaning the streets.' What is this thing called 'cleaning the streets'? It is the wholesale knocking down of old houses to open up new, modern roads. In addition, they construct colossal foreign buildings which effect the appearance and of something beneficial and healthy but really reflect immaturity, a temperament geared toward managing things, superficiality, a parading of foreign prosperity, a failure to grasp the true nature of China, and a lack of understanding of the difficulty of finding resources.<sup>34</sup>*

This could have been the indictment of today's redevelopment of Dongjiadu, if it had not been published one hundred years ago in *Patriotic Newspaper (Aiguo Bao)*.

Dongjiadu still has a tightly knit community of local residents, an ancient network of small streets, and over fifty authentic landmarks. In the corners of some older buildings one can spot boundary stones with the two characters, “*si ming*”, marking the former property of Ningbo clans. Dongjiadu is the last place in Shanghai where one can still find patches of old cobblestone alleys, ubiquitous until the 1990s. Residents favour them as more comfortable for older people (better traction on rainy days). Since the removal of most of the housing on the eastern end of Xuejiabang Lu, there are no more residents to argue the case. Despite the commercial fetish for “old Shanghai,” there are only two officially protected structures – the Sea Merchants' Guildhall and St. Xavier Cathedral. Both buildings owe their survival to simple neglect, and it is hard to envision their integration in the preordained high-rise business zone as anything other than visitor centres.

Everywhere in China, mixed-use neighbourhoods and small street networks are being replaced with wide roads, ephemeral architecture and kitsch (like the row of mock *shikumen* doors in the Cool Docks). The interchangeable ugliness of modern Chinese cities has less to do with urban planning than with the profit-centred nepotism of the political system. But the eradication of Shanghai's oldest district is more than just gentrification: it is urban form with zero Chinese characteristics. For close to a thousand years, Shanghai was a commercial city forged by a mix of nationalities: boatmen and grain merchants from the south, gentry from Jiangnan, Western traders, Japanese industrialists, rural masses from all over. Although hybrid, the Chinese character of the city has never been erased. Communism removed commerce from Shanghai

docks, and now capitalism is removing everything Chinese. Super blocks, chain stores and car culture are presented as the natural manifestation of progress, but relocated citizens have no trouble recognising that this kind of progress serves the interests of a privileged class. Shanghai had a mixed use, diverse and fine grain neighbourhood at the waterfront, and could have used it as a homegrown model of a sustainable city, yet it is moving to make it disappear completely, together with everything reminiscent of its existence.



### **Endnotes**

1. Betty Peh-T'i Wei, *Shanghai: crucible of modern China*. (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1987)
2. Linda Cooke Johnson, *Shanghai: from market town to treaty port, 1074-1858*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
3. Timothy Brook, *The troubled empire: China in the Yuan and Ming dynasties*. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).
4. Huan qiu she bian ji bu. 1999. *Tu hua ri bao (Daily Pictorial)*. Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she.
5. Henry McAleavy, *Wang T'ao: the life and writings of a displaced person* (China Society, 1953).
6. Rhoads Murphey, *Shanghai, key to modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).
7. Frederic E. Wakeman, and Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Shanghai sojourners* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992).
8. Linda Cooke Johnson, *Cities of Jiangnan in late imperial China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).
9. Bryna Goodman, *Native place, city, and nation regional networks and identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
10. Ge, Yuanxu, Zu'an Zheng, Shiquan Huang, and Zhizheng Chi, *Hu you za ji (Miscellaneous Notes on the Travels in Shanghai)* Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1989.
11. Joshua Goldstein, *Drama kings: players and publics in the re-creation of Peking opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
12. W. MacFarlane, *Sketches in the foreign settlements and native city of Shanghai*. Shanghai: [s.n.], 1881.

13. C. E Darwent, *Shanghai: A handbook for travellers and residents to the chief objects of interest in and around the foreign settlement and native city* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1904).
14. Wang, X., & Shanghai shi Shanghai xian xian zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui, *Shanghai shi Shanghai xian zhi* (*Shanghai Gazetteers*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1993).
15. Wang Dingjiu, *Shanghai men jing*, 1932.
16. George Smith, *A narrative of an exploratory visit to each of the consular cities of China, and to the islands of Hong Kong and Chusan, in behalf of the Church Missionary Society, in the years 1844, 1845, 1846* (London: Seeley, Burnside & Seeley, 1847).
17. Robert Fortune, *Three years' wanderings in the northern provinces of China, including a visit to the tea, silk, and cotton countries; with an account of the agriculture and horticulture of the Chinese, new plants, etc.* (London: J. Murray, 1847).
18. *American church review*. (Hartford, Conn: H. M. Mallory & Co., 1884).
19. Annette B Richmond, *The American Episcopal church in China* (New York: The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 1907).
20. Julian Thomas, *Occident and Orient: sketches on both sides of the Pacific*. (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1882).
21. J.W. Maclellan, *The story of Shanghai, from the opening of the port to foreign trade*. (Shanghai: North-China Herald Office, 1889).
22. Lynn Pan, *Shanghai style: art and design between the wars* (San Francisco: Long River Press, 2008).
23. Laurence Oliphant, *Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's mission to China and Japan, in the years 1857, '58, '59* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1861).
24. Jonathan D Spence, *God's Chinese son: the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).
25. Joshua Crowel Garritt, *Jubilee papers of the Central China Presbyterian Mission, 1844-1894 comprising historical sketches of the mission stations at Ningpo, Shanghai, Hangchow, Soochow and Nanking, with a sketch of the Presbyterian Mission Press* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1895).
26. Edward Denison and Guang Yu Ren *Building Shanghai: the story of China's gateway*. (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2006).
27. C. F. Gordon Cumming, *Wanderings in China* (Edinburgh: W.

- Blackwood, 1888).
28. Shang hai shi nan shi qu ren min zheng fu, and Shang hai ke ji bao she, *Shanghai Nanshiqu Zhinan (Guide to Nanshi District in Shanghai)* (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 1993).
  29. Zhang, Shuping, and Zhijun Zhang, *Zhonghua lao zi hao* (Beijing Shi: Zhongguo qing gong ye chu ban she, 1993).
  30. Mark Swislocki, *Culinary nostalgia: regional food culture and the urban experience in Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
  31. Paul Philip Mariani, *Church militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic resistance in Communist Shanghai* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011).
  32. Mario Gandelsonas, M. A. Abbas, and M. Christine Boyer, *Shanghai reflections: architecture, urbanism and the search for an alternative modernity: essays* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002).
  33. Jingji Guancha Bao, *Zhengzai xiaoshide lishi (Disappearing History)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shui li shui dian chu ban she, 2005).
  34. Yeh Wen-Hsin, *Becoming Chinese: passages to modernity and beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

# YANGPU: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE: THE ENGINE OF SHANGHAI

BY MICHELLE BLUMENTHAL

**Editor's note:** *the essay that follows was written shortly before the author's death in the summer of 2012. It stands as a tribute to the city she had lived in and loved over many years, as well as a unique, personal insight into a lesser-known neighbourhood of the metropolis*

Yangpu, despite a long and interesting history, is relatively unknown to the people of modern Shanghai, whether they be Chinese or otherwise. This district of the city has seen many evolutions of identity, and has its sights set firmly on the future. Its architecture, population and very landscape have altered immensely with the passage of time, and it has been known as Yangtszepoo, Yangshupu and Yangpu at various points in history, yet the district's *raison d'être* over the centuries has remained the same: producing essential elements of the economic structure that turn the wheels of Shanghai.

For a long while, I have been trying to work out what first attracted me to Yangtszepoo. Maybe it was that lovely name, or rather the natural need to gravitate to the familiar; it reminded me of earlier times in my life, visiting port areas of cities around the world to deal with the loading and discharging of bulk cargoes. The urban landscape of a city's industrial supplies – including gas, water, electricity and, of course, the goods – were familiar territory, and certainly had an influence on my interest. In any case, early on in my time in Shanghai, I started wandering around the area.

It was Taiwanese architect Teng Kun-yen who facilitated many of my later Yangpu explorations. As one of his projects, he had converted the former factory where Amersham & Meyers produced all their small electrical goods, into an office space for creative industries, referred to by its address, 2218 Yangshupu Road. Teng had his own base there. The gardens of the complex were used for spectacularly innovative exhibitions, making me a regular visitor to the neighbourhood. The most cherished occasions were long evenings talking with Teng through my translator, as he tried to explain his belief in the inherent darkness and light of places around the world, and how he aimed to create light with his own brand of urban renewal. I hoped that the whole Yangpu

redevelopment would turn out as successful as his office conversion.

Later, Deke Erh's book on Yangpu took me to a further level, with its information about the addresses and names of all the old factories. Still later, exploring specific streets and neighbourhoods cemented my interest in studying Yangshupu. Many a hot summer afternoon in 2007 was spent visiting the wonderful old warehouses, factories, docks, brewing plants, and money printing factories, as well as residential compounds associated with specific large-scale companies of 1930s Shanghai. Some, like the old fish market, the Ye Garden and the family home of Zao Wu Qi, were a little more elusive. My fascination with discovering the untouched helped to keep my visits regular. Gradually, and in a more ordered fashion, I started to use old and new maps to find more gems. Sadly many of these are either unrecognisable or gone today.

Yangshupu, Yangszepoo or Yangpu, as it has been known since 1949, is said to have taken its name from a small tributary of the Huangpu River. A literal translation from Chinese characters is "poplar bank", suggesting that Yangpu's silted soil originally saw riverbanks lined with poplars. Today Yangpu is one of Shanghai's 17 districts. Located south of Baoshan, the Huangpu River forms the southern and eastern borders and Hongkou the west. The current land area of Yangpu Qu (district) was last designated in 1997, and its southern edge lies fewer than five kilometres northeast of the Bund.

Somehow or other, I can still imagine the way it must have been when poplar trees lined the riverbanks, especially during my early days of exploration when the Yangshupu of old was still tangible in the sights, sounds and smells of the district. More recent exploration in the area and in books suggests that Yangshupu was already an active cotton producing area by the end of the Song Dynasty. It fascinates me to look at the maps of the area from as early as 750 AD through to the Ming era, to see how the genesis evolved.

Originally situated along the bank of the Huangpu River, close to the Wusong and Yangtze River mouths, the area was subject to flooding and large silt deposits that changed the course of the rivers and the land alongside them. Maps and early accounts indicate settlements, walled villages and temples. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, canals and additional waterways were built to ease the effects of flooding in the area between the Yangtze, Wusong and Huangpu Rivers. Records also show that the mouth of the Huangpu was dredged and the banks shored, providing

groundmass during the Ming Dynasty's period of expansion.

Going back further in history to the period mentioned previously, silt deposits were an issue. Shifting landmass along the riverbank meant that the soil deposits also changed, and the original output of the area – salt – could no longer be produced.

Yangshupu's role over the last 150 years, aside from powering Shanghai, has been as a centre of textile and clothing production, but it is clear that much earlier – when both nature and trade evolved beyond salt – a special cotton strain came into cultivation and brought the area its second wave of prosperity. Cultivation, harvesting, preparation and the home industry of weaving were an integral part of life in this area during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. With the recent spate of fashion warehouses opening in Yangpu, this distant past seems to live on.

During the late Ming Dynasty the area flourished. Villages sprang up along the banks of the river in response to thriving agricultural, textile and banking industries, as well as other areas of trade associated with its proximity to inland access (canals and waterways) and the sea routes available through the East China Sea. This early economic success established Yangpu's enduring reputation for producing essential elements of the engine that was to drive the rapid progress of Shanghai.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the strategic position of the Yangtze River delta saw Shanghai benefit from burgeoning global trade. The First Opium War, resulting in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking and the settlement of the treaty ports and extraterritorial status, firmly established Shanghai as an international urban agglomeration. The 1863 amalgamation (and 1899 extension) of the British and American Settlements into the International Settlement bear witness to the early urbanisation of the Yangpu district.

Following the dialogue of land negotiations between the Chinese landowners and the SMC (the governing body of the International Settlement) for the sale of public and private property for the purpose of development, particularly after the 1899 extension, provides enlightenment in many contexts of the Chinese and British relations during this period in history.

Following the incorporation of Yangpu's southern areas into the International Settlement, the district began to emerge as a seat of industry. During the 1860s, a number of wharves were created on the east and west banks of the Huangpu River. A German company built the first oil wharf there in 1893, followed by a second the following year.

The British-dominated government of the International Settlement set up the Shanghai Waterworks Company in 1880, and constructed China's first modern waterworks in Yangpu in 1883. Yangpu's location outside of the walled Chinese City, partly inside and partly outside of the International Settlement, promoted another first for the district and for China when the first modern paper mill, initially known as the Paper Mill Company, was set up by three Chinese partners in 1882. Yangpu's proximity to the river fostered the next major industry: shipping. With the launch of the Shanghai Engineering Shipbuilding and Dock Company in 1896, shipbuilding, wharf and dock companies were to proliferate in the locale. Textile mills were soon to follow.

Shanghai's rapid progress in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century can be linked to its foreign concessions and to the entrepreneurial nature of the migrating Chinese that flocked to the eastern territories for industrial enterprise and employment. The Yangshupu Power Plant, Yangshupu Gas Works, Zhabei Power Plant, Zhabei Waterworks, new cotton and wool mills, clusters of printing and paper factories, and an electric-wares factory were just some of the endeavours of the new century's first two decades. Yangpu was now to Shanghai as Shanghai was to China: the birthplace of modern industry.

Sun Yat-sen's vision of industrialisation and his desire to turn Shanghai into a major port began with the Greater Shanghai Plan of 1929. Wujiaochang, in the north-eastern corner of Yangpu, was chosen as the epicentre of the Greater Shanghai Plan. In this seat of municipal government roads and services were laid out, and the core buildings of a municipality designed and built. The town hall, museum, library, stadium, hospital and education facilities were completed and stand as a reminder of China's first modern urban planning scheme. Their unique architectural style is a fine mixture of Modernism and Chinese characteristics. While the plan was never fully realised, it is a concrete witness to Yangpu's directorial position and economic importance.

Owing to my current profession as a specialist in contemporary Chinese art, the history of Yangpu in relation to Chinese artists is of particular interest to me. Thus, I was fascinated to discover that Zao Wu Ji – one of China's best known artists – had his family home in the zone specified in the Greater Shanghai Plant. Even more curious was his father's decision to purchase land and build a house in the new style (which, judging from 1930's photos, was a total Cubist design) in support of the new China. The building is still standing and is used as

a Police Community Office, but sadly only one window and one iron balustrade balcony remain today to remind us of the glorious past of this one-time architectural gem.

Change abounded again when the area was subject to heavy bombing during the Sino-Japanese War. Yangpu fell to the Japanese in 1937; the rest of the International Settlement fell in 1941. After 1949, many of Yangpu's industries were moved under state control and their industrial base broadened to encompass the demands of a new age.

Contemporary Yangpu is again the seat of change. Prior to 1949 the area was home to nine major universities. Since China's opening, and particularly since the 1990s, these important educational institutions have expanded to new campuses. Old infrastructure works have been turned into research facilities and house newly created museums that record the history of Yangpu's industries. Urban renewal has taken place in some of the old factories and warehouses, with a focus on creative industries. Poor, low-level housing – lane houses that had been built to house factory workers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – continues to be cleared to make way for modern, energy-efficient homes. In consideration of the residential environment, factories and works have been moved further from the city, while the construction of parks and efforts to clean up the many canals augurs a new era of greening the city.

Urban renewal has seen several factory complexes turned into solutions for modern needs and services, with warehouses providing space for art exhibitions and other creative endeavours. More recently, high-end fashion brands outlet stores have moved into one of the renewed compounds in the area.

The result of this opening was a further exploration into what I have come to refer to as “my area”. Exploring a newly refurbished property with as few guards as possible watching, I happened upon the elevators to the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and – voilà – a bird's eye view of the factory next door, in pristine condition. It wasn't new, but appeared untouched from a distance. What it is now, what it was in the past, what it has been in the interim, and what it will be in the future are my next concerns.

Last year, after one of many cycle rides to the furthest reaches of Yangshupu Road beyond the bridge (where it's still possible to find a few interesting things that have not yet been destroyed) I cycled back. Closer in, at the earlier parts of Yangshupu Road, I found that no one stopped me when I rode into the shipyards where vessel construction is still taking place. I did not take out my camera, I wanted to make sure I

saw everything before I was found and ejected from the property.

There were four hulls under construction and several already well on the way to being fully-fledged vessels. Unfortunately, my shipping knowledge did not help me to identify them, except that they looked military rather than commercial.

As for the future of Yangpu District, much has altered in the years I have been visiting, and change will continue. Architect Teng Kun-yen has gone from the 2218 complex, and it is now the R&D division for Alternative Power of the Shanghai Power Company, which owns and operates the compound next door. Knowing that scientists are working in Teng's space is heartening; I hope they find inspiration and enjoyment from the location. The garden looked intact when I managed to slip past another couple of guards and get to the top of another empty half-refurbished old office block nearby. I hope to return in the future.

Wandering in some areas of Yangpu today, there are fewer and fewer traces of its history as an industrial area. Not so long ago, you could still hear, see, smell, taste and touch the past. With the emphasis now on education, research and development, culture, urban renewal, residential and commercial harmony, as well as on safeguarding the ever-changing environment, Yangpu is once again evolving to provide the fuel for the engine of Shanghai.

# A NEW COURSE IN HISTORY

BY PETER HIBBARD

Within two hours of a hunt for an apartment in late 2002 I found myself on the roof of the Sun Court apartments on Weihai Road, gazing upon a magnificent panorama of old and new Shanghai, and instantaneously decided that it would be my new home. After being forced to move from a nearby historic building facing demolition I was reassured by the presence of a “Heritage Architecture” plaque on the building’s face and the knowledge that my prospective apartment overlooked Jing’an Villas, the largest historic residential colony accredited with similar heritage status. Whilst that slice of old Shanghai would remain, I thought it inevitable that most of district’s historic architecture, housing established communities, would not survive the test of time.

As an historian I am very much concerned with understanding and making connections between the past and present, and the course of history was still evident on my doorstep. Weihai Road was crowded with grimy shops selling car parts; fenders and fan belts were perpetually discharged from the orifices of its surrounding lanes, and shops lining the adjoining Shimen No.1 Road proffered underwear and nightclothes.<sup>1</sup> The area had a long association both with four-wheeled vehicles and fashion dating back to the early 1860s with the development of the neighbouring Bubbling Well Road (West Nanjing Road) as a driving street by the British and to the 1920s when Yates Road (Shimen No. 1 Road) was established as Shanghai’s premier fashion street renowned for its bargain-priced, but exquisite lace and lingerie. By the end of 2006 the car part shops had been relocated to the new “car city” in suburban Anting and in 2009 the former stretch of Yates Road fronting a massive old residential development known as Da Zhong Li was lost to Shanghai’s urban landscape.

Whilst many historic Shanghai buildings have been lost to view, substantive records of their construction are preserved at the Shanghai Municipal Construction Archive and it was there that I began my quest to find out more about where I lived. As the archives are not generally open to the public protracted negotiations were required to gain access to the file on Sun Court that contained a handful of documents relating to the construction of the building between September 1927 and its completion one year later. Chinese owned and designed by a Chinese-

Italian partnership, Calatroni & Hsieh, the courtyard building featured just 31 apartments, many laid out over two floors with two or three bedrooms. With its location in the heart of the International Settlement's upcoming residential and commercial centre, its Italian garden, and oil-fired central heating affording smoke-free roof gardens, the block was purpose-built for lease to foreign occupants. To find out who they were I turned to the Shanghai Library collection at the Siccawei Bibliotheca, which apart from housing the 40,000-volume North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society library, among others, also holds the largest print collection of old Shanghai newspapers and Shanghai directories – including the essential Shanghai Hong List – to be found anywhere. My last stop was the Shanghai Municipal Archives to mull over documents of the Shanghai Municipal Council. Remarkably, records of Shanghai's past have been carefully preserved and catalogued at the library and archives, both opened to public view within the last decade.

Recognisable from my research on the history of the Cathay (Peace) Hotel I found the names Henry Nathan and Carol Bateman among those resident in the early 1930s. Nathan, a New Yorker, headed the resident jazz band at the Cathay ballroom and Bateman frequently choreographed and performed shows there. One of Bateman's young progenies, Margaret 'Peggy' Hookham, who also lived at Sun Court, appeared as a black cat in a Bateman-King School of Dancing production of Hansel and Gretel at the new Lyceum theatre in April 1931.<sup>2</sup> Peggy would later find worldwide acclaim as Margot Fonteyn. Less illustrious residents included accountants, members of the Shanghai police, a sculptor and an undertaker. Heading across the road to the southern entrance of Jing'an Villas there was a German-run restaurant and a British-run guesthouse facing the street, but the bulk of its residents were Chinese. The Villas, a revolutionary housing development designed by Chiulin L. Shih for the Wha Kee Realty Company was completed in 1930. Believing that a sense of community was being lost with the vogue for high-rise residential living, they sought to provide modern apartments within a familiar three-storey townhouse setting and reinforced that sense with the provision of a large clubhouse with a library, billiards, dining rooms and lounge for residents. The 180-odd properties featured small gardens and a selection of three, four and six-roomed "semi-apartments and houses" that could be adapted for the use of between one and four families.<sup>3</sup> Nothing is really new when it comes to lifestyle in Shanghai. The sense of community lives on today with its public spaces affording

opportunities for interaction and recreation and its established small groceries, hairdressing and laundry outlets providing essential local services.

Since the mid-1950s the internal spaces of Sun Court and Jing'an Villas, as in many old residential districts, have been adapted to house many more families than originally intended, and two floors were added onto Sun Court in 1977 to provide accommodation for the directors of the Shanghai Tractor Factory. The residential character of Jing'an Villas, though still dominant, began to change following a major ten-month renovation that gave the buildings a new face in readiness for the 2010 World Expo. Since then around 80 small shops, art studios, bars and restaurants have rented ground floor spaces for their businesses. Some local residents were infuriated by the nuisance caused, whilst others gladly seized the opportunity to sub-lease property at high rents. These are all technically illegal as there are no provisions to apply for a business licence, yet are tolerated and berated to equal degree by local and city government authorities whilst they decide whether the future of the block be bound to cultural (commercial), residential or mixed-use.<sup>4</sup> The events that unfolded in front of me opened up yet another course in history as among the documents I found at the Shanghai Municipal Archives were letters from 1938 and 1940 complaining of unsanitary eateries and an unlicensed laundry and lodging house in Jing'an Villas.<sup>5</sup> More seriously the large clubhouse building on Weihai Road was illegally operating as a hotel and serving liquor to the public in 1937.<sup>6</sup> Whilst those histories may rhyme, my most startling discovery concerning legitimacy and authenticity, was that the present-day Kaisiling café that I frequented since the late 1980s which had occupied a unit on the northern frontage of Jing'an Villas since 1931, bore no relation to the legendary German-owned establishment in Tianjin dating to 1906. Its proprietor Mr. Kiessling just happened to be in Shanghai when the so-called New Kiessling Café opened and protested strongly through the German Consul for its Chinese owners to be prosecuted. This they managed to avoid by transferring its licence to another company and today it bears the Chinese name of Mr. Kiessling alone.<sup>7</sup> I have long maintained that Shanghai is probably the most confusing city on the planet when deciphering what is old and new, real and fake, but fortunately plenty of records survive to help.



### **Endnotes**

1. See Peter Hibbard (ed.), *All About Shanghai and Environs* (Earnshaw Books: Hong Kong, 2008).
2. *The Shanghai Times*, May 1, 1932
3. *The Shanghai Times*, Industrial Section Supplement, December 1929.
4. See reports in *The Shanghai Daily*, July 4, 2011, [http://live.shanghaidaily.com/column\\_detail.asp?type=column&id=585](http://live.shanghaidaily.com/column_detail.asp?type=column&id=585) and the *Global Times*, January 17, 2012 and April 10 2012 <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/692411/Jingan-Villa-residents-not-going-anywhere.aspx> <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/704222/Jingan-Villa-inspections-start.aspx>
5. Public Health Department files, Shanghai Municipal Archives U1-16-1414 and U1-16-1511
6. Secretariat file, Shanghai Municipal Archives U1-4-0355
7. Secretariat file, Shanghai Municipal Archives U1-4-0016

# FOX SPIRITS, GATE TOWERS AND OLD PEKING

BY M. A. ALDRICH

In modern Beijing there are few remnants of the old Ming Dynasty capital city. However one of them stands quite centrally, not far from the main Beijing Train Station, at the intersection of the East Second Ring Road and a municipal park adjacent to the fragments of the Ming city walls. It is a sight that is neglected by most passers-by, whether they are foreign tourists or Chinese on their daily commute. Indeed, most modern Beijingers are more interested in the fruits of consumerism than reflecting on this lonely sentinel with its graceful curving eaves, multiple portals and solid gray foundation. Furthermore it is dwarfed by old and new high rises, governmental buildings and concrete flyovers, and seldom mentioned in guide books. Even its name – the Fox Tower – is a relic of a forgotten past. Let any Beijing taxi driver know that you want to go to the Fox Tower and you will be met with a blank look and perhaps a gruff *shenme difang'r* delivered as a *tu hua* challenge.

Nevertheless, while your taxi flies you past this august structure, you can look through the mirror of the past and sense what Old Peking looked like in all its architectural majesty, if you close one eye and squint with the other.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE FOX TOWER

The Fox Tower was never one of the major conduits into the city. In 1439, it joined the other stately gates such as Chong Wen Men (the Gate of Literary Excellence) and Xuan Wu Men (the Gate of Martial Prowess) on the city walls. However, it served the function of a watchtower and a lesser passageway for building materials and other types of freight being transported into the city proper.

It was a late entrant to the scene of Ming Peking's landscape; Peking was officially inaugurated as a capital city in the year 1421 with extravagant celebrations and diplomatic soirees hosted by the Yong Le Emperor. The Fox Tower was an after-thought, something necessary to reinforce an image of an imperial capital and a useful look-out point just in case marauding Mongols were to return to claim ownership of the city (which they did in the 1450s).

Nonetheless, the Fox Tower occupied a corner of Old Peking that

boasted an ancient dynastic pedigree. This is the same spot where Khublai Khan built the south-east corner of the rammed earth walls that enclosed his capital Daidu (as the city was then called by the Mongolians) in 1271. Nearby a Mongol nobleman, Prince Hata, had his courtyard residence, probably with a *ger* installed in the court, near today's Chong Wen Men intersection. Among Old Peking folks, the area is still called Hata Gate as a misty recollection of a foreign resident who lived here 800 years ago.

To the north of the Fox Tower was the Mongolian imperial observatory, an essential tool of government for the predictions of eclipses and the setting of the times and dates for emperors' rituals. In the Mongolian years of the Yuan Dynasty, Muslim astronomers from Central Asia and the Middle East applied their skills here, though the original observatory and its Mongolian/Muslim instruments were destroyed by the first emperor of the Ming. This Zhu Yuanzheng, an erstwhile rebel and Buddhist monk, found the artifacts too exotically foreign to be acceptable in a China cleansed of foreign symbols of authority. However his imperial successors rebuilt the observatory nearly in the same location at the same time that the Fox Tower came into existence, and again sought the services of Muslim astronomers until they were displaced by the Jesuits with their more exacting Copernican skills in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The observatory still exists, next to the intersection of Chang'an Avenue and the Second Ring Road, which was built in the 1960s on the site of the old city walls. In a different age the Jesuits might have actually taken the evening air by walking along the city wall from their observatory to the Fox Tower.

#### A FOX SPIRIT IN THE GATE TOWER

It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the people of Peking began to say that a fox spirit haunted the tower, thus giving it a name that endured until Liberation in 1949.

In Peking folklore, fox spirits were a potentially lethal type of supernatural being. The legend held that on a nocturnal visit to a cemetery, a fox would exhume a deceased body and then balance a skull upon its head. It then bowed reverentially to the God of the North Star. If the skull did not topple from the fox's head, the fox would be transformed into a spirit who would live for eight to ten centuries. One version of the legend held that the fox spirit could choose to take the form of a ravishingly beautiful woman who could sustain her existence by stealing the

*yang* essence of a male lover by loving him to death. Other fox spirits were less predatory in nature and might choose a convivial and benevolent human form.

It was said that fox spirits immensely enjoyed human company and had a taste for a dram, or two, of fine spirits fermented from rice and other grains. If a spirit took too much on board, it could only retain its human guise with an extraordinary exercise of will. If not, then it gradually resumed a fox appearance.

The Fox Tower was believed to be the home of the King of the Fox Spirits. A tale from 19<sup>th</sup> century Peking recounts the experience of the tower's watchman, a lonely widower who worked here at night and as a hawker in the Hata Men market during the day in order to make ends meet. The watchman had befriended an elderly man – a master raconteur of stories – who would visit the watchman during his lonesome shift and regale him with stories and poetry. Over the years, the two became close friends, probably resembling the elderly gentlemen who still sit in animated discussion on the benches in the Ming Wall Relic Park, serenaded by pet larks in their bird cages or fanning themselves briskly in the summer heat.

On one lunar New Year's Eve, the watchman invited his old friend to share a ceramic crock of rice wine, much like those still on sale in markets and shops throughout the city. The friend drank deeply of this fine gift and insisted that the watchman accept two pieces of silver as a New Year's gift. The friend exhausted himself in an attempt to overcome the watchman's refusal to accept the gift, a strenuous act as can be seen today in the fight between old friends to grab the bill in any Beijing restaurant. After draining the pot, the friend fell asleep. To the shock and amazement of the watchman, his friend metamorphosed into a fox, and then, like the Cheshire cat in Alice's Wonderland, faded into nothingness.

The next evening, the fox spirit returned in human form, cap in hand, with profound apologies for having alarmed the watchman. He acknowledged that he was the King of the Fox Spirits and promised the watchman that his daily earnings as a hawker would increase every day by the sum of fifty coppers for the following three years, a tidy sum in those days which made for a comfortable retirement for the watchman.

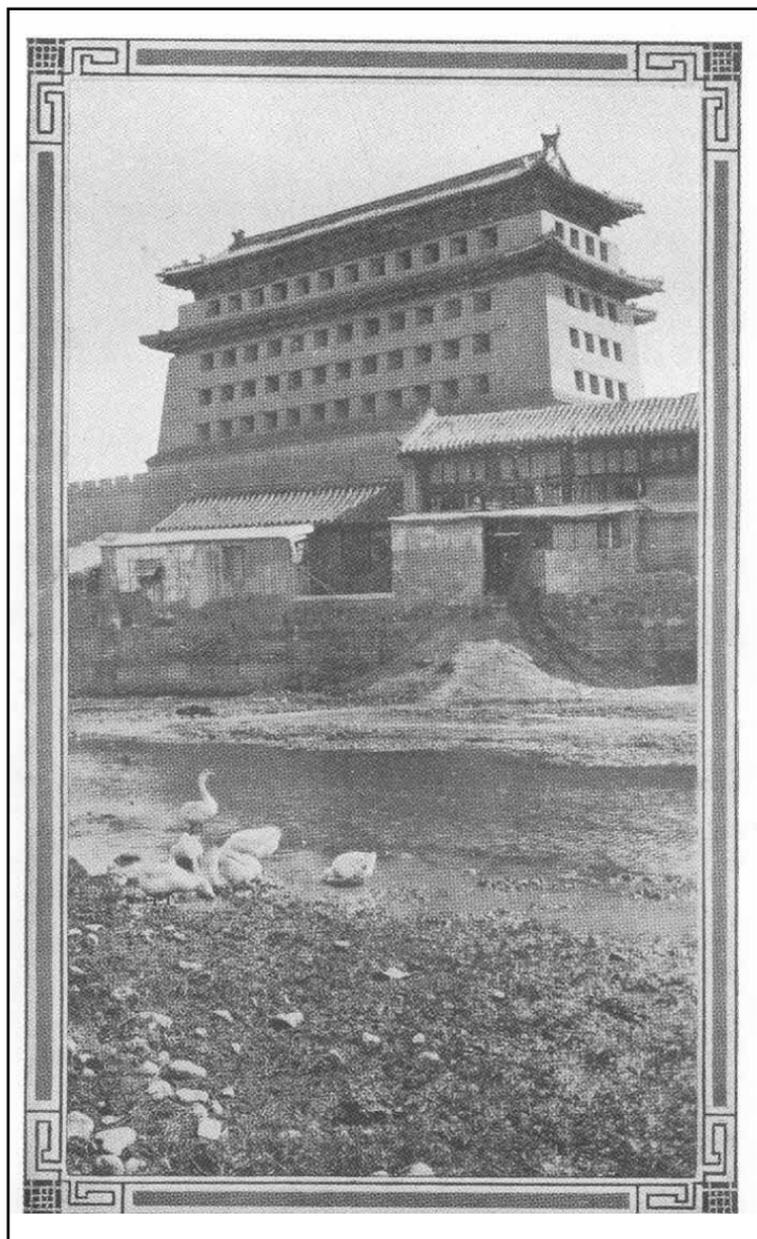
#### TWENTIETH CENTURY SCARS, STABBINGS AND LINGERING SPIRITS

The old watchman and his friend the King of the Fox Spirits might have

encountered some unwelcome company during the twentieth century, a horrid time for Old Peking. In 1900, imperial ineptness, absurd superstitiousness and foreign vengeance resulted in the destruction of many of Peking's neighbourhoods as a result of the Boxer Rebellion. An "Eight Power" Army, an early version of our coalition forces, liberated the foreign embassy district after a 55-day siege by Boxer irregulars, Sino-Muslim infantry and assorted Qing imperial troops, all of whom were intent on sweeping China free from foreign influence. Instead, the victorious foreigners divided the city into different zones of occupation, anticipating the divisions of post-war Berlin or Vienna. The Fox Tower fell within the Russian zone of occupation, complete with daily patrols of the Cossacks keen to demonstrate their superiority over the vanquished Chinese of the city.

You can still see some curious relics of that era. By the stairways leading from the outside terrace to the ground, a sign in Chinese points to some barely visible graffiti, noting that these inscriptions were left by Russian and American soldiers, and serves as "incontrovertible proof of their crimes" during the Boxer Rebellion. However, regular visitors to the Fox Tower will note that the English graffiti is of recent origin. In childish handwriting, "Dec. 16, 1900" and "U.S.A" can be discerned, though it is not clear what an American soldier would have been doing in a watchtower in the Russian zone of occupation (the Americans patrolled the Liu Li Chang neighbourhood). Russian graffiti, if there ever had been any, has worn away with time. However, there is an abundance of graffiti in Chinese, helpfully dated June 15, 1949, July 8, 1960 and the year 1971, along with other dates, written by conscientious (and no doubt patriotic) scribblers. Perhaps the King of the Fox Spirit continues to play a little joke on unsuspecting mortals.

As the twentieth century wore on and Peking became a backwater, the vicinity of the Fox Tower witnessed the arrival of foreign residents, who rented renovated courtyard houses within the seemingly protective crook in the city wall's arm. Gray walls and red gates provided the backdrop to the brutal murder of Pamela Werner, daughter of a renowned English Sinophile and scholar, E.T.C. Werner. In January of 1937, her mutilated body was found by a rickshaw puller, lying against the Fox Tower wall, carefully dissected with her internal organs surgically removed. The Fox Tower murder became a media sensation among the English language press in North China, until Japan's depredations at the Marco Polo Bridge edged the headlines into another direction.<sup>1</sup> From



Fox Tower, *photo Juliet Bredon*

a site of wondrous supernatural spirits, the Fox Tower had become a backdrop for a tawdry murder, symbolic of the decline of old Peking and the ravages to be worked upon China during WW2.

With the establishment of New China in 1949, even the name Fox Tower disappeared. Officially, Beijing city maps call it Dong Bian Men, or the East Convenience Gate, a name redolent in utilitarian practicalities rather than exuding the romance and mystery of the past. Yet somehow, all the spirits of the Fox Tower played their shadowy hands in saving this corner of Old Peking from annihilation.

In 1986, I recall an elderly Peking in Taipei. He was living out his days as a Chinese language teacher, a sullen man who followed the script of his text books and felt the burden of his exile. In 1986, he made a surreptitious trip to the mainland to see his beloved city once more before passing from this world.

On his return, he was a renewed man. “Michael,” he said. “I was so saddened to see that the city walls had all disappeared. But then, I was in a taxi speeding down the Second Ring Road. And out of the corner of my eye, as I was sweeping down the highway, I could see a shadow of the old wall! And this shadow just became grander and grander the closer I came to the Fox Tower.”

“You see, we old Peking people believed that spirits lived inside the city walls. And how can you kill a spirit?”



### **Endnotes**

1. Paul French masterfully solves this crime in his *Midnight in Peking* (London: Penguin, 2012), reviewed in this volume of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China*.

# CHASING GHOSTS IN OLD TIANJIN

BY BILL SAVADOVE

After hours of tramping the streets of Tianjin, the search for my family's former home had reached an end. In the old British Concession on Race Course Road, one of the few city streets which had survived Communism with its original name intact despite the association with gambling and foreign evil, I made a discovery.

The Tianjin house had always represented to me something lost – not just possessions but an entire way of life of my Chinese forebears before they fled the country in 1949. A surviving family photo shows a brick house with a tile roof, enormous windows and graceful columns. As I searched, I looked for the distinctive curved roof which caused people to call the house “Napoleon’s Hat”.

There it was, opposite a golden clock where tourists posed for photos – a public toilet.

I was too late. The Sze family home from 1912 to the early 1950s had been replaced by a modern “WC” as the sign showed, a fitting term for the former British Concession. The entire side of the street where the house once stood had been redeveloped. And for a moment, I thought about using it, but that would have been like desecrating a grave.

When my great grandfather Thomas Sze acquired the piece of land at 17 Race Course Road, he set down roots in the northern port city. The plot was close to his office at the Kailan Mining Administration on Meadows Road (now Tai’an Road), also in the British Concession.

The move was unusual for a native of Jiangsu province with roots in Shanghai, in other words a “southerner” in a northern land. After spending several years in the United States for his high school and college education, he returned from overseas to make a personal commitment to the future of China.

When he acquired the land it was still swamp, a common problem in low-lying Tianjin. He arranged to use ash, waste from a power plant, for landfill. There was room to build a family home and later several other houses.

During World War II, Japanese troops occupied the house, causing the original furniture and many personal items to disappear, including a prized poem given to my great grandfather by his high school tutor. “When they left the house, the Japanese carried everything (away). My

poem went most likely to Japan,” he would later write.

The house itself was lost forever after a relative signed the property away to the new Communist government without compensation in the early 1950s. The family had already fled for the United States. “That ended our ties to that municipality forever,” said my grandfather Palmer Sze, who grew up in Tianjin.

In the family photo with the house, my grandfather sits separately from the rest of the family, and I wish I could ask him why.

### THE LOST CITY

Tianjin, formerly known as Tientsin, has long had an inferiority complex despite its important role in commerce. It has for ages existed in the shadow of Beijing. As a treaty port from 1860, it never achieved the success of Shanghai which opened to the West earlier.

As the 1908 *Guide To Tientsin and Neighbourhood* said: “Tientsin, as far as the traveller is concerned, has for the most part been merely a stepping stone to higher things, namely Peking.” Even today, said Tianjin native Louie Liu, “Tianjin is almost like a lost city.”

I had hoped lack of development would preserve the family home. A decade ago, Tianjin was frozen in time with low-hanging power lines strung along streets plied by massive buses, resembling two separate vehicles grafted together with an accordion-like joint. Residents praised the city’s signature dish, a humble pork bun.

But Tianjin has experienced an economic revival of late, helped by the 2008 Olympics and an international economic meeting in 2010, excuses for the government to spend money on beautification and infrastructure, including a high-speed railway line to Beijing. Airbus, the European plane maker, operates a factory to assemble aircraft. Financial reforms aim to make the city more attractive for investment.

Tianjin, it is claimed, has more foreign-style buildings than any other city in China. The reason: a massive land grab by foreign powers in the late 1800s and early 1900s which gave the city no less than nine foreign concessions belonging to Britain, France, Italy, Japan, the United States, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Belgium.

While development has caused the destruction of historical buildings, at the same time city officials have mandated renovating others for commercial use and tourism, though not necessarily out of concern for preservation. The result is a mixed record for historical conservation in Tianjin.

Historical preservation in Tianjin is a complex interplay between ignorant government officials, a group of experts constrained by their roles as government advisors, a loosely-organized activist group – the Volunteers for the Protection of Tianjin Architectural Heritage, which has won some victories – and the people still living in the old houses.

Louie Liu, who has dedicated himself to raising awareness of historical architecture in the city, takes a conciliatory tone. He runs a private museum with displays about the foreign concessions, heads an association for historical preservation, writes books and gives tours.

“Some people are too extreme. They think every single old house, no matter whether it is good or bad, should be protected. Personally, I think there must be a balance. The government has put a lot of endeavor into preserving old houses. But it’s a pity some old buildings were demolished during recent urban development,” he said.

On one side of Race Course Road, the old Heracles apartment building at Number 8 is used by a company, the former home of a warlord at Number 16-18 is a restaurant and a house at Number 24 has been renovated to be used again as a single residence.

Opposite, the former location of my family home, sit empty lots being used for parking, a towering office building and metal sculptures of horses grazing on a patch of wasteland. The rusting skeleton of a half-finished building, probably halted for financial reasons, has signs saying: “Where Rich History Merges With Dynamic Future”. But there is no history, at least on this side of the street.

#### ON A DARK DESERT HIGHWAY

Retired construction worker Zhang Junsheng, 58, is the one who tells me the house I was looking for probably disappeared seven or eight years ago.

He misses little of neighbourhood events, sitting outside his house on Race Course Road plucking a beat-up old guitar and repeatedly singing the opening line of rock and roll anthem *Hotel California*: “On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair.”

He doesn’t actually speak English, so he can only manage the first line, which was taught to him in a bizarre manifestation of globalisation by the foreign exchange students studying Chinese at the school nearby. He sells them beer from a decrepit wooden stand at the gate of the house, which is shared by several families.

“The big American compound is still there,” he said. The big

American compound is actually a former US military barracks, dating from the 1920s, which now belongs to Tianjin Medical University. His own house is the former home of a son of Yuan Shikai, who famously proclaimed himself emperor after becoming president of the Chinese republic in 1912.

But Zhang is worried. The house next to his has recently been renovated by a wealthy buyer and he fears the government could evict him with little compensation so his house can become a restaurant or club. He worries his son won't find a good wife because the family can't afford to buy an apartment, the bride price in New China.

He becomes suspicious when I ask to see the back of the house, perhaps thinking I am a prospective buyer ready to kick him out. Another reason for his reluctance soon becomes clear. He has stashed a plastic bucket back there which he uses as a makeshift toilet after drinking his own stock of beer. Obviously, he doesn't want to use the public toilet either, which is right across the street.

"I wouldn't leave here for all the money in the world," he said. But later, after I buy a bottle of water from him, he offers to sell me the entire house and work as a security guard protecting the property.

"This will become a place for rich people again," he said.

#### HEAVEN AND HELL IN THE ITALIAN CONCESSION

In the past, each concession had something different to offer. The British Concession was king – the biggest, oldest and most powerful. Within sight of each other were the trio of Gordon Hall, home of the governing municipal council; the Astor House Hotel, the city's finest; and Victoria Park, dubbed the "lung" of the concession for its fresh air and greenery.

My grandfather recalled the German Concession, the site of his early schooling and a family-owned business, the Yu Tsin Tannery, on the riverfront. Even the Chinese rickshaw coolies tried to converse in rudimentary German in the concession. From World War I it no longer belonged to Germany, but people still called it the ex-German Concession into the 1930s.

Every day he would go to the home of his strict tutor who taught him the foundation of a classical education. "We went there every morning in a little horse carriage," he said. "We were asked to read selected passages, memorise them and recite them for the tutor. If we were unable to recite some, we were punished by the tutor by being spanked or hit on the palms until we could do so."

The Japanese Concession was commercial with its many stores and small shops. Given the international nature of Tianjin, my great grandfather had frequent contact with the Japanese business community including the trading firm Okura & Co. located on the waterfront of the concession. His dealings would change with Japanese military adventures in China in the 1930s.

The city was, in some ways, an experiment in globalisation, though one forced by colonial powers. “It is at Tientsin where Chinese and foreigners appreciate each others’ merits perhaps more highly than anywhere else in China,” the *Guide To Tientsin and Neighbourhood* said.

Tianjin’s former Italian Concession has been given a new lease on life as the focus of a massive restoration project. The concession was one of the last among foreign powers when it was set up in 1901 and one of the smallest at 117 acres (47 hectares), bigger only than those of Belgium and the United States, which never developed its concession.

Following the renovation, Piazza Regina Elena has become Marco Polo Square, a cobblestone plaza with a gushing fountain. Piazza Dante, however, has survived with the name of the Italian poet who wrote the *Divine Comedy*.

For local couples taking wedding photos against the backdrop of unique architecture and Chinese tourists looking for a taste of an exotic foreign lifestyle, the former concession is paradise. But to supporters of historical preservation, the government-backed project created a kind of hell populated by poorly restored buildings.

I find the New I-Style Town, as it is now called, strangely lifeless, perhaps because no one lives there any longer. Lanes are lined with restaurants, bars and cafes but customers are scarce. There are few retail stores or residences.

There is a Trattoria Italiana and Nuovo Cinema Paradiso, but the Love Bavaria Beer Bar and Pattaya Thai Restaurant show how the area has moved beyond its roots. Chinese tourist Prisca Liu, who travelled in Italy while studying abroad, sees little resemblance. “It only looks a little like Italy,” she said.

The original concession included companies like the White Star Mineral Water Factory and the Italian Marble Works as well as a church, hospital, school, government offices, military barracks and sports club *Circolo Sportivo Italiano*.

Italy actually tried to expand the concession after griping about swampy land and poor river access by asking for Austria-Hungary’s

former concession, which lay directly north, following that country's defeat in World War I. By 1937, the Italian Concession had 6,500 Chinese and only 373 foreigners, and it reverted to China after Italy's own defeat in World War II.

The restoration of the concession was not without opposition. In 2005, fifty Catholic priests and nuns from Shanxi province protested outside Tianjin government offices over an old ownership claim dating from before 1949. Shanxi is some distance from Tianjin, yet the Catholic diocese in Taiyuan city said the church acquired property between 1911 and 1943.

The dispute remains unresolved, so the property developer has cleaned up the facades of several contested buildings on Minzu and Jinbu roads, but hasn't made them available. Zhai Tian, a representative of developer Tianjin Haihe Historical Preservation Construction Co., claimed there were still some hold-outs. "There are priests inside," she said.

I search around the buildings and find no signs of life. There is a neatly printed sign from 2008 posted in a window, claiming the properties for the Catholic Church and warning people not to rent or buy them. Outside the buildings, there are crudely painted slogans saying "I want to go home" and "Return my home", hinting of fierce protests in the past.

The quality of the restoration has been a target for criticism. Interiors were largely left to individual tenants with little knowledge of preservation. The renovations replaced stone with plaster and concrete, and wooden window frames with aluminum. At the corner of Marco Polo Square, I see the evidence: a pile of window frames on the ground ripped out by workers renovating a building dating from 1916.

Louie Liu has strong feelings about the Italian Concession. "From afar, it looks all right. But when you get closer and check every detail, it's horrible. They used the wrong materials. They changed the colour. They made it look very cheap or vulgar. It changed the atmosphere, the facade. The beautiful houses, they changed the flavour," he said.

It's the dilemma for historical architecture in rapidly developing China: is it preferable to accept a poorly executed renovation or even rebuilding which alters the structure, as lesser evils to losing buildings completely to demolition?

The New I-Style Town has been deemed a commercial success, according to the developer. All but two units are leased.

## CHASING GHOSTS AT THE ASTOR

The amiable British general manager of the 150-year-old Astor Hotel, Martin Verpoorten, assures me there are no ghosts. “No ghosts,” he said. “I would know.”

As I climb the wooden stairs to my room in the 1920s wing of the hotel, just past China’s first ever elevator in a public building, I am doubtful. A hotel which has witnessed the turbulence of China’s history surely must have spirits roaming the halls.

I am already chasing ghosts elsewhere: The house on Race Course Road. The former site of the family tannery in the ex-German concession along the Hai River, now a strip of green along the waterway. The old bank buildings lining the former Victoria Road, renamed Liberation Road.

The Astor House Hotel, now shortened to the Astor Hotel, was for years the place to stay for visiting dignitaries: the diplomatic guesthouse and the centre of social life.

The “Last Emperor”, Puyi, danced the tango in the ballroom in the 1920s after he was deposed. The 1939 New Year’s Day menu offered 15 courses, from crab cocktail to wild goose to mince pie. Hotel workers used to light off firecrackers to scare away the birds in the park just opposite, so their cries wouldn’t bother guests.

After a US \$45 million renovation in 2010, the Astor is back with a British manager though operating under the luxury brand of US-based Starwood Hotels & Resorts and owned by China’s Tianjin Tourism Group.

The hotel’s original structure, a single storey, was built in 1863. In 1886, the hotel was completely rebuilt into a three storey building with a castle-like tower at one corner, an architectural signature which remains.

The hotel was shelled by artillery during the Boxer Uprising in 1900 by Chinese forces sympathetic to the anti-foreign movement. During World War II, the Japanese took over Astor House, renaming it the Asia Hotel and increasing the number of rooms by sub-dividing.

A 1944 advertisement says: “Situated in the Heart of the Special Administrative Area Over Looking the First Park. Excellent Cuisines. Best Accommodation. Terms Moderate.” The Japanese had renamed the British Concession and Victoria Park with more generic titles.

The hotel was bombarded again in 1949 as the Chinese Communists fought the Kuomintang to successfully gain control of Tianjin. In 1976, a devastating earthquake in nearby Tangshan destroyed part of the roof.

When noted designer Alexandra Champalimaud took on the job of renovating the interior, she had a monumental task and a one-year time limit. By this time, the hotel had passed through the hands of nine owners and had been enlarged five times, including suffering the addition of an incongruous high-rise in the 1980s.

“You could still see the very interesting bones that the old building had. It therefore was asking for tender loving care and an incredibly thoughtful renovation,” she said.

She decided what could be kept, like the original wooden doors of the rooms, and what had to be “re-imagined” like detailed plasterwork on the ceilings which she based on a surviving piece in another part of the hotel. She raised ceilings, unblocked doors and reoriented staircases.

The exterior work, handled by another company, included removing cement covering the original brickwork. There were sacrifices for modernity, such as the installation of air conditioners and new fixtures in the bathrooms.

“I tried to work out the significance of each space and recuperate as much of its elegance. We tried to continuously discover other lovely pieces which we needed to retain or restore. But a lot had been lost,” she said. The wooden floors in the rooms, for example, were beyond saving.

Champalimaud said it was a “happy project” despite the inexperience of the construction workers with this kind of restoration and her dealings with a committee appointed by the owner. “When I absolutely thought it was inappropriate, wrong or ugly, then I would say so. Where possible, we just agreed and made concessions,” she said.

The workers learned quickly and Champalimaud kept someone on site to help oversee the project. China’s role as the factory of the world worked to her advantage, allowing her to design all the light fixtures and have them made in China.

Starwood hopes foreign travellers will pay a premium for a room in the restored hotel, while Chinese guests are ready to embrace a “historical product”. “They love the European home-style, chateau or palace feeling,” manager Verpoorten said.

The Chinese owner put it this way. “We hope, by using the opening of the historic Astor, to raise Tianjin’s hotel industry to a new high,” Chairman of the Tianjin Tourism Group, Zhang Dawei, said.

#### TOO MANY MEMORIES

The Astor House was right around the corner from my great grandfather’s

office in the years he worked for Kailan Mining and close to the family home as well. I can imagine him eating in the hotel's enormous dining room or sitting in the ornate reading room, though I don't really know. He worked hard, but he liked to join social clubs and he easily made friends with Americans given his time in the United States.

When he arrived in Tianjin in 1905, he was homeless in more ways than one. Arriving in Tianjin for the first time during the Chinese New Year increased the feeling of isolation since the holiday is usually spent with family.

After nine years in the United States, he was more foreign than Chinese in some respects. Both his parents had died while he was away. His brothers were scattered all over China. He missed his high school tutor, a spinster who had also provided him lodging, with whom he had developed a close relationship.

He went to Tianjin with nothing more than the hope of employment from Yuan Shikai, then based in the city as governor-general of Chihli province, who was seeking to modernize. Waiting for his audience, he wandered the lively streets of Tianjin for several days.

"I went over the Hai River by the iron bridge, which was built after the Boxer Rebellion. Immediately I entered a street, which was full of fine stores selling all kinds of things. I enjoyed watching the various stores at their best," he recalled.

Based on his US degree in engineering, he was offered his first employment, teaching at a technical school and acting as chief engineer at Tientsin's mint. He would later manage railway lines.

I never knew my great grandfather, Thomas Sze, since he died before I was born. I visited my grandfather, Palmer Sze, occasionally before he died in 2010. A Chinese patriarch even in his adopted country of the United States, he captured my attention with stories of his China days, all the while saying "Too many memories."

My previous visits to Tianjin were inauspicious, giving an impression of a backwards city held back by Beijing from being a rival. The first time, a snowstorm snarled traffic. Another time, officials proudly claimed the city was a hive of entrepreneurialism because the government had nationalised so many private companies after 1949 – including our family business.

But wandering the streets of Tianjin, looking for the landmarks my great grandfather and grandfather mentioned, I felt closer to them and to Tianjin.

## THE NORTH KOREA MASS GAMES

BY GARY JONES

*In 2010, Gary Jones was invited to Pyongyang to interview the director and the choreographer of the Mass Games. It was the first and only time the North Korean Games organisers have ever spoken to a foreign journalist about their work.*

When Zhang Yimou, director of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, needed inspiration for what proved to be an awe-inspiring spectacle, the veteran Chinese filmmaker – creative force behind cinematic epics like *Hero* and *Curse Of The Golden Flower* – plundered China’s history, its cultural and technological achievements, and even his homeland’s forays into space.

To realise the vastness of his Olympian vision, however (and without Chinese armies amassed via computer generated imagery, but with 15,000 flesh-and-blood performers working together in real time), Zhang ventured beyond China’s borders for his muse. The director looked to neighbouring North Korea and its Mass Games. As well as being described as that enigmatic Communist state’s overtly nationalistic ideology set to music, and reminiscent of Soviet-era displays of regimentation and might, the annual Games has been dubbed “Cirque de Soleil on steroids”.





In the run up to the Mass Games, communal spaces in Pyongyang, the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, are commandeered for training, and youngsters skip through hula-hoops and are drilled through their paces within ordered grids. The 90-minute Mass Games draws upon the graft not of thousands of Chinese, but of an astonishing 100,000 Korean gymnasts, dancers, acrobats and trapeze artists, all acting together with robot-like precision.

As we approach by car, Pyongyang's impressive Rungrado May Day Stadium, the 150,000-seater home of the Games, glows a burnished gold. Senior figures in the state-operated Mass Games Organizing Committee (MGOC), after months of request, have agreed to discuss the spectacle's creation with an outsider. Though Zhang has spoken extensively of his Chinese Olympic victory, the artistic brains behind the North Korean Mass Games have never before shared their secrets with a journalist from overseas.

We park under the stadium's parachute-like canopy, where batteries of black-clad young women twirl and practise traditional Korean sword dancing in the shade. Inside the stadium, hundreds of red-flag-waving dancers and drum majorettes mill about the pitch. All are covered head to toe, white-silk scarves and pulled-low baseball caps hiding every face. With little heavy industry and relatively few motor vehicles in Pyongyang, there is virtually no pollution. The late-summer sun can be blistering.

"We are in your Guinness World Records, you know," bespectacled

Games Choreographer Kim Mok Ryong, who leads the way up through the stands, states with pride. Clearly, Kim has no worries about the sun: the 60-year-old's face and arms are tanned copper, and he is dressed in an open-collared, short-sleeved, charcoal suit of the casual style sometimes favoured by the North Korea's revered "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il. "Three years ago, I think it was, they gave us the award. Ours is the largest gymnastic and artistic performance in the world."

Games Director Kim Gun Ryong and MGOC customer-relations officer Sin Sung Chol have also joined our small party. Both are kitted out, Western style, in white shirts and grey slacks. Like our two state-employed chaperones, all three men sport badges, pinned over their hearts, depicting the face of Kim Jong Il's father Kim Il Sung, founder of the DPRK who is worshipped by North Koreans, and who was declared "Eternal President" of the nation after his death from a heart attack in 1994.

Sin holds open a door and we are ushered into a large meeting room, three walls of which are lined with rows of velveteen-upholstered armchairs and rosewood tea tables. In the centre of the room, six men and women kneel and debate around a colourful pencil sketch featuring a rainbow, doves in flight and matrices of equally sized and spaced dots, each presumably symbolizing a single human being to perform in perfect mechanical lockstep with his or her compatriots. Chonji brand cigarettes – a telltale sign of status in the DPRK – are distributed by Sin, and the allotted hour begins.

Director Kim, who has worked on theatrical productions in Pyongyang for 24 years, is keen to shed light on why, he believes, the Games resonates with his Communist brothers and sisters. Though the first Games was held in 1961 under the rather dour title *The Era Of The Workers' Party*, and its content and scale changed with the years, in 2002 – in celebration of what would have been Kim Il Sung's 90th birthday – the theme became *Arirang*, a Korean folk tale that tells of two separated young lovers and their quest to be reunited. It is something of an Asian Romeo & Juliet yarn and a tidy metaphor for the divided Korean peninsula. The theme has remained the same ever since.

"It is a sad and moving story," says the 47-year-old director who, alongside the choreographer, joined the Mass Games team in 2001 to work on the original *Arirang* production:

*Though every province in our country has variations on the tale,*



*and different songs to accompany it, all Koreans adore Arirang, even those born or living overseas. It's in our blood. Essentially, we use Arirang to condense the last 100 years or so of Korean history into a single artistic performance. Though the traditional Arirang story was extremely popular in Korea during the time of Japanese colonial rule [1910-1945], since liberation, and under the excellent leadership of President Kim Il Sung and Comrade Kim Jong Il, the lives of Koreans have improved greatly, and we include that to make the performance a happier experience. So Arirang has become a story of the past, the present and the future of the Korean nation, containing scenes of occupation, revolutionary struggle, liberation, division of our country and reunification [of North and South Korea], which is the goal of all Koreans. Arirang will remain the theme as long as people, from home and overseas, want to see it. But even if the theme of [the] Mass Games is modified in the future, reunification will always be included. That can never change.*

All three men, however, concur that the Games, while being an eye-popping visual display, also serves a profound political purpose: by cultivating a group mentality among participants, the Games encourages the suppression of individual desire for the supposed benefit of the mass.

Kim Jong Il himself, in a 1987 speech to Games organisers, decreed:

*Developing mass gymnastics is important in training children to be fully developed Communist people. To be a fully developed Communist man, one must acquire a revolutionary ideology, the knowledge of many fields, rich cultural attainments and a healthy and strong physique. These are the basic qualities required of a man of the Communist type. Mass gymnastics play an important role in training schoolchildren to acquire these Communist qualities. Mass gymnastics foster particularly healthy and strong physiques, a high degree of organisation, discipline and collectivism in schoolchildren. The schoolchildren, conscious that a single slip in their action may spoil their mass gymnastic performance, make every effort to subordinate all their thoughts and actions to the collective.*

Sin, whose two teenage sons have each twice taken part in the Games, echoes his leader's suggestion that the Games might be a microcosm of

his hardline Communist state. “[The Games] drills into the performers the importance of teamwork,” Sin says, waving his Chonji in the smoke-filled air like a magician’s wand. “It teaches them that any small mistake affects all society, and that they are not alone in their efforts. Everyone is working together.”

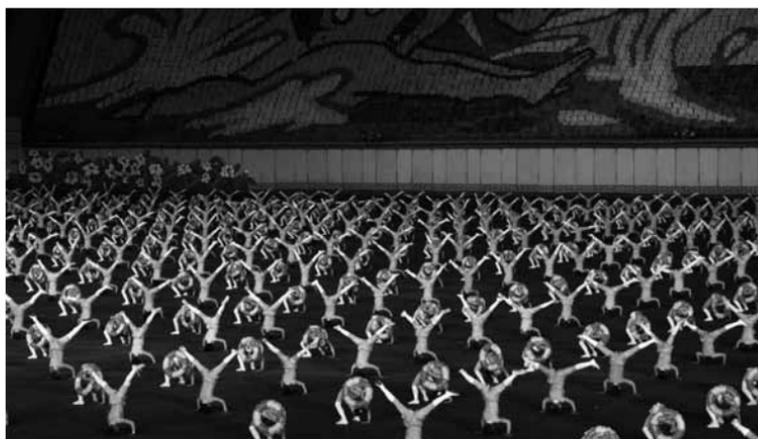
Pyongyang’s population of 2.8 million suggests that at least one in 30 of the city’s inhabitants has a role in the Mass Games. The youngest performers are five years old, and the oldest – professional trapeze artists and dancers – might be in their early 30s. Procuring willing participants, however, is never a dilemma for the MGOC. “We simply go to [Pyongyang] schools and ask the children “Who wants to take part?” says Director Kim. “They all raise their hands, but some must be disappointed. We can’t take everyone. That’s life.”

Though overseas travel is heavily restricted or forbidden for the majority of North Koreans, choreographer Kim has recently returned from a trip to Nigeria, where he instructed dancers coming together for an athletics meeting. “There were dancers from Africa, from Europe, and they asked how we make the Arirang performance so perfect. I told them, it is down to the quality of Korean youth. Our youngsters are hard working, disciplined, organised and educated, and that is down to the guidance and care of President Kim Il Sung and comrade Kim Jong Il. When I instruct [Mass Games participants] to do something, they do it. No questions. No complaints.”

While accepting that he can be an uncompromising taskmaster, Kim insists that overseas reports that the DPRK appropriates hundreds of millions of its citizens’ man-hours each year in the Games are grossly exaggerated. “When we first started training for Arirang [in 2001], six months was needed, but we don’t require so much time these days. This year, about 60 percent of the performers have performed before, so they only practise hard for a month or so. Those taking part for the first time need three months.”

“After many years of Arirang, they only need to train for two hours a day, two or three times a week, to become ready,” says Sin, admitting, however, that subtle changes are made to the Arirang performance each year. “Comrade Kim Jong Il loves and understands art,” the MGOC official adds, “and he has told us that repetition leads to decay, so scenes are adapted every year to keep things fresh.”

Variety, it might be argued, is not a familiar concept for the choreographer and the director. When not working on Arirang, the





men have full-time jobs producing *Sea of Blood*, one of only five state-approved revolutionary operas – known locally as “the immortal classics” – that may be performed at the Pyongyang Grand Theatre. Penned by Kim Il Sung himself as a stage play during the Japanese colonial period, and adapted for musical accompaniment by his son, *Sea Of Blood*, according to the state-produced media, “reflects the burning hatred of the Korean people against Japanese imperialists which turned the country into the sea of blood, their firm determination to [exact] revenge upon their enemies a hundred and thousand fold, their confidence in the revolutionary victory and their ardent aspiration after building a new society”. Since its debut in 1971, *Sea of Blood* has been performed around 2,000 times in the capital alone.

Despite being at the age when most North Koreans retire however, choreographer Kim has no plans to hang up his baton in the near future. “I have been given a huge responsibility, and my position is important for my nation,” he snaps back at such a suggestion, eyes flashing with feigned defiance behind his glasses, a bony finger poking in the direction of his interviewer. “I’m not so fit these days, but I bet my mind is younger than yours. The days fly by quickly now - I only remembered my age when you asked how old I was - but I work with youngsters all the time, and they keep me young.”

Having led us back to the stadium car park, the choreographer introduces one performer who does expect to “retire” after the coming Games. Sword dancer Kim Mi Gyong is 21 years old and a veteran of six

Arirang performances, including two – in 2002 and 2005 – attended by Kim Jong Il. “I’d like to perform as many times as possible,” the textile-factory worker says with a smile, “but there are many other youngsters coming up, so I think this might be my last time.”

And on her training regimen? Kim looks to her friend Ri Song Mi, a Pyongyang tram conductor, when not wielding a flashing blade, for support. “It’s tough sometimes,” says Kim, “but I think about comrade Kim Jong Il coming to see the performance. That encourages me to work hard.”

“It’s all very sisterly,” says Ri, 19, who has danced in three Games. “We are all proud to be involved.”

“There is competition between us, of course,” adds Kim in a rare moment of vocal individualism. “Every one of us feels like that. But we are all working together to do the best we can.”

In recent years the DPRK has actively been trying to attract more overseas visitors to see Arirang, and Beijing-based Koryo Tours – one of just a handful of operations worldwide with the ability to gain foreigners access to the DPRK – took 600 foreigners to the Games in 2010, including around 180 US citizens. Foreign attendees of the Games are charged between 80 and 300 Euros to attend, depending on seating position (the Euro, alongside the Chinese Yuan, being the DPRK’s preferred currency for foreign transactions). North Korean citizens, meanwhile, pay the equivalent of less than one Euro.

Koryo Tours General Manager Simon Cockerell believes the North



Korean push is not about bringing in foreign currency, but about official desire for more outsiders to see what the North Koreans are capable of when they all pull together. As Zhang Yimou told the Chinese newspaper *Southern Weekend* after the Beijing Olympics, when it comes to synchronized artistic performances held on a gargantuan scale, “Number one is North Korea. Their performances are totally uniform, and this type of uniformity results in beauty.”

With the morning sun still blazing overhead, the choreographer explains that the interview is now over. Sin opens another packet of cigarettes, handshakes and goodbyes are made, and we are waved away, heading for our hotel.

The Rungrado May Day Stadium is located on an island in the middle of the wide and sluggish Taedong River, which bisects the North Korean capital, and walkways on both sides of the bridge leading back into the city are crammed tight with teenage girls heading home after their Arirang practice sessions. Some of the youngsters appear exhausted. They hunch forward, sweating under cumbersome backpacks. Some make the trek alone, while others smile and monkey around with their friends. There are carefree faces, troubled faces, pretty faces, and less pretty faces. All are different. All belong to individuals. All are heading in the same direction.

# THE TRADING MELTING POT OF KASHGAR

BY SAM CHAMBERS, WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDRÉ EICHMAN



## HISTORY

Kashgar. Even the very name of this ancient outpost evokes wondrous images. Few places in the People's Republic conjure up such incredible vistas as this cultural home of the Uighurs: an aural, visual and nasal assault.

Sitting as it does nearer to the Mediterranean than to Beijing, Kashgar has always looked and felt the least Chinese city in the Middle Kingdom. Yet, the legendary Silk Road city in the shadows of the Pamir Mountains is now undergoing huge changes following its designation as a "Special Economic Zone" by the central government. This unique trading heritage is about to be upgraded for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For centuries, 2,000-year-old Kashgar, sitting at the confluence of the northern and southern Silk Roads, has remained a vital trading artery where Chinese merchants traded silk and jade for furs, rugs and spices from Central Asia.

Xinjiang, which is larger than Western Europe, borders eight countries, with Kashgar (or Kashi as the Chinese call it) lying at its far western edge, a gateway to exotic, little visited lands. Due west from Kashgar is Tajikistan, northwest is Kyrgyzstan and southwest along the soaring fabled Karakoram Highway past K2 lies Afghanistan, Kashmir and Pakistan. Few cities in China have a greater ethnic mix than the melting pot that is Kashgar.

Most Uighurs claim descent from Karabalghasan, the early Uighur kingdom in what is now Mongolia, which was conquered by Kyrgyz tribesmen in AD 840. The Uighur fled south and dispersed in the oasis towns surrounding the Taklamakan Desert, where they had maintained



trading relations along the ancient Silk Road. They established Turpan as their new capital and Kashgar as one of their most important trading centres. The regularity of the caravan trade between the oases of Marv, Balkh, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kashgar, Turpan and Khotan with the distant capitals of Europe and Asia placed Kashgar in a central role as economic broker and cultural mediator. The Uighurs' far-flung kingdom flourished until the coming of the Mongols in the 12th century.

Islam had arrived in Kashgar by the 10th century, and the city became a centre of Islamic learning, displacing a multi-religious tradition that combined elements of Buddhist, Manichaeism, Zoroastrian, and even

early Nestorian Christian practices (there was a Nestorian archbishopric in Kashgar as early as 650 AD). Hinayana Buddhism in particular flourished from the second century until the coming of Islam: in 644, the travelling Chinese monk Xuanzang recorded not only the widespread practice of Buddhism, but also the vibrancy of Kashgar's bazaar, and the multi-ethnic character of its people, some with "blue eyes" and "yellow hair," perhaps of Sogdian or East Iranian origin. That diversity is evident today, where the daily market – more of which later – attracts thousands of patrons, and the famous Sunday bazaar more than ten thousand; including Han Chinese, Uighurs, Russians, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Kazakhs, as well as tourists from across the globe.

Today, the 160-odd mosques in Kashgar prove the enduring presence of Islam, though Buddhist influence can be found in the extraordinarily varied artwork, music and dance produced by the Uighur people.

The city of Kashgar came to prominence in western minds for the first time around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Russia and Britain squared off for supremacy in Central Asia. Paranoia reigned concerning each of these huge empire's intentions. Britain was convinced Russia





had ambitions to stretch its empire into British-held India, while Russia was worried about the encroaching, marauding red line of British troops along its southern border in countries such as Afghanistan. What followed was that period in history known as the Great Game, a waltz between empires of bluff and counter bluff. Countries and regions in and around Central Asia were tapped for support. Both Russia and Britain mounted tremendously tough expeditions to Tibet for instance to gather support for their imperial quests. Kashgar became a vital listening post at the eastern fringes of this territorial tit-for-tat with both countries establishing consulates in town, both of which are now faded glories as concrete hotel monoliths.

The city has grown in recent decades and has been covered with the standard white-tiled accommodation blocks so beloved of authorities throughout China. Head to Kashgar fast to see the last ancient remnants of its Old Town.

#### A SNAPSHOT OF DAILY LIFE IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN NEXUS

Strolling around the rusty-coloured Old Town is like entering a time warp. I plonk myself on a doorstep, swiping away the dust as I lower myself down, and watch the world go by, noting down every nuance of this last drip of old Uighur urban life. A constant pitter-patter of footsteps is my percussion, the shrill playful sound of kids scampering around the chorus.

At my feet lie well-worn black brick paths. Main streets – four metres wide as opposed to two metres – have newer hexagon shaped bricks. Around me lies a mishmash of old adobe and newer brick house walls, though these exteriors give no impression of the often splendid Turkic opulence through the gorgeous, studded, colourful doors that open into beautiful, intricate courtyards.

Women in their 20s in headscarves walk past, scrupulously dressed. Cleanliness is truly next to Godliness within these dusty confines, the houses kept spotless for the five prayers each and every day.

To my left a lady is arched over, sweeping by her house; a huge swell of dust kicks up. Dust clearance in this oasis in the Taklamakan desert must be a never-ending job.



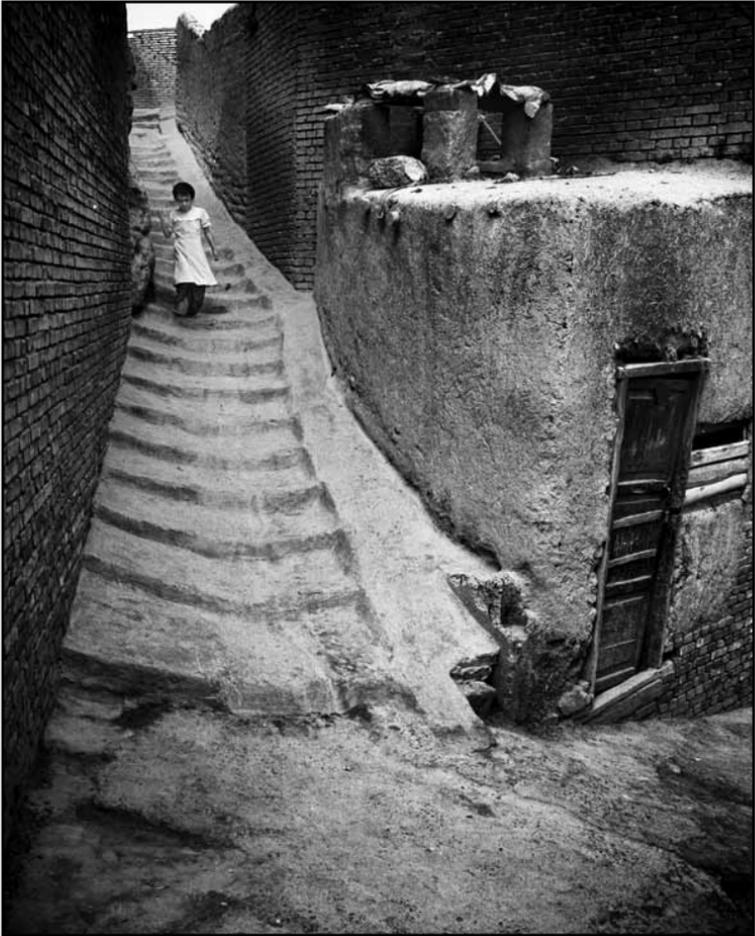
Another lady walks past with three freshly baked bagels in a cheap plastic bag. The warm dough wafts my way. She opens her door, not far from where I am placed, and a rich, spicy smell of mutton stew sizzles onto the street.

On one corner some of the adobe needs retouching. A thick bright brown gluey straw concoction will see to the blemishes soon. However, repair work is rarely seen in this neighbourhood, for these houses, often more than 500 years old, are built to last. Mud bricks are the most important feature of the old homes in Kashgar. These square houses are built of mud bricks laid out in thick layers, with a capped wooden roof covered in reeds, straw and mud to guard against earthquakes. The walls are built 70 to 90 cm thick, and their durability is rarely seen in the Muslim world.

A bearded one-eyed man dressed in a long overcoat passes me. His one eye furtively looks me up and down. A pair of younger men on a moped greet him reverentially, *asalamalakum*, before descending right and out of sight, beeping their horn around the tight corner. The brief low growl of the moped is quickly replaced and drowned out by the trill cacophony of the kids once again. A middle-aged lady pops out from her home to exchange pleasantries with her neighbour. The evening hour is upon us, a time to catch up with friends and family now that the fierce 40-degree heat is receding.

“Wherufrum? wherufrum?” a moustached pudgy man in his early 30s asks me in a very rushed tone. I replay what he has said in slow





motion in my head and reply, “England” at which point his eyes light up and then he is on his way, carrying some milk back home. A kit of pigeons spring off in unison from a telegraph wire like a fast moving dark cloud, jumping into action at the groans of a car horn in the distance below.

Two girls, one dressed in a bright shiny white dress, the other in jeans, stroll past hand in hand.

Gazing to my left again, the lady who has now finished sweeping the dust from in front of her house tosses some water on the area to keep the particles at bay a little longer. Her daughter helps her out with a big bucket. Meanwhile, an elderly gentleman, wearing a traditional green Uighur hat, wheezes his way up the hill from the lake to where I

am sitting. He pushes his bike, the steepness of the hill, his advancing years and the basic nature of the bicycle, make this one hill he won't be peddling up again. To his consternation a youth with a fledgling moustache overtakes him on an electric bike. Going in the other direction a seven-year-old in a red T-shirt swings by on a bike far too big for him, the sound of his brakes piercing the glowing evening.

Five kids turn the corner, looking mischievous. A game of hide-and-seek ensues with the smallest youth counting from one to ten in Uighur – *bir, ikki, üç* . . . However, the sight of a big, hairy white man scribbling in his notebook stops them all in their tracks abruptly for 30 seconds or so as they crowd around me inquisitively.

Two four-year-olds amble past, staring at me, their faces stained from the juicy watermelon they are chewing down to the quick. They are followed by an eight-year-old, who plucks up the courage and greets me, "Hurro". He is carrying his prized toy, a common sight here, a spinning top and whip that careens through the streets – probably the Uighur equivalent of Afghan kite running. He puts his finger to his mouth and bites, shyly. A gentle smile breaks through his softly lit face and his bashfulness disappears when I return his greeting saying hello.

The hide-and-seekers run round the block once more. The gang has grown to eight and now it's a slightly older girl of around nine in a black polka dot dress who's doing the seeking in the labyrinthine tightly knit surroundings of the Old City. For one child though its bedtime. His father comes to tell him, he's not happy, moans a bit but says his goodbyes and heads off.

Behind a closed, studded, sky-blue wooden door I hear a family debating in earnest.

The longer I sit here the more I feel my throat clogged up with dust particles. Clear bright evening sunlight is pouring down the street where ahead of me a boy is showing off to his friend, blowing as big a bubble from his gum as he can. "Hmmm, hmmm," he gestures to his friend to look, his face hidden by a large pink translucent rubber ball. However, at this moment the gum falls from his mouth and onto the floor, the bubble remarkably staying intact. He gasps, picks it up, pats the dust off, deflates it and pops it back in his mouth. My stomach is a long way from such tolerance as probably my growing thirst reflects.

A father and son team pass by on a donkey cart, the clip-clop sound echoing under the bridged houses. The father wails in Uighur, "Rice! Rice!" Though there are no takers on this particular street corner,

judging by the depleted sacks on his cart the father has at any rate had a solid day of sales.

A blast of air funnels down the street, blasting open a couple of doors and whipping up a mini-tornado of dust. I go off in search of water, weaving away left, right, left through the narrow ancient streets until in the fading light I come to a main road, cars blaring, ugly white tiled accommodation blocks lining the street. I am out of the time warp and back into the reality of Kashgar's future. At least there's some ice-cold water for sale opposite.

Thirst quenched, I head back to my hotel to shower away the dust. I'm staying in the grounds of the former British Consulate, at the sprawling uninspired concrete morass called the Qini Bagh. A Mao statue still stands prominent in this, the most westerly city in China. Coming out of my hotel the next day I make my way to the noisy road outside. To my right is a money exchange *cum* international phone centre cubby hole. I'm hanging around for a taxi and watch as a man strolls in with 35,000 US dollars in 100 dollar bills for exchange into Renminbi, more money than I've ever seen and a potent reminder of the city's trading heritage. To my left is a grubby, but tasty, Pakistani restaurant. Above it is an empty Western bar that probably won't see out the summer. Opposite is a Singaporean-funded café, also struggling to make ends meet. The taxi drops me off at People's Square. I get out. I am shielded from the sun by a huge shadow. There in white marble on a dais is the Great Helmsman, one arm aloft. It's a massive statue, the second largest of the founder of the People's Republic in all of China. As I stand up by the plinth I can't help but notice the irony, the quirk of the way the sun is skewing the statue's shadow so that it forms a large cross across the square. Mao's shadow cast large on this remote slice of desert.

It's Sunday, which means two things are important to check out: the animal market and the Sunday Bazaar, both of which provide a welcome return to Uighur culture. Early Sunday morning it's animal time, a chance for hundreds of farmers from the surrounding areas to come to the outskirts of town to sell their livestock. The old animal farm was shunted out to make way for a sprawling shopping mall. But even at its new location, this market truly has a sense of the Kashgar of my imagination.

There are 500 people at the entrance locked in frenzied bargaining, patting and looking over all different types of sheep. Lamb is very much the meat of choice in this part of the world. A donkey with a cart muscles

its way through the centre of all the sheep. Cash is handed over to my right by a wizened old man for a young lamb. The bargaining is fierce inside. One lamb breaks loose and makes a run for it. The 50-ish owner legs it into the centre of the crowd, chasing after his errant livelihood, eventually grasping the sheep by its throat and giving the creature a scolding. A boy no more than 12-years-old uses an ordinary pair of scissors to shear a sheep – a serious crew-cut ensues. From a distance all one can see is a sea of white and green Uighur hats and the noise is intense – arguments over prices mix with the neighs and brays of the sheep. Throughout, however, it pays to keep a firm eye down below as there is quite a farmyard smell...the colour of the tarmac explains why.

While the sheep seem to move around easily enough, the goats are more stubborn, often putting up quite a fight. In a far corner of the market, donkeys, the absolute workhorses of the Uighurs, are paraded. Further back, horses, the most expensive animals on offer here, walk up and down, their coats shining bright in the sunshine.

A Tajik stands aloof from the others, holding his donkey. He looks almost European compared to those around him.

The expressions when haggling are fantastic and very overt. The seller tends to look grievously wounded when the first bid comes in, but by the end of it there's a smile from both the buyer and seller, and a handshake seals the deal. If the arguing is getting out of hand an elder will often come into the circle, yank the cash out of the buyer's hand and give it to the seller closing the deal.

Being on the edge of the world's second largest desert brings many camels to this gathering. A camel moans, kicks out and hits a man. These animals look angry – spitting with venom. I edge around them, giving a good four-metre distance.

A randy bullock tries and tries to jump a cow but the tight noose around his head prevents him getting too high off the ground. He'll remain frustrated till the end of the day.

All this constant animal movement kicks up a fearful amount of dust which goes straight down the back of my throat. There's a whole side of the market devoted to saddles, bridles, ropes and all the accouterments one needs to keep livestock. There are watering trays made out of wood and tires. A whole host of motorized vehicles await to help farmers take their purchases away. Back towards the entrance of the market there's mounds of melons. There is delicious Hami melon, named after a city in the centre of the province. There are also plenty of places to eat, or

buy knives and antiques, but for this kind of stuff there's a better place to go.

The Sunday Bazaar, just 15 minutes away, is a shadow of its former glory when the Silk Road was at its peak. Nevertheless, it is well worth checking out and gives first time visitors a glimpse of some of the multinational trading heritage that has taken place here for centuries. The bazaar is housed within a good-looking green tiled dome and the entrance grandiosely describes this bubbling cauldron of human commerce as the Kashgar International Trade Market of Central and Western Asia. Whether it's an intricate rich red carpet from Turkmenistan, a giant Uighur guitar, a traditional pointed hat from Tajikistan or bright, almost luminescent, spices from Pakistan, exoticism bursts from the heaving stands. Afghans rub shoulders with former foes from Russia, while neighbouring Kyrgyz barter with Uzbeks. Mopeds shriek, storeholders haggle and tourists look on bemused.

Feeling peckish I follow my nose and head down a side-lane for some classic Uighur fare. A middle-aged man, dressed in white, is sweating as



he makes noodles.

A sack of flour is emptied onto a table, a well etched into the centre where a handful of salt is added and a big bowl of water is poured in. The flour is gently folded into the water, the wall of the well becomes thinner and thinner. The cook, Den Den, starts to mash the mixture with his hands. He kneads it hard, throwing in extra water when he notices it is



too dry. He really puts his back into the process. There's a poster of the mosque of Medina in front of him. The mixture is pushed up to the side of the table, some oil is splashed onto the table, the dough is rolled back, kneaded again, the process repeated twice. He then pumps the dough as if it's a weak heart in need of resuscitation. He spreads it out, folding it into itself. This is some exercise, made all the more sweaty by the kitchen stoves roaring near him. This dough is then covered in plastic and left to rest for a day.

Den Den then takes some that he made earlier and rolls the tube with his hand till it stretches to three feet long. He then stretches and folds the resulting strands back on themselves and repeats the process time and time again until he has a noodle-like skipping rope bouncing up and down in the air, the texture becoming lighter and lighter. He takes these strands onto his flour-covered table and continues to stretch them, adding flour to make sure the many strands, fast becoming like spaghetti, stay as one. He chops one end and drops the noodles into a cauldron of boiling water for a couple of minutes.

The typical sauce that goes with these freshest of noodles is made up of the staple meat of Uighurs, lamb, combined with garlic, cabbage, onions, tomatoes, chili peppers and eggplant, added near the end of cooking to soak up the oil. If this all sounds pretty similar to spaghetti from Italy, it's because it is. To the consternation of the Italians it is from these parts that their national dish emanates. The legendary story of how Marco Polo brought pasta to Italy from Xinjiang has been told

countless times, and can be found in his *The Travels of Marco Polo*, the 1298 travelogue that is part *Lonely Planet*, part Anthony Bourdain. It is also printed on countless paper placemats in Chinese restaurants around the world, right next to the instructions on using chopsticks.

I eagerly wolf down my noodles, taking part in the mass slurping sounds from the food shack as locals enjoy every last drop of their dishes. As well as the noodles, there's the ubiquitous lamb skewers and naan bread, all washed down the with glorious local tea, which to this day, writing a year on, I can still recall: the taste and smell of this most delicate, fragrant tea with little rose petals combining wonderfully with the dark, smoky tea leaves.

Suitably full, I get up to leave and head back through the bazaar. On the way out I enjoy the irony of eyeing a familiar Italian looking pasta machine, except that it's Chinese, made by the folk at Jia Yong Ya Mian Ji, whoever they may be. Its initial price is just 65 RMB. I know that if I bargain hard enough I could get that down to half price. Marco Polo R.I.P.

## BOOK REVIEWS

EILEEN CHANG

*Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres*, ed. Kam Louie  
Hong Kong University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY KAREN S. KINGSBURY

The discrepancy between Eileen Chang's low public profile in English and her near omni-presence in Chinese is one way of measuring the distance that separates these two language/culture communities, except perhaps in hybrid hot spots like Hong Kong and Shanghai.

That gap is an opportunity too, which this volume skillfully exploits, by starting from the most productive parts of the Chinese discourse on Chang and connecting them to Anglophonic (and worldwide) interests in gender, performance, cultural hybridity, code-switching and cinematic intertextuality, to name but a few of the topics addressed. The key ordering principle for this high-level bridgework is the "romancing," or charged pairing, of rhetoricity and historicity (a topic tackled with admirable clarity, near the end of the volume, by Tze-lan Sang). The essays are therefore arranged neither in some taxonomical order of critical schools nor as a chronological rehearsal of Chang's life, but in the approximate order of the publication dates of the Chang texts they treat.

Readers familiar with Chang's oeuvre and its repeatedly retrospective, or, as David Der-wei Wang puts it, "involutionary" poetics might wonder if this ordering leads to unproductive reiteration, given the certainty that a small set of people and events from the writer's formative years will re-appear at many junctures. Such is not the case, primarily because, as Kam Louie explains in his introduction, "it is not the content but the way in which [Chang] expressed her memories that is most interesting."

Instead, the main drawback of this ordering, perhaps ironically, given that multi-author volumes sometimes struggle for coherence, is the appearance of completeness. In fact, the collection makes next to no mention of four novels from the middle years of Chang's career: *The Rice-sprout Song*, *Rouge of the North*, *Naked Earth* and *Bansheng yuan* [*Half a Lifelong Romance*]. While the focus on early and late/posthumous stages of her career is an understandable reflection of current discussions in Chinese, a clearer framing of the collection's

scope within a range too broad to be covered in one volume could have sharpened its meanings for Anglophone readers.

The collection nonetheless delivers, within its own necessary limits, an exciting range of approaches, topics and scholarly styles. It starts from usefully direct, descriptive analyses: Kam Louie's study of Chang's dim, yet nuanced view of Westernised Chinese men, and Jessica Tsui Yan Li's discussion of the increased sanguinity of a Hong Kong director's recent re-staging of Chang's ironic wartime romance, "Love in a Fallen City." Nicole Huang adds intriguing detail to our general sense of Chang's lifelong (and politically expensive) immunity to nationalist ideology, by offering new and newly re-examined evidence of the writer's non-antagonism, even at the height of the occupation era, toward Japan.

The discussion then takes a theoretical turn – circling around Chang's own manifestos, as well as those of European modernists like Walter Benjamin – as Esther M.K. Cheung challenges the still-repeated, usually masculinist position that Chang's disinterest in monumentality makes her a lesser writer (in comparison to, for instance, Lu Xun) by showing how "the universal and sublimated originate from the trivial and ordinary." Next, Shuang Shen takes up the ethical questions raised by the doubling in and around Chang – through betrayal, impersonation and bilingualism – during and after the Pacific War, thereby adding nuance and depth to our understanding of Chinese cosmopolitanism in that (continuing) era. Her essay forms an abutting pair with Xiaojue Wang's study of Chang's intense involvement with the Qing classic *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which Wang sees as part of the author's "strategy of deterritorialization, a way of avoiding any political dominion over literary creation by either side of the Cold War dichotomy."

The next four studies are arranged in even closer pairs, focusing on two Chang texts: "Lust, Caution" (and Ang Lee's cinematic rewriting thereof) and the posthumously published memoir-novel, *Little Reunion*. First, Gina Marchetti shows that Eileen Chang and Ang Lee operate from imaginaries saturated with images from Hollywood and (in Lee's case) European New Left and fascist/sadomasochistic-themed film, and what those references can imply. Hsiu-Chuang Deppman undertakes a formalist analysis of the literary and cinematic techniques used by Lee and Chang, showing with elegant precision how these techniques re-create "the traps" of romanticism and materialism. Laikwan Pang, in her study of *Little Reunion*, returns our attention to ethical questions, ultimately celebrating Chang's "sentimental-ethical dimension" in a text

many readers have disliked for its seeming self-absorption and coldness. Tze-lan Sang, as noted above, brings many strands together in her study of the same text, situating it among coeval writings to show how the writer navigated internal and external strictures in order to fashion both “a faithful documentary style” (Chang’s own phrase) and a polished, aesthetically mature novel.

The collection concludes with David Der-wei Wang’s study of Chang’s “poetics of involution and derivation,” a revised compilation of his introductory essays for Chang’s *The Fall of the Pagoda* and *The Book of Change*, also published by University of Hong Kong Press, and a short afterword by Leo Ou-fan Lee, who has written extensively on Chang in Chinese and English, and in multiple genres.

The investments in Chang made by field-leading scholars like Wang, Lee, and Louie – who also organized the conference at which the papers were first presented – extend in many directions, particularly since this collection brings together, in nearly equal proportions, the work of scholars based in Hong Kong and North America (primarily the U.S., with one scholar from Canada). No single volume could resolve the discrepancy between Eileen Chang’s profiles in Chinese and English, but this collection’s contribution toward that cross-linguistic enterprise is genuine, substantial and stimulating.



#### DICTIONARY OF HONG KONG BIOGRAPHY

*Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*, eds. May Holdsworth and Christopher Munn

Hong Kong University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY FRANCES WOOD

The fascinating and infinitely varied characters described in this dictionary made me want to board the nearest plane and rush to Hong Kong to meet them. The only thing that held me back was the realisation that one criterion for inclusion is that the subject must be dead. The biographical entries are uniformly interesting and, though it might be assumed that this is simply a work of reference, to be consulted as necessary, it is, in fact, a gripping read, with one entry leading to another and the whole offering a broad introduction to the history of Hong Kong as well as its inhabitants.

Though organised simply on an alphabetical basis, a couple of pages demonstrate the richness and variety of the contents. Idly reading the joint biography of the Colonial Secretary Sir Wilfred Thomas Southorn and his wife, Virginia Woolf's sister-in-law, the writer Bella Southorn, I turned to that of Sir Reginald Stubbs, 16<sup>th</sup> Governor of Hong Kong who had left the island the year before the Southorns arrived. Stubbs, not the most successful or diplomatic of men, shares a page with Su Zhaozheng, the labour leader born into a poor peasant family who participated in the strikes of 1922 and 1925 and with Major General Suganami Ichiro, one of the (slightly) less brutal members of the Japanese army of occupation in 1942-4. Ichiro's biography led me back to that of his colleague Colonel Arisue Yadoru whose death in 1942 precluded post-war retribution and who, in turn, shares the page with Sister Mary Monahan Aquinas (who helped develop Ruttonjee Sanatorium as a centre for the treatment of tuberculosis) and Aw Boon Haw of Tiger Balm fame. If one includes the Ruttonjee family who used their wealth to help combat tuberculosis in Hong Kong alongside the Japanese soldier, Irish nun and Overseas Chinese tycoon from Burma, the range of historical characters who helped to make Hong Kong what it is becomes apparent.

Not far from two generations of the Ruttonjee family is an entry on Phineas Ryrie, to me an unknown 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish businessman with a resoundingly Victorian name who, it transpires, was connected with the beginnings of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, the Dairy Farm and the Peak Tram. One of his unsuccessful ventures was the idea of breeding rabbits for shoots on Stonecutters' Island. Perhaps aware of their intended fate and contrary to all expectations, his rabbits failed to breed.

The *Dictionary* contains over 500 entries for Hong Kong people who originally came from all over the world. It occurs to me that no other island anywhere has contained such a varied selection of noteworthy inhabitants: there is the Philippine nationalist Jose Rizal (1861-1896) because "nineteenth century Hong Kong was a haven for Filipino nationalists"; a slew of missionaries from America, Australia and all over Europe, Hugh Van Es, a Dutch photographer, the publisher and bookseller Henri Vetch, brought up in Fuzhou, the d'Almada e Castro family of Portuguese civil servants from Goa, the Gibraltar Genoise barrister Albert Sanguinetti with his pipe, monocle and dry wit ("searching for justice" under a table in court) and Captain Mateen Ahmed Ansari, winner of a posthumous George Cross for "conspicuous gallantry". And, as the editors note, even the

contributors to the *Dictionary* worked in many parts of the world.

However, the majority of the entries describe Chinese residents from Pui To the 5<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist monk to the major entrepreneurs and philanthropists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. All classes are included from pirates, seamen and bakers through local village leaders to artists, film stars and civil servants, offering a broad picture of Hong Kong life. Politicians of all sorts are included, with Qiying, forced to sign the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, sharing a page with Qiao Guanhua, one of the major figures in post-1949 Chinese foreign affairs who had worked as a journalist in Hong Kong for more than a decade from 1938.

The *Dictionary* is enhanced by illustrations of people, places and events and is an altogether pleasing enterprise: well written and well edited, a comprehensive guide to Hong Kong and its citizens which is both useful and entertaining.



#### DÉCADENCE MANDCHOUÉ

*Décadence Mandchoue: The China Memoirs of Sir Edmund Trelawny Backhouse*, ed. Derek Sandhaus  
Earnshaw Books, 2011

REVIEWED BY PAUL FRENCH

If a memoir is not completely accurate, should we be overly concerned? Providing that we are, despite the slight niggle that all is perhaps not quite kosher, thoroughly entertained, should we worry? A president or a prime minister's memoirs should perhaps at least aim for accuracy (though, obviously, rarely achieve it) while we accept, and invariably hope for, a little bias from other less important mortals where the story is less crucial. For just about every memoirist, it seems, legacy preservation is important – otherwise why bother to pen them? So a little exaggeration to boost the legacy is fine, by and large.

Do we really worry about Christopher Isherwood's absolute accuracy regarding his *Berlin Stories*, Jack Kerouac's actual encounters *On The Road* or whether Steinbeck really met all those people he claimed in *Travels with Charley* (recent allegations suggest he did not)? Embellishment, gilding the lily, over-egging the pudding....I submit to the court that these are not the deadliest crimes a memoirist can commit. A complete tissue of lies from start to finish is, admittedly, problematic but the worst

offences a memoirist can commit are surely to impose upon the reader dull and leaden prose, tortuous symmetry and anecdotes that resolve in boring anti-climaxes. Sir Edmund Trelawny Backhouse, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet, at least according to his saucy, revelatory and, it has to be admitted, rather questionable memoirs *Décadence Mandchoue*, certainly never knowingly missed the chance for a spectacular climax.

That last line is of course an awful joke...puerile, juvenile and smutty. But *Décadence Mandchoue* is primarily concerned with sex in old Peking in many ways, places and combinations. I think that Sir Edmund, filthy old bugger that he was (just in his own mind or in reality - you decide!), would have chuckled. Among other things in *Décadence Mandchoue* Sir Edmund does puerile; Sir Edmund does smutty. So *Décadence Mandchoue*, so filthy it was for decades consigned to the dark corners of the basement stacks of Oxford's Bodleian Library, is definitely an eyebrow raiser, but it does also contain a lot of Backhouse's true stock in trade - high-level imperial gossip. He had always traded on this grapevine, the scheming "Kremlinology" of the secretive and furtive Qing Court. The distinctly less well-connected George Morrison ("Morrison of Peking") lapped it up and regurgitated it for the readers of the London *Times* to decipher the machinations of the Forbidden City over their morning kippers. And with Morrison we get to see that Backhouse was a pretty good judge of character - Morrison is described as 'inquisitious and perfidious' - as good a description of the vainglorious and overrated correspondent as any.

More importantly though, in *Décadence Mandchoue* we get to see Backhouse's gossip gathering techniques in action...and they did invariably seem to have involved sex. Indeed sex was everywhere in Peking during the dying days of the Qing - while *Décadence Mandchoue* reveals how Backhouse was gathering data in homosexual bathhouses for Morrison, the great Aussie blowhard himself was, according to Linda Jaivin's recently published book *A Most Immoral Woman* (HarperCollins Australia, 2010) preoccupied chasing (and rather easily catching) a nymphomaniac heiress with a taste for sojourning in the Orient.

While *Décadence Mandchoue* remained virtually inaccessible in the Bodleian after its author's death in 1944 the anti-Backhouse forces came to take centre stage. There's no doubt that the ghost at the banquet, looking over your shoulder tut-tutting and disapproving, as you read *Décadence Mandchoue* is that old party pooper, uptight bore and character assassin Hugh Trevor-Roper.

Most people who have heard of Backhouse will have encountered him within the pages of Trevor-Roper's nasty and spiteful biography *The Hermit of Peking: The Hidden Life of Sir Edmund Backhouse* (first published by Penguin in 1976). Trevor-Roper, later to be made Baron Dacre of Glanton, was drearily upper middle class in the worst English way - a conformist, a prude and a man of very fixed ideas. Backhouse was his antithesis and so, as bores and bullies have done down through the ages, he went for him with all guns blazing. When you read, or as I did for the purposes of confirming my own prejudices as true, re-read *Hermit of Peking* you can't help but like Backhouse and want more. Some readers coming to *Décadence Mandchoue* may have previously dug out Backhouse's former bestsellers, largely co-authored with his fellow Sinologist and *Times* journalist JOP Bland (himself an Ulster High Tory, though still a most interesting and surprising character) - *China Under the Empress Dowager* (1910) and the follow up, *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (1914). Both are exaggerations but both do also shed light on the milieu and the cadences of Ci Xi's court.

This new edition of *Décadence Mandchoue*, now out of the stacks of the Bodleian and into the light, is brought to us by the Shanghai-based reprint house Earnshaw Books and edited by Derek Sandhaus (who must surely now be the world's most knowledgeable living Backhouse expert!) and goes further than the books co-authored with Bland. It is the scurrilous, profane and downright mucky memoir of a decidedly odd, reclusive and rather tetchy genius (though I'm convinced that genuine geniuses are permitted to be tetchy - it goes with the territory).

This extremely well researched edition of *Décadence Mandchoue* (with the editor working directly from the original text (s) in the Bodleian) does seem to give the lie to any number of slurs that have entered the popular imagination regarding Backhouse...invariably courtesy of Trevor-Roper. Let's just take one marginal charge of Trevor-Roper's that has dogged Backhouse's legacy - that he was a fascist supporter in the run up to, and the early years of, the Second World War. Disliking Backhouse's sexual proclivities and lifestyle, Trevor-Roper saw it as obvious he would also be a political naïf and slip into fascism and hating his own country. However, by going back to the original texts we encounter their initial protector and early editor Dr. Richard Hoeppli, the honorary Swiss Consul in Peking in the 1940s and a medical doctor. Hoeppli knew Backhouse, and was his physician as well as his confidant and literary executor. That is to say Hoeppli spoke

with Backhouse, argued and debated with him, urged him to write these memoirs (and an early, equally scandalous memoir of his pre-China wild days in England as a youth). Trevor-Roper did not know nor ever meet Backhouse. Hoeppli saw Backhouse (a sick and aged man in a Peking then occupied by the Japanese and a hollow shell of its former self) as irascible for sure, distant and out of touch with the politics and ideologies of modern England and Europe probably, but far from a close up and personal supporter of the Axis powers. Backhouse said many things - about politics, about China, about the British, about Jews, about everything - he was often boastful, sometimes plain wrong, occasionally daft and repeatedly contradictory. Trevor-Roper grabbed onto many of these random thoughts and death bed statements while writing in the knowing post-war world of the 1970s - how hindsight is a useful gift to the prejudiced biographer looking to point score.

It is to be hoped that as far as Backhouse's sexual tastes went we live in more enlightened times. Yet it is still worth asking why the solidly stiff upper lip on Backhouse's homosexual jaunts in Peking from Trevor-Roper and others? It is accepted, even by Trevor-Roper, that Backhouse ran with the lively and gay (in both senses of the word) set at Oxford and Cambridge in the first half of the 1890s, that he was on the fringes of the Oscar Wilde scandal and sensational subsequent trial. So why on earth is it so hard seemingly for so many to accept that when he moved to Peking, still a vibrant young man, he would not actively seek out and join a similarly fun and dedicated gay crowd?

On this subject Trevor-Roper was 'mean spirited and narrow minded' according to Sandhaus. He was appalled at Backhouse's homosexuality (or "deviance" as Trevor-Roper would have it). Backhouse was certainly not the last gay or bi-sexual European to enjoy the somewhat more easygoing and tolerant (at least in certain elite quarters) environment of Peking - the writers Harold Acton and Victor Segalan as well as the poet William Empson among others all had their share of fun too. In Backhouse, as with all of the above, we have a true and dedicated aesthete in our presence. It is to be hoped that an audience reading *Décadence Mandchoue* in the second decade of the twenty first century will judge Backhouse's sexual tastes with less sniffiness and condemnation that was previously the case.

But let's concentrate on what's accurate, semi-accurate or downright inaccurate in *Décadence Mandchoue*. No doubt Backhouse rambles between half-truth, lie and fabulous invention. But, Sandhaus argues,

the germ of truth is always there. Often co-conspirators, sometime friends and occasional associates are “forgotten” or omitted entirely. Backhouse’s exploits are elevated with the man himself invariably always in charge. His book...his rules. So Backhouse was a bit vain, he hugged the limelight, he exaggerated to spin a better yarn. So what? Let he who is without sin cast the first stone....those who live in glass houses etc. etc...

And then there is the big question of what did and didn’t happen - did Backhouse have repeated and somewhat imaginative and energetic sex with the aged Empress Dowager? These compelling pages include Backhouse maintaining that Ci Xi was even able to penetrate him with her enlarged clitoris! (and I did re-read that bit several times to make sure that is what he claims). The big question? Well, in the sense of good robust tabloid titillation this is actually way beyond any FOOTBALLER BEDDED ME 5 TIMES A NIGHT SAYS MANICURE MODEL or FAMOUS GOLFER INDULGES IN SECRET TRYSTS WITH DINER WAITRESSES. It even dwarfs AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND INTERN SHARE CIGAR IN UNUSUAL WAY. Surely BRITISH PEER OF THE REALM ROUGHLY PENETRATED BY PENSIONER CHINESE EMPRESS DOWAGER beats all. Now that’s a headline Fleet Street could have loved in pre-Super Injunction days. And remember, I told you right at the start, Backhouse always did spectacular climaxes!!!

True or false (and Sandhaus throws out some plausible reasons to believe that at least a good old fashioned knee trembler in the Forbidden City may have come to pass) it’s great stuff. At the time of course *Décadence Mandchoue* posed a major problem for any publisher. Later prudes like Trevor-Roper were appalled (and not out of any concerns over the reputation of the elderly Chinese lady mentioned above!) but Backhouse was a man of the more ribald pre-World War One late, late Victorian and Edwardian years. It is, arguably, only now, as the horrors of the twentieth century trenches, Blitzes and concentration camps recede in their immediacy that we can perhaps appreciate Backhouse’s truly tabloid soul in our more immediate and sensational age. Surely were the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet to come back from whatever heavenly (and I do see Sir Edmund most definitely ascending rather than descending) fleshpot he’s been languishing in since his death, he’d find a weekly columnist’s job with requisite large salary awaiting down Wapping way at Murdoch Towers.

Backhouse had, what we would now call, “sources” who provided,

over decades in many cases, snippets of well informed gossip from the court. Palace insiders, gossipy and bribable courtiers, grandees with agendas and grudges. Surely no surprise to us in the post-Lady Di generation. He protected his sources, changed names, used aliases and fabricated identities. Not perhaps impeccable investigative journalism, but it's the dying years of the Qing, he's gossiping with eunuchs in bathhouses and young nobles in bordellos - a little disguising of sources *a la* 'a taxi driver told me...' seems permissible (there are indeed several 'a rickshaw boy told me...' equivalents in *Décadence Mandchoue*).

Sir Edmund was not just a mover and a shaker but a bit of a ducker and a diver too. His journalism was compromised by his long list of dodgy deals involving conniving eunuchs filching what they could from the jewelry boxes of the Forbidden City and gunrunning warlords in need of Europe's finest weaponry (interestingly Backhouse was just one of many English public school boys to become involved in running guns to Chinese warlords – a fascinating thesis remains to be explored there). He was the financial pages reporter caught insider trading of his day. Journalists trading on the information and contacts they've gained while producing stories are not unknown on Fleet Street and elsewhere of course in our modern and more regulated times. If Backhouse's deals involved a thrilling tale of official shenanigans in the warlord-wracked interior China, while today the story is one of a few shares shabbily traded with the push of a PC's "send" button, then surely, as Norma Desmond said, "It's the pictures that got smaller"!!

Admittedly, it has to be said, Backhouse did outright make some stuff up. No embellishment, no gilded lily, just pure invention; or at least exaggeration. There are no shortage of the cartoon-like characters - Cassia Flower and his "elephantine" member; Duke Lan requiring his regal buttocks to be stingingly whipped till lacerated followed by his apparently endless ejaculations - and we're just at page eight!! Say what you like about Backhouse but he was no tease - you get it all, in detail and just about every variation imaginable (and Backhouse has a vivid and broad sexual imagination).

How wonderful to have this new and amazingly well introduced, edited and footnoted edition of *Décadence Mandchoue*. If nothing else it firmly puts to bed any notions that today's legion of China Hands, hacks and self-appointed experts are remotely wild. Until you've been savagely bedded by a Dowager Empress in the Forbidden City you haven't really "done China" surely!!

QIAN QIANYI'S REFLECTIONS OF YELLOW MOUNTAIN

*Qian Qianyi's Reflections of Yellow Mountain: Traces of a Late-Ming Hatchet and Chisel* by Stephen McDowall

Hong Kong University Press, 2009

REVIEWED BY TAMARA H. BENTLEY

In his recent book, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections of Yellow Mountain: Traces of a Late-Ming Hatchet and Chisel*, a multi-faceted study of Qian Qianyi's 1642 prose essay on his excursion to Yellow Mountain, Stephen McDowall offers not only an impressive and densely footnoted translation of Qian's essay, but also a thoughtful series of introductory chapters drawing out the significance of Qian's work. McDowall rightly situates the late Ming florescence of travel accounts (*youji*) within the need to assert one's cultural refinement. Practicing the landscape in a well-read, sophisticated manner (subsequently embroidered in written narrative) effectively separates scholarly connoisseurs from the mercantile nouveaux riches, who take a utilitarian approach to travel, even descending to marking up the landscape or promoting travel for their own purposes. But McDowall's study goes beyond elucidating these sometimes obliquely coded forms of cultural competition. Drawing widely on the scholarship of pilgrimage, travel writing, and even Kristeva's notion of a mosaic of citations (p.94),<sup>1</sup> McDowall shows that Qian Qianyi's text constructs a carefully-chosen public persona, and dialogues at least as much with an ever present series of literary precedents as with his experience of the mountains themselves.

McDowall points out that the high point of travel to Yellow Mountain began only in the Wanli period (1573-1620CE), a phenomenon which dovetails with the expansion of printed travel guides to the site as print culture expanded in the same period. Because of the proximity of the Huizhou merchant home territories to Yellow Mountain, the patronage of these merchants is significant vis-à-vis tourism and these printed guides. The relative nearness of this mountain to Jiangnan elites is also worth noting. McDowall connects landscape "connoisseurship" to trends in garden construction, where, in the late Ming, productive functions began to be downplayed compared to the purpose of reinforcing in-group relationships and asserting high-level taste. Scholarly sources McDowall references regarding these interpretations include Craig Clunas's work *Fruitful Sites* and Wai-yee Li's article "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and late-Ming Sensibility."<sup>2</sup> McDowall also notes Arjun

Appadurai's argument that the main purpose of luxury objects is their rhetorical and social value (p.20).<sup>3</sup> McDowall places Qian Qianyi's travel in the "luxury object" category, though the "possession" is an experience and not an object (p. 20).<sup>4</sup>

In terms of defining oneself by way of sacred or literati forebears, especially as reenacted through experiences of place, McDowall draws upon the work of Tobie Meyer-Fong as well as Coleman and Elsner on pilgrimage.<sup>5</sup> But of course in order for McDowall to argue that the self is constructed here by way of reference to others, he has to document a myriad of literary citations. McDowall performs awe-inspiring feats in this regard. One example would be the stress, in Qian's essay and in related paintings, on the waters flowing down from Yellow Mountain. This motif alludes to assertions that these mountains stood as a heavenly mirror of the earthly capital, with the waters flowing out functioning to cleanse the empire of evil elements. McDowall traces this idea to early sources – among them the *Zuozhuan* which comments that a certain site "may be occupied without fear of disease. There are the Fen and the Kuai (rivers) to carry away the evil airs." (p. 104, note 21). Another example McDowall provides: when Qian alludes caustically to the branding of the mountains by cutting words into them, Qian is likely adapting an earlier comment by Yuan Hongdao (p.76). McDowall also brings to the reader's attention the importance, for Qian, of Li Bai's Tang-dynasty six-part poetic series on the ascent of Taishan (p.84). McDowall even catches Qian's reference to a previous essay on Huangshan by Wu Tingjian which highlighted the fortuitousness of having clear weather as compared to the rain-blocked ascents of so many others (p.84).

McDowall links his material to significant literary trends of the late Ming. Chief among these is the assertion of "obsessiveness" (which also conveys an individual flavor) and the interest in "exceptional" (*qi*) features. McDowall notes that the term *qi* is quite prevalent in Qian's essay (p. 16-17).

McDowall also expands his consideration of Yellow Mountain materials to include images of the site, noting that perhaps the first well-known painting is Ding Yunpeng's "Morning Sun over Heavenly Capital," dated 1614 (done to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of a family friend). This painting could have had a range of auspicious meanings, because of the imperial metaphors cited above, because the Yellow emperor was supposed to have visited these mountains (p.77), and due to the important Buddhist establishments at the location.<sup>6</sup> In

addition, the Huangshan peaks are said to rise above the clouds like the immortal isles (p. 54). We must concede that, while McDowall's treatment of the Qian Qianyi *youji* text is painstakingly documented (in the appendix he cross references all the known editions of the work and compares variations in wording for example), his treatments of the visual images remain somewhat cursory. Differences in composition are noted, and the preference for a series of named peaks rather than more continuous views, but brushwork and stylistic references go largely unnoted. (For example, in Ding Yunpeng's "Heavenly Capital" work, his dry brushwork and pale red and green colorations refer to Wu school features, particularly as seen in the works of Wen Zhengming.) This is a small weakness, however, given the contributions McDowall makes by demonstrating relationships between the written and painted materials. McDowall notes, for example, that even highbrow paintings of Mount Huang do share some features with more pedestrian topographical woodblock prints (p.55). He also notes a reciprocal relationship between tourist and travel accounts and paintings of Mt. Huang (p.54-55).

Not the least of the metaphors that McDowall draws upon is that of the process of studying as a journey – climbing up through classical learning to finally develop an overall view is likened to laboring up a mountain step by step. Tall peaks are equated, in Qian Qianyi's preface, with great poets, each different from the other. As Qian Qianyi puts it: "To engage in proper scholarship is like climbing the mountain, starting in the foothills, reaching the verdant growth, selecting its splendid lines, and absorbing what stands apart from the rest." (p.93). To extend this thinking, I would argue that McDowall's complex study provides us with a most impressive journey, laced with penetrating views.

### **Endnotes**

1. Julia Kristeva, *Semeiotike: Recherches pour une semanalyse* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969).
2. Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996). Wai-yee Li, "The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility," *T'oung Pao* 81 (4/5) (1995):269-302.
3. Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
4. McDowall adds "It is important also to note that the popularity of travel began to reach its peak during the period in which the com-

modities markets were, if our sources are to be believed, spiraling out of control.” (p.20.)

5. Tobie Meyer-Fong, “Making a Place for Meaning in Early Qing Yangzhou,” *Late Imperial China* 20 (1) (1999): 49-84. Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present: Sacred Travel and Sacred Space in World Religions* (London: British Museum Press, 1995).
6. As McDermott points out, state support for the important monk Pumen at the Huangshan mountains in the Wanli period was a significant aspect of the increased appreciation of and travel to the mountains in this era (pp. 44-45).



#### LAO SHE IN LONDON

*Lao She in London* by Anne Witchard

Hong Kong University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY JO LUSBY

It is not simply the pall of smog that invokes the London of Charles Dickens in China. Blustering industrialists and officials, child pickpockets, belligerent drunkards, humble clerks, ambitious naïve young men – so present are his caricatures in the daily media that it is surprising that they don't crop up in the country's literary output more regularly.

This rich parallel was observable in the 1920s, despite the huge difference between the two societies. And so, when Lao She – who would go on to become arguably China's greatest novelist – arrived in London to take a teaching job at the London School of Oriental Studies, the emerging man of letters found much to fascinate and stimulate.

Anne Witchard's revealing portrait of Lao She's five years in London (1924-29) presents a complex, chaotic picture of society in flux. The city was home to a confusion of ideas, fads, politics, and clichés that created the decadent chic of Orientalism and the dark shadow of Sinophobia. A high modernist society lurching from the destruction of World War I into the new world, this was a city of vegetarians and voodooists, of Bohemian hedonists, Cubists and futurists; of norm-breakers like Ezra Pound, Cecil Beaton, and Isadora Duncan. Alongside the chinoiserie silks sat the prejudice that created Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu novels and

a racist fear of the “yellow peril” of sex and drugs that the incoming Chinese were accused of bringing with them. In the parlours of both Limehouse and Bloomsbury, fads and phobias around China were everywhere.

Into this whirlpool stepped the young man Lao She. Born in 1899 to a poor Manchu family of the Red Banner, Lao She was schooled from birth in the culture of discrimination and prejudice, a member of an ethnic grouping that had fallen from social and economic power. Following the Republican revolution in 1911, the position of the Manchus did not improve, and they continued to languish at the bottom of the ladder of societal opportunity. His own education interrupted by poverty, in 1921 Lao She became a teacher for very poor children in a Christian church in the west of Beijing.

Through contact with foreign missionaries, Lao She was offered a teaching job in London. Imbued with the ideas of the May Fourth and New Culture Movements, Lao She was already a proponent of plain-speaking, “baihua” writing. This vernacular adopted by the likes of Lu Xun stood in opposition to cultural elitism based on the writings of ancient greats like Confucius and Mencius.

Ironically, however, while Lao She journeyed to London eager to explore a new realm of literary realism and satire, the bohemian denizens of London’s intellectual scene were traveling in the opposite direction. They had turned their backs on Dickens, and were keen to embrace the eternal values of China’s great cultural past. Proponents like Ezra Pound and Clement Egerton engaged Lao She to aid them in their efforts to bring classics like *Jin Ping Mei* (*The Golden Lotus*) into the English language mainstream, just as Lao She strove to remove their yoke from around his neck.

Perceptions about China in the London of the day fell into two clear camps. For artists such as Cecil Beaton and Isadora Duncan, China was fuel for stylish statements and deep mysticism. Theirs was an exoticised Orient, represented through dragon and cloud patterns on wallpaper and drapes, and scantily clad men and women lounging at noon in their flowing silk robes.

On the opposing side, there was the “yellow peril” school of thought. Most famously finding their literary expression in the writings of people such as Sax Rohmer, the Chinese were coming to corrupt the morals of vulnerable young women, seducing them with sex and opium. Rohmer was not burdened in his writing of Chinese villains by ever

having visited China – but the goings on of Limehouse provided rich inspirational pickings for his stories.

Witchard draws on her vast resources of knowledge to describe the characters and caricatures of 1920s London. One such example is the case of Brilliant Chang, which provided plenty of grist for the mill of Sinophobia. An educated, bourgeois, Westernised playboy, Chang was accused of supplying cocaine to 23-year-old West End taxi-dancer Freda Kempton, who died from convulsions. Among other business interests, Chang was the part-owner of the Shanghai Restaurant where, it was discovered, “half-a-dozen drug-frenzied women together joined him in wild orgies in his intoxicatingly beautiful den of iniquity above the Shanghai restaurant.” He was sentenced to 14 months in jail followed by deportation. The good old days indeed.

*Lao She in London* is replete with fabulous vignettes of a rich and frequently dirty time and place. The Thomas Cook travel agency, she notes, ran bus tours to Limehouse, during which they would stage hatchet fights to please the bus tourists when the local residents were not brawling.

Then, there was the general harassment the Chinese community, in the form of drug clampdowns under the cover of immigration status checks on Chinese boarding houses, laundries, and restaurants. This detail will raise a wry smile on the face of anyone familiar with late-night visa sweeps in China’s entertainment districts today, albeit with different nationalities in play.

Living literally on the boundary of two worlds (the bawdy entertainment of Limehouse and the high minded intelligentsia of Bloomsbury), Lao She’s daily London was in many ways more mundane. It was one of boiled vegetables, cheerfully racist landladies, Speakers’ Corner polemicists, and plates of noodles in Chinatown. Yet it becomes apparent that while London provided a rich canvas for Lao She to experiment with literary character and style, he was experimenting in parallel to rather than in collaboration with his international contemporaries.

The most explicit references to Lao She’s time in London are in his novel *Mr. Ma and Son* (Er Ma), and this forms the primary resource for Witchard’s insight into his view of the city. The story follows the father and son Ma, who travel from China to run a curiosity shop they inherit from father Ma’s brother. The novel charts the highs and lows of cultural exchange, of love and antipathy, and of the clash of ideas across

the generations. Blundering Reverends and well-meaning landladies populate the scene as the Mas attempt to navigate the social conventions of English society, all the while trying to maintain their own cultural identity. The descriptions such as the casual display of “symbols of China’s shame” in the home of Reverend Ely— shoes for the bound foot and an opium pipe – provide reliable witness to the incidents and attitude as Lao She experienced during his sojourn in London.

Upon his return to China in 1930, Lao She discovered that, in his absence, two things had occurred: his fellow writers had become divided by politics, and the success of three of his novels had established him as a popular novelist back home. These three novels were not among the works that history has judged his greatest, these being *Rickshaw Boy*, *Camel Xiangzi*, and *Teahouse*. Looking at this critical period of his life, it seems that Lao She achieved something that his British counterparts singularly failed to do: tune his ear to Chinese cultural nuances, and cherry pick inspirations from foreign ways of living and thinking.

Shortly before Lao She died (he drowned himself at the start of the Cultural Revolution, in 1966) he granted an interview to visiting British journalists Roma and Stuart Gelder. “I received great kindness in England. It’s a pity we don’t get on better. They don’t understand China very well nowadays. But that will change with time.” It seems these things take some time.



FLORENCE AYS COUGH

*Knowledge is Pleasure: Florence Ayscough in Shanghai* by Lindsay Shen  
Hong Kong University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY SUE ANNE TAY

In the time after the signing of the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, extraterritorial areas across Shanghai were ceded to European and American powers. Over time, the city’s expatriate history grew to be a rich tapestry woven by tales of high-powered business deals, privileged lives in private country clubs, scandals in smoky brothels, all carried out by personalities, one more colorful than the next.

From well-heeled merchants from Western Europe to the downtrodden White Russians and stateless Jews fleeing persecution in different times, Shanghailanders, as they became known, have shaped

the city in its many manifestations - the “Paris of the East”, an enduring business entrepot laced by a vice-ridden underbelly, and Art Deco showcase of the Orient.

Yet, among the many famous (and predominantly male) Shanghailanders, who have captured the minds of present-day China watchers, Florence Ayscough (1875-1942), for all her contributions as a Sinologist, ethnographer, patron and collector of the arts, translator of Chinese poetry, photographer and horticulturalist, had been largely neglected.

Thankfully, Lindsay Shen has rectified this archival gap by drawing a detailed profile of Ayscough. Born Florence Wheelock, daughter of a prominent Canadian businessman and American mother, Ayscough appeared to be an archetypal Shanghaider, born and bred in the city surrounded by wealth, privilege and ponies but wore China and its culture like a second skin. Her status in Shanghaider society was further cemented by her marriage to Francis Ayscough, a successful British trader who was himself highly regarded in the Shanghaider community.

In the outset, Shen describes Ayscough, perhaps too convincingly, as a social creature of her time, owing to her place as a Concession-era expatriate wife. Life was largely filled by weekends at the Race Course on Bubbling Well Road (now Nanjing Road), sitting on the organizing committee of the Shanghai Ladies’ Golf Club, performing duties as the wife of the President the Shanghai Gun Club, and active contributor to the Shanghai Horticultural Society.

In a way, Shen sets up a perfect foil to disabuse the above stereotype of her subject. She documents the evolution of Ayscough’s growing intellectual pursuits, sparked during her time as librarian of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, whereby she helped turn the Shanghai library into one of the best on the China Coast. Hours of reading and cataloguing Sinologist works snowballed Ayscough’s wide-ranging interests, particularly in art and poetry.

Ayscough’s knowledge of Chinese art history was matched by her then-widely admired collection of Ming and Qing-dynasty ceramics, jades, furniture, calligraphy and paintings which she lent to international exhibits, and later travelled extensively in the US to lecture about. Many of the collected works were eventually bequeathed to the Art Institute of Chicago, the city where she eventually settled.

As Ayscough graduated from art connoisseur to curator, she was

tasked to help sell specific Chinese art collections in the United States, in particular, the works of Shanghai Modernist Ren Bonian (1840-95). Since little was known of early Chinese Modernism in America, Ayscough introduced and later widely spoke on the movement at galleries and museums in America, including New York's Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's Studio, the prestigious Colony Club, the Cosmopolitan Club, and Rhode Island School of Design.

Ayscough's dynamic personality and multiple talents shine through Shen's description of her performance-like lectures which Ayscough understood required "poise and presence, and a keen sense of pitch" (page 69). Be it in Shanghai or New York, "(s)he was often dressed in Chinese robes, and reviews in newspapers repeatedly stressed that her talks were beautifully illustrated, often with hand-colored lantern slides produced from her photographs." (page 106) She was adept at bridging the cultural gap and helped illuminate China for a Western audience.

Ayscough's many encounters with major historical figures included an audience with Empress Cixi, correspondence with American industrialist Charles Lang Freer of the famed Freer Sackler Galleries in Washington DC, to whom Ayscough had tried unsuccessfully to sell a Chinese collection in 1917, and an enduring friendship with the American poet Amy Lowell (1874-1925).

In an effort to make the text in the Chinese calligraphic paintings she was promoting accessible to a Western audience, Ayscough had first reached out to her old friend from Boston. Lowell was not a Sinologist like Ayscough but a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet of the Imagist school, which adopted free verse as opposed to traditional poetic conventions.

Lowell, "openly lesbian, obese, cigar-smoking and bellicose," (page 73) could not be a greater contrast to Ayscough's elegance and diplomacy. Yet, Ayscough found in Lowell a willing partner to fulfill her dream of translating the revered works of China's most famous classical poets including Li Po, Tu Fu and Wang Wei. Tu Fu was of special interest to Ayscough who, over decades, studied his works obsessively, and at one point wrote, "I feel far more intimate with Tu Fu – he died in 780 AD – than I do with anyone living. I mean that quite literally."

The objective was to capitalise on Ayscough's decades of experience in China – as a then-amateur Sinologist, art curator, horticulturalist and ethnographer - to concoct a more sensory dimension to the poetry. This was as opposed to some Western poets' translations, which Ayscough felt incomplete, limiting and at times, even inaccurate, based on their

purely academic knowledge of China.

Shen's detailing of their working relationship is particularly revealing of the synergy the unlikely pair shared. Ayscough worked with her long-time Chinese teacher and friend, Nung Chu to translate the Tang poems word for word. They were subsequently mailed to Lowell for her input and stylistic revision, along with copious notes on context. A "four-year 'paper hunt' went back and forth across continents and oceans", as it was described, and the correspondence survived even the turbulent periods of World War I and unrest in China as witnessed by Ayscough. By 1921, *Fir-Flower Tablets* was published to much critical acclaim.

The translation had given Ayscough further confidence and drive to complete her eventual tomes, *Tu Fu: The Autobiography of a Chinese Poet* and *Travels of a Chinese Poet: Tu Fu, Guest of Rivers and Lakes*, which were published in 1929 and 1934 respectively. As Shen noted, Ayscough had by then translated over 800 of Tu Fu's poems: "She understood herself as a craftsman, who had served a long, self-abnegating apprenticeship, and who now approached her work in the spirit of veneration." (page 82)

There are moments when Shen's portrayal of Ayscough can appear overly generous, glossing over critique of her literary work, even in retrospect after many similar translations of Tu Fu's works and his biographies were published in the last century. It would have been interesting to see Shen analyze, even if briefly, more varying reviews of Ayscough's works, during her time and in the present day, and how she might have defended herself.

For example, a present-day review by G. S. McCormick<sup>1</sup>, who wrote for the *Plum Ruby Review* in January 2004, took to task Ayscough and Lowell's accuracy of their translations, comparing them to the works by William Hung (1893-1980), and Burton Watson (1925-) - also widely respected in their field of Chinese literature. One criticism had been that Ayscough and Lowell's translation, while competent, was "full of artifice, adding details (T)u Fu never intended"<sup>2</sup>

A criticism has been that Ayscough's work was wordy but recognizably more vivid even if it ultimately lacked the elegance in parsimonious translation. Shen too does acknowledge this, recognizing that "(w)hile some lines are sharp and fresh, others feel overworked, exhausted perhaps by their transpacific excursions." (page 79).

Appropriately, McCormick used a stanza of Tu Fu's seminal poem "Peng Ya" to illustrate the differences:

From “Fleeing to Peng Ya” (Ayscough)

[...]

*Famished, my foolish girl baby gnawed me; She wailed; I dreaded  
tiger, wolf, would hear.*

*I covered her mouth and wrapped her to my bosom; She turned  
over, turned back, threw herself to the side; the sounds increased;  
she screamed with rage.*

From “Peng Ya” (Hung)

[...]

*The silly daughter tried to bite me when she felt hungry; I feared her  
crying might attract the attention of tigers and wolves; I held her  
mouth tight to my bosom; She wiggled free and wailed the more.*

From “Ballad of Peng Ya” (Watson)

[...]

*The baby girl in her hunger bit me; fearful that tigers or wolves  
would hear her cries, I hugged her to my chest, muffling her mouth,  
but she squirmed and wailed louder than before.*

Hung had pointed out in 1930 similar problems of additional verbage in Ayscough’s translated works as part of her 1929 biography of *Tu Fu*, as well as some factual inaccuracies which he had attributed due to her misunderstanding of the Chinese language. Nevertheless, Hung acknowledged, “Taking the book as a whole, however, it is a praiseworthy attempt on the part of a Westerner to understand and interpret sympathetically Chinese culture.”<sup>3</sup>

Ayscough must have read these reviews but they had clearly not dimmed her passion for the subject as she continued to be widely sought as a translator, lecturer and curator. There was no doubt that Ayscough’s innovative approach had contributed a valuable prism in the many interpretations of Tu Fu’s poetry in English.

Shen should be credited for her very thorough research, spanning decades and continents, paired with elegant prose. She has painted a vivid and rounded portrait of a Renaissance woman, whose humanism and passion for sharing her impressively diverse knowledge of China and its culture, was as vibrant as it was unrelenting. Ayscough’s adventurous and fearless spirit in all aspects of her life only feeds into Shen’s narrative.

Florence Ayscough's biography is an important addition to the canon of Shanghailanders history, as well as to the vast archive of Chinese art and literature studies in English. Given her contributions in the varying disciplines under the umbrella of Sinology, Shen has rewarded Ayscough with the rich profile that she truly deserves.

### **Endnotes**

1. McCormick, G.S., "Poet for Troubled Times," *Plum Ruby Review*, 1.1 (December 2003-January 2004)
2. McCormick
3. William Hung, "On Poetry and Drama," *The Saturday Review of Literature* (April 5, 1930)



### **WRITING IN(TO) ARCHITECTURE**

*Writing in(to) Architecture: China's Architectural Design and Construction Since 1949* by Sylvia Chan

Hong Kong University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

"Let a hundred blossoms flourish, let a hundred different schools of thoughts contend". So argued Mao in a more generous phrase of 1956; although, during the Cultural Revolution, editors and newspaper contributors were persecuted mercilessly for taking this appeal for critical thought too literally. The media commentator Yuezhi Zhao has written that the death of Mao and subsequent introduction of market liberalisation brought a certain relaxation to the notion of the media as an explicit "instrument of the party" (and even this liberalisation came with notable historical aberrations).

Sylvia Chan's book explores the socio-political transitions that have affected China throughout the 20th century, and are beginning to frame the 21st, through the prism of architectural journalism, a literary form that only started in China in the 1930s. Chan's book is an exploration of how China's dramatic historical changes have affected the nation's urban discourse.

Chan's book is more than anything a critique of the way that architecture has been described – by commentators, specialists or politicians – since 1949. Her premise (adapted from Thomas Markus' book *Words Between Spaces: Buildings and Language*) is that the style

and content of architectural writing can be closely tied to prevailing social and cultural conditions. Despite the relative simplicity of the underlying thesis, Chan manages nonetheless to achieve a level of interest throughout.

She describes, for example, how Mao's autocratic reign led to compliant centralist journalism; that post-1979 China was then characterised by more expressive openness; and that the writings of the first decade of the new millennium have become more globally and critically engaged. Chan examines these three key periods of modern Chinese history, cross-referencing events with information from three influential journalistic forms: propagandistic (state-directed), introductory (technical writing) and commentaries (opinion pieces).

Architectural writing in post-1949 China has appeared in the mainstream press only on rare occasions, though a dramatic increase was evident with the launch of the *Architecture Journal (AJ)* in 1954. However, these outlets were predominantly organs for the dissemination of state policy and, as Chan states "it was impossible to engage... in a debate about architectural principles". This was a period when architectural professionals lost their autonomy and found themselves dragooned into Design Institutes. Articles of the time spoke of the collective "we" (individual architects were seldom named) and of adherence to formal design standards. Debate – such that it existed – was merely about how to successfully implement the rules.

The Maoist principle of "self-criticism" – known in less Orwellian colours as "self-awareness" – is central to the practice of architecture, and yet such an innocent phrase comes with an uncomfortable historical baggage. The *AJ*, Chan says, often contained articles in which architectural professionals would regularly write "condemning themselves and their own work" for failing to comply with state regulations or employing "wasteful" designs. Conflating confident self-criticism with disgraced self-flagellation goes some way to explaining why Chinese architecture students and older architectural practitioners are so poor at actual conscious self-reflection.

The search for a national style "with tangible Chinese features" in the 1950s resulted in pro-Soviet influenced Beaux-Arts (Socialist Realism) school as well as anti-Beaux-Arts (known as "economical socialist functionalism") school. Chan cites examples of designs being "correctly evaluated" for their left-wing credentials; or of bamboo being used as an economical socialist alternative to steel reinforcement,

though failing to inform the reader of the consequences of such policy. One thing was common to the period: Modernism was rejected as a bourgeois deviation.

Dedicated architectural magazines – looking to excite an actual architectural awareness – eventually appeared under Deng Xiaoping, but were quite limited and targeted towards specific research projects or in the realm of direct lessons for practitioners. The four key magazines of this period were: *World Architecture*, published by Tsinghua University, which examined the work of foreign architects; *Huazhong Architecture* dealing with modern architecture; *New Architecture* looking at the work of Chinese architects, and; *Time + Architecture*, published by Tongji University, which focused on Chinese design and theory. All of these came out in the early 1980s, though it was only in 1992 that the first foreign article was translated and republished, and 2003 before a number of foreign magazines started to appear, with a Chinese edition of *Domus* (the first Chinese language version of a Western architecture magazine) appearing in 2006.

Three things are of note here: one is that the architectural learning curve of these publications has been incredibly steep and the undoubted problems that have arisen the last 30 years should not over-shadow the positives (an ability to discuss the negatives is one such benefit).

Secondly, some similarities in the discourse are as profound as the differences and we should note that the prevailing social and cultural conditions in the West are themselves dumbing down architectural debate and leading to a serious absence of criticism. When Chan writes that, under Mao, “statistics were often used” and designs were regularly “scientifically supported” it is not too different from the contemporary Western architectural scene which tends to regurgitate policy mantras and rely on “evidence” to justify “good buildings” (p58). The consequences in the West may be less brutal than in 1950s China, but it is no less harmful to the practice of free-thinking.

Finally, Chan looks to the rise of social media networks and lively online architecture chatrooms as an example of the modern revolution in Chinese public engagement. However, at the same time she recognizes that the untrained public cannot fully engage with the potential depth of discourse by qualified architects and architectural academics or journalists. This conclusion is not a Western-style call for “inclusive” anti-elitism, but rather an open call for even more democratised debate. “Architectural professionals”, she says, “have a responsibility to ‘speak to’

and ‘speak with’ the general public, not just to ‘speak for’ them.” If only more Western architects and journalists were listening.



## MIDNIGHT IN PEKING

*Midnight in Peking – How the murder of a young Englishwoman haunted the last days of Old China* by Paul French

Penguin Books, 2012

REVIEWED BY ALEX SPARKS

Murder is a heinous crime. Still today there are countries that consider the act of murder so terrible that their law systems use capital punishment for the crime. But once the murderer is tried and punished, how many of us remember the name of the victim or victims? It is more likely that we remember the murderer – Fred West, Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, Theodore ‘Ted’ Bundy, Charles Manson, the list goes on and on.

But Paul French the author of *Midnight in Peking - How the murder of a young Englishwoman haunted the last days of old China* sets out to address this common reaction of the public, by remembering one young murder victim, Pamela Werner, the adopted daughter of a former British consul in China.

*Midnight in Peking* is French’s cold case search to find justice and remembrance for Pamela Werner and her father E.T.C Werner. French’s book successfully tracks down Pamela’s story which lay forgotten for 75 years in footnotes of books, newspaper articles, letters to newspapers, autopsy reports, libraries spanning the globe from London to Shanghai, and an unearthed and uncatalogued file at the National Archive in London, containing a bereaved father’s own investigation file into his child’s violent death.

Set against the biting cold winter backdrop of Peking in January 1937, French’s book tells of a disturbing and amoral underside to expat society in the city of the former Emperors of China, which led to the violent and callous death of a 20 year old young woman.

French pulls no punches as he discusses the world of 1937 Peking. A city filled with Japanese invaders, gangsters, nightclub owners, pimps, hired muscle, almost destitute stateless White Russians, prostitutes, drug dealers, misfits, penniless rickshaw pullers and male sexual predators. A city used as a playground by trust fund brats, well to do travellers and

upmarket Bohemian socialists. All of whom hid under a thin veneer of respectability propped up by a corrupt local Chinese warlord, his police force and Foreign Consuls with their consular staffs.

*Midnight in Peking* paints a world almost tipping over the edge into the abyss of the Second World War and engaging in one last fling before the lights and the music were switched off. A world that no longer knew right from wrong; a world that only cared about image and prestige; a world that did not care about the fate of one young woman making her first forays into adulthood only to have them ended almost before they began; and a world that cared less for the feelings of Pamela's Sinologist father, whose world was shattered by those masquerading as respectable members of the Peking foreign community.

Skilfully through the use of unearthed documents French has hunted down Pamela's story and run her killers to ground. The result is a fascinating piece of detective work which reads like a thriller minus the majority of the dialog. Although at moments the reader may feel that they are within a noir novel, what is disturbing is the realisation that Pamela's murder is not fiction: it is fact.

French's brutal honesty about those involved in Pamela's murder and its subsequent investigations drives the reader on to the end of the book. As the reader turns each page, they feel Pamela and E.T.C Werner's presence. No matter where the reader is in the book, Pamela and her father are always in sight. They are always at the front of the dark picture of Peking. Pamela sticks in the reader's mind constantly.

Delicacy for the dead is not in these pages of horrific murder, hindered investigation, amoral behaviour and cover up. French makes the point that Pamela was no angel. But she did not deserve to die. French has placed as much expat dirty washing on display as possible in a successful attempt to find justice and remembrance for Pamela Werner.

But if *Midnight in Peking* is not enough for the reader then there is an accompanying website [www.midnightinpeking.com](http://www.midnightinpeking.com). The website includes "Pamela's Peking" an interactive map with images of Peking then and now; a timeline which covers Pamela's death in January 1937, its official investigation and the continuing private investigation up to her father's death in 1954; news clippings covering the original investigation; pictures of those involved in the case; fantastic images of old Peking; and an audio walk which retraces the primary locations involved in Pamela's murder.

After reading *Midnight in Peking* and viewing the website, the reader may have a different view of the nostalgic sheen placed on post revolution China that can be found in many other books on this turbulent period in the country's history. The reader may question past foreign perspectives and motives of expat life during the collapse of the Manchu dynasty and its subsequent years of civil and international war under the control of the warlords and the Japanese.

But most importantly maybe the next time the reader picks up a "Who dunnit?" on a cold or humid night, they may care less about the "who did it?" and more about "who it was done to?" French's book leaves us thinking more about Pamela Werner and her father than the murderer. That is probably a good not a bad thing.



#### SHANGHAI FURY

*Shanghai Fury: Australian Heroes of Revolutionary China* by Peter Thompson

Random House, 2011

REVIEWED BY LIU WEI

Finally we have the last of Peter Thompson's Fury trilogy. *Shanghai Fury* pretty much serves as an Australian *Who's Who* for the half-century time span which witnessed the emergence of a new China. We read through the lives of two eminent Australians, George Morrison and William Donald who served as personal advisors to two of China's new dictators. Originally the *Times*' man in Beijing (Peking), Morrison became advisor to Yuan Shi-kai, the first president of the Republic of China, whose life ended in 1916 after a failed attempt to restore the imperial system, while Donald started his China career as correspondent for the Sydney based *China Mail* and ended up working for Generalissimo and Madam Chiang Kai-shek for a decade, playing a vital role in the rescue mission to bail out the husband in the Xi'an Incident of 1936. Since both men's lives have been fastidiously scrutinized by previous China scholarship, the theme here seems to be a dramatised version of their combined contribution to the shaping of China's modern history. Yet we cannot help but wonder slightly if the China drama of the first half of the 20th century was not necessarily the result of the country's rulers' failure to live up to Australian ideas of leadership.

It would be a perfect concluding chapter if Rewi Alley, who first worked as a fire inspector in Shanghai but later turned into a revolutionary hero for the Communist cause and was a close comrade of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, were not New Zealander but Australian. Is it because of his nationality that Alley's brief story in the book ends abruptly, short of even mentioning his involvement with the Communist Party?

The obvious shortage of material for such an ambitious project ("Australian Heroes of Revolutionary China") must have led Thompson to seek other ways to balance the book's overall structure. Apparently one of these was to reconstruct Australian daily life in Shanghai. While one admires the author's colossal enterprise to track down the lives of dozens if not hundreds of Australians who formed a part of the contemporary Shanghai expatriate community, it is still tiring to read one after another account of the arrival at the Bund of a housewife, nurse, or trainee journalist whose existence bears little impact on the big China picture. We also are informed that Archibald Clark Kerr, the British ambassador to war-time China, himself a Scotsman, was Australian born. But one wonders why Wallis Spencer, the future Duchess of Windsor, merits more than a page for her brief stay in Shanghai.

The book is dotted with certain puzzling inaccuracies. We are also led to believe that Mao participated in the May 4<sup>th</sup> demonstration at Tiananmen Square in 1919 (he was not in Beijing at the time), that Chiang Kai-shek was trained in Moscow (his only time spent in the Soviet Union was a three-month stay on Sun Yet-sen's order, when he assessed Russian national strength), that Chang Hsue-liang (Zhang Xue-liang), the ruler of Manchuria, announced allegiance to Chiang Kai-shek in 1930 (the event took place in 1928) and he was sent to fight Mao's People's Liberation Army (PLA) in north China in 1931 (the Red Army was at the time based in Jiangxi and did not change its name to the PLA until 1947), and that Harold Timperley, correspondent of the *Guardian*, was sent to Washington in 1940 as the Chinese Finance Minister T.V. Soong's advance party and played a big role in securing American aids for China (was Washington really listening to an Australian journalist whose name hardly appeared anywhere in America?). The list continues. One wonders if such misquotations are not out of an eagerness to please the audience.

All in all, *Shanghai Fury* is a wrong project executed with inadequate understanding of the subject matter. It is not surprising it fails to deliver

the fury it promises.



THE SCRAMBLE FOR CHINA

*The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* by

Robert Bickers

Allen Lane, 2011

REVIEWED BY DEREK SANDHAUS

China is a country with two histories. On the one hand is the official history compiled by the state and its various iterations. Then there's everything else: personal accounts found in books, diaries and journals written by a wide range of Chinese and international sources. The former is generally prepared with the benefit of hindsight and intended to advance an unambiguous interpretation of events informed by a political agenda. The private histories are no less slanted, each reflecting the prejudices and limitations of their authors, but taken as a whole they present a more nuanced picture. Reconciling these histories is no small task, particularly when dealing with a topic as loaded as China's interaction with the outside world during the late Qing dynasty. But British academic Robert Bickers makes this challenge the foundation of his ambitious *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914*.

Most people would throw up their hands, declare the history gap the product of two equally valid (or not) perspectives and give up on the whole enterprise: not Professor Bickers. No, this is deathly serious stuff and, for China at least, the wound is still fresh. As the nation goes through the process of reintegrating itself into the international community, China's colonial history plays no small role. Says Bickers:

*But in fact we cannot understand the resurgence of China now, and its sometimes quiet, sometimes raucous and foul-mouthed anger at the world, unless we understand the traumatic century which followed the first opium war, however much it might seem mere history. For history matters in modern China, and the past is unfinished business...The memory of the era of national humiliation is embedded in the state's very articulation of itself, and its raison d'être.*

Thus we have the book's *raison d'être*. If we want to move beyond the nationalist rhetoric and into the realm of cooperation and mutual understanding, it is essential that we know how we got here. It is essential that both sides, East and West, understand their shared history, learn from their forebears' mistakes and cooperate to avoid the same pitfalls. The Chinese already care deeply about this history, so it's time the West starts caring too. This book is a starting point.

Of the official Chinese account of the so-called "Century of Humiliation", says Bickers, "It goes like this: unequal treaties were forced on China at gunpoint by foreign imperialists, and accepted by their craven collaborators, the decadent, feudal emperors, warlords and deracinated bureaucratic capitalists."

There is some overlap between this story and the ones found in the records left behind by the westerners who visited and lived in China during this period, but the differences are far more revealing. Scattered amidst the colonial battle cries for God, country and coin are tales of dynamic, often positive, interactions between foreigners and a local community they did not fully understand. There are accounts of prejudice and malice, to be sure, but also of good intention and honest misunderstanding. What is absent is evidence of a unified foreign project intent upon the humiliation of China, and this makes sense. The foreign community in China was a collection of individuals who had commonalities without necessarily a common cause. "This was a connected world, and the continuities are important," says Bickers, "but there was no grand scheme, design or plot."

Since there's no collective will at work, *The Scramble for China* looks instead at individuals in history – and what fascinating cast of characters Bickers has to work with.

The story of Hugh Hamilton Lindsay serves to loosely frame the first third of the book, beginning with his highly illegal journey along the Chinese coast at the behest of the British East India Company in 1832. Representing the interests of the traders at Canton, who were fed up at being unable to legally unload their wares (mostly opium) upon greater China, Lindsay set sail aboard the *Lord Amherst* (aptly named for the British ambassador who had been unceremoniously denied entrance into Peking by the Jiaqing Emperor). Along the way, he met with curious locals and was frequently chased off by distraught officials. In writing of his voyage, Lindsay challenged the notion that the Chinese

were uninterested in things foreign, and provided vital intelligence to those traders, like William Jardine, who would secure free trade by force. Lindsay petitioned for action, got it in the form of the First Opium War and had a key role in its aftermath. Every mainland port he had visited would later become a Treaty Port in the terms of Chinese surrender. The western merchants, Lindsay & Co. soon to join their ranks, now had the right to free trade and self-governance on foreign soil, but their appetites remained unsated. Domestic uprisings and another opium war led to a business boom in the stable foreign-run ports like Hong Kong and Shanghai. But in one of history's delicious ironies, the bottom dropped out of the market in the peace that followed and a number of western firms, including Lindsay's, went belly up.

No small amount of ink is spent on the men of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service, from the irascible British first inspector-general, Horatio Nelson Lay, to his highly influential Irish successor, Sir Robert Hart, all the way to the last I.G., American Lester Little, who departed in 1950. The Customs was a queer organization. Run by Chinese-speaking foreigners, it was officially a Chinese government agency and counted among its responsibilities the collection of a sizeable portion of the nation's revenues. But customs duties were only part of what it did. The Customs often acted as intermediaries and advisors for the Chinese foreign office, improved the ports, and also installed signal towers and lighthouses along thousands of miles of coastline.

Customs lighthouse keeper George Taylor, stationed in southern Taiwan, provides one of the book's more memorable digressions. Arriving in the early 1870s, the Scottish harbormaster's son quickly became friendly with the local *Paiwan* natives (the women in particular) on his regular exploratory rambles. He learned the *Paiwan*'s language and customs, and even went on to author a few scholarly articles on the subject.

This is just a sampling of the foreign presence in China: the good, the bad and the quirky. Bickers also takes note of the Chinese actors in the drama, and though they are perhaps less well developed than their foreign counterparts, their stories are no less enlightening.

For example, take the tragic story of Zhang Zixi of Lanzhou. When his nine-year-old brother went missing, Zhang traveled 95 miles on foot to Peking's British Legation to demand the release of his brother, whom he believed to have been kidnapped by foreigners. Why? Because it was commonly believed in his village that foreigners kidnapped Chinese to

use their eyes and hearts to make western medicine. Zhang, who carried a spear and offered to find a replacement child for the foreigners, was turned over to the local authorities and flogged with bamboo.

Zhang's story and others like it are included to illustrate the enormous mistrust of foreigners, particularly missionaries, when the Chinese hinterland was flung open to foreigners after the Second Opium War. In the rush to convert, western missionaries often overlooked how their actions appeared to the Chinese. Thus when the Catholic Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul in Tianjin offered indigent parents money to raise their children in the Catholic orphanage, sinister rumours of their "true" designs began to swirl. The whole incident ended in the tragic deaths of many clergy, Chinese converts and the French Consul-General. Similar instances of cultural insensitivity and widespread anti-foreign sentiment in reaction to the ever-increasing foreign incursions would lead to more bloody flare-ups around the country, most dramatically in 1900 with the Boxer Uprising. The international community only responded with increased suspicion of the Chinese, and ever more demands of the Chinese government.

However strained the relationship was between China and the outside world, Bickers reminds his readers, "We must not always think in terms of opposites, of Chinese and foreign as separate, or locked in uneasy embrace". For in the end it was the colonial and concession governments at work in Hong Kong, Shanghai and other Treaty Ports that allowed Chinese the breathing space to develop new kinds of businesses, establish a free press and begin openly discussing the nation's future. In Manchu China one could not criticize the government's methods, but in foreign settlements the Chinese could start thinking about a "self-strengthening" reformation and, when repeated military losses became too much for the reformers to bear, could throw out their ineffectual Manchu rulers. Though the "unequal" treaties the Western powers and Japan forced upon the Chinese had aimed to subject the Chinese to foreign will, their net effect was empowerment. By the time the diehard colonialists wised up to what was happening, the Qing dynasty was toppled, China was a republic and the momentum of the times had shifted against them forever. China had asserted its right to rule itself, and the era of foreign land grabs was at an end.

After deftly navigating through this tumultuous period of nearly a century, Bickers leaves his readers with an interesting conclusion, "There was nothing uniquely shameful or uniquely humiliating about

China's treaty century. Events were wholly and always tied up with global trends – the rise of British predominance internationally not least and its contestation in the 1890s and after.” The period of foreign incursions was not one of aggressors and victims, of good and bad, but of individuals from around the globe caught up in the same current of events. It is not Chinese history any more than it is western history – it is shared history. And a history that we would do well to remember as we look toward the future. He continues:

*[T]o understand how modern China, how young China today understands the world, and its own history, we do need to understand the history of the encounter between Westerners and Chinese, Westerners and Manchu, in yamen and street, trading house and council chamber, on battlefields and inside chapels. We need to understand how intertwined and interconnected our histories are: that China and the Chinese were equally a part of the flows of people and ideas that marked the 19th century.*

That is what impresses about *The Scramble for China*. It is not simply a history lesson, but a lesson in history itself. Bickers does more than just check off a series of names and events, he brings them to life and explains their current relevance. For a collection of facts is not a history any more than a pile of books is a library. Learning from the past is only useful insofar as it helps us inform our relationship with the present. Bickers has not only reminded working historians why they do what they do, but has also given the next generation of historians its marching orders.



#### OVER THERE

*Over There: The Pictorial Chronicle of the Chinese Labour Corps in the Great War* by the Weihai Municipal Archives  
Shandong Pictorial Publishing House, in English and simplified Chinese

REVIEWED BY ALEX SPARKS

Sometimes war heroes don't carry guns. Sometimes they carry spades and pickaxes. Sadly these heroes are the ones that regularly fail to get any credit and are quickly forgotten. In the case of 140,000 Chinese peasants and labourers who volunteered to aid the Allied Powers during the First

World War, this is also unfortunately what happened. After the war, the contribution of these brave young men quickly disappeared from Western and Eastern consciousness, until now with the publication of Weihai Archive's *Over There – The Pictorial Chronicle of the Chinese Labour Corps in the Great War*.

Through the use of meticulously researched images, documents and personal stories, the book tells the history of Republican China's attempt to break its "international isolation" by offering military assistance in the shape of "soldiers as labourers" to the Allied Powers: France, Great Britain and Tsarist Russia. These men became known as the Chinese Labour Corps (CLC).

By 1917, three years of brutal industrial warfare had the Great War belligerents on the verge of exhausting their national manpower. China's answer to the Western powers' problem was an almost inexhaustible supply of what they were missing – manpower. Through its use, Republican China saw its opportunity to break the yoke of its subjugation to technologically more superior nations. All that the Eastern nation asked was to be recognized as an equal power in the world political theatre. Sadly, at Versailles in 1919, China was to be denied its request by a victorious yet ungrateful West. It took China a further 30 years, until the end of the nation's civil war, for the country to gain the international recognition that it had sought. With the ascension of the Communist star over the country, the world would have to regard China as an equal nation.

*Over There: The Pictorial Chronicle of the Chinese Labour Corps in the Great War* explains how France and Great Britain picked up on the idea of using Chinese labour to aid their war efforts. The book studies the development of the CLC and its work in Europe and Africa. The pictorial chronicle shows how 140,000 labourers were picked and trained, then shipped to the Western and African fronts between 1917 and 1918. The story continues with labourers' lives in Europe and Africa; their treatment by their white officers; the work they undertook from stints in munitions factories to digging frontline trenches under enemy fire; their social life in their camps; and the final repatriation to China for the majority of the survivors. The book also discusses the effects on the labourers after as much as five years away from their homeland and families. Through the use of personal stories, the book looks at these men's responses to returning home, and how many who returned tried to aid their nation by bringing new technological methods and ideas to

China. It also studies the small number of labourers who chose to stay in Europe, marrying and living out the rest of their lives in the foreign countries they had fought to defend.

This piece of forgotten history is brought back to life by the Weihai Archive team's in-depth research of the CLC. The city archive began its work in 1998 in China and Europe collecting material and tracing survivors and their relatives. The team's work culminated in an academic conference on the subject of the CLC in Weihai, and the production of this book.

What is surprising is the amount of detailed information and material the Weihai Archive team has collected. Each chapter is prefaced with a brief introduction and then the story is left to be told by the images, with captions in both English and Chinese. The majority of the images were taken by those involved with the CLC at the time. The Weihai Archive has worked hard to track down personal stories and artifacts which give life and humanity to the 140,000 Chinese labourers, who could so easily have remained forgotten forever. Many thanks to the Weihai Archive team: now a group of unconventional heroes is getting the recognition it deserves. Their contribution to China and the West now will not remain forgotten.



#### **RELUCTANT REGULATORS**

*Reluctant Regulators: How the West Created and How China Survived the Global Financial Crisis* by Leo F. Goodstadt

Hong Kong University Press, 2011

REVIEWED BY FRANK MULLIGAN

As a senior economic policy adviser to the Hong Kong Government, Leo F. Goodstadt is the kind of person you would want to see writing an historical account of the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis, and the lessons to be drawn from it. In this he succeeds admirably.

However, if you are looking for an economic tome with a wealth of theories and graphs you may be disappointed. Goodstadt's approach is to look at what central bankers and regulators were saying about themselves and about the crisis. The self-criticism aspect of this approach makes the book unique, and all the more interesting for it.

Goodstadt's conclusions are broadly in line with what is generally believed to be true about economic crises: i.e. that they are predictable

and avoidable, but of course normally only in retrospect. But predictable or not, Goodstadt's argument is that US and UK regulators chose not to intervene in the market, before or during the crisis, or even consider using the tools that were at their disposal.

What we as consumers needed was supervision, governance and market discipline. What we got was an abdication of responsibility, disguised as adherence to the prevailing economic theory. Too many people in the financial sector bought into the self-correcting nature of free markets and held on desperately to a misplaced belief "in the innate superior wisdom of financial markets."

Citing "moral hazard" bankers urged Western governments not to intervene in the crisis, because it would only encourage banks and companies to take greater risks in the future. But they conveniently ignored the difference between implementing existing regulations, which were sufficiently robust, and actually rescuing banks and companies.

Regulators and lawmakers often couldn't even distinguish between right and wrong, and they clearly failed in their duty to discriminate between legal and illegal practices. Central bankers and lawmakers had already made a choice for growth and that growth acted as a shield against any temptation they might have had to regulate. With the world's economic system seemingly chugging along nicely, it was easy to see any future crisis as just the cost of doing business the free market way.

#### PSYCHOLOGY OF CRISIS

Looking at the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis from the point of view of a non-economist, you could argue that the main issue was neither financial nor economic, but one of belief.

Central bankers and regulators suffered from the mistaken notion that markets are always self-correcting, and that regulations should be kept to an absolute minimum. Once you have drunk the Kool-Aid on this, and they did to a shocking degree, the ideal regulatory regime would approach zero regulations. Goodstadt makes it abundantly clear that many bankers and regulators believe that markets are essentially unknowable. When the crisis hit they were as mystified as anyone else as to the cause.

He goes on further to say that economists doing research before the crisis had been unable to establish clear connections between Risk A and Consequence B. So their conclusions were that there was no clear

and compelling reason not to take risks. This advice fits free-market orthodoxy so well it should have of itself raised alarm bells. The very people paid to see things clearly and objectively could not tell the emperor that he wasn't wearing any clothes.

This free-market culture was so dominant it bears serious comparison to the cognitive dissonance seen in a religious cult, where the strong belief or identity of the cult is very resistant to facts. Faced with the negative consequences of their own actions, and the resulting mental discomfort, or dissonance, bankers and regulators could not face the simple fact that the market is not always self-correcting. The logical conclusion is that it was their free wheeling behavior that had caused the crisis, and this was too much to contemplate.

Cults generally follow this model, and choose the belief/identity over conflicting facts. Goodstadt points out that even today there is little sympathy in the banking community for increased regulatory control. Having destroyed trillions of dollars of our wealth with actions that were often clearly illegal, bankers and regulators now feel free to pick and choose the facts that they want to see.

The contrast in world-view between those in the financial industry, who have bought into the cult of free markets, and the rest of us outside-of-the-loop, could not be starker. As consumers or taxpayers we see the Global Economic Crisis in terms of a catastrophic loss of jobs; and/or personal financial disaster; and/or the destruction of our pensions. Bankers and regulators, on the other hand, see the banking industry bouncing back from the crisis, and companies raking in cash, so they continue to resist calls for a stronger regulatory regime. The process of not seeing what is as plain as the nose on your face is called doubling-down, and many bankers seem to be doubling-down on the now disproven free-market orthodoxy.

#### CHINA'S CHALLENGES

Meanwhile, China appeared to weather the storm better than most countries. It unveiled a US\$586 billion stimulus package that kick-started the Chinese economy, and avoided much of the GDP loss that the US suffered. According to Goodstadt, China obviously had serious problems during the Global Financial Crisis, and it continues to have issues with housing bubbles and massive local government debt. But it always had an ace up its sleeve – the fact that its economy is not fully plugged into the world economy, and that it can use Hong Kong as an

interface.

Goodstadt details how Hong Kong bucked the trend, and refused to focus on the all-for-growth Anglo-Saxon economic model. Instead, financial authorities focused on economic stability, and directly intervened in the market. The territory introduced tough regulations, and far from hampering growth, they ensured both financial stability *and* growth. He suggests that China can and has learned from this model. (It remains to be seen what surprises China has in store for us.)

This book was written basically for Hong Kong and about Hong Kong, but it has lessons for us all. As someone who has previously criticized the financial authorities in Hong Kong for the coziness of their business relations, Goodstadt has the credibility of an ardent critic. He applies that skill very well to the crisis, and to the financial players.



#### STRUCTURE, AUDIENCE AND SOFT POWER

*Structure, Audience and Soft Power in East Asian Pop Culture* by Chua Beng Huat

Hong Kong University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM F. SMITH

The complex geo-political landscape of East Asia has historically grappled with the impact of a Western *liberal attitude* towards society through its global export of popular culture, especially in comparison with the Confucian based notion of *Asian Values*. Somewhere in the depths of these dynamic issues, Chua Beng Huat – a Singaporean Sociology Professor at National University of Singapore, finds an opportunity to explore the transnational cultural, political and economical aspects of East Asian Pop Culture. He admittedly understands how this tremendous topic is impossible to cover in one book. Nonetheless, he offers us an introductory text for dialogue and presents a well-structured overview of the last two decades (1990-2010).

According to Chua, the spread of transnational pop culture from Japan and South Korea to other regions of Asia is a result of heterogeneous ethnic Chinese communities outside of the mainland who, for example, use “mutually incomprehensible languages,” as well as, having “variation of daily foods.” Additionally, these communities have a “long history of sharing pop culture in various Chinese languages that is produced, distributed, and circulated through a very well-established

structure,” which Chua designates as “Pop Culture China.”

Within Pop Culture China resides a diverse audience that often uses incomprehensible “dialects” depending on their location. For example in Hong Kong, Cantonese is the most commonly used language, however, in Taiwan it is almost completely absent. As a consequence of dialects or language differences among the ethnic Chinese communities, standardisation of subtitling and dubbing used in certain pop culture products, like TV dramas and movies, greatly varies local readings of similar productions. In this capacity, Chua suggests that Pop Culture China is a result of a one-way transnational flow of Japanese and South Korean pop culture that integrates and circulates into a massive Chinese-language market, which ultimately constitutes the broader East Asian Pop Culture.

However, not everyone considers the transnational integration of pop culture as a positive one. There are some small group debates concerning cultural politics with those who view such importation as *cultural invasion* and *cultural imperialism*, often implicitly and explicitly involving local state agencies. Of course, this one-way flow of transnational Japanese and South Korean pop culture opens up a space for audience participation, sometimes in the form of conventional fan clubs or online *sub-fan groups*. Interestingly, sub-fan groups “operate below the radar of the state and profit of producers.” They pride themselves in their ability to subtitle recently released productions from Japan and South Korea into Chinese script. In other circumstances, Chua recounts instances “when an artist becomes entangled in larger political issues,” which impact avid fan communities. Using examples, Chua demonstrates how some fan groups respond to state interference in pop culture.

Although Chua’s relationship to East Asian Pop Culture is based on his Singaporean perspective, he also explores how Hong Kong and Taiwan were significant to the production of film, TV and pop music, which maintained a constant presence in Malaysia and Singapore during the cold war era. By the late 1970s, TV drama and *Cantopop* (Cantonese Music Industry) emerged appealing to a generation that was not interested “in either the history or politics of mainland China.” By the 1990s, Chua identifies two global changes that supported the transnational expansion of Pop Culture China. First, advances in telecommunication technologies provided “new modes of transmission” from which inflows of Japanese and South Korean creative industry

productions arrived in major cities of East Asia. And second, the “liberalization of media industries,” in the region, “which resulted in the rapid development of TV stations, legal and illegal, and the massive expansion of airtime that needed to be filled quickly and inexpensively.” As economic liberalization continued in mainland China, Cantopop took a radical turn and major Cantopop singers began recording in Mandarin with Taiwan emerging as the center for Mandarin pop.

Although the center of Pop Culture China shifts according to movements in regional market liberalization, its overall structure is quite stable and “operates under the presumed *sameness* of a *common* Chinese cultural heritage. Of course, as Chua points out, the pop culture industry is still in its infancy in mainland China, however, “it has already begun to compete with Taiwan and Hong Kong as a center of production of Chinese-language pop culture.” On the other hand, China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002 has required it to open its doors to foreign competition. However, it continues to regulate imports with restrictions of screening schedules on domestic stations and quotas. In response to these issues, foreign companies are finding ways to work with Chinese partners in co-productions, in order to frame them as *local* Chinese products.

Chua’s concluding chapter examines the role of pop culture as a resource for *cultural influence* and *cultural diplomacy*, or what he calls “soft power.” Soft power is a way of influencing through different modes of persuasion. One way of using soft power may be to persuade others that your views on certain issues are similar, if not the same. In other words, soft power succeeds through pop culture by making one culture attractive to another. In a time when military intervention is restrained, Chua claims, “the exporting and importing of popular culture has been transformed into an arena of such [soft power] competition.” However, as a backlash against the unequal balance of transnational flow of pop culture, Chua points out, there can and have been negative effects within the “imagined national public space and national culture.”

Chua’s book would be appropriate for anyone seeking a more detailed grasp of pop culture in the East Asia region. He cites numerous and lengthy pop culture business statistics, as well as plenty of examples of popular TV dramas, movies, and music that have established Pop Culture China and East Asian Pop Culture. Overall, the text provides a condensed look at the broad complexity of the heterogeneous ethnic

---

**BEIJING RECORD**

*Beijing Record: A Physical and Political History of Planning Modern Beijing* by Wang Jun

World Scientific Publishing, 2011

Originally published in Chinese 《城记》王军著

三联书店, 2003

REVIEWED BY JEREMY GOLDKORN

Wang Jun, the author of *Beijing Record*, is a journalist with Xinhua News Agency's *Outlook* magazine 瞭望周刊. He was born in a poor village in rural Guizhou province in 1969, but was a diligent enough student to pass the entrance exams into Renmin University in the Chinese capital. After graduating with a degree in journalism, he joined Xinhua as a reporter and has been with the state-owned news and propaganda organization ever since. Such a resumé should not deter anyone from reading his work.

While Xinhua (sometimes called the New China News Agency) has something of a reputation outside China, a number of the country's most outstanding journalists have worked for the organization. Yang Jisheng 杨继绳, author of the recently translated *Tombstone* 墓碑, a detailed account of the starvation caused by the Great Leap Forward, was with Xinhua until his retirement. Working at Xinhua gives journalists access to state archives and senior officials available to no other journalists. Moreover, while guided news and propaganda are the public faces of Xinhua, it has always served an additional role, as an internal national information network that supplies relatively unadulterated information to senior Party leaders. In this role, Xinhua's value is precisely dependent on the accuracy of its information.

Wang Jun's book contains a wealth of eye-witness accounts, archival materials, maps, plans and photographs. His sources are many and varied: city planning documents from the late-Qing dynasty to the early years of the twenty-first century, the family correspondence of the famous Chinese architect Liang Sicheng and interviews with Liang's wife and son, the works of Mao Zedong, interviews with city planners and government officials, newspaper accounts, municipal archives, maps

and much more. For the Beijing-obsessed, *Beijing Record* is a delight. But what a sad delight.

Liang Sicheng 梁思成, son of the famous late-Qing reformer Liang Qichao 梁启超, was the author of *A History of Chinese Architecture* and Deputy-Director of the Beijing City Planning Commission in the early post-1949 period. His story provides the narrative focus for Wang Jun's *Beijing Record*. Wang recounts, in gloomy detail, Liang's failure to convince Mao Zedong and his fellow Party leaders, none of whom were Beijing natives, to build the new administrative centre of the revolutionary capital to the west of the old city. This would have preserved the wonder of urban design that was old Peking, with its city walls, intricate grid network of alleyways and distinctive courtyard houses.

The Beijing I've been living in for the last seventeen years is largely a result of a master plan that was developed – partly with the help of planners from the Soviet Union, partly as a result of native revolutionary hubris – during the 1950s and 1960s (a process revived in the 1980s). *Beijing Record* narrates in detail how the city became what it is today. So many factors: revolutionary fervour, Soviet advisors who had no knowledge or interest in Chinese traditions, Philistines in charge of cultural and urban planning, political infighting, the real problems of constructing a modern city on a pre-modern template, and the iconoclastic, Maoist will to smash the old and build the new.

Wang Jun does not flinch from criticizing more recent urban planning decisions, and he has access to a wealth of caustic sources. One of the more piquant quotes in the book is from the former President of the People's Supreme Court, Zheng Tianxiang 郑天翔. Zheng discusses the Oriental Plaza, a complex of shops, offices and a five star hotel, constructed on the rubble of a previously charming and historically significant neighbourhood on the east side of the Republican-era shopping street Wangfujing, or 'Morrison Street' as it was known from the 1920s to the late 1940s. The Oriental Plaza was made possible because of an accommodation between Chen Xitong 陈希同 mayor of Beijing from 1988 until 1995 (when he was brought down in a corruption scandal) and a company controlled by the Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing 李嘉诚, Asia's richest man. Zheng Tianxing remarks:

"In recent years, a monster has appeared in Beijing. The monster is the 'Oriental Plaza'...

... Now look at other places of Beijing and places around the city districts. No one knows how many historical and cultural sites and how

many scenic beauties have not been cut up or encroached upon...”

That's just one of the Chinese pleas for more humanistic urban planning recounted in *Beijing Record*. The book itself was a popular and critical success in China when it was published in 2003. It caused a wave of debate in the Chinese media about the destruction of the physical heritage of Beijing and other cities: a review of the book was even published on the website of The Ministry of Land Resources, a government organisation one might blame for some of the destruction of the capital's physical heritage.

Popular concern about the demolition of neighbourhoods of historical value is certainly growing. So is there hope that what little is left of old Beijing may survive?

In answer to that, I turn to “The High Price of the New Beijing” by Ian Johnson, a thoughtful review of *Beijing Record* and a few other books about the city. It was published in the *New York Review of Books* in June 2011. Johnson offers a limpid ray of hope:

“...people like Wang Jun help rebut the arguments that China is in the grips of an incurable inferiority complex toward its own culture, or that the destruction represents the final break with the country's millennia of history and culture. He and others show that many are working to bring the past to light.”<sup>1</sup>

Their successes are few but all the more precious. The home of Wang's great hero, Liang Sicheng, was slated for destruction until Wang organized criticism of the local officials who had approved its demolition. It is a small, modest victory...

Sadly, the limpid ray of hope was soon extinguished: In January 2012 during the weeklong Chinese New Year holiday, Liang's former residence was demolished by a real-estate developer.

Social media users and journalists uploaded photos of the despoliation to the Internet, and there was a small online hue and cry, but Liang's former residence was already rubble, indistinguishable from a million other construction sites in a million Chinese cities.

\*\*\*

Every morning, on my daily commute to the office, I cycle past the former Liang residence, now the Liang Rubble. It is fenced off, and guarded round the clock by two thuggish, pimply rogues wearing grey uniforms. The rogues look like *chengguan* – China's quasi-police force

of “city managers” who “manage” informal traders, beggars, and street vendors – but they don’t appear to have official identification.

Less than a minute’s walk south of the Liang Rubble is the location of No. 3 Front Zhaojialou Lane 前赵家楼胡同, now often just called Zhaojialou, the former residence of Cao Rulin 曹汝霖. Cao was a vice minister of foreign affairs of the Northern Government of China, who in 1915 signed the humiliating “Twenty-one Demands” 二十一个条项 accord with Japan.

On 4 May 1919, students razed Cao’s house in protest. This was perhaps the first act of mob Chinese nationalist outrage, and destruction, taking shape as something we can recognize today. The date gave the May Fourth patriotic movement its name. One could, if so inclined, peg 4 May 1919 as the day Chinese anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist intellectual currents began to flow sharply leftwards. The Communist Party of China was founded in 1921.

There is a small monument to the 4 May arson at Zhaojialou. There is not yet a monument to Liang Sicheng on the site of his disappeared house.

There is a hotel just opposite the Liang Rubble. Shortly after Liang’s residence was demolished, the hotel’s owners renovated its walls and gate. Next to the hotel gate now stands a brand new piece of fake old grey Beijing wall, on which there is an information plaque brazenly titled “Ruins of Zhaojialou”. Liang Sicheng himself will no doubt be drafted in service of some business or development scheme, when he has been dead long enough.

The feeling of contemplating the Liang Rubble as I cycle to work, procrastinating the writing of this review, is described perfectly by Pierre Ryckmans. His essay “The Chinese Attitude Towards the Past”, was originally presented under the name Simon Leys as the Forty-seventh Morrison Lecture on 16 July 1986, and subsequently made available online in the virtual pages of *China Heritage Quarterly*:

*This same China which is loaded with so much history and so many memories is also oddly deprived of ancient monuments. In the Chinese landscape, there is a material absence of the past that can be most disconcerting for cultivated Western travellers – especially if they approach China with the criteria and standards that are naturally developed in a European environment. In Europe, in spite of countless wars and destruction, every age has*

left a considerable amount of monumental landmarks: the ruins of classical Greece and Rome, all the great medieval cathedrals, the churches and palaces of the Renaissance period, the monuments of the Baroque era - all these form an unbroken chain of architectural witnesses that perpetuate the memory of the past, right into the very heart of our modern cities. In China, on the contrary, if we except a very small number of famous ensembles (the antiquity of which is quite relative), what strikes the educated visitor is the monumental absence of the past. Most Chinese cities – including, and especially those which were ancient capital cities or prestigious cultural centres – present today an aspect that may not look exactly new or modern (for, if modernisation is a target which China has now set for itself, there is still a long way to go before it can be reached), but appears strangely devoid of all traditional character. On the whole, they seem to be a product of late 19th century industrialisation. Thus, the past which continues to animate Chinese life in so many striking, unexpected or subtle ways, seems to inhabit the people rather than the bricks and stones. The Chinese past is both spiritually active and physically invisible.<sup>2</sup>

This is why *Beijing Record*, with its meticulous documentation of the making of modern Beijing, is an important book for those who care about cultural heritage. The physical city of old Beijing is disappearing around us, leaving behind place names that refer to long-demolished buildings, the fading memories of old people, ghosts, shadows, and documents like *Beijing Record*.

*I'd like to thank Geremie R. Barmé for his comments and suggestions on this review.*

### **Endnotes**

1. "The High Price of New Beijing" by Ian Johnson  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/jun/23/high-price-new-beijing/?pagination=false>
2. "The Chinese Attitude Towards the Past" by Pierre Ryckmans  
[http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=014\\_chineseAttitude.inc&issue=014](http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=014_chineseAttitude.inc&issue=014)

### **Further Reading**

"Historical Memories of May Fourth: Patriotism, but of what kind?"

by Xu Jilin

[http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/features.php?searchterm=017\\_mayfourthmemories.inc&issue=017](http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/features.php?searchterm=017_mayfourthmemories.inc&issue=017)

*In Search of Old Peking* (1986) by L. C. Arlington and William

Lewisohn with an introduction by Geremie R. Barmé

Ministry of Land Resources review of Beijing Record

[http://www.mlr.gov.cn/wskt/wskt\\_hsgs/200503/](http://www.mlr.gov.cn/wskt/wskt_hsgs/200503/t20050318_635986.htm)

[t20050318\\_635986.htm](http://www.mlr.gov.cn/wskt/wskt_hsgs/200503/t20050318_635986.htm)



### CHINATOWNS IN A TRANSNATIONAL WORLD

*Chinatowns in a Transnational World, Myths and Realities of an Urban Phenomenon*, eds. Vanessa Künnemann and Ruth Mayer

Routledge, 2011

REVIEWED BY CINDY HING-YUK WONG

The rapid expansion of Chinese economic and political power worldwide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has focused new attention on the lives, beliefs, images and actions of Chinese worldwide, especially in those enclaves – Chinatowns – that have become emblematic of global mass migrations in the last two centuries. While Chinatowns often have been characterized by exoticism, timelessness and mystery, new scholarship has underscored the complexity of movements, adaptations and dialogues that continue to recreate human communities within hybrid spaces in the Americas and Europe and changing panoramas in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This volume, which examines imagery and identity in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands, contributes both data and insights to that ongoing debate.

This edited volume emerged from a conference on Chinatowns at the Leibniz University in Hannover in 2008, part of a longer German Research Foundation project on “Diasporic Self-Fashionings: Exchanges of Chinese-American and American-Chinese Identities.” (2006-10) This genealogy explains the geographic framing of the book, which nonetheless covers a century of social history, literature and community identities in these settings. Through these individual pieces, including a strong introduction and conclusion, the volume raises issues on representation, myth making, spatial articulations of Chinese settlements,

and transnational network of Chinese migrants and shows how ethnic practices are intertwined with larger national, regional and global forces in different times.

The introduction by Ruth Mayer, provides an excellent context through which to understand the choices contributing authors have made to construct a coherent exposition on Chinatown as an urban transnational phenomenon. She describes the history of San Francisco Chinatown and Arnold Genthe's photography of it, linking the general history of San Francisco Chinatown and its representation by an overseas German photographer. Mayer further weaves these perceptions to images in *Effi Briest*, an 1895 German novel that briefly mentions the existence of "creepy" Chinese in a fictional northeastern German town of Kessin. Hence, she draws together representation, myth-making (Roland Barthes) and imaginative rendering of Chinese/Chinatown with a broader social scientific and historical understanding of Chinatown. Mayer also explains how the volume introduces English-speaking reader to little known German cases; here she asserts that although some of the Chinese settlements do not fit the general pattern of ethnic enclaves, the German and Dutch cases are important because they "tended to be represented and probably also perceived of themselves at some point or other in terms of the iconology and the imaginary of the Chinatown. (4)" This statement underscores the difficult task of defining "Chinatown" in this volume and beyond: is it a spatial concept, official or not, or primarily a human one? Should one include most overseas Chinese experiences under the larger umbrella of Chinatown studies? Finally, Mayer also shows that Chinatown is not "purely" Chinese; she pushes the idea that Chinatown is not China through a reading by Fei Xiaotong, a Chinese anthropologist from China, of Washington Chinatown that exposes the schism between the transnational spaces of overseas Chinatown and the perception of one whose experience of China is wide and not reconcilable. This divergence resonates with Mary Lui's discussion of the Hong Kong reception of Chinese American writer Jade Snow Wong, who gained a successful career in the US, but was perceived as "white Chinese" in Hong Kong.

Different articles in the book provide multiple entry points to understand overseas Chinese experience even in this limited vision of the West. Articles by Lars Amenda and Dagmar Yu-Dembski, as Mayer notes, provide important data on Chinatowns in Germany and the Netherlands that will be less familiar to many Anglophone readers.

Amenda focuses on the formation of portside enclaves in Hamburg and Rotterdam, rapidly adducing factors as complex as global maritime trade, the impact of war and inflation, the propagation of images beyond population numbers and the impact of the Nazis on Chinese populations. Yu-Dembski turns to Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s, where a student population complicated class and imagery of the Chinese before Nazism, casting light as well on memoirs and other extensive primary sources that can open up this chapter in Chinese mobility. Still, these enclaves remain small and transient by comparison with North and South American Chinatowns or other Asian and Australian cases, suggesting the need for wide contextualization.

North American Chinatowns, while better-known, profit from rethinking in Mary Lui's important article on how Chinese Americans as well as the U.S. State Department promoted the assimilatory successes of Chinese America in the post-World War II /Cold War era. This fills a real gap on Chinese American scholarship that tends to elide the period from the end of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1946 to the change in immigration policies in the 1960s. As in her previous path-breaking work, Lui's text combines insights into human agents as well as changing national and transnational contexts.

Authors also explore the imagery of American Chinatowns. Kirsten Twelbeck's study of Donaldina Cameron covers a century's worth of essays and fiction on this San Francisco Chinatown Mission founder. However, it would be beneficial if the author had further contextualized her sources; for example, a novel like *Chinatown Mission* by Geraldine Burrows, seems fairly insignificant by contrast to other variations on history and myth. Similarly, Vanessa Künnemann's reading of Pearl Buck's *Kinfolk* proves a bit perplexing, giving little credit to Buck's creation of the character Mrs. Liang until the very end of the article. Here, in particular, it would be instructive to distinguish in the analysis among the representations of Chinatown, China and Chinese even while elucidating their mutual dependences.

Some of the shorter American essays tend to be more editorial. The distinguished historian John Tchen, for example, exposes the absurdity of comparing piracy to terrorism in the raiding of Chinatown Canal Street Counterfeiting goods in post 9/11 New York. He points out that the Yellow Peril myth can be used time and time again to define the United States; however, it would also be instructive to understand that China and everything that can be connected to China is not the quintes-

sential U.S. enemy; any “other” can fill that role, from the USSR to Iran and/or Arab states in general, depending on political situations. Similarly, Yong Chen’s piece on food has a promising start in scholarship on early foodways; however, when the article discusses the author’s situation in Irvine, it seems to depart from the discussion of the popularity of Chinese food to talk more generally about restaurants and supermarkets as gathering places for suburban Chinese America. In particular, it seems problematic to call places like Irvine California and suburban Chinatown post-modern; these sites may differ from traditional “downtown” Chinatowns, but the authors need to explain what they mean by postmodernity in these cases.

London provides a third spatial anchor for the text. Anne Witchard’s studies on Thomas Burke’s depiction of the Limehouse district and Ruth Mayer’s reading of Sax Rohmer’s Fu Manchu and *Shadow of Chinatown* provide close examinations of Orientalist texts of the first part of the twentieth century in the trans-Atlantic English speaking world that have shaped certain prevalent myths about Chinatown as mysterious and seedy and its association with criminality. Again, two other social historical chapters underscore the complexity of Chinese population in terms of class, region of origin and language and their views on the new London Chinatown. The first, by Rosemary Sales *et al* represents more of a project report than a complete analysis of this complex site, but it links well with Flemming Christiansen’s overview of the part Chinatown labour plays in transnational capitalist globalization. This synthetic overview reminds us how we might profit from even more dialogue among these different visions of Chinatowns, feeling the give and take of the original conference as well as this set of more independent essays.

Overall, the collection underscores the importance of close historical readings of Chinatowns as lived and imagined spaces, providing insights into well-known cases like those of the United States and Great Britain while bringing to wider attention the scholarship and resources in less-visible cases from pre-Nazi Germany. This selection also allows the reader to compare sources and perspectives in novel ways, underscoring the multiple meanings and perspectives that challenge Chinatown studies. While the collection does not necessarily develop a coherent position on these issues or speak to the wider dialogue around Chinatowns in Africa, Latin American, or Southern and Eastern Europe, it raises questions about the nature of Chinatowns, migration, identities

and images that should continue to spark discussion across this exciting field in years to come.



CHINA'S VANISHING WORLDS

*China's Vanishing Worlds: Countryside, Traditions and Cultural Spaces* by  
Matthias Messmer and Hsin-Mei Chuang  
Bentelli Verlag, 2012

REVIEWED BY NEALE MCGOLDRICK

As China's growth looms, it gets harder for visitors to experience the subtleties of Chinese villages that are farther from the beaten path. *China's Vanishing Worlds* by Matthias Messmer and Hsin-Mei Chuang, offers a thousand photographs and a sensitively written text to close that gap. In their introduction the authors explain that:

*Whereas the photographs which form its core, offer a subjective selection of our personal experiences, we have composed the text to compliment the pictures in an objective and more comprehensive way. Our visual images are atmospheric in nature, but we want the text to stimulate thought.*

The subtitle: *Countryside, Traditions and Cultural Spaces* depicts a clear focus. There are topics of interest to artists and architects, to economists and social workers who may not ever get to China. What is surprising, however, is the decision to cover villages thematically rather than geographically. Beginning with a chapter on *fengshui*, followed by labyrinths of space, individual villages have been chosen to reflect food, water, health, and the environment. A chapter on education might be expected, but there is also one on "Entertainment as a Refuge," which offers a rich perspective on events that still sustain village life.

Each chapter highlights particular villages as it explores its theme, describing the villages in words and images that make it easy to appreciate the pace and quality of life, against a backdrop of Matthias Messmer's stunning photographs. The images grab your attention, but it is the detail of the text that helps the reader appreciate much that would be missing in a coffee table book. These introductions to chapters, while not truly academic, can be a little dry as they introduce each broad

theme, but provide useful data on AIDS, the cost of schooling, and population shift to cities, offering a deeper perspective. What follows are introductions to individual villages dramatically demonstrating that each village has a heart that clearly touched the authors. By reading details about the traditions of *fengshui*, or banking policies in particular towns, or why two look so different, the photographs become that much more genuine.

Some of the villages were selected because they reflect the traces of ancient trade routes, where the images remind us of how much of China's past has been lost. This occurred not only during the periods of imperialism and civil war, but in the fury to expand without a tradition of saving great temples and mansions of the past. Looking at decrepit model villages, one is also firmly reminded that not all modernisation has been good for China.

In the introduction, the authors admit that they had hoped to make an apolitical book, but it was not possible. Too much of what China was and is becoming has been decided by politicians. The authors note that they don't focus on the worst "cancer" villages, but rather on typical villages one finds in every region of China, and while it is not a geography book in the traditional sense of north, south, east and west, every reader will come to know the different regions of China in a most personal way – village by village.

Among the great virtues of the book has been the inclusion of Pinyin spellings of Chinese words throughout, make it possible for someone visiting a town to connect with local history. One useful example: "*Bao, ying and tun* suggest that troops were at some time stationed... *Zhai* points to a minority or mountain settlement... *Wan, ba and tang* suggest a settlement near a body of water... *pu* was the ancient name of a postal station." With these clues, even readers with limited Chinese can get a sense of the environment, and turn to the glossary at the back to find the characters or discover village phrases like "*cun weishengshi*" for village clinic. Of interest to some may be the translation of the full text into German, which takes up just 30 pages in the back of the book – an indication that the authors' choice was to devote most space in these 330 pages to the images.

In his comment on the back cover, Jonathan Spence, author of *The Search for Modern China*, describes this work as promising and sustaining "a thorough exploration of China's still attainable built past, and its all-too-swiftly vanishing present." In its own way UNESCO

deserves credit for making its mark in China as it has elsewhere in the world, and local heritage associations have saved parts of Shanghai or water towns for tourist purposes. It is a lamentable reminder that China is just too large and villages too needy to make restoration a consistent priority. An example of this is a description of younger family members returning to some villages, but the first thing they want is a modern flat with indoor plumbing.

Historical images include maps, historical posters from the Mao years, and small drawings from eras gone by. Modern images beyond the photographs include maps reflecting data, and architectural drawings that illustrate housing patterns. Some are frustratingly small, barely larger than postage stamps, but laid out as a collage, the message is clear in the power of juxtaposition. One fascinating page offers four landscape images from different centuries, one of which is ridiculously Disneyesque, but juxtaposed with the others, it is a reminder that this is now part of China, too.

The cover image captures the essence of the book. A four-year old boy wearing modern sneakers watches a black and white television with colored posters of Mao and Liu Shaoqi on the walls. “But wasn’t Liu repudiated?” you might ask. “How old is the picture on that farmhouse wall?” This is surely no reprint. It’s been hanging there for decades – a reminder that back then, before television, someone might not have gotten the message about who was “in” or “out” of power, or perhaps thought no one would object. In any case, it is a daring choice to have Liu Shaoqi on the cover.

Messmer’s choice of isolated figures is interesting for a country as populous as China. There are more pictures of buildings without people – courtyards, architectural details, or silent interiors with all the power of still-lives. Others have only one small silhouette, or the back of a shawled woman washing vegetables by the edge of a canal. That inanimate choice gives all the more power to the individual faces of just one isolated fisherman, or three bored child in a largely abandoned schoolroom. The group images are few and far between, but more appreciated as a reminder of what is best in village life. On the back cover, art critic Li Xianting, suggests that the book “as a whole conveys a lonely and melancholic atmosphere.” While it is true there are many misty images, and natural lighting in interior spaces can be rather dark, on balance this is a book that is truthful and beautiful about a world that is quietly disappearing.

A couple of cautions: this is a large, heavy and expensive book, better read sitting at a table. The weight (2.5 kg) reflects the quality of paper used to produce the book in Switzerland. It offers a breadth of life in China combining its history, geography and culture in a most compelling way. Readers are invited to pick and choose, and concentrate on personal areas of interest. It is likely however, that the images are so compelling they will want to read the whole thing.



#### EUROPE AND CHINA

*Europe and China: Strategic Partners or Rivals?*, ed. Roland Vogt  
Hong Kong University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY AUSTIN WILLIAMS

Just half a century after De Gaulle's vision that Europe ("from the Atlantic to the Urals") would decide the destiny of the world, Europe looks anything like a global powerhouse. With the euro falling apart, European authority is regarded by many, with barely concealed disdain.

From Britain to Bulgaria, the European Union is seldom mentioned without the suffix "crisis", and the phrase "European integration" is widely held to be an oxymoron. In June 2012, *The Economist* magazine cited a Pew Research Centre study showing that 'only a minority agree that EU membership is a "good thing"'

So it is useful to read a series of recent academic papers examining Europe's belief in its 'normative authority' in world affairs. In *Europe and China: Strategic Partners or Rivals?* the authors' ambition is to situate the waning European project in relation to China's rise. It explores why Europe hasn't formulated a coherent strategy towards the East and suggests that it has much to do with the loss of its own cohesion in the West. The book is something of an advisory note about how to rectify Europe's identity crisis.

The series of essays are organised in two parts: the first examines the changing international order and the second looks at a series of issues – from human rights to energy security - that form some of the so-called new multilateralist approaches to global relations.

The first few chapters set the scene. In brief the argument states that while *China* needs *Europe* as a source of investment and advanced technology, and Europe needs China as an export market, neither

has formalised this strategically. The book is primarily written from the European perspective suggesting that one of the key problems for Europe “is not (being) able to persuasively define its interests in the region, let alone its strategic ones”. (p4) This vacuum is put down to a lack of clear leadership. However, as Greece’s recent elections indicate, a leader can simply be a technocratic solution: a mechanistic way of excusing the lack of clear political *purpose*. Conversely, leadership as a political *vision* should be something to cohere – or challenge – the current stalemate.

Vogt’s suggestion that ‘China’s rise could indeed become a catalyst of European integration’ comes across as wishful thinking. Such fatalism has come to characterise contemporary European politics. It is a viewpoint that looks to outside forces – rather than internal dynamics – to resolve the problem. Indeed, many of the authors seem oblivious to the dangers implicit in what Montesquieu once called the “politics of drift”.

A number of opening chapters repeat the interesting but slightly academic discourse about whether Europe has a “strategic”, “constructive”, “comprehensive” or even a “strategic, comprehensive and stable” relationship with China. Song, writing about the opportunities presented by recent changed circumstances, emphasises that the EU is no longer a global political power and resolves that its ‘expectations will have to be reduced’ (p33) lest it be marginalised altogether in China’s growing trade relations with East Asia. There is a palpable sense of “keep your heads down and maybe it’ll go away”. Not the most inspiring international relations agenda.

Pan goes so far to argue that even constructive engagement can be dangerous. This somewhat counter-intuitive position stems from the notion that Europe’s normative position has been justified on its “moral authority in an otherwise flawed world” (p43). It is, Pan says, based on the “false premise that the Chinese Other ought to and can be transformed into the European Self”.(p45) Whether one agrees or not, this is a relativistic posture that tends to undermine some significant value judgements cultivated throughout European history. No longer can the authors (nor European leaders, it seems) defend human rights, democracy and freedom in their own terms and they resolve that these are not necessarily things to ram down the throats of our Chinese partners. We should be more “modest” and “contingent” and engage in “cosmopolitan engagement”. This kind of pragmatic real-politik, in the

absence of robust critical engagement, poses a potential threat to the Western Enlightenment tradition.

In its place we have the “soft” universalism of Environmentalism, which is posited as the new vision for interdependency between the two blocs. In a political climate where ideological battles seem not to exist, concern about the environment is an easy option. Arguing for leadership through trade, investment, growth and development are gone, it is argued; the new way forward is a moral leadership that comes from environmental righteousness and the recognition that Sino-European relations are becoming increasingly dominated by “human rights and religious freedom, energy and environmental protection”.

The suggestion that these “values” are tangential to, or separate from, “trade” is a point of some contention. Environmentalism and energy politics may not be rooted in trade, *per se*, but their influence on what economist Daniel Ben-Ami has called “growth scepticism”, means that these ideas are having a significant restraining effect on economic development. Indeed, the environmental New Economic Foundation demands “sustainability adjustment programmes”, unashamedly harking back to the IMF’s reviled Structural Adjustment Programmes.

But beyond that, the message is simple: old school international relations are too polarised and challenging, whereas everyone loves sustainability. This gives Europe some moral might that will allow it to punch above its weight. Even though there are some very interesting chapters here, unfortunately, the authors fail to address whether this positioning is an evasion, rather than a resolution, of global forces.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**M.A. Aldrich** is an international commercial lawyer currently working in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. He has resided in the Far East for nearly 25 years and writes on a wide array of Asian historical and legal topics. His book *The Search for a Vanishing Beijing* was published by Hong Kong University Press in 2006.

**Tamara Bentley** is Associate Professor, Colorado College. She teaches in the areas of the arts of China and Japan.

**Michelle Blumenthal** was an art consultant, Honorary Events Director, Royal Asiatic Society China, and a member of the advisory committee of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China*.

**Tim Chamberlain** is currently researching the presence of Western travellers in the borderland regions of Western China and Eastern Tibet during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He is also project coordinator for international touring exhibitions at the British Museum.

**Sam Chambers** started out as a freelance journalist in Hong Kong, before becoming the East Asia Editor for the world's oldest daily newspaper, *Lloyd's List*. He has written for leading newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*. He established AsiaScribbler Co., a research outfit focusing on travel and transport in East Asia.

**André Eichman** is a fine art documentary photographer whose work has appeared in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, the *Royal Geographical Magazine*, *Vogue* and *W Magazine*.

**Paul French** is the author of *Midnight in Peking* (Penguin), a work of literary non-fiction investigating the real life murder of a 19-year-old English girl in 1937 Beijing. The book has been a *New York Times* Bestseller, a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week, and is currently being adapted into an international mini-series.

**Paul Gladston** is Associate Professor of Critical Theory and Visual Culture and Director of the Centre for Contemporary East-Asian Cultural Studies at the University of Nottingham. Between 2005 and 2010, he served as inaugural head of the Department of International Communications and Director of the Institute of Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Nottingham Ningbo, China.

**Jeremy Goldkorn** has lived in Beijing since 1995. He is the founder of Danwei.com and a co-editor of *The China Story Yearbook 2012: Red*

*Rising Red Eclipse.*

**Ian Gow** is Emeritus Professor of East Asian Studies and Executive President of The Sino-British University College, Shanghai

**Paul Hansen** is a poet, landscape painter and translator of classical Chinese poetry. His recent published works include *Slanting light along the riverbank, a stretch of trees: Selected Lyrics of Xin Qiji* (The Clarel Press, Anacortes and Suzhou, 2010), and a further selection of Xin's lyrics from The Clarel Press, *Jeweled Hairpin Split, Seven Lyrics of Love and Sorrow, The Clarel Press, 2011.*

**Peter Hibbard** is a Shanghai based writer and travel professional. He was President of the Royal Asiatic Society China from 2007-11.

**Tess Johnston** is uniquely qualified to research and write on the Western presence in old China. She first came to Shanghai in 1981 to work at the American Consulate General and in 1996, after over thirty years in the diplomatic service, she retired and stayed on to research, write, and lecture. She and her co-author, Shanghai photographer Deke Erh (Erh Dongqiang), have published 25 books, including fifteen volumes on Western architecture and the expatriate experience in old China.

**Gary Jones** is a British journalist based in Hong Kong. His work has appeared in numerous quality publications worldwide, including *Time Magazine*, the *Times* and *Sunday Times*, the *Independent*, the *Telegraph* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

**Sarah Keenlyside** is the founder of boutique travel and events company Bespoke Beijing. Formerly a *Sunday Times* news journalist and editor at *Time Out Beijing* magazine, she has lived in Beijing since 2005. She now resides in a courtyard behind the city's ancient Bell Tower with her partner Tom and their two dogs, Barney and Max.

**Karen S. Kingsbury** is Professor of International Studies at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**Katya Knyazeva** is a journalist and fine artist born in Siberia. She has lived in South Korea and the United States and currently resides in Shanghai. Ms. Knyazeva has produced illustrated books, animations and a graphic novel; her work has been published throughout East Asia and Europe.

**Sophie Leacacos**, a Swiss-American living in Shanghai, has taught American literature and British history at Shanghai Normal University.

**Liu Wei** is Associate Professor at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, and Adjunct Professor at the University of Torino (Italy) and Long Island University (US). He helped re-establish the Royal Asiatic Society China

serving as Vice-President.

**Jo Lusby** is the Managing Director of Penguin North Asia. From her base in Beijing she oversees English, Chinese, and Korean book publishing and selling. She is responsible for Penguin's relationship with authors including Nobel laureate Mo Yan, Bi Feiyu, Paul French, Sheng Keyi, and John Garnaut. Originally from the UK, Jo has lived in Asia for the past seventeen years.

**Neale McGoldrick** has been a history teacher for forty-four years and has spent the last eight years living and teaching in Shanghai. Among her other publications is a book on Woman Suffrage in the United States and numerous articles on education and graphic design.

**Frank Mulligan** is Visiting Professor at the China Europe International Business School (CIEBS) Shanghai.

**Eric Politzer** studied history at the University of Minnesota and Nankai University in Tianjin. He spent several months in Shanghai in 1989, but his interest in Shanghai local history began during a sojourn in Japan, when he discovered four large boxes containing perhaps 10,000 pre-War Chinese postcards, in a bookstore in Tokyo's Jimbocho district. The variety and richness of life in Shanghai which the postcards hinted at, and the lack of any explicatory or reference works about them, stimulated his interest. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

**Derek Sandhaus** is the author of *Tales of Old Peking*, *Tales of Old Hong Kong* and the editor of Sir Edmund Backhouse's *Décadence Mandchoue*. He lives in Chengdu, Sichuan Province.

**Bill Savadove** has worked as a journalist in Asia for nearly two decades. He is currently Shanghai Bureau Chief for the news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP).

**Lindsay Shen** is Associate Professor at Sino-British College, Shanghai, and Honorary Editor for the Royal Asiatic Society China.

**William F. Smith** is a new media and cultural studies critical thinker who holds a PhD in media and communication from The European Graduate School in Switzerland. He has lived in Asia over the last ten years, including over four years in China.

**Alex Sparks** is an English language teacher who spent seven years living and working in the provinces of Jiangsu, Shanghai and Jilin, China. During his time in China, Alex privately studied modern Chinese history with specific emphasis on the city of Shanghai. Alex Sparks now lives and works in Kazakhstan, central Asia.

**Ronald Suleski** is Professor of History and Director of the Rosenberg

Institute for East Asian Studies at Suffolk University in Boston. He received his PhD from the University of Michigan. He lived in Japan for many years and then served as Assistant Director of the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard, before joining Suffolk in 2009.

**Sue Anne Tay** is a Shanghai-based photographer and author of ShanghaiStreetStories.com, which documents Shanghai's urban transformation, the heritage architecture and community lifestyle of Shanghai's disappearing old neighborhoods.

**Jeffrey Wasserstrom** is Professor of Chinese History at the University of California, Irvine, and the author of books such as *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010* (Routledge, 2009) and *China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

**Anne Witchard** is a lecturer in the Department of English, Linguistics and Cultural Studies, University of Westminster. She is the author of *Lao She in London* (HKUP, 2012), *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie: Limehouse Nights and the Queer Spell of Chinatown* (Ashgate Publishing, 2009) and co-editor with Lawrence Phillips of *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination* (Continuum, 2010).

**Austin Williams** is director of the Future Cities Project, lecturer in Architecture at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in Suzhou, China. He co-edited 'The Future of Community' and 'The Lure of the City: From Slums to Suburbs' (2011).

**Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong** is Professor, College of Staten Island, City University of New York.

**Frances Wood** is Curator of the Chinese collections, the British Library and has published books on various aspects of Chinese history from the First Emperor to the Cultural Revolution.



**EARNSHAW**  
**BOOKS**



ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY CHINA

ISBN 978-988-8422-44-9



9 789888 422449