



Journal
OF THE
Royal Asiatic
Society
China

VOL 79

2019

No 1

Price 100 RMB

SUPPLIED *gratis* TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY
AVAILABLE FOR SALE TO NON-MEMBERS

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

Journal OF THE Royal Asiatic Society China

Vol. 79 No. 1, 2019

EDITOR
Tracey Willard

Copyright 2019 RAS China



CONTRIBUTIONS

The editor of the Journal invites submission of original unpublished scholarly articles and book reviews on the religion and philosophy, art and architecture, archaeology, anthropology and environment, of China.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 will receive a copy of the Journal.

LIBRARY POLICY

Copies and back issues of the Journal are available at the Royal Asiatic Society library. The library is available to members.

www.royalasiaticsociety.org.cn



Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China
Vol. 79 No. 1, 2019

978-988-8552-71-9

EB 136

© 2019 Royal Asiatic Society China

The copyright of each article rests with the author.

Front Cover Image: Street Art in Georgetown, Malaysia, by Elizabeth Vines
(copyright - photograph by author)

Designed and produced for RAS China by Earnshaw Books Ltd.
17/E, Siu Ying Commercial Building, 151-155 Queen's 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.*

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the RAS or its members. The designations employed in this publication and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of RAS China.

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Tracey Willard

RAS CHINA COUNCIL AND REPORT 2018-2019

RAS BEIJING COUNCIL AND REPORT 2018-2019

SECTION 1: 'MODERNISM WAS A HETEROGENEOUS EVENT'

Huang Zunxian, Qing China's Pioneer Modernist Poet

By Anne Witchard

An Influence from the Souls of these Stone Saints: Early American
and Japanese Discovery of an Ancient Site in North China

By Dong Wang

Unexplored Archival Information on Fu Sinian's Student Life in
Europe and the Propagation of Scientific History in China

By Di Lu

'We protest against this fearful Terror ...' - The China League for
Civil Rights and its interactions with Germany in 1933

By Silvia Kettelhut

A Wildly Improbable Bookstore

By John D Van Fleet

**SECTION 2: ‘DESPITE THE UNCERTAINTIES
OF SUCH A POSTING’**

Footsteps in the Far East: William Burgess Pryer (1843 -1899) Part One
By Judith Ann Pereira

Footsteps in the Far East: William Burgess Pryer (1843 -1899) Part Two
By Judith Ann Pereira

The China Poetry of Margaret Mackprang Mackay, 1934 -1938
By Paul French

‘One of the most popular figures of old China days’: The story of
‘Bill’ Arthur Jack William Evans
By Simon Drakeford

A Glimpse into the Art Scene in Beijing in the Mid-Nineteen Eighties
Observations of an art-lover during the years 1984-86 and a little bit
beyond...
By Christoph Waldersee

SECTION 3: ‘EXPLORING OLD NEIGHBOURHOODS

On Yangshupu Road
By Duncan Hewitt

The Conservation Challenge: The Importance of Sustainability and
Good Design in Asian Heritage Cities and Towns
By Elizabeth Vines

SECTION 4: ‘THE ENTIRE THING SMELLS FISHY’

Miss Shanghai: The Years of Infamy
By Katya Knyazeva

Who Was “Bok”?
By Paul French

YOUNG SCHOLAR'S ESSAY

A Study of China's Vernacular Dwellings

By Inez Low

BOOK REVIEWS

An Introduction to the RAS China Book Clubs

By Convenors Dagmar Borchard and Peter Hagan

Imperial Twilight - The Opium War and The End of China's Last
Golden Age

by Stephen Platt

Reviewed by Peter Hagan

Remembering Shanghai - A memoir of socialites, scholars and
scoundrels

By Isabel Sun Chao and Claire Chao

Reviewed by Duncan Hewitt

AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley and the New World Order

By Kai-Fu Lee

Reviewed by Jim McGregor

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I'M VERY PLEASED to introduce a wonderful selection of essays and articles to you in this, the 2019 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China (JRAS China). Our contributing authors include academics from China, Europe, and Great Britain, researchers of family archives, and some old friends from the early days of the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) China. The journal is arranged in four parts, grouping articles of similar themes, followed by the Young Scholar's Essay, and Book Reviews. The section titles come from quotations from the articles within this edition.

This year's journal is concerned with what is sometimes called China's modern period, that is, the last 200 years, with a focus on China's interaction with the outside world. It is an appropriate perspective as this year marks the centenary of the May 4th Incident, when hundreds of students took to the streets to protest the unfair concessions made at the Versailles Peace Conference concerning China's territory. This led to months of protests throughout the country and to many arrests, as the new Republic of China struggled to find its place as a nation in the 20th century world order. The New Culture Movement, which emerged at this time, brought a flowering of new ideas to China, including an appreciation of vernacular literature, and modern Western scientific thought. Intellectuals and reformers such as Lu Xun, Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shih, Fu Sinian and Liang Qichao were to play important roles in modernising China.

It is therefore fitting that we begin with several articles examining aspects of modernism in relation to China. None of them deal directly with the May 4th Incident, and are perhaps all the more intriguing because of this. Dr Anne Witchard's beautiful essay discusses the life and work of Huang Zunxian, a Qing diplomat, reformer and poet. He became an important mentor to the reformers of the Hundred Days campaign, an involvement that almost led to his death. Other articles in this section explore the lives of Chinese intellectuals in China and abroad as they shaped their new ideas, formed international relationships, and stood up for what they believed in. At the same time, intellectuals from other countries were changing the way they saw China, attempting to fit their impressions of China into a worldwide narrative. The sensitive reader will notice several themes and leitmotifs running through these essays: the *Academia Sinica*,

woodblocks, Japan, the palette of the painter Whistler, and cultural transfer in language, to name a few.

As Chinese intellectuals were going out into the world to find new inspiration, foreigners were coming into China to explore and develop new careers. In the second section, we meet several of these, whose lives and interactions with China span more than a century, from the 1860s to the 1980s. Like many of us today, the protagonists in these essays came to China for work, study and marriage. They include an early curator and contributor to the RAS museum, a poet who lived and travelled in north China, a very sporting businessman and a student who became enraptured with the work of contemporary artists in Beijing. Their disparate experiences of China and the region provide eyewitness accounts of China's journey towards the modern nation state we see now.

The story of modernity is not only to be found in the journals and notebooks of residents and visitors, but also in the landscape, or more precisely, the cityscapes. The next section takes the reader into the streets: Duncan Hewitt's thoughtful journey through the district of Yangshupu may make you want to get onto the subway and go find these places yourself, if you are lucky enough to have some free time in Shanghai. Taking a larger view, a fascinating photo essay describes the importance of preserving historical architecture in Asian cities and provides eye-catching examples.

Our final section provides some unusual perspectives on the period. Katya Knyazeva's essay about the Miss Shanghai competitions of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, describes the scandals, love intrigues, and controversies occurring over the course of the contests, but the author is careful to highlight the poignant afterlife of some of these beauty queens. I asked Paul French if he might give us a book review for this year's journal, and received 'Who was Bok?' This quirky review features pirate queens and bloodcurdling accounts of life on the high seas, and being from Paul French, a mystery! Mr French examines the evidence to solve the mystery of the unknown 'Bok' and asks us to decide if his sleuthing is correct.

The journal is intended to provide both a platform for serious scholarly research, and an outlet for lighter contributions which our readership would find interesting as reading material. We welcome contributions for future issues of JRAS China, and would be pleased to work with you to bring your stories to life. This edition would

not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the editorial committee, Dr Kate Munro, Cordelia Crockett, John Van Fleet and Jack Rennie, and, as always, the patient guidance of our publisher, Graham Earnshaw. I hope you will enjoy these essays and articles as much as we did. If you have any feedback, including suggestions, requests, comments, or have a different answer to Paul French's riddle, please feel free to contact me at editor@royalasiaticsociety.org.cn.

Tracey Willard

A Note about the cover:

One of the great benefits of being a member of the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) China is being able to use the RAS library, which occupies a beautiful room in the former Jardine Mathieson building on the Bund. Apart from having a large and carefully curated collection of books, maps and documents covering many aspects of interest to the scholar of Asian studies, the library holds one of only four (almost) complete sets of the RAS China Journal in Asia (see Peter Hibbard's introduction to the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China in Shanghai* Vol.75, No 1, 2013). The journals were issued from 1858 to 1948, then stopped for about 60 years, starting up again in 2010.

Our old journals are mostly cloth-bound in green. On the first inner page is what would have been the original cover, when the paperback journal was distributed among Shanghai's English speaking community. Of these paper covers, several variations can be seen through the years: at times they are quite formal and bland, at others fantastically Oriental. The dragon coiling around the corner, first appeared in the 1880s—the earliest one I could find was 1886. This dragon appears intermittently until 1909, but by 1912, a new front page had been settled on, and remained the consistent cover design for several decades. The motif reappeared when the next iteration of the journal began in 2010.

This year, we are featuring an image from one of our contributing authors (Elizabeth Vines) on the outer cover. We have recreated the inner page to resemble the original dragon cover, including a note that the journal was supplied '*gratis*' to members, and was available for purchase by non-members. In 1886 the journal cost \$2.00 (Mexican dollars?); in 2019, the price is 100 RMB.

When I've held those old journals in my hands, carefully turning

the pages, I've wondered if \$2.00 was a lot for a journal at that time, or a little. I hope that in 150 years' time, a visitor to the RAS library (surely it will have a very large collection by then!) will turn the pages of this edition, as you are doing now, and wonder: back in 2019, was 100 RMB a lot, or a little?

Tracey Willard, Editor

RAS CHINA COUNCIL 2018-2019

Hon President

John Edwards – British Consul General Shanghai

Hon Vice Presidents For Life

Carma Elliot CMG, OBE

Peter Hibbard MBE

Liu Wei

Tess Johnston

Vice President

Julie Chun (also Art Focus Convenor)

Secretary (also Interim Treasurer)

John D Van Fleet

Membership Director

Parul Rewal

Programme Director

John Villar

Programme Coordinator

Rachel Rapaport

Journal Editor

Tracey Willard

Librarian

Sven Serrano

Council Members

Convenor	Peter Hagan (Non-fiction Book Club)
Convenor	Dagmar Borchard (Fiction Book Club)
Convenor	Furkan Erdogan/Dong Wang/Gabor Holch (History Club)
Convenor	Nianci Li/Katherine Song (Film Club)
Convenor	Robert Martin (Stories of Things)
House of Roosevelt Liaison	Ted Willard
IT Support And Website Manager	Johan Uusitalo

Ex-officio

Alan Babington-Smith (President, Beijing RAS)

RAS CHINA REPORT FOR 2017-2019

RETURNING TO THE traditions of the previous years, the journal is including reports from council members of RAS China, which is based in Shanghai. As a RAS report has not been included in recent journals, the following report covers the last three years. We are also very pleased this year to include a report from our “Northern Cousins”, Beijing RAS.

In Shanghai, our honorary president is the British Consul General for Shanghai, and our highest executive officer is Vice President.

Vice President’s Report

I have been honoured to serve as Vice President for the Royal Asiatic Society China, and enjoyed the support, energy and enthusiasm of our wonderful council members. I am stepping down from the position of Vice President this year but will continue in my other RAS roles, as Convenor for Art Focus and Library Volunteer. Our beautiful library offers a quiet place for study and reading on the third floor of the House of Roosevelt building on the Bund and is staffed by a team of volunteers.

The RAS Focus Groups, which have always been a main attraction for like-minded members, have experienced cycles of increase as well as decline over the years, especially when convenors have had to repatriate or leave their roles due to professional or personal reasons. There is a strong correlation between the type and quantity of our content, as each of the focus groups tend to create a core of followers,

resulting in sub communities with discussion groups on WeChat.

The popularity of the Book Club has led to two daughter clubs, fiction and nonfiction, to offer a greater diversity of books. The History Focus Group has taken various forms over the years, from the projection of university level history lectures in pre-recorded format with following discussions, to a series of themed member-led study sessions. Art Focus holds monthly events at art museums, galleries or in the RAS Library, where members and non-members enjoy guided visits, lectures and discussions. The Film Focus Group has offered documentary series and classic Chinese films. The RAS library holds an extensive collection of DVDs, which convenors supplement with material from education institutions and other sources. A new and very popular Focus group this year has been “Stories of Things”, offered by the convenor in his elegant *lilong* home, where RAS members gather to discuss the provenance and function of objects presented by members and invited guests. By examining two or three objects and discussing the history of each, members gain a personal and evocative entry point for exploration of history and culture.

Our General Program of Events has always been our largest draw for non-members, providing a platform for guest speakers and panels from abroad or from within China. These diverse and abundant activities provide the intellectual stimulus for the expatriate community in Shanghai as well as to visitors and friends. In some cases, RAS co-convenes with other organisations, such as the British Council and Crossroads (a Shanghai based organisation which invites speakers to give lectures on current affairs). The dedication and commitment of our volunteers is the engine that enables us to keep pace with this thriving city. After serving as three years as the Society’s Vice President, I am pleased at the remarkable achievements we have collectively made. I have no doubt the Royal Asiatic Society will continue into 2020 with renewed vigour and purpose.

Julie Chun, Vice-President 2017-2019, Co-Vice President 2016-2017

Membership Director’s Report. Our membership has risen steadily in the past few years, thanks to an increase in the Society’s Focus Groups and general events. The launch of our new library space on the Bund in September 2017, also contributed to the increase.

Membership Numbers 2017 – 2019

December 2017: 134

December 2018: 203

December 2019: 200

In 2017/18, we re-introduced the category of Fellow (FRAS), which is a complimentary lifetime membership to be awarded to individuals who had been a member of the RAS China for 10 years and had made some form of exemplary contribution to the RAS and the expatriate community. Our esteemed member, Betty Barr, was the first person to have this conferred upon her in July 2018. In 2018/2019, we introduced a new category of membership: Young Professional, which is intended to encourage recent arrivals in Shanghai who are still becoming established in their careers.

Currently our membership base is hovering around 200 members, in the following categories:

Honorary/Fellows (8), Individuals (90), Joint/Family (62), Students (17), Young Professional/Overseas Members/Pensioners (24).

With the advent of our electronic membership management system on Eventbank in 2018, we eliminated our plastic membership card system in favour of digital membership cards and have moved towards online application and renewal processes.

Parul Rewal, *Membership Director 2017-2019*

Secretary's Report. In 2017 and 2018, RAS China undertook some costly projects, including relocating the library, switching to a web based event management platform, expanding public outreach and engaging the services of a paid administrator. In 2019 our cost-cutting initiatives, combined with stable event frequency and pricing, have brought us to a firmer financial situation. We will continue to operate within our means going into 2020, and expect to remain in a stable position. In addition to our operating expenses, a reserve is held to cover the cost of moving the library, should this become necessary in future.

Over the past year, we have revised our Constitution, which was ratified by the Annual General Meeting at the end of 2018. The revised Constitution clarifies the voting positions on the RAS Council, who may stand for those seats and in what manner. Our website and

communication platforms have been upgraded, allowing online event registration, payment and membership interactions to be completed using local online payment systems such as WeChat and Alipay. Since May 2018, our paid Administration Manager has provided assistance with venue management and event check in, bookkeeping and transactions management.

John D Van Fleet, Secretary 2017-2019

Events (2016 - 2019)

2016

- Book Club (Dagmar Borchard, Marcia Johnson)	8	21.6%
- History Club (departure of Linda Ferguson)	0	0%
- Art Focus (Julie Chun)	8	21.6%
- Film Club (Sandra Strand, Linda Johnson)	2	5.4%
- General Program (Susie Gordon, John Villar)	14	37.8%
- Joint lectures with Crossroads (hosted by Frank Tsai)	2	5.4%
- Special Events (Executive Committee)	3	8.2%
TOTAL	37	100%

2017

- Book Club (Dagmar Borchard, Connor Bralla)	15	27.2%
- History Club (Furkan Erdogan)	8	14.5%
- Art Focus (Julie Chun)	9	16.4%
- General Program (Marcia Johnson, John Villar)	10	18.2%
- Joint lectures with Crossroads	9	16.4%
- Special Events (Executive Committee)	4	7.3%
TOTAL	55	100%

2018

- Book Club (Dagmar Borchard, Connor Bralla)	14	22.2%
- History Club (Furkan Erdogan)	6	9.5%
- Art Focus (Julie Chun)	11	17.5%
- Film Club (Nianci Li)	8	12.7
- Story of Things (Robert Martin)	2	3.2%
- Library Events (Carolyn Robertson)	4	6.3%
- General Program (John Villar, Rachel Rapaport)	13	20.6%
- Joint lectures with Crossroads	3	4.8%
- Special Events (by Executive Committee)	2	3.2%
TOTAL	63	100%

2019

- Book Club (Dagmar Borchard, Peter Hagan)	14	22.2%
- History Club (Furkan Erdogan, Dong Wang, Gabor Holch)	6	9.6%
- Art Focus (Julie Chun)	11	17.5%
- Film Club (Nianci Li, Katherine Song)	7	11.1
- Story of Things (Robert Martin)	6	9.5%
- General Program (John Villar, Rachel Rapaport)	11	17.5
- Joint lectures with Crossroads	4	6.3%
- Special Events (the Executive Committee)	4	6.3%
TOTAL	63	100%

INTRODUCTION TO THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY BEIJING

THE RASBJ was founded in 2013 as a chapter of the Royal Asiatic Society China. In December 2018 it became a fully independent branch of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. The RASBJ organises events such as talks, walks, panel discussions and out-of-town excursions with historical commentary. Our goal is to bring China and the rest of the world closer together. We explore and explain Chinese history, art, architecture and culture, both ancient and contemporary.

For the year starting November 2018, RASBJ organised 20 such events. These included an overnight trip to the Western Qing tombs; special tours of exhibitions at UCCA and the Tsinghua Arts Museum with expert commentary; a “Haunted Beijing” walk on the night of the Hungry Ghost Festival; two Historical Quiz nights; and a dynamic debate on the merits of the Ming versus Qing dynasties. In addition, academic experts gave presentations on a wide range of topics, from Central European refugee communities in Republican China to Beijing’s energy strategy.

For the coming year, RASBJ is unveiling a fresh list of planned events, specialising in thoughtfully curated events with an edge of adventure. RASBJ membership remains steady at close to 100, with new members replacing the roughly one-quarter who leave China each year. Finances are sound, and events overall provide a modest surplus.

OFFICERS

In 2013, the founding Core Group was headed by Alan Babington-Smith and included Abi Howell, Matthew Hu Xinyu, Philippa Kelly, Li Xiaoqin, Melinda Liu, Fergus Naughton, Charles Parton, Kevin Saric, Neil Schmid, Helen Sunderland and Deedy Zhao.

The current Advisory Group includes Peter Batey OBE, Paul Haenle, Victor Lang and Jeorg Wuttke.

The following have been nominated for confirmation as Council Members at the Dec. 3, 2019 RASBJ Annual General Meeting:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) President | Alan Babington-Smith |
| (2) Vice-President | Melinda Liu (also Website Manager) |
| (3) Event Director | Peter Hogg |
| (4) Treasurer | John Olbrich |
| (5) Membership Officer | John Olbrich |
| (6) Communication Officer | Deedy Zhao |
| (7) Council Member-At-Large | James Nobles |
| (8) Council Member-At-Large | Lucas Gajdos |
| (9) Council Member-At-Large | Ben Miller |
| (10) Council Member-At-Large | Susie Hunt |
| (11) Council Member-At-Large | Katrin Buchholz |
| (12) Council Member-At-Large | Tario Perez |

**Section 1:
'Modernism was a
heterogeneous event'**

HUANG ZUNXIAN, QING CHINA'S PIONEER MODERNIST POET

BY ANNE WITCHARD

ABSTRACT:

The nascent literary innovations of China's own fin de siècle (shi ji mo) and the abortive Hundred Days Reform of 1898 were part of a Chinese contribution to modernist shifts, which not only predate those of the May Fourth period but were subsequently repressed by the cultural renovation campaigns of May Fourth activists, who saw modernity as achievable only in terms of the West. Huang Zunxian, diplomat and classical poet, can also be seen as China's first modernist poet, whose poems incorporate observations of foreign societies he encountered during his years in consular service.

'I will strive to put the individual back into poetry and cause poetry to refer to things of the real world.' (letter from Huang Zunxian to Liang Qichao, 1902)

INTRODUCTION

While competing definitions of modernism persist, contemporary considerations of the global cultural output that occurred under its rubric concur that modernism was a heterogeneous event. In the case of China, economic domination by multiple foreign powers (significant amongst them Japan) led to the aggressive territorial and cultural expansionism within her borders, that in the late 1890s would shock China's intelligentsia into what Lin Yusheng describes as a 'crisis of Chinese consciousness' (Lin, 159). In seeking to achieve "modernity", i.e., the transition from a disintegrating old society to a revolutionary new society, the May Fourth Movement (1919) would wholeheartedly embrace Western cultural and literary capital, effectively erasing modernist developments that had gone before.

Huang Zunxian (Huang Tsun-hsien, 1848–1905) has the distinction of being Qing China's last great classical poet, but he is less well known as China's first modernist poet. A diplomat and strongly driven reformist, over the course of his career Huang served in the consulates of Japan (1877–1882), the United States (1882–1885),

Great Britain (1890–1891), and Singapore (1891–1894). His poetry is rich in allusions to three thousand years of Chinese literature, yet also incorporates quotidian detail about the foreign societies he encountered, and the scientific and technological developments that were transforming the world at such an astonishing rate. Huang's experience of Meiji Tokyo, San Francisco's Chinatown, and *fin-de-siècle* London provided material for poems that treat encounters with Japanese dress reform, American racism, and British royalty. An ascent up the Eiffel Tower in an electric elevator affords an opportunity to muse upon pre-WWI Europe's armaments build-up. Huang's poetry represents the resolute commitment of a classical poet uniquely placed to respond to conditions of contemporary global modernity.

He was the first Chinese to seriously engage with the changes taking place in Japan after its opening to the modern West; his defence of Chinatown "coolies" inform an indignant response to U. S. Exclusion Laws; while his London poems provide us with a fascinating and hitherto unexplored Chinese counterpoint to indigenous artistic responses of Anglo-American modernists, themselves undergoing radical formal experimentation by looking East. In the account that follows I am indebted to the translations of Huang's poetry in J. D. Schmidt's critique of this most erudite of poets, *Within the Human Realm: Huang Zunxian, 1848-1905*. For biographical detail I rely also on Noriko Kamachi's *Reform in China: Huang Tsun-hsien and the Japanese Model*. These are the only comprehensive works on Huang Zunxian's poetry in English to date.

BEGINNINGS OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

From the time of the First Opium War (1839-1842), incursion by foreign powers and their establishment of "spheres of influence" had engendered Chinese humiliation and resentment. The overwhelming defeat of the Qing armies in Korea and China by the newly powerful Meiji Japan in 1894–1895 propelled a small but influential group of China's educated elite to look at China's problems anew. It was in the flux of this extended historical moment, from 1895 to the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, that ideas of Chinese nationalism in relation to a global world order began to be formulated.

An explosion of print media and journalism in China during the 1890s was crucial to this development. In 1896 the diplomat and poet Huang Zunxian launched the *Journal of Current Affairs* (*Shi-wu pao*)

to propagate new ideas, appointing as its editor-in-chief the young Liang Qichao (1873-1929), who would emerge as the most influential of China's reformist intellectuals, instrumental in developing China's own "new journalism". It was from Huang that Liang learned the powerful ideological implications of propounding an informed sense of China's situation in the world, not just by disseminating knowledge *about* other countries but of adopting structures of knowledge *from* other places as well.

In the summer of 1898, a small number of non-bureaucratic elites led by Liang and his teacher, the scholar Kang Youwei (1858–1927), together with a handful of reform minded officials, including Huang, launched a campaign in Peking that would become known, retrospectively, as the Hundred Day Reforms (*wuxu*). Among the Reform Decrees, the celebrated classical essay system used for answering exam questions during Ming and Qing times, which represented the apex of scholarship and the path to office, was abolished. Schools and colleges for the dissemination of modern learning were to be established in all provincial capitals and district cities. A bureau was to be opened at Shanghai for translating Western literary and scientific



Figure 1: *Punch* October 8th 1898 THE ARTFUL DOWAGER Empress-Dowager Xi Taihou (to the 'son of Heaven'); Reform, Indeed! I'll Reform You! Go and stand in the corner till I tell you to come out!

works and textbooks. The movement had the support of the Emperor Guangxu, but after 103 days, the perceived threat to vested Manchu interests from the movement's proposed measures prompted a bloody *coup d'état* instigated by the Empress Dowager Cixi.

The Emperor was placed under house arrest and six of the reformers were executed. Others fled—Kang and Liang to Japan while Huang, who fortunately had been detained by illness in Shanghai, was spared arrest thanks to intervention by the foreign community there, including the intercession of a former Prime Minister of Japan, Ito Hirobumi, who was visiting the city. Huang would live the remainder of his days in enforced retirement, far from the offices of power, the Hundred Days Reform having marked 'the zenith and, at the same time, the nadir of his political career' (Kamachi, 235).

Almost all the reformers of the Hundred Days of 1898 were poets. The connection between poetry and politics was close in Imperial China; Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were each accomplished practitioners of the art. The composing of poetry was regarded as a serious social and intellectual commitment and thus poetry was expected to engage with the reformist project. In 1899, on a boat to Hawaii and with a price on his head, Liang couched his call for a new poetry in terms of colonial and territorial exploration:

If you write poetry, you must be a Columbus or Magellan of the poetic realm. When the fertility of Europe's soils was exhausted and there was a surplus of industrial production, the Europeans had to search for new land in America and on the shores of the Pacific Ocean (Schmidt, 58)

Liang advocated the plunder of European culture and the appropriation of Western intellectual systems to replenish and reinvigorate the exhausted conventions of the Chinese classical tradition. In this respect his endeavour anticipated the method of Pound and the Imagist school in reverse, however the goal as Liang saw it was not for any radical innovation of form, but rather that modern content and new terms be incorporated into "the forms of the ancients" in the same way that Western ideas had recently been incorporated into the Japanese language and culture. Liang singled out his mentor, Huang Zunxian, as exemplary in having resolved the conflict between new expression and traditional style, for proving that

classical Chinese form could serve as a vehicle for modern ideas and experience.

HUANG'S EARLY YEARS

Born into a distinguished Hakka family in Meizhou (*Jiayingzhou*) in Guangdong province, Huang's sense of mission about China's fate was roused when, as a recently married young man, he witnessed the destruction of his ancestral home at the beginning of the Taiping Rebellion (1851–64). The ensuing thirteen years of warfare and famine that bedevilled southern China roused his determination to effect change in the Qing administration. Despite, or perhaps because of his noted intellectual precocity, Huang repeatedly failed the civil service examinations, which shaped his political thinking further. He wrote sharply satirical poetry expressing his disdain for the so-called "eight-legged" essay, the antiquarian rote-learning system that produced the inept officials responsible for China's internal calamities, as well as the 'foreign disasters which struck us one after the other' (Schmidt, 152). In an early poem 'Mixed Emotions' (c. 1860s) Huang not only critiques that arcane system but also declares an unprecedented determination to write vernacular poetry that would reflect the realities of the modern world.

When I read the classics in the days of my youth,
I felt something was wrong as soon as the book's cover
 opened.
For the language of antiquity and our modern speech
Are more remote from each other than alien countries
...
I intend to write in my very own language
And refuse to be limited by ancient fashions
Even if I use the current slang of our age
To compose the poems I intend to publish.^a

In 1877 when he was twenty-nine, Huang secured a position with China's first ever diplomatic delegation to Japan. An earlier trip to Hong Kong in 1870 had awakened his interest in foreign cultures. His exposure to the material wonders and sybaritic excesses of the Crown

a For this and other translations of Huang Zunxian's poetry see Schmidt *The Hut Within the Human Realm: The Poetry of Huang Zunxian 1848-1905*.

Colony's wealthy elite prompted 'Reactions to Hong Kong', a reflection on the scientific advances that had enabled Britain's imperial advantage and secured Chinese capitulation

Gas lamps flash like silver flowers on flaming trees;
Fancy embroidery embellishes carpets of Kashmir.
A race of titans carved out the port of Hong Kong,

...

The English here live like Buddhas in Heaven;
Even their Chinese servants take pride in their warlike
masters

People ride hydrogen balloons a thousand feet into the sky;
A hundred horses dash 'round the racetrack, swift as the
wind.

...

The people all follow the customs of foreigners
And even mimic the twittering of Western tongues.

The next lines suggest China's irrelevance as consequent upon her government's pitiable inaction and can be read as challenging a no longer tenable Sinocentric world view:

If you happen to climb a hill to get a good view of the
ocean/Notice how China's vast expanse recedes far into the
distance

When Huang arrived in Japan, the Meiji Restoration was already nine years old, during which time, along with its military overhaul and nationally standardised pedagogy, the country had acquired gas lighting, telegraph and railway systems, all operated by an increasingly Western-style centralised bureaucracy. Japan, a former vassal state and cultural colony of China, was well on its way to taking a place among the major powers of the world. Western manufactured goods had transformed the cultural landscape of its elites, who carried umbrellas and pocket watches, wore spectacles, leather shoes, and boned corsets, ate at restaurants serving European cuisine and wine, and decorated their homes with imported carpets and furniture. In Tokyo, Huang befriended Japanese scholars and studied written Japanese. He noted the unity in Japan of the written and spoken language, which supported

widespread literacy. As well as recent Japanese works of political and economic development, he read translations of political philosophy including John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (trans. 1872), Rousseau's *Social Contract* (trans. 1874) and Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (trans. 1877). While Western democratic thinking gradually enthused him with a potential model for change, he observed that Japan's wholesale adoption of Western legal, fiscal and military institutions did not run to political democracy. He also read the current Meiji best-seller, *Stories of Successful Lives in the West*, the translated title of none other than that staple of Victorian didacticism, Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (trans 1871).

Huang's *Assorted Quatrains on Japan* (*Jih-pen tsa-shi*, 1879) fascinated readers in China, just as they were intended to, with their vignettes of contemporary Japanese life transformed by the adoption of Western influence:

That ancient land has willed itself new birth;
Steers itself toward the mainstream of the earth.
Idle their looms, yet opulent their dress;
East-neighbours look like strangers from the West
(Kamachi, 67)

The aim of the *Quatrains on Japan* was to encourage Chinese emulation of the Meiji regime's more progressive features. As Schmidt observes, enthusiasm is tempered with thoughtful observation, nevertheless "praise generally outweighs criticism" (Schmidt, 108). The reference here to idle looms refers to the decline of local industry under the pressure of foreign imports, while the merits (or otherwise) of adopting Western dress would remain a sticking point with Chinese reformists for decades to come. The *Quatrains* are written in classical form yet introduce a variety of technical innovations. Huang coins neologisms for words of foreign origin, i.e., 'parliamentarian' (*yiyuan*), 'newspaper' (*xinwen*), and otherwise phonetically transliterates, 'tobacco' (*danbagu*), 'Jesus' (*Yesu*), and so on 'for what may be the first time' in classical Chinese poetry (Schmidt, 68). To present foreign concepts or things unknown in the grammar and vocabulary of classical Chinese, he employs ingenious references and allusions to earlier Chinese literature, drawing on monographs of overseas exploration, dynastic histories, and Buddhist scriptures of various origins. And

he makes a decisive break with the stale imagery of classical usage. For example, the cherry blossom, traditionally associated in Buddhist teachings with the transitory nature of human existence is, in Huang's poetry, invested with a contemporary poignancy. For him, the cherry's flowers symbolise traditional Japanese culture threatened by 'the poison fog of opium spread across the oceans' and, by extension, the cultures of all East Asian countries in the face of Western imperialism (Schmidt, 113).

Huang's conviction that 'a peaceful world can only come from democracy' was shortly put to the test when he was posted as Chinese Consul General to San Francisco in 1882. This was the year that Congress enacted the Exclusion Act law prohibiting Chinese immigration.^b After the trade in African slaves became outlawed, plantation owners in Latin America and the Caribbean, and mine owners in South Africa and Australia, had been forced to look elsewhere for labour. A lucrative 'coolie trade' as it became known, operated during the 1840s and 1850s out of the virtual 'slave market of the British-controlled seaports' of China's coast (Hsieh, 41). On America's West Coast, Chinese had been arriving since the California gold rush of the 1840s, when initially their presence was tolerated due to the manpower requirements of railroad and mine construction. However as gold became harder to find, animosity towards the Chinese grew. The situation worsened in the 1870s when an economic depression struck the country, and public anger over cheap Chinese labour erupted in rioting and violence. Anti-coolie clubs sprang up across the state, and lawmakers of all parties passed a succession of resolutions designed to counteract the "oriental menace". The Cubic Air Ordinance of 1870 was one, used by San Francisco police to harass Chinese immigrants. Each lodging house was supposed to provide at least 500 cubic feet of air for every resident. Tenants in overcrowded housing were liable to be fined. Many refused to pay and the jails quickly filled up. According to a story related by Liang Qichao, Huang was summoned to a San Francisco jailhouse where a number of Chinese were being held for residing in unhygienic conditions. Huang pointed out that the conditions in the jail were far more cramped and therefore illegal and the officer had no choice under law but to release the prisoners (Bee, accessed Nov 2019). Huang's time in San

b Under Article 1 all Chinese labourers were banned from entry, and under Article 14 no Chinese was to be allowed citizenship.

Francisco was unpleasant and intensely disillusioning. In later years he would write poems reflecting on the corruption, racism and political strife that had tarnished America's righteous vision of democratic peace and social harmony amongst 'the yellow, white, red, and Negro races' (Schmidt, 246) but whilst he was there, fighting legal battles on behalf of his persecuted countrymen with little support from his own government who wished only to avoid conflict with Western powers, he had no time for poetry. It was to be a different story in London.

'LONDON IS BLACKER THAN LACQUER'

December 1890 was the foggiest month in Victorian London's foggy history. Meteorological records tell us that the borough of Westminster totalled an incredible zero hours of sunshine out of a possible 242 hours and forty-two minutes (Brodie, 1892). Xue Fucheng (Hsieh Fucheng, 1838 – 1894), Qing Envoy Extraordinary to England, France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany, was thankful to escape his duties at the Chinese Embassy in Portland Place for a few weeks in Paris. He recorded in his diary:

London has been enveloped in dense fog for the past two months, and the city is in total darkness, even in the daytime. Tens of thousands of people suffer from coughing spells. I am not accustomed to such a climate and was anxious to leave (Hsieh,59).

Xue was accompanied by a sizeable entourage, which included Huang Zunxian. We can read Huang's account of London's weather that month in the short poem, 'Heavy Fog' (1890). It chimes with his mood.

What do I accomplish with all my toil?
I would sail back east, if I had a ship.
A hundred worries wear me down –
I sit by myself and write words in the air.
The fog is so dense, London is blacker than lacquer;
The cold is so bitter, it dims my fire.
I raise my head to gaze at a wild goose,
Soaring high in the sky, it rides the wind homeward.
Huang had been appointed consular aide to Xue on the highest

recommendation of the Zongli Yamen, Qing China's equivalent of a Foreign Office. After being relieved of his San Francisco posting in 1885, Huang had devoted his time to finishing a comprehensive and meticulously detailed prose work on Meiji Japan, *Treatises on Japan* (1887). He sent copies to the most powerful members of the Self-Strengthening Movement, including the de facto foreign minister, Viceroy Li Hongzhang (1823–1901). The book would provide important ideas for the reform programmes of the 1890s and for the moment secured Huang his posting in London. Xue was himself a progressive thinker and active in the Self-Strengthening Movement, but he was unable to advance his aide much beyond the most routine secretarial tasks. Xue's own duties involved protracted and ultimately fruitless negotiations with the British, over border disputes along China's frontiers involving Burma, British India, and British interests in Afghanistan. Only slightly more successful were his attempts to advance a cause (dear to Huang's heart also), to establish official Chinese representation of overseas Chinese communities in the British colonies. Huang was rewarded at the close of 1891 with the post of Consul General in Singapore, overseeing Kuala Lumpur Penang, and the neighbouring islands of the Malay Peninsula (Hsieh, 56). In the meantime, between glittering receptions at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, and occasional trips across the channel to the capitals of France, Belgium, and Italy, Huang found himself with time on his hands, and this was to have a positive effect on his poetic development. His London sojourn would mark a stylistic breakthrough, during which he would experiment with longer verse forms as a better vehicle for the expanded view of life afforded by his foreign travel and consular service. Into these poems he incorporated specifics of European scientific and technological developments alongside reflective historical narration, the latter, notes Schmidt (130), being an entirely innovative device in Chinese poetry on foreign lands and intended to capture the argument of the poem.

In 'On Climbing the Eiffel Tower', an electric lift makes redundant the classical Chinese poet's trope 'daydream about flying on the wind' (Hsieh, 277).

Tourists stand on tiptoe to get a closer look
Thrilled by this new spectacle revealed to their eyes.
An elevator car suddenly shoots up its cable,

And I leap when I hear the whine of its engine.
I really am flying, without any wings on my back

Yet this paean to the scientific conquest of the sky contains a warning about the destructive potential of modern technology. From his godlike perspective on the pinnacle of the Eiffel Tower, the speaker observes:

A few wisps of mist rise west of the sea,
Where the British Isles glower far in the distance.
I remember the engagements of the Hundred Year's War,
How England rent France and battled for empire
...
The whole continent of Europe is an old battlefield;
The Europeans love war and don't compromise lightly.
Today six great emperors divide the continent between,
Each boasting he's the strongest leader of the world.

The horrors of the Great War were some years off, but Huang's poem acknowledges the disturbing implications of the Darwinian power struggle of the century's close. Xue was recording similar fears in his diary:

In Europe weapons are so varied and efficient that the powerful nations of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia and Austria are vigorously competing with each other to improve or invent more powerful weapons which will conceivably exhaust all their resources.

To my knowledge, such an arms race began thirty years ago, but these nations have been engaging in war for decades. After the arms buildup however, confrontations between the nations have decreased considerably and have seldom developed into war. The reason is obviously fear. They are frightened that once a war starts, there will be enormous sacrifices on all sides. In the end no one will be able to claim total victory. This is a frightening interpretation and I shudder at the thought (Hsieh, 60).

In spite of its contemporary concerns, 'On Climbing the Eiffel

Tower' has a literary pedigree that descends from canonical accounts of Confucius' ascent of Mount Tai, and from ancient records of soaring Buddhist pyramids and pagodas (Schmidt, 124). The classical theme of broadened physical horizons and enlarged spiritual perception is paralleled here by one of modern scientific vision. Gustave Eiffel's Tower, the world's highest manmade structure at the time, had been erected two years previously for the 1889 World's Fair, staged to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution. Built as a demonstration of French technological expertise, the Eiffel Tower was not taken down with the close of the Fair in spite of an "Artists' Petition" from Parisian poets, writers, architects and sculptors, decrying its vulgarity. It was saved by its usefulness to scientific experiment such as aerodynamic measurement, meteorological observation and, in particular, radio transmission. Guy de Maupassant famously made it a habit to eat lunch inside the Eiffel Tower's restaurant in order to avoid having to actually look at it. Indeed most nineteenth-century artists and poets followed the Romantics in proclaiming their revulsion for the industrialised world. While it was not until 1909 that Filippo Marinetti and the Italian Futurists would make a vociferous point of their modernity by lauding the technological triumph of man over nature, in the Chinese tradition the chasm between technological concerns and the arts had never troubled intellectuals (Schmidt, 183). Huang Zunxian was keen to impress upon his readers that modern technology enabled Western men to live like gods and that scientific knowledge could (and should) dispel superstition and ignorance. At the same time Huang was in no doubt as to the link between science unguided by moral principle and human genocide:

Scientists can graft peaches and plums, make the whole
year like spring,
Create giant fruits, fragrant flowers, and entirely new trees.
No wonder, in the newly opened lands of our Western
Hemisphere,
White men are replacing all the old red-skinned natives.

The reasons for the dependency of 'Heavy Fog' are made plain in 'Moved by Events', a depiction of a grand ball at the apogée of London's high society. The subjugation of the East is implicit in the exotic hospitality on offer, and there is a sense of oppression conveyed in

this surfeit of imported produce and display of technological prowess.

They serve their guests a thousand gallons of port
And present everybody intertwined branches of roses.
They sate us with jackfruits a foot in diameter,
Slake our thirst with cups of Hindustan's tea.
They lodge us in multistoried towers of glass
And convey us in curtained carriages with wraparound
windows.
They present robes with sleeves weighed down by gold
thread
And invite us to a ballroom immured in brocade curtains.

In the next stanza, the dazzling throng of lords and Britannia-
esque ladies is likened to the celestial gods and goddesses of Buddhist
scripture and Chinese mythology. The paradisaic allusions critique
China's current degradation.

Red felt carpets hug the floor, lamps blaze on the walls;
At the soiree tonight, they announce new guests without
cease.
The couples enter hand in hand, and the women all curtsy,
Resembling immortals, more numerous than grass blades.
Embroidered gowns trail on the floor over seven feet long;
White feathers cover chignons and stick up like tridents.
Outer robes unfasten and bare women's arms;
Tassels hang down from heads, mounted by jeweled tiaras.
Their slim waists bewitch you like lithe willow branches;
Clusters of dainty shoes resemble bouquets of lotus.
A butler in the courtyard serves frozen sherbets;
An orchestra below the stairs plays to a drum's beat.
All gods, dragons, and mortals attend this banquet,
Riding from the Milky Way on rafts of silver.
Their costumes are in all styles, they speak every language;
They live in joyful harmony and entertain themselves with
flair.

You may very well ask why I alone am depressed –
I turn eastward and face China, sighing over and over!
The ending couplet is unexpected. The contrast between the

splendid soirée and the marked alienation of the poet illustrates China's place in the world order. In London in 1890, moving amongst the highest echelons of society, Huang would come to a honed awareness of the machinations of international diplomacy. At the same time he was considering his place in China's poetic tradition and coming to the conclusion (anticipating Eliot) that while the poet is inserted in tradition, it is poetry as a direct record of the poet's experience that makes it fresh and meaningful. He set out these important ideas in what came to be called his 'London Preface' (1891):

As for the subjects I treat, I make use of modern official documents, compilations of regulations, regional dialects, and vulgar maxims, in addition to objects which did not exist in antiquity and realms previously unexplored, writing down whatever my eyes and ears experience.

Huang's poetic practice entailed a deliberate and dynamic response to the forces of change. Uniquely placed to respond to conditions of contemporary international modernity, he reacted by exploring and expanding the roots of Chinese cultural resources. His highly individual selection of traditional sources, and his idiosyncratic manipulation of these, asserted the primacy of the individual voice. 'I do not fail to write my own poetry' he stated, 'the world of today is different from antiquity' (Schmidt, 52). In his admiration for his native Hakka folk songs, for vernacular fiction like *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, popular dynastic histories, and all kinds of peasant ballads, Huang was markedly prescient:

I know that in the future a literary style which is as suitable to its age and as current as the vulgar tongue will develop. Yes, I want all peasants, workers, merchants, women and children to be able to enjoy the advantages of literacy' (Schmidt, 65).

Not until the admonitions of Hu Shih's *Eight Principles of Literature* (1916) and the May Fourth promotion of his Vernacular Literature Programme would the importance of national literacy gain hold in China.

Huang's London poems provide us with a fascinating counterpoint

to indigenous artistic responses in England at the *fin de siècle*, which themselves were undergoing radical transformation. 'The Great London Fog' is particularly illustrative of this. When Harriet Monroe, expounding upon *Poetry* magazine's promotion of Pound's Imagism, observed that "more than half a century has passed since occidental painting and sculpture began to feel the subtly regenerative influence of oriental art", she was recalling James McNeill Whistler's re-visioning of the smoggy Thames in the series of paintings he titled *Nocturnes* (Monroe, 310). Monroe was convinced that the revival of poetry must also depend upon an Eastward turn and eschew the 'narrow boundaries of race and language' in the way that had enabled visual modernism's dismantling of referential realism (Monroe, 310). Monroe made her first visit to London in the same year as Huang, in that foggy December of 1890, taking a room in the house where expatriate New York writer Henry Harland had lodgings. The ambassadors from China were not alone in their discomfited reaction to the fog. Harland was keen for Monroe to 'remain in London as the only place to work out a literary career' but she 'could not endure the thought of life by candlelight in that sooty, cheerless capital where for three weeks I shivered in cold rooms and never once saw the sun' (Monroe, 103). Harland would indeed establish his literary career when four years later, with Aubrey Beardsley, he founded the *Yellow Book*, so named because it was conceived in 'the densest and soupiest and yellowest of all London's infernalist yellow fogs' (Nelson, 298). Nevertheless London was compensated for Monroe by the 'many interesting people who gathered in groups under the dark canopy of fog' (Monroe, 103–4). Her most interesting introduction was to 'Jimmy' Whistler.

The compositional and technical influence of an Eastern aesthetic on Whistler's Thameside scenes stripped these pictures of any narrative or moral comment and focused instead on their formal qualities. The Decadent poets of the 1890s anticipated Imagism in their response to what Whistler had done. As Hugh Kenner notes: 'On a foggy island, in an ambience prepared by James McNeill Whistler' the men of the Nineties 'defined a new convention for the short poem' (Kenner, 180). The extraordinary atmospheric conditions of the late-Victorian capital were to prove the battleground between the forces of reaction and the avant-garde. If art critics were to be decried for 'treating a picture as if it were a novel, and trying always to find out the plot' then what was the correct response to poetry? Attempting an absence of moral

discourse and following Whistler's contentious artistic synaesthesia, Wilde's 1889 poem 'Symphony in Yellow' rethinks the conventional associations of London's yellow fog with Oriental imagery, jade, yellow silk, and a yellow butterfly (Whistler's trademark).

Thanks to Whistler's dramatic confrontation with the shibboleths of Victorian art, the painter remained a touchstone of artistic innovation during the 1890s and beyond, his ideas becoming increasingly appealing among those sympathetic to artistic experiment. For Anglo-European modernists, China's aesthetic difference gained credence as Western realism's most basic tenets were rejected: when narrative or pictorial representation was no longer considered to be analogous to direct experience, and temporal and spatial order no longer advanced symmetrically or progressively. Whistler's "problem" was one that Ezra Pound set out to address in poetry. The "Chinese" lyrics that he produced to illustrate the tenets of Imagism, 'Liu Ch'e', 'Fan-Piece, for Her Imperial Lord' and 'Ts'ai Chi'h', represent this endeavour: to discover an approach to poetry that would detach all non-essential referents and that, contrary to what Huang attempted in his poetic endeavour, did not rest primarily upon the foundation of an individual subject giving voice to personal experience. Conversely for a Qing dynasty poet, to do just that was to be modern.

China's part in the upheavals of late-Victorian artistic consciousness, when acknowledged at all, has been one directional, the artistic metropolis is a 'vortex drawing strength from the peripheries' as Kenner put it (238). Huang's poem 'The Great London Fog', written during his retirement in 1898 in bitter response to the collapse of the reform movement, affords a challenge to the geopolitical, cultural and racial centrism that constructs this 'travel narrative' of metropolitan modernism. The poem is a singular take on the familiar trope of London's pea-soupers, not just because it is written by a Chinese, but for the irony of its treatment. The capital's abiding characteristic here provides an allegory for *fin-de-siècle* fears regarding the inevitability of British progress and hegemony.

The blue sky has died, a yellow sky reigns;
The ocean staggers, clouds tumble, and dark spirits
assemble.
Heaven is groggy from wine, and God dreams in a stupor;
The country sinks into confusion at the loss of its sun.

All England lies lethargic in a boundless sea of fog –
Benighted and hazy, like the dark kingdom of sweet
dreams.

The first stanza of Huang's poem treats London's meteorological conditions in the language of pre-scientific superstition in which natural phenomena were attributed to divine discordance. Here Huang returns London to the Dark Ages; the Christian God is no different from the pagan Bacchus of old. Just as in the futuristic fantasies of H. G. Wells, M. P. Shiel and other authors who were predicting technological disaster and global warfare, the whole of England is threatened, entombed in a condition that is like the opium fog it afflicted on China. The next two stanzas continue the apocalyptic theme.

I have sat in this cubbyhole for several months now
And worship my walls' lamp like an idol of Buddha.
I really can't tell whether it's morning or evening,
Nor is it possible to distinguish the north from the south.
My lamp burns its ghastly green as it starts to sputter;
Armageddon's black ashes inundate the whole world.

I imagine I'm crossing the endless sands of the Gobi
Or exploring a bottomless cavern too dark to measure.
Grime covers everything (even the dust gets dirty!);
I strain to see the air but the air has become ink.
No one can give a name for these colours and shapes;
Our eyes and noses are plugged up with corks.
We will never discover another Creator
To sunder sky from earth after he is born.
Could this all be a plot of some vicious demons,
Who stirred up the ocean and roiled its waters?
For suddenly we plunge into hell's endless night,
Terrified by an evil wind that blows us to the land of ghouls.

Huang employs a multitude of what Schmidt coins "transfer" allusions, 'the transfer of purely Chinese cultural or historical allusions into poetry that describes foreign cultures' (Schmidt, 99), here referring to ancient Buddhist and Hindu beliefs, to demons and

the underworld, presenting his Chinese readers with an England that is alien, freakish and frightening. The transformative effects of London's fog create a gothic sublime that for Anglophone readers recalls the 'orientalising' effects of the opium dreaming of Samuel Taylor Coleridge or Thomas De Quincey: the endless yellow 'sands of the Gobi' resembling 'the caverns measureless to man' and the exotic displacements of *Kubla Khan* (1797) or *Confessions of an English opium-eater* (1821). In the two final stanzas though, the fantastic scenario is undercut by a prosaic and scientific account that then poses questions about the balance of world power.

When I go out of doors, I can barely walk an inch;
All over the boulevards I hear clanging bells.
Horses and carriages vanish like hens in their coops;
In this mirage city of towers, the air just stinks.
A tiny run appears in the fine mesh of Heaven's net,
Revealing the crimson orb of a bloodshot sun.
It is certainly too dim to irritate anyone's eyes,
Too pale and cold to even warm up my hands.

I've heard our globe circles the sun and turns once daily;
Now the British Commonwealth extends over the world's
continents.
It's an empire on which the sun never sets;
Its radiant glory covers every place under the heavens.
But who could imagine you can't see the sun in its capital
And everyone is afraid the sky will fall on his head?
Scientists say the earth's moisture evaporates and
condenses to form rain,
Clever mathematicians can calculate how many raindrops
there are.
The English have always made their home by the water's
side
(Not to mention all the vapor from their ten million
chimneys).
So if somehow you could total the world's fog inch by inch,
I bet it wouldn't come close to the fog in London Town!

Schmidt lists the neologisms in the final stanza, *diqui* (globe),

Yingshu (British Commonwealth), and *diqi* (vapour), but notes that their strangeness is diminished by the ‘large number of almost equally unusual Buddhist terms’ in the first part of the poem. These too are ‘ultimately of foreign (Sanskrit) origin and were used sparingly by most major poets’, but they serve as ‘a bridge to the more “alien” Western borrowings of the poem’s concluding section’ (Schmidt, 72). Without this, he notes, ‘the poem would be considerably less effective’ for Chinese readers, ‘for a good deal of its wit revolves around the contrast between its Sanskrit-based mythological opening and the tongue-in-cheek “scientific” conclusion, expressed through the medium of Western neologisms’ (Schmidt, 72–73). Readers in the West are familiar with the tale of Chicken Little, who spread the word that the sky was falling after an acorn fell on her head. They are less likely to be aware that the story derives from the fable of Daddabha, from the fourth century Buddhist book known as the Jataka, that warns of the perils of hysteria in the face of impending catastrophe. Ultimately Huang’s poem delivers a message that British belligerence in China belies *fin-de-siècle* anxieties at home. In London, indigenous poets were turning to similar metaphorical associations.

In W. E. Henley’s ‘Scherzando’ of 1892 the roar of London’s ‘ancient Strand’ at the ‘golden end’ of an autumnal afternoon ‘sounds suffused/ Seems as it were bemused / And blurred, and like the speech / Of lazy seas on a lotus-haunted beach’. A decade later the poet’s pleasure in the capital’s ambient ‘enchanted lustrousness, This mellow magic’ has given way to a concern for English imperial complacency, a ‘full-stomached faith in kindness / All over the world’. In the epilogue of his elegy for the Queen, ‘In Memoriam Reginae Dilectissimae Victoriae’ (1901) Henley describes the nation as being ‘in a golden fog’ hanging at the paps/ Of well-being’, passively mellowing, dozing, rotting down / Into a rich deliquium of decay’. It is an image of slumbering stagnation exactly like that levelled at Qing China, although it is difficult to see how Henley could have considered British imperial aggression in abeyance given the picture stories running in the Illustrated London News and the Graphic covering the retribution meted out after the Boxer Uprising that year. The aftermath of a bigger war would provoke other combinations of yellow fog, lotus lands, Eastern belief systems, primordial myth and inertia in T. S. Eliot’s ‘Prufrock’ (1917) and in ‘The Waste Land’ (1922).

Buddhism for Huang serves often as a symbol for the traditional

culture of the East under assault from Western Christianity. Chinese intellectuals tended to find Christianity both intolerable and ridiculous. The close links between Christian missions and Western aggression fuelled their antipathy. Xue Fucheng was constantly preoccupied with problems arising from incidents concerning missionaries, which the foreign powers, particularly France and Germany, used as excuses for further demands and indemnities (Hsieh, 81). In his poem 'Reclining Buddha of Ceylon' Huang writes:

Lately the followers of Jesus Christ
Have been busy spreading the Old and New Testaments.
They ship stacks of Bibles through their merchant marine
And back up their holy gospel with artillery barrages.

Both Huang and Xue discovered that Christianity was not so universally admired in the West as the Western missionaries would have had the Chinese believe. Xue reported conversations with "Western scholars" who 'hinted broadly that once the natural sciences are fully developed, their religion will eventually be cast away' (Hsieh, 16). Huang advised Liang Qichao, 'the veneration of religion was long ago considered rubbish in the West. Such countries of modern Europe as Germany, Italy, and France have strictly limited the power of the church to interfere in politics, and it would surely be a mistake to promote a Confucian religion at the present time and thus perpetuate the nonsense of others' (Schmidt, 135).

At the end of 1891 Huang was appointed Consul General to Singapore. Passing again through the possessions of 'the empire on which the sun never sets', he wrote a poem on the new Suez Canal and another one at British-occupied Port Said (Schmidt, 33), both key strategic spots in maintaining Britain's global hegemony. In Singapore it was possible once more for Huang to effect positive change in the conditions of his countrymen. Large numbers of Chinese had moved to the Malay Peninsula to find work in the tin mines and rubber plantations. With no official protection, they were frequently victimised by unscrupulous British officials and treated little better than slaves. After tedious and lengthy negotiations, Huang succeeded in getting British agreement to set up vice-consulates throughout the Straits Settlements. His term in Singapore ended in 1894 as hostilities with Japan broke out in China over control of the Korean peninsula.

Forced to cede southern Manchuria and Taiwan to the Japanese, together with a colossal indemnity, even conservative Qing officials now agreed that reform was imperative.

THE HUNDRED DAYS AND AFTER

Back in China, Huang met the scholar and indefatigable activist Kang Youwei and became involved with him in the Self-Strengthening Movement. It was then that Huang helped establish the *Journal for Contemporary Affairs* (*Shiwubao*, 1896–1898) in Shanghai and invited Liang Qichao to be its editor-in-chief.^c This was the start of a friendship that would have a major impact on the literary and political activities of both men.

In 1896, Huang was accorded the rare privilege of a private audience with the Guangxu Emperor. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5 had badly shaken China. Curious about Huang's eyewitness accounts of Japanese modernisation, the young Emperor was keen to learn more from his well-travelled subject. During their conversation Huang informed him that while he was serving in London, he had been told that only a century earlier England had been no stronger than China, and that the strength of Western countries was due to political reform. The political sub-text of Huang's *Quatrains on Japan* and his *Treatises on Japan* impressed the Emperor that the Meiji Restoration could serve as a model for China's own transformation. Two years later, in June 1898, Huang was summoned once again to the capital, together with Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, and other reformers. This time he was unable to come, having succumbed to an attack of dysentery. Over the next three months, the period that would become known as the 'Hundred Days of Reform', the Emperor issued a dizzying spate of edicts concerning all aspects of Chinese government and society. Freedom of criticism was allowed and a large number of excess Manchu officials were cashiered. In Huang's absence he was appointed as new Legation Minister to Japan but this was not to be. Just as the Reform Movement reached fever pitch, it was brought to an abrupt end by a reactionary palace coup led by the Empress Dowager Cixi. The Emperor was seized and the arrest of the reformers was announced. Kang and Liang managed to escape but Kang's beloved younger brother Kang Guanren and Liang's good friend Tan Sitong,

c The journal was published from 1896 to 1898, with a wide circulation and a run of more than ten thousand copies. It played an important role in introducing new political ideas from Europe and is considered to be the first modern Chinese magazine (Schmidt, preface, xx).

along with four other activists were publicly beheaded. Huang was put under house arrest in Shanghai but he was permitted to retire to his home in Jiayingzhou. In the Guangdong countryside Huang cultivated old English roses, wrote and revised a remarkable quantity of poetry, and in 1902 restored communications with Liang, now exiled in Japan. Liang published much of their correspondence on these vital issues in his *New Citizen Journal* operating out of Yokohama. During these years Huang voiced increasingly radical ideas. He concerned himself with promoting education, particularly at primary and elementary stages, in modern Western science and technology, proposing a simplification of the Chinese language, and the development of a literature in the vernacular that would be accessible to the common people, all contributing to national cohesion and patriotic pride to make China strong in the face of domination by foreign powers.

In 1904 it rained continuously for sixty days in Jiayingzhou. The condition of Huang's lungs, which had been weak since his stay in foggy London, became serious. He died in March 1905, aged just fifty-seven.

AFTERMATH

In the vortex of revolutionary forces that anticipated Republican China, anti-imperialist discourse was strong, but rather than ideologically oppositional to imperialism per se, the goal was for China to become as strong as the Western and Japanese imperialists. The consciousness of a cultural crisis in the 1890s stemmed largely from the 'profound disbelief that such a rich and enduring civilization as the Chinese universe would have no place in the modern world' (Karl Zarrow, 259). At this point the crisis was not yet so comprehensive as to lead reformers to question the validity of the native cultural tradition entirely. It was because of his confidence in the universality of ancient Chinese ideals, that Huang 'was so amazingly open to Western learning. He did not regard science and modern institutions as being "theirs", as opposed to China's own' (Kamachi, 262). Huang saw scientific development as part of a universal progress that China had failed to develop, largely thanks to the depredations of Qing culture. Reformist measures centred chiefly on institutional (especially maritime, military, and legal) self-strengthening in order to address what must surely be a temporary eclipse of the brilliance of the nation. As late as 1902, Liang Qichao could find grounds for consolation in the fact that although China has fallen behind others in everything

else, in ‘the field of literature ... it seems that she can contend with the West’ (Schmidt, 60). The iconoclastic intensity of May Fourth’s swingeing literary reform was some way off. When Liang called for a “poetic revolution” (*shijie geming*) he qualified this as ‘revolutionising the spirit ... not the form’ and advocated using ‘old poetic forms to contain new ideas’ (Schmidt, 47). While Liang’s poetic revolution did not aim for the radical formal departures that Ezra Pound’s modernism would entail, or that Chen Duxiu’s Marxist allegiance would later demand, his call for a new approach to poetry anticipated his pioneering championship of a New Fiction, and was fundamental to the development of a new literature for Republican China.

The lines of influence of global modernism then were multi-directional. While Whistler used ‘the imagination of foreign difference’ to change the way ‘artistic form explained the reality of the world’ in the West (Chang, 2), Liang Qichao and Huang Zunxian were advocating artistic “colonisation” of foreign difference to invigorate Chinese literary practice. Their programmatic approach to a new poetry would prove foundational for the development of modern literature in the new China. For Liang, Huang’s neologisms and Western borrowings could have been pushed even further. He went on to advocate an omnivorous consumption of European texts to enable authors of the Poetic Revolution to express new ideas and concepts. While he singled out Huang as the most outstanding of the new poets, he commented: ‘New language in his poems is still limited probably because new language and old poetic forms may clash with each other, and since Huang valued form, he strove to avoid this problem’ (Schmidt, 73). In the aftermath of 1898, Liang’s radical notions for twentieth-century Chinese poetry were expanded to prose, a development based on his understanding of the vital correlation between the popular novel and the integrity of the nation state. Because Huang had been committed to classical form, he struggled with the difficulties of expressing modern concepts in his poetry. Writers of the May Fourth generation would conclude that any effort to fit the modern world’s “new wine” into the “old skins” of traditional form was simply futile.

Huang’s subsequently underrated achievement is his pivotal legacy – in having written “the last glorious chapter” of Chinese classical poetry, pushing inherited form to its uttermost limits while pioneering Chinese poetry’s emergence into the twentieth century

Anne Witchard (a.witchard@westminster.ac.uk) is Reader in English

Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of Westminster. Her research interests are in China Studies and literary modernism. Recent publications include the edited collection British Modernism and Chinoiserie (EUP 2015), England's Yellow Peril: Sinophobia and The Great War (Penguin 2014), and Lao She in London (HKUP 2012) which situates the Chinese writer Lao She as a central figure of transcultural modernity, influenced by the collision of Chinese and British literary traditions.



Works Cited

- Bee, Frederick, *Three Hard Years on the Golden Hill* 金山三年苦: New Sources for the Study of Huang Zunxian in San Francisco <http://www.frederickbee.com/linpaper.pdf> (accessed Tuesday 19th November 2019)
- Brodie, Frederick (1892). 'On the prevalence of fog in London: During the 20 years 1871 to 1890', *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* 18: 81, 40-45
- Chang, Elizabeth Hope (2010). *Britain's Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire And Aesthetics In Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Nelson, James G., (1971). *The Early Nineties: A View From the Bodley Head*, Harvard. Harvard University Press.
- Hsieh Fucheng (tr. 1993). *The European Diary of Hsieh Fucheng: Envoy Extraordinary of Imperial China*, New York: St Martin's Press.
- Kamachi Noriko (1981). *Reform in China: Huang Tsun-hsien and the Japanese Model*, Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press.
- Karl, Rebecca E. and Zarrow, Peter, eds., (2002). *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Kenner, Hugh (1971). *The Pound Era*, Berkeley: University of California Press
- Liang Qichao (1936). *Poetry Talks from the Ice Drinker's Studio*: collected essays, Shanghai: China Books.
- Lin Yusheng (1979). *The crisis of Chinese consciousness: radical anti traditionalism in the May Fourth era*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Monroe, Harriet (1938). *A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World*, New York: Macmillan Co.

- Schmidt, J.D. (1994). *Within the human realm: the poetry of Huang Zunxian, 1848-1905*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, David Der-wei (1997). *Fin-de-Siècle Splendour: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction 1849-1911*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

AN INFLUENCE FROM THE SOULS OF THESE STONE SAINTS:

EARLY AMERICAN AND JAPANESE DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT SITE IN NORTH CHINA

BY DONG WANG

ABSTRACT:

More than a century ago, stone Buddhas in North China became an object of fascination among influential and wealthy Americans and Japanese, awakening imaginings of cultural bonds spanning continents. In the imaginations of various individuals, stone Buddhas came to symbolize human connections long lost and the union between European and Asiatic heritage. A circle of privileged Americans and Japanese passionately promoted Chinese culture and the stone Buddhas of Longmen as a form of art, but with disparate political messages. These dissonant, fin-de-siècle discourses about Longmen intersected and ultimately gave strength to each other. Thus seminal American and Japanese efforts helped to spawn transcultural connections and borrowings that still today stimulate yearning for a common global heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarly work seeks to reveal the common traits that run across religions and cultures. Over a century ago, a similar search for lost or loosened human connections was expressed in the appropriation of ancient sites in China, including Luoyang's Longmen Grottoes on the North China Plain. This was an important dimension of modern history that has mostly escaped the attention of commentators, who have thus far associated the modern scramble for Chinese artefacts across the Atlantic and the Pacific with art collecting, connoisseurship, urban governance, the internationalisation of heritage, cosmopolitanism, and nationalism.

This article examines early American and Japanese discoveries of historical sites in North China; in particular the Buddhist cave temples, rock sculptures, reliefs and inscribed stone tablets at Longmen, 12.5 kilometres south of the city of Luoyang in the central province Henan. Luoyang city served as the capital to thirteen historical dynasties in central China.

In 1910, Charles Lang Freer (1856–1919)—an American industrialist, connoisseur, and founding donor of the Freer Gallery of Art, owned by the U.S. government and known primarily for its comprehensive collection of American and Asian art, stayed in the Qianxi Temple at the northern entrance of Longmen from 29 October to 14 November. In his journal, Freer wrote, ‘Lung-men [Longmen] is interesting as no other cave temples are interesting. Its power to interest almost overwhelms me. Its grip upon me constantly increases, it makes me almost feverish—an influence from the souls of these stone saints.’¹

His normally brief travel diary used 62 pages to record the details of this visit, as well as the emotions and speculations sparked by this first and only visit to the site. Nothing similar to the spontaneous insights expressed here can be found elsewhere in his papers. Longmen—more than any other ancient site—captivated Freer. In 1911, he asserted with foresight, ‘The workmen had to cut through obstacles, not around them. They hewed their way through the rocks; there was no short cut. The result of the efforts of these great workmen is absolutely neglected today, but some day it will be cherished by the world and the world will protect it.’² Ninety years later, in 2001, Longmen became a UNESCO World Heritage site under the protection of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and Chinese law.

This decision followed a century of recovery and re-evaluation driven by a host of far-thinking people—American, British, Canadian, Chinese, French, Finish-Russian, German, Japanese, and Swedish—in the fields of politics, history, art, archaeology, culture, antiquarianism, and connoisseurship. Through this process, Longmen, alongside many other ancient monuments, became an icon of modernity—a site of mental projection, a symbol of timeless perfection, and an object of scientific classification and analysis.

How did Longmen—a run-down place at the turn of the twentieth century—emerge as a source of fresh spiritual inspiration for important American and Japanese opinion formers such as Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), Okakura Kakuzō (1862–1913), Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919), and Langdon Warner (1881–1955)? What impact did their affinity with ancient sites in North China have across the Pacific? To answer these questions, I will first investigate the social conditions that led to ancient Chinese sites becoming a source of inspiration for some leading American and Japanese intellectuals and connoisseurs who sought to reform their own traditions. Then I will focus on

Freer at Longmen and the circle of people who influenced him and redefined American cultural taste, comparing their pronouncements to contemporaneous Japanese interpretations. Freer's epiphany about Longmen manifested part of a movement bound by the common advocacy of Asia, which was driven by heterogeneous groups with different purposes. An example of a very different interpretation is provided by Japanese scholar and nationalist Okakura.

EASTERN TRADITION AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

By the turn of the twentieth century, three major socio-cultural developments—*anxiety about industrialisation, the increase of overseas travel and an expanded knowledge of Europe and Asia*—had led to a strong conviction among many influential and wealthy Americans that, in the emerging field of Asian art and aesthetics, 'the two great streams of European and Asiatic practice, held apart for so many thousand years, have, at the close of the nineteenth century, been brought together in a fertile and final union.'³

From around 1860, in reaction to industrialisation and the rapid growth of a modern society, Americans such as the Boston Brahmins^a and other industrialists, philanthropists and antiquarians—had embraced Chinese classical art with an eye to America's future role in Asia Pacific and the world. This trend can also be explained by America's aspirations to gentility, grandeur and a sense of destiny. At the same time, admiration for Chinese culture blossomed in new forms among Japanese, Chinese, French, Swedish, British, and German elites. Goetzmann and Jennings have characterised this movement, where cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation occur simultaneously, as cultural globalisation.⁴ America's interest in East Asian ancient ruins and traditions may have been partly inspired by transcendentalism, not only breaking with Puritan intolerance but also articulating inherent sympathy for Oriental thought and spiritual values.

American appropriation of Chinese historical monuments may also have grown out of a desire to allay the anxieties inherent in modernisation and industrialisation or, conversely, anxiety about being left behind in the rapid march of progress. Ancient sites enkindle mystical moments of exaltation, illumination, and self-

a The Boston Brahmins refer to old aristocratic families in the Boston area that were interlinked through marriage, wealth and exclusive social circles, such as the Adams, Cabots, Boylston, Appletons, Danas, Forbeses, Withthrops, and Peabodys.

transformation when 'the two become one entity; time and space are abolished'. The sublime structure of these artefacts brought the minds of some collectors to a state where 'the self becomes one with the spirit of humankind'.⁵

American society had been deeply influenced by the European tradition of *Bildungsreise*, or what was frequently called the Grand Tour. Travelling to Europe, ingesting culture and the arts in France, Italy, Greece, and other European countries formed a part of the passage to adulthood among the privileged classes of the Eastern seaboard of the United States. Together with the popular commentary it inspired, touring abroad 'influenced conceptions of national identity and formed part of a public debate about how the United States should behave in the world'.⁶ The large body of foreign travel literature produced by the American literati, including James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), Henry James (1843–1916), and Mark Twain (1835–1910), expressed a fascination with the Anglo-Saxon myths and a reverence for foreign civilizations.

Although not as popular as European explorations, American knowledge of Asia and the world during this period was not without historical antecedents. Commencing in 1784, private trade and the U.S. naval presence in the Asia Pacific, especially during the Jackson years, brought Chinese porcelain, paintings, and furnishings into American homes on the East Coast.⁷ In 1831, Nathan Dunn, a Quaker missionary and merchant who had lived in China for twelve years, shipped back to the United States what was the largest collection of Chinese artefacts in the world outside of China at the time. In 1838, Dunn's China objects were exhibited in the 'Chinese Museum' in Philadelphia, in space provided by the Philadelphia Museum Company. The exhibition attracted 100,000 visitors, and an equal number when it moved to London in 1842.⁸

Early American maritime traders who had travelled to China also bequeathed a literary legacy to the United States. Their accounts include André Everard van Braam Houckgeest's two-volume *Voyage de l'Ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales Hollandaises, vers l'Empereur de la Chine, dans les Années 1794 & 1795* (published in 1797–98 in Philadelphia); Amasa Delano's *Narrative of Voyages and Travels, in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, Comprising three Voyages round the World; together with a Voyage of Survey and Discovery, in the Pacific Ocean and Oriental Islands* (1817, Boston); and

Robert Waln, Jr., *China: Comprehending a View of the Origin, Antiquity History, Religion, Morals, Government, Laws, Population, Literature, Drama, Festivals, Games, Women, Beggars, Manners, Customs, &c of that Empire* (1823, Philadelphia). The 1840s also saw the publication of Robert B. Forbes' *Remarks on China and the China Trade* (1844 Boston, Mass.) and Samuel Shaw's *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw, the First American Consul at Canton* (1847 Boston, Mass.). In 1843, the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* was founded.

The introduction of regular commercial steamers between San Francisco and Yokohama in 1867, the transcontinental railways that spanned the United States, and the opening of the Suez Canal in November 1869 all made travel to the Asia Pacific easier.

AMERICAN DISCOVERY OF LONGMEN: CHARLES LANG FREER (1854–1919) AND OTHER SHAPERS OF AMERICAN CULTURAL ORIENTATION

This story of American affinity with Longmen begins with Charles Lang Freer, probably the first American who went to that historical site, and the circle of people who influenced him and helped redefine American cultural taste. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a significant number of Americans who, like Freer, went to China with the intention of seeking connectedness and inspiration from the Eastern past, wherever it might be encountered. Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), who became an important guide to Freer in the study of Japanese and Chinese antiquities, observed in 1907: 'It is not too much to say that the thousand and one innovations, the freer technique, and the generally increasing breadth of view of our recent generations, are either the direct or indirect results of this contact [with the Asia Pacific].' He commented on the lack of awareness of Japanese and Chinese Buddhist art in Europe and the United States before the middle of the nineteenth century: '...before oriental examples opened our eyes, few of our artists even suspected [their] existence.'

Dating from the Western Jin Dynasty (261–303 CE),⁹ the Longmen Grottoes (see Figure 1) comprise more than 2,000 stone niches and caves, over 100,000 fine-grained limestone sculptures and reliefs, and around 2,800 memorial steles (stone tablets) containing more than 300,000 words of inscribed text.¹⁰ These caves and niches are carved into a one-kilometre stretch of limestone cliffs on either side of the Yi River.

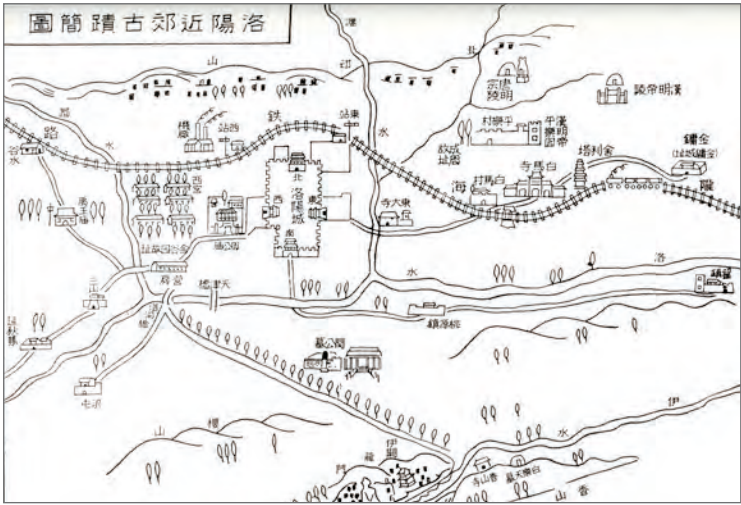


Figure 1. Map of Luoyang's relics including the image of Vairocana at the centre bottom. Qianxi Temple is the small pavilion to the right of the big Buddha image at the center bottom.¹¹

In the main, Longmen's sculptures are low relief carvings on the walls and ceilings of the caves, while a few are spectacularly hewn out of the limestone *in situ*. The inscriptions are mostly chiselled into the walls and ceilings, adjacent to the individual images to which they refer.¹² The production of stone images at Longmen tailed off after the Tang dynasty (618–907) as the city of Luoyang fell victim to war and communal violence, although some new carving projects were likely undertaken until the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Irregular maintenance and repair efforts were made, the most significant probably on the occasion of Emperor Qianlong's visit in 1750. Luoyang has been variously described as 'the nursery of Chinese culture and civilization', a 'Chinese Babylon,' a disappearing ancient capital 'deserted by modern civilization, left alone on the Northern Chinese plain with nobody caring for it.'¹³

This impression of loneliness and neglect was observed by a slightly earlier visitor, Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim (1867–1951), who visited Longmen on June 8, 1907. Mannerheim was engaged in an undercover intelligence mission, travelling through Asia overland from St. Petersburg from July 1906 to October 1907. He was attached to a scientific expedition led by French archaeologist Paul Pelliot, with whom he travelled from Tashkent to Kashgar:

Early in the morning, I made an excursion to a mountain situated 25 *li* south of the city [Luoyang], which is called “Lung-men” [Longmen] (the Dragon Gate)...The mountain is divided by a broad ravine, at the bottom of which flows a branch of the Luo river ...The mountains are not tall, yet they are beautiful, with steep sections and with the bare cliff-face protruding everywhere... The mountain walls on both sides of the river reveal a multitude of grottoes, beginning with niches so small that each one frames its own Buddha image and ending with domes measuring 12–14 m in length and 7-8 m in width... Everything here is strongly reminiscent of the domes and traces of painting that can be seen in the Turfan region. But here each Buddha statue and every ornament has been carved into the cliff, in many cases very artistically. An unbelievable amount of work has gone into it... several of the domes are blackened by soot from fires and many sculptures have been deprived of their heads or one of their limbs. Primitive stairs worn smooth by use and railings carved into the cliff testify that in the distant past this place was a much-visited pilgrimage site. This is said to be no longer the case.¹⁴

More than any other ancient monuments, Longmen captivated Freer, who lived nearly twenty thousand kilometres away. Born in Kingston, N.Y., to a poor family of six children, Freer lost his mother at the age of fourteen. He was forced to drop out of school in grade seven to work in a cement factory. With the assistance of Frank J. Heckler, who recognized the young man’s bookkeeping and organizational skills and later became Freer’s business manager, Freer went on to make a fortune in the railway, automobile and investment industries.¹⁵ He was a self-made person who exemplified the American dream.

Freer was diagnosed with neurasthenia, a nervous condition commonly diagnosed among the upper classes in the United States at that time. Part of the cure involved encouraging sufferers to rest and to spend time in the wilderness. Living in an industrialized society which valued material extravagance, Freer found peace and satisfaction in nature and the purity, simplicity and harmony of artworks from all cultures and periods that supported his own coherent aesthetic vision.

His ideas and collecting were permeated by certain key themes.

One of these themes was tonalism. Represented chiefly by George Inness and James McNeill Whistler, tonalism emerged in American landscape paintings in the 1880s, introducing an emphasis on mood and shadow; it frequently manifested in pervasive washes of colour suggestive of atmosphere or mist. Between 1880 and 1915, dark and neutral hues, such as grey, brown and blue, or yellow and olive, dominated the compositions of many American artists; tonalities shared by the unknown stone carvers of the Longmen caves. In a journal entry written on the train from Beijing to Luoyang (Honan-fu), Freer praised the healing power and beauty of his favoured colour palette and the subtle natural hues of the North China plain, as yet untouched by industrialisation. He also expressed a yearning for tranquillity and simplicity amid the hustle and bustle of an industrialised age.

All day through a continuous garden of farms, pale green, yellow green, onion green and the green of recently sown grain, gray & corn colored grasses—deep reddish purple of the shrub from which small brooms are made—Furrowing the land for seed planting with two circular stones fixed to an axle—shoveling sand through sieves and piling in heaps resembling American haycocks—bricks making in foot mounds [sic], thrashing and winnowing grain, ploughing steel and wood—and harrowing the soil, stone rollers—women picking cotton, persimmon trees in fruit, digging sweet potatoes—During afternoon mountain range at West. Camels laden with sweet potato vines, carts loaded with baled cotton.

Despite his lack of formal training in Buddhism and foreign languages, Freer, then in his mid-fifties—and what were to be the last few years of his life—gave himself over to the study and appreciation of the stone icons at Longmen. To Freer, Buddhism, like other world religions, offered healing power to deal with the pressures and spiritual needs of the modern world.

All earthly existence is full of sorrow, and...the only deliverance from sorrow is the renunciation of the world and eternal rest. Seclusion from the world and the active

business of life was obviously the first essential of the saintly life of Buddhism, as of all ascetic forms of religion.¹⁶

‘For those with the power to see beauty, all works of art go together, whatever their period,’ wrote Freer. The Buddhist stone icons at Longmen—especially those carved during the Northern Wei Dynasty prior to the seventh century—struck a chord with Freer, who rejoiced in recognizing the linkages between the Hellenic and Chinese civilizations: ‘Here Greek power and intellectual predominance shown in the hundreds of huge figures are softened by dreamy ideals born of the Buddhist belief in the knowingness of all existence... The story of the beauty of these temples from which forever a stream of joy flows.’¹⁷

This tendency to see commonality across traditions was deliberately cultivated by a group of American public intellectuals. As early as 1907, Fenollosa, a close friend and adviser to Freer, suggested that attention be paid to the distinctive unity of the Freer collection of American and Eastern art objects, ‘which is destined to play a great part in developing the future art of America.’¹⁸ Even before he had concentrated his energies in collecting early Chinese Buddhist sculptures, Freer was seeking out elements of synthesis and kinship in the three divisions of his collection: the pictorial work of James McNeil Whistler; glazed pottery from Egypt, Babylonian, Persia, India, China, Korea, and Japan; and Chinese and Japanese paintings. These three groups were interrelated through the ideal of historical completeness, where the paths of the world’s advance could be seen. Furthermore, their kinship was established through ‘the mysteries of light-play in the composition of these tones,’ the ‘secret chord’ that pulled even the later dark limestone sculptures and pebble-like stones from Longmen into a ‘harmonic scheme’ of green, grey, brick-red, and stone-brown, yellow, olive, and azure.¹⁹

Freer made substantial contributions to bringing together East and West. His imagery of Longmen was forged through studying, seeing and comparing. In the series of lectures he gave in 1908 about Mt. Mihintale, the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, Sigiri, Buddhist rock temples, and other monuments in Ceylon, and later around 1911 on Longmen itself, Freer attributed the origins of cave sculpture and the selection of sites for Buddhist monuments to India:

In most of the hill ranges of India and its borders, caves were occupied by holy men who soon learned to excavate them, while the face of the rock invited the earliest efforts of the sculptor. In addition to the selection of a rock suitable for excavation, the Buddhists, like the monks of the West, seem to have been influenced in the choice of a site, not only by such practical considerations as accessibility, the presence of a good water supply, and proximity to trade routes, but also by a keen appreciation of natural beauty. Magnificent scenery has a more intimate connection with the subject of Buddhism than appears at first sight.... In China, Java and Japan, the same principle has guided the selection of sites, with a distinct preference for the neighborhood of mountain streams.²⁰

Freer spent the two weeks from October 29 to November 14, 1910, at Longmen in the company of Nan Mingyuan, his Chinese business associate, and some Chinese guards and workers. He was among a very few privileged Caucasians, and perhaps the first American, to have ventured to Longmen, a fact that 'means much to American art and scholarship,' as an interviewer wrote in 1911.²¹ Freer played a major role in an international effort to classify early Chinese Buddhist sculpture as art, and in some cases superior to their counterparts produced by any other civilization: 'With what has been discovered by Chavannes, the French investigator sent to China by the French academy three years ago, and what I found myself there is absolutely no question that an art did exist in ancient China. And it was an art that, in my opinion, equals or exceeds in value that which is known to the world at present.'²²

Longmen appealed to Freer for two main reasons, both reflecting his identity as a discriminating and sophisticated pioneer of the arts in an age of industrialization in the United States. Firstly, to Freer, the craftsmanship and artistry of the unknown sculptors of Longmen bridged temporal and regional divides and invited him to enter into a quasi-symbiotic union with their creators. He yearned to converse with the inner soul of historical ruins.

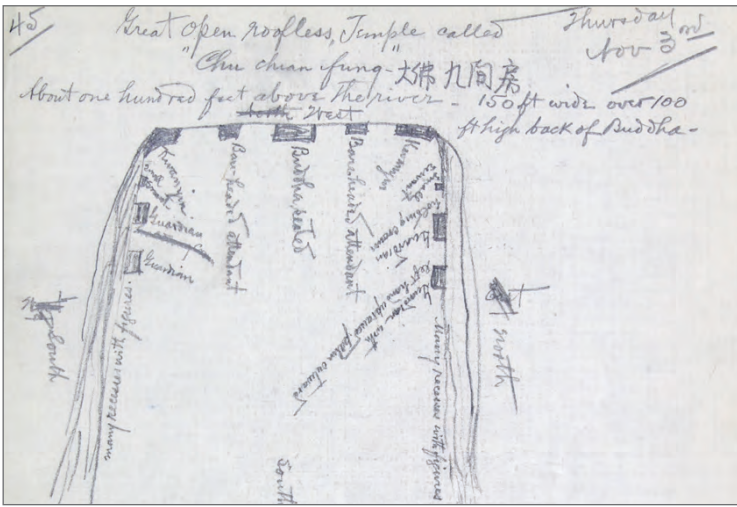


Figure 2. Freer's drawing of Jiujianfang, the Fengxian Temple where the iconic Vairocana Buddha is housed.²³

Having begun to collect artworks in the 1880s, Freer, as a late starter, practised 'intelligent travels', to use his own words, going far beyond mere sightseeing and the dilettantish purchase of works of art.²⁴ His imagination and distillation of what he saw as the inner life of art gave a distinctive character to Freer's patronage and generosity to artists and the public alike. In 1911, introducing Longmen to an audience in Japan, Freer stated:

Little is known of the details of the wonderful craftsmanship of these early sculptors, but of course their cutting was done with metal tools. One can see that there is a marvelous skill of and in the strong and delicate modeling; a miracle of training in the designs that surround many of the niches; and in the almost imperceptible figures cut in very low relief which decorate the back of many of the niches; also in the lotus dais found in the center of the ceilings of many of the large temples... To do work of this kind is to have perfect foresight and perfect skill; is to be both craftsman and artist. It is, first of all, to be a composer, a draftsman and then, as a crowning grace, to be a technician—a master of one's tools.²⁵

Longmen helped Freer envision a universal, monist world of unity and congruence expressed through a variety of authentic emotions, faiths, expressions and relationships between men and women of different classes. This potent but somewhat neglected counter current of enlightened humanity stressed the possibility of creative relationships with humanity at large in a world of war, conflict, excess and poverty. For him, the religious emotion he felt in the strange light of the temples at Longmen symbolised the kind of relations that were 'not merely the love of imitation but representative of genuine faith.' 'In these sculptures one feels that the joy of work never departed from the workman; that he saw ever before him new pleasure in perfection of form and feeling.'

This unitary vision extended to the complementarity of the sexes. The muscular lines of some of the Longmen figures were balanced by the spirit of femininity and 'held together from end to end with a perfection of unity.' It was the strength of feminine influence that moulded the divinity of the Amida Buddha and his emanation Guanyin into a gentler form. 'To the Buddhists the true man was a combination of man and woman.'²⁶ To Freer, Longmen's caves manifested perfection of human creativity:

Wandering before the thresholds of these grottoes, many of which are grass-covered and all of which open outward to the clear, quickly flowing river and then through their lines and masses of unending sculpture above, below and on all sides of you, is, indeed, an unusual experience and the impression left upon the mind is far finer than those experienced in the renowned temples of India, Java or Japan. Here one sees much greater variety in size, form and decoration, to say nothing of mystery and environment.²⁷

This combination of ideals also derived partly from Freer's experience of the World's Columbian Exposition, held to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus' voyage to America, which opened in Chicago in May 1893. Over two hundred World Congresses or Parliaments of anthropology, labour, medicine, temperance, commerce and finance, literature, history, art, philosophy, religion, and science were held in conjunction with the Chicago exhibition. Refinement, knowledge and care of the soul were the values

most cherished by Freer,²⁸ connecting him with Longmen and others of kindred spirit. At the time, the World's Parliament of Religions was hailed as marking the 'dawn of a new era of brotherhood and peace.'²⁹ According to one contemporary observer, monist idealism sought to 'secure from leading scholars, representing the Brahman, Buddhist, Confucian, Parsee, Mohammedan, Jewish, and other faiths, and from representatives of the various churches of Christendom, full and accurate statements of the spiritual and other effects of the religions which they hold upon the literature, art, commerce, government, domestic and social life of the peoples among whom these faiths have prevailed.'³⁰

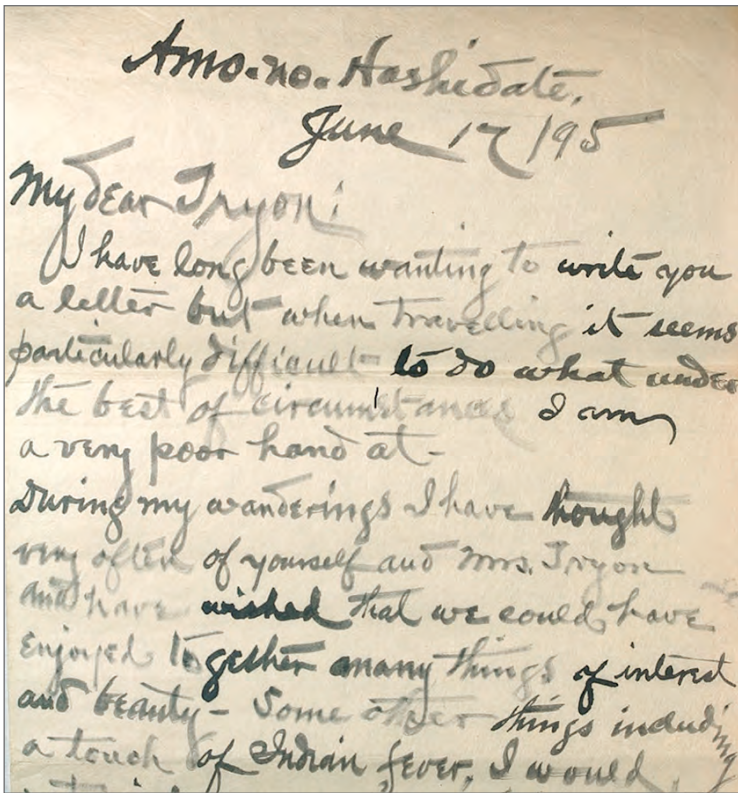


Figure 3. Freer's 1895 hand written scroll letter³¹

In 1895, Freer had found solace on a visit to Amo-no Hashidate, one of the most scenic places in Japan, meaning "bridge in heaven," on the Tango Peninsula, northern Kyoto Prefecture, spanning Miyazu Bay:

If the Buddhist idea is correct and I am inclined to think it is, not one earthly existence alone is sufficient but several are required to develop an imaginative mind. Does not this then mean experience and does not intelligent travel bring experience??.... My present trip has brought me one valuable sensation at least of a long and welcome escape from high pressure American business life. Foreign business life is as nearly rapid as ours. So the influence I wish for exists not at Paris, Bombay, Calcutta, Hongkong, Shanghai, Kobe, Kioto, or any other large cities I have yet found. Kioto, Japan's old capital comes nearest to it, because of its excellent old time art, in many forms, beautiful surroundings and absence of large commercial enterprises.³²

Freer's time in Asia made a deep impression on him, and influenced his thoughts about the future. He commented in a letter to his business associate in 1910, 'The more I see of the Chinese people, the greater is my respect and esteem. Someday they will again be what they were centuries ago—world-leaders in many ways.'³³ These views reflected the global bent of America's Pacific Era of the early twentieth century, as President Theodore Roosevelt called it, which meant that 'the commerce and the command of the Pacific will be factors of incalculable moment in the world's history.'³⁴ Endorsing Freer's various China initiatives including the American Archaeological School in China, Roosevelt called for a universal world to 'bring all nations into intimate and brotherly association,'

Our place as a nation is and must be with the nations that have left indelibly their impress on the centuries... The Atlantic era is now at the height of its development and must soon exhaust the resources at its command. The Pacific era, destined to be the greatest of all, and to bring the whole human race at last into one great comity of nations, is just at the dawn... We cannot escape our destiny if we would; we must face the performance of our duties to mankind... It depends largely upon the present generation of American citizens to say whether our country shall keep in the van of this glorious work and win the chief triumphs

for ourselves; or whether we shall supinely permit others to make the effort, to run the risk and to reap the reward.³⁵

In Roosevelt's new world order, 'the awakening of China is one of the great events of our age,' and it was urgent to grasp and command China for 'the West to implant its ideals in the Orient, in such fashion as to minimize the chance of a dreadful future clash between two radically different and hostile civilizations.'³⁶

However, some contemporary commentators harboured less optimistic views. This contradiction is illustrated in a letter written from a Peking hotel by Langdon Warner to Charles Freer in April 1914:

In spite of the fact that I had come over here expecting the very best from the Chinese and recognizing that I was on the track of the very roots of all the things that I most valued and loved in the Orient—still I have been getting more and more disgusted with the present [emphasis in original] state of things and more and more discouraged with the Chinese themselves...One could not be human and go through this country with his eyes entirely on the past, if it were possible he could build up a grand and altogether admirable idea of the people. But with the government on the edge of ruin and no honest Chinese stirring a hand to help it, with sickness and disease and cruelty as bad as they were in Marco Polo's time, with no attempts to clean up morals or minds or bodies I cannot regard the most fascinatingly interesting trip in the light of a picnic. Like Nelson at Trafalgar "I wouldn't be elsewhere for thousands." But like Nelson I am scared to death; and I have no faith in the ultimate result for the country.

JAPANESE APPROPRIATION OF LONGMEN: OKAKURA KAKUZŌ (1862–1913) AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BOSTON BRAHMINS

America's initial appropriation of Chinese culture and ancient sites can be compared to Japan's, also a rising industrial power. Okakura Kakuzō (see figure 4), a believer in monist idealism and transcendentalist spirituality, visited Longmen in 1893, one of the earliest visits by a foreigner in modern times.³⁷ From the turn of the

twentieth century, prominent members of the Japanese intelligentsia, including Sekino Tadashi (1867–1935), Tokiwa Daij (1870–1945), Mizuno Seiichi (1905–1971), and Nagahiro Toshio (1905–2001), made expeditions to Longmen and other Buddhist monuments in China. Their research into the materials, style, age, and condition of the sculptures, in combination with their extensive use of textual evidence—drawn from Chinese historical records—illuminated the significance of Longmen as what they believed to be the finest and the most representative Buddhist site of its time. On February 11, 1904, a few days after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, Okakura and his students, Taikan Yokoyama, Sunso Hishida, and Shisui Rokkaku, boarded a ship for Seattle. Despite America’s attitude towards the war, the Japanese were treated favourably by the American press: ‘Mr Okakura, with the insight of the scholar and the fearless conviction of the erudite critic, reported that Japan had nothing to learn from the art of the Western world. On the contrary, it behooved the government to preserve Japan’s priceless inheritance and enlarge upon it in the lines upon which enduring fame had been achieved’, the *New York Times* reported.³⁸

Okakura devoted himself to placing Japan at the centre of the modern world order in the Asia Pacific, while consolidating his ties with the closely-knit group of Boston Brahmins during the last ten years of his life. Daisy Yiyou Wang and Satoko Fujita Tachiki emphasise anti-modernism as the binding factor that connected Okakura and the Boston Brahmins. The spread of Japanism in Europe and the United States can be seen in the writings of Edward Sylvester Morse, William Sturgis Bigelow, and Percival Lowell, and Charles Appleton Longfellow. ‘In meeting Okakura, the Boston Brahmins, as spiritual seekers from another continent, found a kindred spirit.’ For Bigelow, Okakura was a ‘queer duck, but he knows a lot.’³⁹

Born into a samurai family in 1862 in the treaty port of Yokohama, Okakura began studying English at the age of six or seven in the home of American

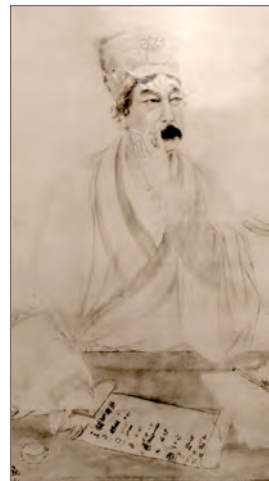


Figure 4: Portrait of Okakura Kakuzō⁴⁰

missionaries James C. Hepburn and S. R. Brown.⁴¹ In 1880, he graduated from the University of Tokyo, then an English institution, where he studied philosophy, Darwinism, English literature, and Western analytical philosophy alongside Americans including Ernest Fenollosa. Fenollosa was a Harvard graduate who came to Japan in 1878 to teach Western philosophy; he soon became enthusiastic about Japanese art and its preservation, and was later a curator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Okakura's achievements as a nationalistic intellectual and his ties with the city of Boston and Harvard University are indicative of his entangled agendas and roles, operating under different mantles. American contemporaries generally tolerated his views, which bordered on ultra-nationalism and racism. Throughout his life, Okakura campaigned for the *kokugaku*, or Japanese national learning movement and championed the notion that "Asia is one." Asia, to Okakura, knew no political boundaries, and modernised Japan was its undisputed leader.⁴²

In the 1880s, together with Fenollosa, Okakura pioneered a new art movement. In 1884 the pair formed a new organisation called *Kangakai*, the art appreciation club, supported by William Bigelow, a wealthy Bostonian and then a personal friend of Fenollosa. This new Japanese art movement was designed to empower traditional Japanese art (Buddhist art in particular) with new Euro-American art theory as a way of countering the mindless imitation of Western forms in Meiji Japan. From September 1886 to October 1887, the Japanese Ministry of Education financed Okakura and Fenollosa on a trip to study art education in the United States, France, Italy, Spain, Austria, and Germany.

In 1889, Okakura established and headed the Tokyo Fine Arts School while serving as the director of the Imperial Museum. However, ten years later he was forced to resign as a result of opposition to his new Japanese art movement and his involvement with the wife of his boss. Shortly after in 1899, with seventeen followers, he set up the *Bijutsuin* (Academy of Fine Arts) to "protest against two movements—the pseudo-classic and pseudo-European," claiming that "art must be national, and that we shall be lost if cut away from our traditions."⁴³

In 1896 Fenollosa resigned from his position at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston following his scandalous affair with Mary McNeil Scott (whom he later married). Some years later, William

Bigelow, a leading trustee of the MFA, invited Okakura to fill the role, unaware that Okakura had been forced to resign following a similar transgression in Japan. Between 1906 and 1910, Okakura served as advisory director of the Japanese and Chinese department of the MFA, where he served as curator from 1910 until his death in 1913. His main responsibility was to catalogue and purchase Chinese and Japanese art objects in Japan and, especially, in China.⁴⁴

During his last ten or so years, Okakura split his time between Boston and Izura, Japan. He died on 4 September 1913 in Tokyo. A memorial service was held at Boston's Fenway Court on 20 October 1913. The tribute read at the memorial service included the words: 'In a true sense he was an exemplar of the finest traditions of his land, a nationalist and yet a cosmopolitan—a choice and potent personality the like of which our times may hardly produce again.'⁴⁵

Between 15 July and 7 December 1893, Okakura visited China for the first time, traveling via Korea and Shanghai on his return route, shortly before the Sino-Japanese War broke out. This field trip was sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Imperial Household. He travelled in company with his houseboy, helper, and photographer Hayasaki Kōkichi.⁴⁶ Some speculated that his trip to Beijing with an interpreter, Miwa Kōsaborō, had a covert intelligence-gathering purpose. In addition to his 1893 trip, Okakura visited China three more times: in 1906–1907, to purchase artworks for the MFA; in June–July 1908, when he stayed in Manchuria and Beijing for two weeks on his way back to Japan from Europe; and finally in May–June 1912, when he spent a month in Beijing and Manchuria.

To aid in the task of cataloguing Japanese artworks and writing a history of Japanese art, Okakura set out to investigate Chinese sites and objects with a view to establishing the origins of Japanese art, and finding Chinese parallels. In early August Okakura and Hayasaki arrived in Tianjin before moving on to Beijing. Their explorations of Beijing's temples, ancient sites, and the antique markets of Liulichang, as well as the urgings of their Japanese and Chinese contacts, prompted them to make an unplanned detour, south to Henan through Hebei Province. After visiting the White Horse Temple, the first Buddhist temple in China, and other places in Luoyang, Okakura spent the 19th of September 1893 at Longmen.

In his early years, Okakura had believed that Hellenism implied a dominant, Eurocentric role for Roman and Greek art in the

development of the Gandharan and Chinese Buddhist art styles. The resultant view that Indian-Chinese Buddhist art was subsidiary to the Greco-Roman classical style was unacceptable to Okakura. Longmen and Luoyang provided Okakura with clear evidence of the transmission of the Hōryūji style of Japanese Buddhist art directly from China, rather than from Greece and Italy. This discovery had important implications for Okakura's narrative of Chinese history, according to which the Yuan Mongols destroyed Chinese civilisation, thereby promoting Japan—an equal to the West in the modern world order—to centre stage in Asia, in place of a backward China. On the other hand, the stone sculptures and apsaras found in the Middle Binyang Cave at Longmen dating from the Northern Wei, clearly pointed to Hellenic-Indian influence. This compelled Okakura to acknowledge Hellenism, along with Assyrian and Egyptian influences, as a factor in the formation of Japanese art. According to Jing He, Okakura's had previously argued for a pure, equal, and independent style of Japanese art before the coming of Hellenism. However, his 1893 field trip proved to Okakura that he was wrong about the Hellenistic influence in Japanese art in the debate over Hōryūji, established in 607 (and today a UNESCO World Heritage site).⁴⁷ Okakura was inconsistent over the years on the relationship between the art of the East and the West. In 1887, he asserted that “art belongs to heaven and earth, and there cannot be a distinction between the East and West.”⁴⁸ Visiting Longmen and other ancient monuments helped Okakura and other Japanese intellectuals to recontextualise their own religious and cultural heritage in order to deal with the competing claims of West and East more effectively.

In 1908 Okakura charted the influence of Bactrian Greece on China as a central element, spread by way of Greek Bactrians and Scythians to Gandhara and North China.⁴⁹ Bactria (*daxia*) formed part of the Balkh region in Northern Afghanistan, as well as today's Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in central Asia. The Greco-Bactrian kingdom existed from 250 to 125 BCE, while the Indo-Greek kingdom was established on the Indian subcontinent from 180 to 130 BCE. Situated in the north-western corner of the Indian subcontinent, the Gandhara region linked Greco-Bactrian Buddhist stone sculptures with their Chinese counterparts. Scholars such as Osvald Sirén considered central Asia—through the intermediation of Scytho-Sarmatian art—as providing the main impetus for the Chinese animal

sculptures of the Han dynasty. Sirén argued that it was only towards the end of the sixth century CE that the ‘two currents [from central and western Asia]...flowed together and formed one great stream of artistic development. Then the animal and the religious sculpture became almost homogeneous in their artistic character; Buddhist art flourished into a more mature national product, swallowing all the foreign influences which had reached Chinese sculpture from time to time.’⁵⁰ In any case, the timing of Okakura’s exploration was crucial, as by 1908 the Hellenic–Indian Buddhist link had been a hotly debated topic for at least ten years among European explorers and sinologists such as Charles-Eudes Bonin, Edouard Chavannes and Aurel Stein. It is hard to avoid the impression that Okakura was reinterpreting existing research findings from Europe to suit his own agenda. Japanese nationalism and its tension with other political ideologies were central to Okakura’s relationship with Longmen, China, the United States, and Europe.

Okakura and his work would have lasting influence after his death. He was an important promoter of Japan and Japanese art, who made himself a leading authority on Japanese and Chinese art and art history among the Western audiences of his day.

Freer acknowledged Okakura’s huge influence in the United States and Europe in a letter dated 6 September 1913 to Langdon Warner, a Harvard professor, and another important figure in the modern history of Longmen:

Yesterday’s papers print a dispatch from Tokio dated September 4th, announcing the death of Okakura. His unexpected calling will doubtless create considerable stir in Boston, especially in museum circles. Although it was my misfortune to find many defects in Okakura, I recognize that his efforts did very much universally to awaken interest in oriental art, and I shall always have genuine admiration for certain characteristics of the man. I often wish that I had known less of certain official and personal doings of the man.⁵¹

In reply, Warner’s letter, dated Thanksgiving Day, 1913 and written from Peking, asks.

Was it not a generous thing of Doctor Ross to give his prize statue to the M.F.A. in memory of Okakura, whom he did not entirely like and never professed to understand? I think that Okakura's work there in making people's eyes see was greater than the man himself, and he was an extraordinary creature.⁵²

CONCLUSION

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, thanks to steamships and other technological improvements, some privileged Americans and Japanese like Freer and Okakura imagined that they were able to communicate with the human past through visiting and comparing ancient sites. After experiencing historical sites in person, these early foreign visitors participated more actively and intelligently in giving direction and added purpose to their own country's domestic and global relationships. Several observations can be made.

Firstly, the geopolitical and geo-cultural messages of the early American and Japanese interpretation of the Longmen site can be considered in light of their respective places in the modern world. To Freer—a product of the rising United States as a new world powerhouse with aspirations for geo-cultural status—Longmen represented the purest and highest achievement of the Chinese civilization, that also invoked a Hellenic past and thus ought to be assigned a new value. To Okakura, Longmen helped legitimize modern Japan as the heir to the glorious past of Eastern civilization and the unrivalled leader of Asia. Although Okakura and Freer had nothing in common on a personal level, both men were bound by modernity's dilemma and their common advocacy of Longmen and other Eastern monuments within small, privileged circles. These complex relations largely arose from Japan's own anxiety about its new role in the modern world as a result of rapid industrialisation, and also from the aspirations of Americans such as the Boston Brahmins, who sought spiritual fulfilment and mental solace in Asian artefacts and ancient ruins.

The impacts of early American and Japanese exploration of Longmen were compromised in two ways. The first limitation arose from the very nature of the loose confederation of organisations and individuals bound together only by their common advocacy of China and Asia, who, though they moved in the same circles, held widely different views. These views are typified by Charles Lang Freer

with his predilection for One Humanity, and Okakura Kakuzō with his belief in pan-Asianism. The second limitation can be seen in the contradiction between idealism and reality which confronted every visitor to Longmen in the early twentieth century, though moved by the sublime beauty of the work, some were incapable of reconciling the contrarities involved. Langdon Warner's fear and disgust exemplify this viewpoint.

However, these fin-de-siècle voices taken together, although seemingly dissonant, evidenced a yearning for a unity of meaning based on a universal spirituality for varied purposes. This new, transcendent understanding of history provided a vehicle to articulate their anxieties about industrialisation as much as their vision for modern society. For example, Freer yearned 'to unite modern work with masterpieces of certain periods of high civilization harmonious in spiritual suggestion' albeit aware of the limitations inherent in the challenge. Epiphanies such as that experienced by Freer at Longmen reveal a desire for the unity of humanity, in the sense that ancient sites were converted into a modern narrative of the past as well as the future. According to Freer, what lay beyond the physical, material world was a reality that transcended history and almost had a will of its own:

The effect of the work at Lung-men is so rich, so harmonious, so right in the relation of its parts and in the relation of the whole to its surroundings, that when I first saw it, I forgot for the time the stupendous schemes and designs lost in the overwhelming effect as a whole, it is all thrilling and living—with these strange figures in different planes of relief, bending with curve of niches and vault, gazing out into the faint grey stillness born of many centuries.⁵³

Freer's visionary ardour, Okakura's understanding of a cultural exchange between East and West, and Warner's lamentation of past greatness mirrored in present misery—all projected the monumental ancient certainties of Longmen onto the unsettling reality of technological and social change in the modern world. What in a distant past had been a place of pilgrimage like Longmen could still, over a century ago and even today, spark—as artefacts, as a site—intense

emotions about life and the universal future. Indeed, these voices, redolent of modernity, still reverberate in today's heritage practices.

This article is dedicated to the memory of Daniel H. Bays (1942–2019), a mentor and a friend who pioneered the study of Christianity in China together with John K. Fairbank of Harvard University.

Dong WANG (dongwang@shu.edu.cn) is professor of history, director of the Wellington Koo Institute for Modern China in World History at Shanghai University, and has been a research associate at the Fairbank Center of Harvard University since 2002. Dr. Wang currently serves on seven international editorial boards including the U.S.-based Association for Asian Studies, *American Foreign Relations Since 1600: A Guide to the Literature*, and the *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*. She is also a history club convenor for the Royal Asiatic Society Shanghai.

Her books in English include **Longmen's Stone Buddhas and Cultural Heritage: When Antiquity Met Modernity in China** (to be released in 2020), **The United States and China: A History from the Eighteenth Century to the Present** (2013, expanded 2nd ed. to be released in 2020), **Managing God's Higher Learning: U.S.-China Cultural Encounter and Canton Christian College (Lingnan University), 1888-1952** (2007), and **China's Unequal Treaties: Narrating National History** (2005).



References

- 1 Charles Lang Freer's travel journal, 19 October 1910; 28 October 1910, Charles Lang Freer Papers (CLF Papers thereafter), Freer and Sackler Gallery of Art Archive, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.
- 2 Freer's lecture on Longmen in Japan during his homeward trip, 1911, CLF Papers.
- 3 Ernst F. Fenollosa, "The Coming Fusion of East and West," *Harper's Magazine*, December 1898, pp. 115-22; Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, "The Collection of Mr. Charles L. Freer," *Pacific Era* 1, no. 2 (1907): 57-66.
- 4 William H. Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed: The Romantic Horizon in American Diplomacy 1800–1860* (New York: Wiley, 1966); Justin Jennings, *Globalization and the Ancient World* (Cambridge:

- Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 5 Kathleen Pyne, "Portrait of a Collector as an Agnostic: Charles Long Freer and Connoisseurship," *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 1 (1996): 75-97.
 - 6 Christopher Endy, "Travel and World Power: Americans in Europe, 1890-1917," *Diplomatic History* 22 (Fall 1998): 565-94.
 - 7 Andrew C. Jampoler, A. *Embassy to the Eastern Courts: America's Secret Pivot toward Asia, 1832-37* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2015).
 - 8 John R. Haddad, "China of the American Imagination: The Influence of Trade on US Portrayals of China, 1820-1850," in *Narratives of Free Trade: The Commercial Cultures of Early US-China Relations*, ed. by Kendall Johnson. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), pp. 57-82.
 - 9 Li Daoyuan (郦道元, ?-527), annotated and transl. by Chen Qiaoyi (陈桥驿) and supplemented by Wang Dong (王东), *Shuijing zhu* [水经注] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017, 1st ed. in 2016), vol. 15, pp. 119-21. Li served for the Northern Wei court.
 - 10 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, CLT/WHC/NOM 542, The State Administration of Cultural Heritage of the People's Republic of China, World Heritage Convention, Nomination of Cultural Properties for Inscription on the World Heritage List: China, Longmen Grottoes, 2001.
 - 11 Ni Xiyong (1911-42), *Luoyang Youji* (Shanghai: Zhonghuashuju, 1935).
 - 12 Amy McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i, 2007).
 - 13 David Hogge, "Freer's Longest Trip to China 1910-1911," *Arts of Asia* 41, no. 5 (2011): 122-34. Ni Xiyong (1911-42), *Luoyang Youji* (Shanghai: Zhonghuashuju, 1935), p. 1.
 - 14 Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, *Resa genom Asien: Fältmarskalken Friherre C. G. Mannerheims dagböcker förda under hans resa Kaspiska havet—Peking* (Stockholm: Lindfors Bokförlag A. B., 1940), vol. 2, p. 327.
 - 15 Thomas Lawton and Linda Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy of Art* (D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1993); Charles Lang Freer and James McNeill Whistler, *With Kindest Regards: the Correspondence of Charles Lang Freer and James McNeill Whistler, 1890-1903*, ed. by Linda Merrill (D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

- 16 Charles Lang Freer lecture notes, CLF Papers.
- 17 Charles Lang Freer lecture on Longmen, circa 1911 in Japan, CLF Papers.
- 18 *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* (London: William Heinemann, 1921, 2nd ed., 1st ed. in 1912), vol. 1.
- 19 Fenollosa, "The Collection of Mr. Charles L. Freer," p. 63; Aline Saarinen, *The Proud Possessors: the Lives, Times, and Tastes of some Adventurous American Art Collectors* (New York: Random House, 1958).
- 20 Charles Lang Freer, Lecture manuscript on the Buddhist ruins in Ceylon, 1908, date is the author's inference, CLF Papers.
- 21 Charles Lang Freer, Interview, the press cutting published in *Detroit News Tribune*, after February 1911, date suggested by David Hogge.
- 22 Freer, Interview, 1911.
- 23 Charles Lang Freer Papers. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the estate of Charles Lang Freer, FSA_A.01_01.6.6.1.45b.
- 24 Freer's letter on a hand scroll to Dwight William Tryon on 17 June 1895 from Amo-no Hashidate (Amanohashidate), Japan, CLF Papers.
- 25 Freer's lecture on Longmen in Japan, 1911.
- 26 Freer's lecture on Longmen in Japan, 1911.
- 27 Freer's lecture on Longmen in Japan, 1911.
- 28 Charles Lang Freer's letter to Dwight William Tryon, 27 July 1893, CLF Papers.
- 29 Charles C. Bonney (1831-1903), a Chicago lawyer, judge, teacher, and orator, was president of the World's Congress at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. The *New York Times* Obituary of Charles C. Bonney, 24 August 1903.
- 30 Bonney, Charles C. 1895. "The World's Parliament of Religions," *The Monist* 5, no. 3 (1895): 321-44, p. 330.
- 31 Photograph of Freer's hand written letter on a scroll to Dwight William Tryon on 17 June 1895. Dwight William Tryon papers. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of an anonymous donor and Linda Merrill, 1989, FSA.A1989.02_3.1-4.
- 32 Freer's hand written letter scroll to Dwight William Tryon on 17 June 1895.

- 33 Freer's letter from Kaifeng, Henan, China, to his business partner Frank Hecker (1846-1927), 24 October 1910, CLF Papers.
- 34 Theodore Roosevelt, "The Pacific Era," *The Pacific Era* 1, no. 1 (October 1907): 1-4.
- 35 Roosevelt, "The Pacific Era." Free and Roosevelt correspondence in 1912-1915, CLF Papers.
- 36 Theodore Roosevelt, "The Awakening of China," *The Outlook*, November 28, 1908, pp. 665-66.
- 37 Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen, *China: Ergebnisse eigener Reisen und daraufgegründeter Studien* (Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer, 1882), vol. 2, p. 501.
- 38 *The New York Times*, report, 20 March 1904.
- 39 Satoko Fujita Tachiki, "Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913) and Boston Brahmins," Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Michigan, 1986, p. 9 and p. 92.
- 40 Portrait of Okakura Kakuzō, December 17, 1910. Langdon Warner (LW) Papers, Harvard Houghton Library, 1900-1959, MS Am 3138, Box 2, Folder 30.
- 41 F. G. Notehelfer, "On Idealism and Realism in the Thought of Okakura Tensin," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 16, no. 2 (1990): 309-55.
- 42 Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East: The Spirit of Japanese Art: The Spirit of Japanese Art* (New York: Cosimo, 2007, 1st ed. in 1904), pp. 1 and 90-102.
- 43 Tachiki, "Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913) and Boston Brahmins," p. 69.
- 44 *The New York Times*, 1 September 1913. Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924) Papers, 1760-1956, Archives of Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Mass.
- 45 Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924) Papers, 1760-1956, Archives of Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Mass.
- 46 Okakura Kakuzō, *Okakura Tenshin Zenshū* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979-81), vol. 5, pp. 120-26, p. 492.
- 47 *Okakura Tenshin Zenshū*, vol. 5, p. 28, p. 51 and p. 151.
- 48 Okakura, "Kangakai ni oite," [鑑画会に於て] in *Okakura Tenshin Zenshū*, vol. 3, pp. 173-78.
- 49 Masako N. Racel, "Okakura Kakuzō's Art History, Cross-cultural Encounters, Hegelian Dialectics, and Darwinian Evolution," *Asian Review of World Histories* 2, no. 1 (2014): 17-45. Wang Yiyu, "The

Loouvre from China: A Critical Study of C. T. Loo and the Framing of Chinese Art in the United States, 1915-1950,” Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 2007, pp. 129-30.

50 Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century* (London: Ernest Ben, 1925), pp. 26-27.

51 Charles Lang Freer, Correspondence: Warner, Langdon, 6 September-25 December 1913, CLF Papers.

52 Langdon Warner’s letter to Charles Lang Freer on 27 November 1913, p. 8. Langdon Warner Papers, Harvard Houghton Library, MS Am 3138, Box 8, Folder 26 “American School of Archaeology Expedition, Freer, 1913-1914.”

53 Freer 1911 interview.

UNEXPLORED ARCHIVAL INFORMATION ON FU SINIAN'S STUDENT LIFE IN EUROPE AND THE PROPAGATION OF SCIENTIFIC HISTORY IN CHINA

BY DI LU

ABSTRACT:

Fu Sinian, founder of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, is well known for his leading role in the transformation of historical methodology in modern China. Fu's propagation of scientific history was closely associated with his ideological changes and education received in Europe in the 1920s. Some unexplored English and German archival documents cited in this article help to further delineate Fu's student life, especially his studies in Psychology and Experimental Psychology at University of London (today's University College London), University College and Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin (today's Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin). He was never awarded a degree by either university, nor enrolled at the University of Edinburgh, but his psychological training received in London and Berlin, together with his growing preference for science, qualified him for membership in the Preparatory Committee for the Institute of Psychology, Academia Sinica, and shaped his advocacy of scientific history.

Fu Sinian (1896–1950), born in Liaocheng, Shandong, is noted for his status as the founder of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 'the first institute in modern China that attempted a new approach to the study of Chinese history'.¹ The Academia Sinica was formally established on 9 June 1928, but its history dates back to May 1927.² Based on a similar institute at Sun Yat-sen University (Guangzhou), established by Fu in 1927,³ the Institute of History and Philology began its preparation in March 1928, and was formally founded in Guangzhou on 22 October 1928.⁴ Fu was in charge of the Institute from its foundation till his death.⁵ Interestingly, his name also appears in the list of members of the Preparatory Committee for the Institute of Psychology, Academia Sinica. This list was announced at the meeting on the Preparatory Committee for Academia Sinica, chaired by Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), the president of Academia

Sinica^a, on 20 November 1927.⁶ Cai, a pioneer in modern Chinese psychology,⁷ supported Fu's efforts to include a historical-philological institute in Academia Sinica.⁸ Nevertheless, given that Academia Sinica positioned itself as the highest national institution dedicated to scientific research and also did not originally reserve a seat for the Institute of History and Philology,⁹ it is somewhat strange to see the affiliation of such an institute with Academia Sinica. Moreover, Fu's membership in the two institutes for different areas of research also seems incomprehensible. To understand these events, it is necessary to probe into his European educational experiences.

Fu Sinian enrolled in the preparatory school of Peking University in 1913, and then became an undergraduate student in the Department of Chinese Literature at the same university in 1916. Before completing his undergraduate studies in the summer of 1919,¹⁰ he grew weary of traditional Chinese culture and scholarship and turned to Western learning.¹¹ Driven by his aspiration to understand the Chinese mental world and solve fundamental issues of modern China's national crisis, he left for Jinan, the capital of Shandong, on 29 May 1919 and later took an examination for the selection of students for overseas education. Then he departed for Beijing on 20 June.¹² On 2 July, the Ministry of Education formally announced that he would be one of the Shandong students officially supported to study abroad.¹³

Five months later, he travelled from Beijing to Shanghai on 26 December 1919,¹⁴ then boarded the ship 'Tydeus', and sailed from Shanghai for London on 3 January 1920, with the intention of studying philosophy.¹⁵ The ship stopped briefly at the port of Yokohama, and finally landed him in Liverpool on 21 February 1920. The following day, Fu reached London, and headed to 36 Bernard St., Russell Square¹⁶ where the Central Union of Chinese Students in Great Britain and Ireland was located and which he had named as his temporary address for correspondence.¹⁷ Some authors claim that, after reaching London, Fu first entered the University of Edinburgh, and then moved to University College.¹⁸ But Fu never mentioned his experience in Edinburgh, and the university cannot find any record of his registration.¹⁹

The historian Wang Fansen points out that, 'Fu spent three years at London University with the intention of obtaining an M.A. degree

a Cai Yuanpei had taken courses on psychology at the University of Leipzig during the period 1908-1911

in psychology, but he was unable to do so. Nevertheless, these three years were an important period in Fu's intellectual development'. Wang found three archival records at London University indicating Fu Sinian's admission as a Masters candidate in Psychology (Archival Nos.: 275598, 433492 and 433593), but generally speaking, Wang found 'almost no materials for this period except a notebook with several jottings in it'.²⁰ The unexplored registry file of Fu Sinian, preserved at University College London (Archival No.: 2438) reveals more details of Fu's student life in London. The first two of four sheets are (1) 'RE-ENTRY FORM', 'to be filled up in respect of each Session by MATRICULATED Students of the University who are re-entering the College', and (2) 'FIRST ENTRY FORM', 'for Non-Matriculated Students of the University wishing to enter the College'. Both are original documents completed by Fu. The other two sheets are (3) a reply to a letter of enquiry regarding Fu Sinian, dated 30 April 1976, and (4) five lines that very briefly record when Fu registered in the university and passed Bachelor's Honours papers.²¹

The following is the reply to the letter of enquiry, which outlines the course of Fu's studies at the university.

Dear Madam,

I am replying to your letter of 15 April 1976 concerning Mr Szenien FU.

I regret that our College records of students here in 1920s contain no detail and I cannot, therefore, supply information on the extra-curricular activities of this student.

Mr Fu was registered as a part-time evening student in the Faculty of Arts (Department of Phonetics) from April to June 1920. He was registered as a postgraduate student in the Faculty of Arts (Departments of Psychology and Physiology) from October 1920 to June 1922. He certainly appears to have been full-time during 1920-21. From October 1922 to June 1923 he was registered as a part-time postgraduate in the Faculty of Arts (Department of Psychology).

In June 1922 he passed University of London B.A. Honours papers in Psychology and it would appear that these were taken as a qualifying examination for a higher

degree. It seems that the University have confirmed that this was a qualifying examination, and that he was not awarded the B.A.

I regret that I cannot help you further.

Yours faithfully,
WPB

W. P. BOURNE (MRS)
Senior Assistant Registrar

This letter was clearly written in response to a query regarding Fu Sinian's study in London. It can be read together with the following five lines typed on the fourth sheet of paper:

FU, Szenien,
Ent. 1919–1920.
B.A. (Peking)
1920. Reg. under Stat. 113.
1922: Passed B.A. Hons. papers. (Psychology)

In a letter to Hu Shi (1891-1962), written in London on 1 August 1920, Fu disclosed that, after spending a semester attending classes at 'University College', he was determined to study psychology all his life. He acclaimed the erudition of Prof. Charles E. Spearman (1863–1945), head of the Department of Psychology, and meanwhile mentioned the fame of George D. Hicks (1862–1941) and Leonard T. Hobhouse (1864–1929). But he did not regard Spearman as a first-class scholar, as the latter had a heavy sense of pedantry. Fascinated by chemistry, physics and mathematics, he even regretted his previous six years devoted to preparatory education and Chinese literature in Beijing. According to the same letter, he once communicated to Spearman that he planned to register as a first-year student in the Faculty of Science in the following October, but Spearman discouraged this idea. Consequently, Fu was now doing some 'postgraduate work' and picking some undergraduate courses to take.²² It is certain that when Fu wrote this letter, he had finished the semester (April to June 1920), and decided to transform his identity from 'a part-time evening student in the Faculty of Arts (Department of Phonetics)' to 'a postgraduate

student in the Faculty of Arts (Departments of Psychology and Physiology)', as described in the letter above. However, since Fu had never expressed his intention to pursue phonetics before his departure for London, his starting his student career at University College with the Department of Phonetics seems perplexing.

The 'FIRST ENTRY FORM', the second sheet in the registry file of Fu Sinian, may help to explain why Fu initially registered at the Department of Phonetics. This form was signed by 'Szenien Fu' on 27 April 1920, and stamped with the office seal the following day. It contains some details of his first application to University of London, University College. According to the form^b, Fu's 'Address while attending the College' was '46, Sisters avenue, Clapham, London SW'; his 'Home Address' was '010 Gooer Mucut University, Peking'; his 'Date of Birth' was 'march 26th 1896'; his 'Previous place of education' was 'Graduate from Peking University'; his 'Proposed Course of Study' was in the Faculty of 'arts' and the amount of 'fees payable' was £4.4. Moreover, he selected four subjects offered by the Department of Phonetics: (1) 'Lectures on Colloquial English'^c (Index Letter: S33); (2) 'Pronunciation Ex.' (Index Letter: S6); (3) 'Pronunciation Ex.' (Index Letter: S7); (4) 'Ear-training Ex.' (Index Letter: S10). It is reasonable to consider that these subjects actually served as language courses for non-English speaking students.

In an article written for Chinese students who intended to study in Britain, published serially in Beijing during 12–15 August 1920, Fu asserted that it was not easy to cross the language barrier. Probably based on his own experience, he complained that candidates were not exempted from the English language entrance examination held by University College, that the examination favoured small topics, and that candidates would not be informed of the scope of the examination in advance. Despite this, he suggested that the atmosphere in University College was fresher than that in the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, and that University College also had first-class professors in different fields of study, and could provide

b The words 'avenue', 'march' and 'arts' were not capitalised. 'Gooer Mucut' are identified from the original words scribbled down by Fu Sinian.. This 'Home Address', possibly invented by Fu, is hard to understand because Fu's home town was Liaocheng, Shandong, rather than Beijing. The home address was also not his residential address in the Peking University, because he resided at 'Xizhao Sihao' (No. 4, West House).

c 'Colloquial' is obviously a misspelling of 'Colloquial' 'Ex.' is an abbreviation of 'Exercises', see University of London, *Regulations and Courses for Internal Students, for the Session 1920-21*, London: The University of London Press, 1920, p. 625.

good-quality education in arts, science, economics, medicine, and engineering.²³ Fu's letter to some of his friends in Beijing (including Xu Yanzhi, 1897-1940), sent from London on 30 May 1920 contains information about his choice of Britain and University College. It recounts that the only reason for his going to Britain rather than America was the close geographical relationship between Britain and the European continent, which would offer him more chances to see varied nations (which, according to the above mentioned article, would thereby diversify one's thought). Charles S. Myers (1873-1946) and William McDougall (1871-1938), in connection with the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, where psychology thrived, held obvious attractions for him. However, he did not go to the two universities, but chose University College, partly because he had insufficient official financial support; and also because University College, where he sensed a fresher atmosphere, offered complete training in psychology. Furthermore, the letter mentions his resolution to spend three years studying psychology, and reveals that he would study zoology, physiology, and mathematics beforehand.²⁴

The 'RE-ENTRY FORM' in the registry file of Fu Sinian is related to the 1922-1923 academic year. Signed by Fu on 6 June 1922, this form records his 'Address while attending the College' as follows: '31 St Mark's Crescent Regent's Pk. NW1'. According to the form, the 'Date of FIRST ENTRY' is 'Oct. 1920'; when Fu was 'in the 3rd year' of his study at the Faculty of Arts, and his 'Course of Study' was 'Psychology', beginning 'Oct. 1920' and ending 'June 1923'; the 'Subjects' column is merely filled with the words 'thesis work'; the amount of 'fees payable' for the item is £10.10; the mode of his study is described as 'Pt.', an abbreviation of part-time, which accords with the related information given in Mrs Bourne's 1976 letter above. It is noteworthy that Fu's ages indicated on this form (signed in 1922) is 21 and on the 'FIRST ENTRY FORM' (signed in 1920) is 19. The ages are both incorrect. Considering Fu was born in 1896, he should be 24 in 1920 and 26 in 1922.

In 1923 Fu Sinian left University College, and moved to Berlin. According to information from the University Archives of today's Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Fu's matriculated at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin on 19 May 1924, during the 114th Rectorate, with matriculation number 4692. His course of study was 'Exp. Psychology', i.e., Experimental Psychology. He studied at this

university from the summer semester of 1924 till the winter semester of 1926–1927. During this period, his residence address in Berlin was ‘Dahlem, Unter den Eichen 93’. While his course of study in the summer semester of 1924 and the winter semester of 1926–1927 is recorded as Experimental Psychology, his course of study in the winter semester of 1924–1925, the summer semester of 1925, the winter semester of 1925–1926, and the summer semester of 1926 is recorded as Psychology, probably an abbreviation of Experimental Psychology. The date of his leaving the university is recorded as ‘14.10.27’, i.e., 14 October 1927.,²⁵ He left Berlin before this, so this date may have been his scheduled departure date.

Although Fu enrolled in Experimental Psychology, he actually had a wide interest in Western learning, and ‘attended a very wide variety of courses’ in Berlin, including ‘logic, medical psychology, anthropology, Sanskrit, and phonetics’; and before he left Berlin, he had ‘gradually turned toward an orientological and philological approach to learning.’²⁶ While the scheduled date for the completion of Fu’s study at the university was the end of the winter semester of 1927., he interrupted his study due to, according to his own words, his ‘moral weakness’, as he thought that his mother would probably die if he continued to stay in Europe. Fu left Berlin at the end of August 1926, remained in Paris for a short period, then he went to Italy and departed for China, arriving in Hong Kong on 30 October of the same year.²⁷

The psychological training that Fu Sinian received in Europe qualified him for membership in the Preparatory Committee for the Institute of Psychology, Academia Sinica. But following Fu’s return to China, as Wang Fansen points out, his reputation was established in the field of history rather than psychology, despite being, since 1927 ‘recognized as one of the chief architects of modern Chinese learning’. Fu emphasised ‘objective and scientific rigor’ in historical research, which he hoped would ‘help divorce history from the traditional moral and political indoctrination of the past’, and ‘promote the importance of historical facts over theoretical concepts’.²⁸ This is associated with, as Axel Schneider states, Fu’s ‘positivistic conviction’ that ‘it is possible to eliminate metaphysics from human experience and research.’²⁹

In the first annual report (1928) of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Fu clearly stated that the Academia Sinica was founded to develop modern science, so research in history and

philology should not be part of the work of the Academia Sinica if its pursuit did not accord with that of natural sciences.³⁰ The Institute of History and Philology was therefore established in the Academia Sinica because it treated history and philology from the perspective of natural sciences. In the inaugural issue of the bulletin of the Institute, published in October 1928, Fu expatiated on the objectives of the Institute of History and Philology, stressing that historical studies in the modern period drew on all the tools supplied by natural sciences. He also directed members of the Institute to conduct history and philology research like biology, geology, etc.³¹ Fu's strong interest in science, developing during his study in Europe where a fresh scientific atmosphere prevailed, helps explain these conceptions.

Di Lu (ludiresearch@gmail.com) holds a PhD in History from the University College London. He was the winner of the Charles Leslie Junior Scholar Essay Award in 2016. His research mainly focuses on transnational history of modern overseas students and science.



References

- 1 Q. Edward Wang, *Inventing China Through History: The May Fourth Approach to Historiography*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 124.
- 2 Anonymous, 'Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Diyici Yuanwu Huiyi Jilu [Memoir of the First Conference on the Administration of the Academia Sinica]', in: *Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Shiqi Niandu Zongbaogao*, Nanjing: Head Office of Academia Sinica, 1929, pp. 53-54; Anonymous, 'Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Diyici Gongzuo Baogao [First Report on the Work of the Academia Sinica]', in: *Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Shiqi Niandu Zongbaogao*, Nanjing: Head Office of Academia Sinica, 1929, pp. 262-264; Zhou Ning (ed.), 'Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Gaikuang (1928-1948 Nian) [General Review of Academia Sinica, 1928-1948]', *Minguo Dang'an* [Archives of the Republic of China], 1990, (4): 55.
- 3 Zhang Rongfang, 'Fu Sinian Zai Zhongshan Daxue [Fu Sinian in Sun Yat-sen University]', *Zhongshan Daxue Xuebao: Shehui Kexue Ban* [Journal of Sun Yat-sen University: Social Science Edition], 2004, (2): 68-74.
- 4 Fu Sinian, 'Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo

- Shiqi Niandu Baogao [Report of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica in 1928]’, in: Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Wenshuchu (ed.), *Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Shiqi Niandu Zongbaogao* [General Report of Academia Sinica in 1928], Nanjing: Head Office of Academia Sinica, 1929, p. 215; Wang Maoqin, ‘Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo Zhengshi Chengli De Riqi [Date of the Establishment of the Institute of History and Philology]’, *Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo Sishi Zhounian Jinian Tekan* [Special Issue on the Fortieth Anniversary of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica], 1968, 1: 191-204.
- 5 Anonymous, ‘Fu Si-nien’, in: Howard L. Boorman (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (Vol. 2), New York: Columbia University Press, 1968, pp. 43-46; Wang Maoqin, ‘Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo Dashi Nianbiao [Chronicle of Events Concerning the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica]’, *Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo Sishi Zhounian Jinian Tekan* [Special Issue on the Fortieth Anniversary of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica], 1968, 1: 191-204.
- 6 Anonymous, ‘Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Xinlixue Yanjiusuo Choubei Weiyuan Minglu [List of Members of the Preparatory Committee for the Institute of Psychology, Academia Sinica]’, *Daxueyuan Gongbao* [Bulletin of University Council], 1928, (1): 159; Anonymous, ‘Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Choubeihui Ji Ge Zhuanmen Weiyuan Chengli Dahui Jishi [Memoir of the Conference on the Foundation of the Preparatory Committee for Academia Sinica and Its Professional Committee Members, 20 November 1927]’, in: *Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Shiqi Niandu Zongbaogao*, Nanjing: Head Office of Academia Sinica, 1929, pp. 415-420.
- 7 David B. Baker (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology: Global Perspectives*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 97-98.
- 8 Fu Sinian, *Fu Sinian Yizha* [The Letters of Fu Sunian, Vol. 1], Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo, 2011, p. 116. See also Du Zhengsheng, ‘Wuzhong Shengyou De Zhiye——Fu Sinian De Shixue Geming Yu Shiyusuo De Chuangli [An Ambition That Came out of Nothing——Fu Sinian’s Historiographical Revolution and the Establishment of the Institute of History and Philology]’, *Gujin Lunheng* [Disquisitions on the Past & Present], 1998, (1): 13.

- 9 Anonymous, 'Zhonghua Minguo Daxueyuan Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Zuzhi Tiaoli [Organisational Regulations of Academia Sinica, University Council, 4 July 1927]', *Daxueyuan Gongbao* [Bulletin of University Council], 1928, (1): 63-66; Anonymous, 'Xiuzheng Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Zuzhi Tiaoli [Revised Organisational Regulations of Academia Sinica, 10 April 1928]', *Daxueyuan Gongbao* [Bulletin of University Council], 1928, (5): 28-31; Anonymous, 'Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Zuzhifa [Organisational Law of Academia Sinica, 9 November 1928]', in: *Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Shiqi Niandu Zongbaogao*, Nanjing: Head Office of Academia Sinica, 1929, pp. 1-3.
- 10 Han Fuzhi, 'Fu Sinian Xiansheng Nianpu [Chronicle of Mr. Fu Sinian]', *Taida Lishi Xuebao* [Historical Inquiry], 1996, (20): 237-244.
- 11 Wang Fansen, *Fu Ssu-nien: A Life in Chinese History and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 19-54. Cf. Fu Sinian, 'Xinchao Fakan Zhiqushu [A Note on the Purport of The Renaissance]', *Xinchao* [The Renaissance], 1919, 1(1): 1-4; Fu Sinian, 'Rensheng Wenti Faduan [The Beginning of Life Problems]', *Xinchao*, 1919, 1(1): 5-17.
- 12 Fu Sinian, *Fu Sinian Yizha* (Vol. 1), p. 12.
- 13 Anonymous, 'Liuxuesheng Diershi Shiyuan Jige Gesheng Pingjun Fenshu Bangshi [Announcement of the Average Score Obtained by the Students Who Passed the Second Examination for Overseas Study]', *Jiaoyu Gongbao* [Bulletin of Education], 1919, (8): 3-5. See also Wang Huanchen (ed.), *Liuxue Jiaoyu: Zhongguo Liuxue Jiaoyu Shiliao* [Overseas Education: Historical Sources on Chinese Overseas Education, Book 3], Taipei: Guoli Bianyiguan, 1980, p. 1562.
- 14 Anonymous, 'Fu Sinian Xiansheng Nianpu Jianbian [A Brief Chronicle of Mr. Fu Sinian]', in: Ouyang Zhesheng (ed.), *Fu Sinian Quanji* [A Complete Collection of Writings by Fu Sinian, Vol. 7], Changsha: Hunan Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002, p. 402. Cf. Anonymous, 'Fu Sinian Yu Pingbo Er Xiansheng Laishen [Fu Sinian and Yu Pingbo Arrived in Shanghai]', *Huanqiu Zhongguo Xueshenghui Zhoukan* [The World's Chinese Students' Federation Weekly], 1920, (14): 2.
- 15 Anonymous, 'Cheng Titisi Chuan Chufa Zhi Liuxuesheng [The Students Going to Study Abroad Took the Ship Named Titisi]',

- Shenbao*, 5 January 1920, Section 10. About seven months later, Fu himself mentioned in a letter the day when he embarked on the ship in Shanghai, i.e. 2 January, see Fu Sinian, *Fu Sinian Yizha* (Vol. 1), p. 14.
- 16 Fu Sinian, *Fu Sinian Yizha* (Vol. 1), p. 14; The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; *Board of Trade: Commercial and Statistical Department and Successors: Inwards Passenger Lists*; Class: BT26; Piece: 668. In this archive Fu Sinian's name is spelt as 'Fu Szenien'.
- 17 Xu Yanzhi, 'Xinchaoshe jishi [An Account of the Society of the Renaissance]', *Xinchao*, 1919, 2(2): 398-402; L. Y. Chen, 'Anglo-Chinese Friendship', *The Nation*, 1920, 26(20): 673-674.
- 18 For example, see Hu Guotai and Guo Weiwei (eds.), *Liu Zhen Xiansheng Koushu Lishi* [An Oral History by Liu Zhen], Beijing: Jiuzhou Chubanshe, 2012, p. 200; Xia Zhengnong and Chen Zhili (eds.), *Da Cihai: Zhongguo Jinxiandai Shi Juan* [A Great Encyclopedic Dictionary: Volume of Modern Chinese History], Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 2013, p. 581.
- 19 Information provided by Caspian Reid of the Centre for Research Collections at Edinburgh University Library. Through email, on 4 April 2018.
- 20 Wang Fansen, *Fu Ssu-nien: A Life in Chinese History and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 56-58.
- 21 Archival documents provided by Robert Winckworth, Archives Assistant at the Records Office of University College London. Through email, on 15 March 2018.
- 22 Fu Sinian, *Fu Sinian Yizha* (Vol. 1), pp. 16-17. For the lives of the three scholars, see Morris Ginsberg, 'Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse', *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 1929, 4(16): 442-452; Stanley V. Keeling, 'George Dawes Hicks', *Mind*, 1941, 50(199): 306-309; Patricia Lovie and Alexander D. Lovie, 'Charles Edward Spearman, F. R. S. (1863-1945)', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 1996, 50(1): 75-88.
- 23 Fu Sinian, 'Yao Liuxue Yingguo De Ren Zuixian Yao Zhidao De Shi [The Underlying Things to Be Known by Those Wishing to Study in Britain]', in: *Fu Sinian Quanji* (Vol. 1), pp. 403-414.
- 24 Fu Sinian, 'Liuying Jixing [An Account of Study in Britain]', in: *Fu Sinian Quanji* (Vol. 1), Changsha: Hunan Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2000, pp. 399-402. For the lives of Charles S. Myers and William

- McDougall, see Frederic C. Bartlett, 'Charles Samuel Myers, 1873-1946', *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 1948, 5(16): 767-777; Major Greenwood and May Smith, 'William McDougall, 1871-1938', *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 1940, 3(8): 39-62.
- 25 Archival information provided by Sabrina Rübisch at the University Archives of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Through email, on 25 April 2018.
- 26 Wang Fansen, *Fu Ssu-nien: A Life in Chinese History and Politics*, pp. 62, 64. Cf. Yue Nan, *Chen Yinke Yu Fu Sinian* [Chen Yinke and Fu Sinian], Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 2014, p. 42.
- 27 Fu Sinian, *Fu Sinian Yizha* (Vol. 1), pp. 43, 52, 96-97; Hu Shi, *Hu Shi Riji Quanbian* [A Complete Collection of Hu Shi's Diary, Vol. 4, 1923-1927], Hefei: Anhui Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001, p. 273.
- 28 Wang Fansen, 'Fu Ssu-nien: The Latter Days of a May Fourth Youth', *The Gest Library Journal*, 1993, 6(1): 8.
- 29 Axel Schneider, 'Between Dao and History: Two Chinese Historians in Search of a Modern Identity for China', *History and Theory*, 1996, 35(4): 71.
- 30 Fu Sinian, 'Guoli Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo Shiqi Niandu Baogao [Annual Report of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica in 1928]', in: *Fu Sinian Quanji* (Vol. 6), p. 9.
- 31 Fu Sinian, 'Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo Gongzuo Zhi Zhiqu [The Objectives of the Work of the Institute of History and Philology]', *Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo Jikan* [Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica], 1928, 1(1): 3-10.

‘WE PROTEST AGAINST THIS FEARFUL TERROR ... –’

THE CHINA LEAGUE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND ITS INTERACTIONS WITH GERMANY IN 1933

BY SILVIA KETTELHUT

ABSTRACT:

In 1933 the China League for Civil Rights protested against violations of human rights in Germany. Shortly after the burning of books in Berlin, several core members of the League met with the acting Consul General of Germany in Shanghai to present a letter. The representatives of the league included several high profile Chinese intellectuals whose high presence forced an official response from the German ambassador and ensured that the protest would be printed in leading newspapers of the day. This article examines the reception of this letter and the reactions to it, both officially and in the public domain, and also introduces the commemorative artwork created more than 20 years after the event.

INTRODUCTION

Human rights have been a topic for discussion between Germany and China in recent years, but an incident occurring almost ninety years ago demonstrates this is not a new experience. In 1933, the China League for Civil Rights protested against violations of human rights in Germany. Its core members were leading Chinese intellectuals: Song Qingling, widow of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic of China; Cai Yuanpei, president of the Academia Sinica, who reformed the Chinese educational system according to the German model; and Lu Xun, the foremost Chinese author of the 20th century.

On 18 December 1932 the Shanghai paper *Shenbao* (The Shun Pao) published a ‘Manifest about the Start of the China League for Civil Rights’, which was authored by Song Qingling, Cai Yuanpei, Yang Quan (also known as Yang Xingfo), Li Zhaohuan and Lin Yutang, under the collective name of Preparation Committee. At a press conference at the end of December, this Committee declared the founding of its Provisional Executive Committee, with Song Qingling as its Chairwoman, Cai Yuanpei as Vice-Chair, and Lin Yutang as Secretary General.¹

Its main activities were campaigning for the liberation or at least more humane treatment by the Guomindang (KMT) of politically persecuted avant-garde intellectuals, in particular communists and revolutionary students in China, and collecting funds for them.² The League supported them in court proceedings and by writing telegrams and proclamations, and it undertook to organise the support of the masses.

While the attention of the League was focused primarily on China, three members of the Shanghai Branch of the League were foreigners: the journalist and writer Agnes Smedley, the journalist and political scientist Harold Robert Isaacs, and the journalist George M. Battey. When George Bernard Shaw visited Shanghai in February 1933, the League hosted him. Both Shaw and Song Qingling were honorary presidents of the International League Against Imperialism.

The League attempted to be impartial, but over time its political bias towards progress, revolution and communism became more evident. Some scholars describe it as a politically active group founded and led by the Chinese Communist Party; others characterise it as a supporting branch committee under the Communist International.³ As Song Qingling put it in 'The Tasks of the China League for Civil Rights', 'This league is not a political party', and 'its aim is not the fight for political power', 'but from another perspective one has to acknowledge that the questions we want to solve are political'.⁴

Lu Xun joined the League in January 1933. According to his membership certificate, issued on 11 January 1933, he was member number 20. The certificate, however, also carries the number 3; this most probably shows the importance of his membership to the League.⁵

On 17 January 1933 the Shanghai Branch of the Executive Committee of the League was founded, and Lu Xun became one of its nine elected members. In his diary, Lu Xun writes on 17 January that he 'took part at a meeting of the League for Civil Rights, elected executive member'.⁶

However, Lu Xun was not a member of the national Provisional Executive Committee that led the League, only a member of the Shanghai Branch, and he did not assume any special tasks. Some researchers hold the view that he remained rather passive because he doubted that the League would exist for a long time.⁷ In a letter dated 12 February 1933 to his friend, the author and literary critic Tai

Jingnong, Lu Xun wrote ‘the League for Civil Rights might not have a long life, next time I will tell you more’.⁸

The only time that the League became active in response to a situation outside China was in its protest against the treatment of intellectuals, authors, and Jews by the National Socialists in Germany.⁹ On Saturday, 13 May 1933 its representatives handed over a protest letter to the German Consulate General in Shanghai. As an important member of the League, Lu Xun was part of the delegation.

The relationship between Lu Xun and Germany was multi-faceted. At the Kobun Gakuin Institute in Tokyo, Lu Xun studied German in addition to Japanese. The Shanghai Lu Xun Museum exhibits a list of German books that Lu Xun planned to order from the German publisher Quelle & Meyer in Leipzig while he was in Japan. The list probably dates from the period 1906-1909 and contains books on zoology und botany, various works on literary history and on painting and paleontology.

He also admired the style of the German woodcut artist Käthe Kollwitz, bringing copies of her work to China, and providing information about them. Later in his life Lu Xun promoted modern Chinese woodcuts.

The League was concerned about developments in Germany. Hitler had seized power at the end of January 1933. As early as March 1933, the systematic persecution of Jewish, Marxist, pacifist, and other opposition authors had started, including actions against the so-called “non-German” spirit (*Aktionen wider den undeutschen Geist*) that culminated in the burning of books in Berlin and other German cities. The earliest such burnings took place in March, but most of them were staged in May. The burning of books at the Bebelplatz – a square close to the State Opera in Berlin – took place on the evening of 10 May 1933. It was probably the immediate cause for the protest of the League at the German Consulate General three days later.^a

According to a note that Lu Xun entered into his diary on 11 May 1933 – one day after the burning of books in Berlin – he went to the Academia Sinica, where the League held their meetings, in the afternoon. We do not know what happened there, but it seems likely

a Today, there is an impressive memorial at Bebelplatz, an underground installation by the Israeli sculptor Micha Ullman: a set of empty bookcases visible through a glass plate inserted into the cobblestones. Besides, a line by the German poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) has been engraved on a plaque: ‘Das war ein Vorspiel nur, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen.’ (‘That was only a prelude; where books are being burnt, people will in the end also be burnt.’)

that the members of the League discussed whether and how they should react and finally decided to hand over a protest letter to the German Consulate General.

On 13 May, Lu Xun wrote in his diary 'in the morning to the Academia Sinica, afterwards to the German Consulate'.¹⁰ The German Consulate General was at that time located at Huangpu Road 9/10, in a building dating from 1884/85.

As the KMT regarded the brutal persecutions in Germany with some sympathy, the protest of the League can also be seen as a veiled protest against the KMT government.

Various sources deal with the League's visit to the German Consulate General. One is the report by Acting Consul General Richard C. W. Behrend to the German Legation in Beiping dated 15 May 1933, to which the protest letter is attached, as well as related reports and documents, which will be examined in detail in this article.

The League's visit was also the subject of a woodcut, which the renowned Chinese artist Zhao Yannian (1924-2014) completed in 1956.

REPORT BY ACTING CONSUL GENERAL RICHARD C. W. BEHREND TO THE GERMAN LEGATION IN BEIPING OF 15 MAY 1933

The protest letter and various related documents to which this paper refers are kept in the Political Archive of the Auswärtiges Amt – the German Foreign Office – in Berlin. The file in which the documents are kept belonged to 'Referat D', the Division for German Affairs, and is entitled 'Lügenmeldungen über Mißhandlungen, Inhaftierungen usw.; Protesteingaben politischer Gefängnisinsassen' (Libellous reports on maltreatment, incarceration etc.; protests of political prisoners).¹¹

According to the report, the visit of 'Frau Sun Yat-sen' (Mrs Song Qingling) was announced by telephone shortly in advance. The representatives of the China League for Civil Rights were received by the Vice Consul General, Mr Richard C. W. Behrend. The Consul General, Heinrich Freiherr Rüdts von Collenberg-Bödighheim, had left Shanghai at the beginning of March of that year; that summer he would be posted to Mexico. Thus it fell upon the Vice Consul General to receive the visitors.

The delegation, headed by Song Qingling, handed over a protest letter signed by Song Qingling as Chairwoman of the League and by the 'former Education Minister and present President of the Academia

Sinica His Excellency Cai Yuanpei' as Vice-Chairman.

According to the report they were accompanied by the former Education Minister and present Vice-President of the Academia Sinica Yang Qun, the 'professor at the Academia Sinica and well-known writer Lin Yutang; the well-known writer and pioneer of the modern Chinese language movement, Lu Xun, the well-known author of the book *Daughter of Earth* and former correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Agnes Smedley and the likewise well-known publisher of the "China Forum" Harold Isaacs'.

PROTEST AGAINST SUPPRESSION

The protest letter first states the goals of the League in general: The fight against terror in China and for the civil and human rights of the Chinese people as well as the formation of an alliance with progressive forces throughout the world. It then states that the League protests against the 'brutal Terror and Reaction prevailing in Germany'.

The League points out that it has learned from various sources 'representing all shades of political opinion' that, since the Fascist regime was established in Germany, 30,000 to 40,000 workers and thousands of working class leaders and intellectuals had been arrested. Prisoners were tortured in jails, in the barracks of the Nazi Storm Troops and in concentration camps.

The protest letter then deals with the situation of the working class: their printing presses, property, and funds had been confiscated or stolen by the Fascists. It says that 'there is no freedom of the press, of speech, of assembly, no right of organisation, no right of any activity of the masses to better their conditions'. These rights – freedom of the press, of speech and of assembly – were the same rights the League was fighting for in China.

The protest goes on to describe intellectual and cultural life in Germany. It states that the greatest scientists like Albert Einstein, Magnus Hirschfeld, and thousands of others had been persecuted and driven into exile. Other intellectuals like Leon Feuchtwanger and Thomas Mann had been forced to leave the country. Great artists like Max Liebermann, Käthe Kollwitz, and the composer Bruno Walter were deprived of any opportunity to work.

The press, the letter points out, exists under the iron heel of the Fascists. The entire working class press, even liberal intellectual organs like the *Weltbühne* were suppressed and their editors imprisoned.

‘The persecution of the Jews and anti-Semitic pogroms, systematically organised and encouraged by the German government and the Fascist Party’ are described as a ‘sign of human and cultural retrogression to the Middle Ages and the darkest days of Czarist Russia.’

The latest act of vandalism, the burning of books of progressive, proletarian, and Jewish writers were ‘acts such as have occurred only during the darkest days of ignorance and barbarism in our human history. Such was the fate of works of great scientists and thinkers in the ancient past, who further paid for their advanced thought at the stake.’

The letter then refers to reports in the press, saying that: ‘These facts [...] have been reported in responsible newspapers in Europe and in America.’

It states that even conservative organs like the *New York Times* had reported on 15, 20 and 21 March that the

[...] torturing of communists, Socialists, Radical and Jewish Deputies, newspaper men, lawyers and writers, are daily published in the newspapers of Vienna. [...] Dr Ossietsky, editor of the *Weltbuehne*, had his teeth knocked out by a revolver butt. [...] The eyes of other prisoners are gouged out, their hair torn out, hands burned, heads and bones broken. ... it is not unusual to find, on almost any morning, in the woodlands surrounding Berlin the bodies of men killed by bullets or beatings; [...] the police report them as “unidentified suicides”.

The letter goes on to say that Leon Feuchtwanger had written in the *New York Times* of 21 March about ‘despairing stories of women whose husbands and sons have been dragged from bed and inhumanly beaten, and about whom nothing more had been heard or seen.’

The *Volksrecht* of Switzerland had related that ‘There are bourgeois newspapers in Germany which report that corpses of men with gouged out eyes and teeth knocked out [...] have been dragged from the Landwehr Canal in Berlin.’

The letter concludes with the words ‘we protest against this fearful Terror against the German working class and progressive thinkers, a Terror which is crippling the social, intellectual and cultural life of

Germany'.¹²

BEHREND'S REPORT TO THE GERMAN LEGATION

In his report to the German Legation at Beiping of 15 May 1933, Acting Consul General Behrend writes that he first rejected the letter because of its political character. He suggested that the League hand it over directly to the German Legation in Beiping, which – as a diplomatic, not only a consular mission – was the competent authority for political issues. But, according to the report, Song Qingling and Cai Yuanpei stated that they could neither go to Beiping nor to Nanking – where the German Legation had an office – to hand over the letter personally. They asked Behrend to forward the letter to the Legation.

Finally, Behrend agreed. In his report he writes that he accepted the letter especially out of consideration for Cai Yuanpei. In fact, Cai Yuanpei had had a close relationship with Germany; he had spent some five years there, mostly at university.^b His ideas about education and an ideal university for China as well as the university reforms undertaken under his leadership were profoundly influenced by his studies and investigations in Germany.

Behrend states that he explicitly pointed out to his visitors that both German leftist and foreign newspapers exaggerated events in Germany. Some circles were indeed pursuing tendentious and libellous agitation abroad with a view to undermining the reputation of the German government. However, the government had taken immediate and forceful countermeasures to counter these reports, and according to official and private reports, peace and order had quickly been re-established.

He furthermore reports that Song Qingling presented him with a collection of clippings from German and foreign newspapers that contained some 'descriptions of individual excesses'. After having looked at them cursorily, he handed them back.

ECHOES, RESPONSES AND RAMIFICATIONS

For both the League and the Consulate General the echo in the Shanghai press was of prime importance. The League therefore sent

b He went to Berlin in 1907, studying philosophy, psychology, art and art history at the University of Leipzig from 1908 until the end of 1911. He returned to China when the Qing Dynasty had ended. In 1912 Cai again travelled to Leipzig, but returned to China at the request of Sun Yat-sen six months later. In 1924 he went to Hamburg to pursue ethnic studies, but because of political disturbances he could not pursue this plan and returned to China.

copies of its protest letter to the leading newspapers, which published it either in its entirety or in part. The German missions in China on the other hand asked some papers not to publish the text in full.

In his report of 15 May, the Acting Consul General also briefly describes how the letter was reflected in the press. According to this report, the first newspaper to inform him about the protest – as early as on the evening of 13 May – was the English language, American-owned, pro-China *Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury*. It listed the names of the seven members of the delegation and describes Behrend's reaction:

[...]the consulate was not concerned with political matters but promised that the document would be transmitted to the German Legation. He expressed the view that troubles in Germany have been exaggerated in press reports abroad and that the nation has been an object of adverse propaganda.

The Chinese-American *The China Press* (Ta-lu pao) published the entire letter. Other non-Chinese papers published parts on 14 May, but without a commentary of their own.

Of the Chinese papers, the *Shenbao* (The Shun Pao) summarized the letter, though it did not mention the presence of Lin Yutang, Isaacs, nor Smedley. The *Shih Shih Xin Pao* (The China Times) published a translation of the editorial comment of the *Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury* without quoting from the protest letter.

On 19 May, the German Consulate General in Tientsin (Tianjin) noted reports of the protest letter in the press. It had been asked by the Legation to prevent the press from publishing the protest letter in full. The author of the report (Dr Hensel) stated that some papers had indeed promised him not to publish its content. This report goes into great detail about what exactly the various papers had chosen to publish.

The German missions also made their point of view known in the diplomatic and consular corps. At the meeting of the Shanghai consular corps on 16 May the Acting Consul General made a declaration in which - according to the protocol of the meeting as quoted by the Consulate General in a report dated 24 May to the Legation in Beijing – he was able to declare that:

[...] the allegations made of atrocities and discrimination were absolutely groundless and evidently were made with the object of undermining and discrediting the authority of the present Government. There had been minor disturbances when the new Government took over but peace and order had been restored and full protection was assured for everyone in Germany, foreigners included [...]. The Senior Consul thanked his German colleague for his declaration.

The Consulate General in Shanghai, as promised, forwarded the protest letter to the German Legation at Beijing. But, according to the report of Minister Dr Oskar Trautmann to the Foreign Office dated 7 June, he refused to accept it and returned it to Song Qingling with an accompanying letter. In this he stated that the information quoted by the League was either unconfirmed propaganda or excessively exaggerated and was not in the least trustworthy. Where isolated incidents had occurred, the government and relevant authorities had severely condemned them and had immediately remedied the situation.

Several papers had published the protest letter. Apart from attempting to prevent the press from publishing its full text, the German missions sent them the letter of the German minister with which he rejected the protest letter's content. Trautmann on 18 May asked the local Reuters office to publish the information about his refusal to accept it. The text that he attached to this request reads as follows:

The German Minister Dr Trautmann, having received a letter of protest from the China League for Civil Rights at Shanghai against the alleged brutal terror prevailing in Germany, to-day returned this protest to Mrs Sun Yat-sen, the president of the said League. In his accompanying letter he points out that the protest is based on false or utterly exaggerated news and that in reality there has been no terror and no pogroms in Germany, as neutral observers have repeatedly confirmed. The German Minister stated that he therefore is not in a position to accept the protest

of the China League.

On 22 May *The China Press*, which in its political orientation was close to the League, published the telegram by Reuters (of 19 May) stating that the protest letter was returned to Song Qingling and detailing the content of Trautmann's accompanying letter to her.

On 23 May the government-friendly Tianjin German language daily *Deutsch-Chinesische Nachrichten* after a short introduction fully quotes the letter to Song Qingling:

Peping, 18 May 1933
Madame Soong Ching-Ling,
Chairman of the China League for Civil Rights,
533 Avenue du Roi Albert
Shanghai.

The reports referred to in the letter are either unconfirmed propaganda or excessively exaggerated and not in the least trustworthy. Pogroms against Jews or similar riots have not taken place anywhere in Germany. Where isolated excesses have occurred, the German authorities have countered them energetically. The government and all leading entities have stringently criticised the few excesses that have taken place and have immediately remedied the situation. This has been confirmed by all neutral observers in Germany. It is inadmissible to create a full picture of the situation in Germany from tendentious reports, as has been attempted in the letter of the League for Civil Rights, and I highly regret that it was handed over to the press for publication in China.

Given these circumstances I am not in a position to accept the letter and herewith return it.

(signed) Trautmann
German Minister.

How did the German language paper *Deutsche Shanghai Zeitung*, which was loyal to the Nazi Party, reflect the whole matter? On 16 May it described the handover of the protest letter and its rejection by Trautmann. It refrains from quoting the protest letter „der wir die

Ehre eines Abdrucks wegen ihrer geringen Bedeutung nicht erweisen wollen” (‘which because of its small significance we shall not honour by printing’). ‘Those who would like to read it could do so in the foreign press.’ It lists all members of the delegation that visited the Consulate General and describes the reaction of the Acting Consul General, using more or less the wording of his report to the German Legation in Beijing.

It also mentions the echo in the local press: After the *Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury* had published an article under the headline ‘Delegation calls at German Consulate to Protest “Terror”’, most other local papers in English or Chinese language had also reported about the protest.

In a somewhat apologetic manner the *Deutsche Shanghai Zeitung* states that it had tried to get more information from the Consulate General. ‘But the Consulate was closed on Saturday afternoon and did not receive phone calls until 7 pm, so the paper waited until Monday ... (15 May). We think this was a correct decision, because now we can also include the view of the Consulate.’

The paper states ‘from our point of view the step should not be taken too seriously. These high-ranking personalities have fallen victim to communist propaganda.’

It then requests that foreigners should not interfere in German domestic issues, and suggests that those fighting for ‘human rights’ should first take care of human rights in their own country. It gives a few examples of violations of the law in China, including one case that had been reported by the *Peking and Tientsin Star*. The article requests Harold Isaacs not to concern himself with purely German issues. It concludes that the paper – or the Germans? – had always abstained from interfering in China’s domestic politics and would continue to do so.

The leading German associations in Shanghai made a counter-statement to the protest letter: On 18 May, at a meeting of the German Chamber of Commerce, members of the Chamber, of the German Association and of the National Socialist Party China Branch and the Shanghai Branch were present, a declaration against the protest letter was made. It was signed by the German Association and the German Chamber of Commerce – but not by the National Socialists – and was published in the *Deutsche Shanghai Zeitung* on 19 May. The content of the declaration is the following:

We do not intend to attribute major significance to the declarations of this League which is known as a group of protesters against anything and everything except against the situation in Soviet Russia. Yet the nearly ridiculous insistence with which this group, in the face of overwhelming proof to the contrary and at a time when the “horror crusade” has long been unmasked as slander of the lowest kind, recurs to horror propaganda cannot be regarded with total indifference.

The declaration seeks support from so-called “neutral” reports of “eyewitnesses”.

We just want to point to neutral reports of eyewitnesses like Mr Sackett, the former ambassador of the United States to Berlin, Herzog, aide-de-camp of the King of Italy, Mr Vernon Bartlett etc. We are content to note that most local daily newspapers have refrained from commenting on that unfortunate event.

According to a report of the German Consulate General of 22 May to the German Legation in Beiping, this declaration was translated into the relevant languages and sent to all papers that had published the text of the protest letter or its content. The report confirms that the protest letter, the letter of the Minister and a propaganda leaflet of the *Aufklärungsausschuss Hamburg-Bremen* (Enlightenment Committee Hamburg-Bremen) had immediately been forwarded to Song Qingling. That committee was an agency of the chambers of commerce of the port cities Hamburg and Bremen for public relations abroad, which from 1933 onwards served propaganda purposes.

EARLY AWARENESS OF THE DANGER OF NAZISM

Thus the German government firmly rejected the acceptance and content of the protest letter, and furthermore tried to limit the damage its publication could do to Germany’s reputation.

The protest of the League could not, of course, prevent the National Socialist regime from continuing the persecution of Jews, intellectuals, socialists, communists, and others. But for Shanghai in particular

and China in general the protest strengthened – at an early time – the awareness that dangerous developments were taking place in Germany.

In May 1933 there were not too many people abroad who had already recognized the extent of the threat that the National Socialist regime posed to European values and to peace and security in the world. Even some diplomats posted to Berlin viewed the “young” politicians who proclaimed change after a period of economic crisis as a perhaps blustering, but generally not an ill-meaning, and certainly not a dangerous lot.

That Lu Xun was one of those who very early on recognised the real aims of the National Socialists and the dangers emanating from their policies adds a specific – and significant – political dimension to his literary fame.

The Chinese and foreign languages press played an important role in in this process of strengthening the awareness of the National Socialists’ crimes. That was highlighted by Yang Xingfo vis-à-vis the press after the protest letter had been sent back to Song Qingling. The goal of the League for Civil Rights was to awaken the people to the fight for justice. It was to be expected that because of his position the German minister would not forward the letter to his government. But the League had already attracted considerable attention and, one could say, thus achieved its goal. The local Zionist Association had already sent a thank-you letter, and members of Japanese literary circles had also unanimously condemned the burning of books in Germany.¹³

FURTHER PROTESTS IN SHANGHAI

In Shanghai, however, the protest letter of the China League for Civil Rights was not the only protest that reached the German Consulate General after the burning of books in Berlin.

Already on 11 May, the president of the Shanghai Zionist Association Sonja Toeg and its honorary secretary N. E. B. Ezra had written in a letter to Acting Consul General Behrend that the Association had organised a meeting of Jewish residents in the Shanghai school auditorium at the beginning of May. A resolution was proposed and carried unanimously. The meeting deplored ‘the recrudescence of anti-Semitism in Germany and the outrage perpetrated upon Jewish citizens’. It viewed ‘with alarm the tendency of the Hitler Government to trample upon the rights, safety, and existence of the Jewish people in that country’. It appealed ‘to all liberty-loving nations to show their

disapproval of the new regime of intolerance, thereby subjecting Jews to physical outrage, economic persecution and moral indignity'. A copy of the resolution was to 'be forwarded to the local Consulates for transmission to their respective governments'.

THE LEAGUE SENDS A TELEGRAM TO HITLER

In spite of its protest letter having been rejected by the German minister at Beiping, the League continued to protest against developments in Germany. One month later, on 17 June, it addressed a telegram directly to "Chancellor Hitler" protesting against the treatment of political prisoners in German prisons. It reads:

CHINA CIVIL RIGHTS LEAGUE REGISTERS
STRONGEST PROTEST AGAINST PREVAILING
TORTURE ARRESTS POLITICAL PRISONERS
REQUEST THEIR IMMEDIATE LIBERATION
SOONGCHINGLING

On the original copy of the telegram in the Archives of the Foreign Office there is a note added by an official: 'Witwe von Dr. Sunyatsen, Schwägerin des Marschalls Chiang Kaishek, Schwägerin des Finanzministers T. V. Soong' ('Widow of Dr Sun Yat-sen, sister-in-law of Marshal Chiang Kai-shek, sister-in-law of Minister of Finance T. V. Soong'). The official made a mistake: T. V. Soong was in fact Song Qingling's younger brother, not her brother-in-law.

The telegram reached the Reichskanzlei, the German Chancellery, on Saturday, 17 June; it was dispatched to the Auswärtiges Amt, the Foreign Office, on the same day. On the following Monday, it received the Foreign Office's entry stamp 'received on 19 June' and was forwarded to the Division for German Affairs (Ref. D) where, on 20 June, it received the file number 'Ref. D 2213'.

On 22 June a Foreign Office cable to the Consulate General Shanghai reads:

Received the following telegram
[quotes its content verbatim]
Request to exert elucidating influence on sender.
Bülow-Schwante

On 24 June the German Minister in Beiping, Trautmann, referring

to the instruction to Shanghai, sent the following cable:

Influence has already been exerted earlier. Refer to report of 7. – 369-. Repeated efforts to influence Mrs Sung who is close to the communists and whose views cannot be changed, is pointless and would presumably lead to further attacks by the press.

This time, in order not to keep the issue unduly alive, he refrains from passing counter statements to the press.

ASSASSINATION OF YANG XINGFO

Only one day after the League sent the telegram to Hitler, it was dealt a severe blow: on the morning of 18 June 1933 one of its core members was assassinated. Yang Xingfo, Secretary General of the League, was shot by Chiang Kai-shek's secret agents when he left the Academia Sinica at Ya'erpei lu (today's Shaanxi nan lu 147) by car. Yang had long been aware that he was in danger. He had received various threatening letters, but he had nonetheless continued and even increased his activities. Having graduated from Cornell and Harvard universities, Yang Xingfo had served as university professor in Nanjing before entering politics. As member of the KMT he held important posts in Shanghai; in 1932 he became Secretary General of the Academia Sinica. But when he started to support the release of political prisoners and the resistance against Japan, he came more and more into conflict with the KMT. He not only took part in all events organised by Song Qingling; in spring 1933 he went to North China to propagate the protection of civil rights and criticised their handling by Chiang Kai-shek. He was strongly opposed to the civil war and advocated the union of both parties – the KMT and the Communists – in the fight against Japan. He criticised Chiang Kai-shek for, as he called it, directing his rifle against his own people, not against the Japanese.

Of course, the League's telegram to Hitler was not the reason for the assassination of Yang Xingfo. According to the daughter of Lu Xun's youngest brother Zhou Jianren, Zhou Hua, Chiang Kai-shek learned from his secret agents that Song Qingling not only supported the activities of the League, but also other actions such as the fight of resistance of the 19th Route Army against the Japanese.

According to Zhou Hua, Chiang Kai-shek – while he might well

have wished to do so – could not have Song Qingling killed, because she was held in high esteem by many members of the KMT and influential foreigners alike. Also Cai Yuanpei's and Lu Xun's reputation and good relations with many circles of society prevented Chiang from going after them. The choice to be the victim therefore fell on Yang Xingfo, co-founder and Secretary General of the League. His assassination was intended to frighten Song Qingling.¹⁴

Zhou Hua recalls what happened: the mastermind behind the assassination of Yang Xingfo was said to be the head of the KMT secret service Dai Li. He belonged to Chiang Kai-shek's private gang, the "Blue Shirts", whose core developed into a disciplined paramilitary police and secret police apparatus. Dai Li is said to have suggested that Yang Xingfo be assassinated in the area of Daxi lu and Zhongshan lu, where he liked to ride his horses. But that area was outside the concessions. Inside the concessions the Chinese government was not able to pursue criminal investigations, so Chiang decided to perpetrate the crime in the French concession, close to Song Qingling's house. Eventually the Blue Shirts chose the Academia Sinica, where Yang worked and lived.

They planned the assassination for 17 June. But as a police car passed exactly at the moment when they wanted to shoot Yang, they did not go ahead. It was a mere coincidence that this was the day Song Qingling sent the telegram to Hitler.

Yang's assassination took place on the following day, 18 June, when he and his son left the compound of the Academia Sinica. Yang and the driver died; Yang's son, whom his father had protected with his body, was only slightly injured. In the turmoil after the shooting, one of the six secret agents became disoriented and did not make it to the agents' car. The others did not wait for him and even took shots at him from the car. He tried to commit suicide but failed. He was apprehended by the French police and brought to Guangci Hospital in Jinshenfu lu. There, he was questioned by an official of the French prison. He gave his cover name and said that he had come to Shanghai to visit relatives.

Hearing that Yang was dead pleased Dai Li, but on learning that one of the agents had been arrested and had disclosed his cover name, he was furious. That evening, the injured agent had a Chinese visitor, who allegedly had relations with the French prison staff. The visitor was an agent of the military regime, who told the prisoner to take poison. The agent died on the following day because his 'injuries

could not be healed'.¹⁵

Yang Xingfo's funeral in the Wanguo Funeral Hall took place two days later, on 20 June - the day that Song Qingling's cable received its file number in the Foreign Office at Berlin. Although Lu Xun's name was also on the blacklist of the KMT's secret service, he attended the funeral. On the day of the funeral, Lu Xun said to Xu Shoushang, a former schoolmate who was also a literary historian, author and educationalist: 'I should give him the last escort.' Xu thought for a while, then said: 'So let's go together.'¹⁶

According to Zhou Hua, Lu Xun was asked by a journalist at the funeral if Yang had been a communist. Lu Xun could not be sure whether the question was a trap, so he answered carefully that Yang was not only not a communist, he was a member of the KMT. Then why was he murdered, the reporter asked. Suddenly abandoning his caution, Lu Xun answered that in the eyes of the KMT, those who love the country are communists and had to be extinguished. The KMT was loyal to imperialism. 'Japan,' he concluded, 'you don't have to worry!'¹⁷

In the night after the assassination, Lu Xun wrote a letter to Cao Juren in which he mused 'the recent events are not worse than those at the end of the Ming Dynasty, but nowadays infrastructure and knowledge are more advanced, so actions are more perspicacious and brutal'.¹⁸

Shortly after the funeral Lu Xun wrote a poem in commemoration of Yang Xingfo:¹⁹

Lament on Yang Quan

The time of ideals is gone
Let, what thrives, blossom or wither
Again to cry for a fighter
The rain gave me tears.

SILENCING THE VOICES OF OPPOSITION

Paying honour to Yang Xingfo at his funeral was Lu Xun's last activity with the League.²⁰ However, he continued to stand up for its ideals. On the day after the funeral, Zhou Jianren, Lu Xun's youngest brother, went to see him. Lu Xun said 'Yesterday Mr Cai and Mrs Song also went, the assassination of Yang Xingfo was clearly a warning for Mrs

Song and Mr Cai, but both are very determined'.²¹

A KMT death list, including the names of Lu Xun, Song Qinling and Cai Yuanpei was published in Harold Isaacs' *China Forum*, gives the name of the agent (with cover name) who was expected to carry out the assassinations. In spite of reading the name of his intended murderer in the paper, Lu Xun said: 'The more brutal the enemy is, the more determined we are. This is the only way to vanquish the enemy.'

On 25 June 1933 he wrote to Yamamoto Hatsue (1898-1966): 'Of late, fascism has been on the rise in China. Of our friends, one has already disappeared, one has died in an assassination. Perhaps many others will be killed, yet I am still alive. As long as I live, I will answer their pistols with my pen.'²²

That is exactly what Lu Xun did. There are a number of texts in which he relates and compares the regime of the KMT to that of Hitler. In these texts, he called Chiang Kaishek and his like 'yellow-faced accomplices of Hitler' and predicted their downfall.²³

But publishing became more and more difficult for Lu Xun and other intellectuals like him. Even when he used a pseudonym, his texts would be either banned or shortened by censors. Lu Xun commented that

In other countries they erase, but here they alter the texts. These people do not have the talent to become authors, so they change their profession and become officials. Now they alter texts. Does the original author feel that to be unjust or just? And when they shorten a text, they do so to such an extent that it does not make any sense any more and the readers cannot understand it.²⁴

By November 1933 his texts were generally forbidden. On 25 November Lu Xun wrote to the author, translator and university teacher Cao Jinghua (1897-1987)

[...] the goal is to close all papers, so that we do not have the possibility to publish. [...] The *Shenbao* already does not publish my articles, nor the texts of others that are suspected to be my texts written under a pseudonym; my enemies strike out more and more strongly against me.²⁵

THE COMMEMORATIVE WOODCUT BY ZHAO YANNIAN

The handover of the protest letter also became a subject of the arts years after the event.

Lu Xun passed away in 1936. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of his death, in 1956, various Chinese artists had been asked to create artwork reflecting an event in the great author's life. The woodcut artists Zhao Yannian chose the protest.

The woodcut is a masterpiece. It gives Lu Xun a central position. He is placed in the first row of the group, even more prominently than the chairwoman of the League, Song Qingling, who – in a manner typical for her – stands with hands folded, and Vice-Chairman Cai Yuanpei who stands in the second row, slightly concealed by Lu Xun and Song Qingling. Whereas she is shown diagonally from the front and from one side, Lu Xun is seen almost entirely from the front, only slightly facing towards her. While his left hand is hidden behind his back, his right hand is plainly visible - the hand with which he holds his pen. This might be a reference to what Lu Xun had written to his friend Yamamoto Hatsue in 1933, hinting at the “White Terror” of the KMT secret service, on answering ‘their pistols with my pen’.²⁶

Zhao Yannian depicts Lu Xun in a Chinese gown. The gown is of light colour, perhaps a light grey, and plain without a pattern. His head stands out from what could be described as a halo, giving him a nimbus like a saint. It reminds the viewer of a famous painting of the young Mao Zedong in a light blue gown. Also, of course, in many paintings Jesus is shown wearing a white long dress and with a halo.

On the woodcut Lu Xun is quite tall. Although in reality he was shorter than most of his colleagues, the artist here has given him the same height as the others. Song Qingling is also depicted as taller than she was in reality.

On the left side, partly concealed by Lu Xun, is Yang Xingfo (Yang Quan), who would be assassinated only a few weeks later by KMT secret agents. He wears a Western suit and tie, which might indicate a modern outlook on the world. In the centre, between Lu Xun and Song Qingling, we see Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), who at that time was in his mid-sixties, also in a Chinese gown.

The person on the right hand side, separated by a short distance from the group, would then be Lin Yutang. However, when Zhao Yannian created the woodcut, Lin Yutang was for political reasons not to be painted. Also the person depicted does not look like Lin Yutang. Could the artist have deliberately given him a different appearance –

as was once surmised by a Japanese scholar? Let us assume it is him: by placing him apart from the group, the artist might be hinting at some or all of the following ideas. Firstly, Lin sympathised with Hu Shi, who saw the aim of the League as the protection of the human rights of political prisoners primarily through the enhancement of the legal framework.²⁷ Lu Xun had strongly opposed Hu Shi in two texts written in March 1933. Secondly, Lin Yutang was more wary than the other members of the League – he would not attend Yang Xingfo’s funeral. Cao Juren writes that Lu Xun said to Xu Shoushang: “Yutang is too cautious!”²⁸

The members of the League stand with their faces raised, looking straight towards the two German diplomats, the Acting Consul General and what is most probably his interpreter or an assistant. The woodcut shows the interpreter reading from the letter to his superior. They wear Western suits like Yang Xingfo, but instead of ties both wear bow-ties, which makes them stand out as particularly bourgeois. As they stand close to the viewer, both appear taller than the members of the Chinese group. But they bend forward stiffly, their eyes downcast, like guilty puppets of a criminal regime which they have to serve. Behrend listens to the text of the protest letter being read; he looks stern. His subordinate holds the letter in both hands, as if he were seeking support.

While the League is depicted in the light, the Germans stand on the dark side of the woodcut. In its top left corner a part of a swastika flag is visible. This flag, in tandem with the black-white-red flag of the German Reich, had been hoisted outside the Consulate General for the first time on 16 March 1933²⁹, so it is probable that there was also such a flag in the room where the Consulate received visitors.

On the woodcut two delegates are missing: Harold Isaacs and Agnes Smedley. Why? Did Zhao Yannian refrain from showing them out of aesthetic reasons, because including them would have led to too many persons in the scene? Or did he want to specifically highlight the merits of the Chinese intellectuals? A Chinese Lu Xun scholar has argued that Isaacs was an anarchist, and that China at the time of the creation of the woodcut was strongly opposed to anarchism, so that might be the reason for the artist not to depict Isaacs.

Lu Xun died on 19 October 1936. If we assume that the artwork to commemorate the 20th anniversary of his passing was to be finalized before October 1956, the woodcut would have been created during the

Hundred Flowers campaign^c or on its eve.

THE LIVING SPIRIT OF THE CHINA LEAGUE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

The assassination of Yang Xingfo was fatal for the China League for Civil Rights, but its spirit lived on in the mind and work of Lu Xun. This becomes evident from reports by contemporaries about Lu Xun's reaction to Yang Xingfo's death, as well as from texts written by Lu Xun himself.

The protest by Song Qingling, Lu Xun, and the others shows the early recognition of the grave dangers emanating from Hitler, the National Socialists, and their policies. In several essays Lu Xun compared the KMT government in China to the National Socialist regime in Germany. In many respects, Chiang Kai-shek copied the German fascist organisations and practised what one could call "fascism with Chinese characteristics". The "White Terror" – the persecution of his opponents by secret agents – reached a degree comparable to that of the two major fascist regimes that existed at that time in Europe. Freedom of thought was strongly limited in Germany and China at that time; in Germany, books went up in flames, and in China, liberal writers could not publish, and publishing houses accepting their works were threatened.

The events following the lodgement of the China League's protest letter illustrate this similarity in a striking manner. Its authors, protesting against the worsening situation in Germany, were threatened and assassinated in China. German officials refuted their righteous demands and published specious counter statements. Although the KMT effectively silenced them at the time, these events were not forgotten, and have been commemorated by artists in later years.

Silvia Kettelhut (*silvia_kettelhut@yahoo.de*) holds a PhD in Sinology, and has been working with and living in China since the mid-1980s in various functions dealing with cultural and academic exchange. She is founding member of *Explore Shanghai Heritage* (2003), a Chinese-foreign initiative dedicated to the academic exploration of architectural and cultural heritage in Shanghai and China.

c In mid-1956 an official effort to liberalise the political climate had started. Cultural and intellectual figures were encouraged to state their opinions on the rule and the programme of the Communist Party. Under the slogan "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend" the Party invited intellectuals to openly air their views.



References

- 1 Song Qingling, *Wei xin Zhongguo douzheng* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1952), pp. 43-44. The journalist Lu Yi (1911-1997) who attended the press conference, describes Lin Yutang as Secretary General, Lu Yi, 'Lu Xun yu Zhongguo minquan baozhang tongmeng', *Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan* 7 (1995), 45-49 (pp. 46-47); other authors state that Lin was the League's press officer. Chen Jinxing shows that the preparations for the League started months earlier: Chen Jinxing, 'Yiluosheng yu Zhongguo minquan baozhang tongmeng – jianxi tongmeng yu zhongguo gongchangdang de guanxi', *Jin shidai yanjiu*, 1 (2011), 16-30 (pp. 20-25).
- 2 Chen Youwei, Ding Yanzhao, 'Zhongguo minquan baozhang tongmeng de chengli yu huodong', *Shehui kexue*, 1 (1980), 122-134.
- 3 Chen Jinxing, pp. 16-30.
- 4 Song Qingling, 1952, p. 31; Song Qingling, *Song Qingling xuanji*, III (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1992), p. 103; Zhu Zheng, 'Guanyu Zhongguo minquan baozhang tongmeng de ji jian shi', *Xin wenxue shiliao*, 2 (2006), 73-91 (p. 90).
- 5 Ni Moyan, 'Lu Xu he Zhongguo minquan baozhang tongmeng', *Xin wenxue shiliao*, 3 (1981), 45-55 (p. 47).
- 6 Lu Xun, *Lu Xun riji*, III (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006), 355.
- 7 Zhu Zheng, 'Lu Xun he Hu Shi zai Zhongguo minquan baozhang tongmeng', *Yanhuang chunqiu*, 12 (2005), 42-48 (p. 42); Zhu Zheng, 2006, p. 81.
- 8 Lu Xun, *Lu Xun quanji*, XII (1998), p. 150.
- 9 Lu Yi, p. 48.
- 10 Lu Xun, 2006, p. 377.
- 11 Political Archives, German Foreign Office, R 98440. A selection of the most important documents has been published in Silvia Kettelhut, *Have Assumed Charge. German Consulate, Shanghai. Impressions of 150 Years* (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin chubanshe, 2006), pp. 155-165.
- 12 The full text of the protest letter in English is published by Kettelhut, pp. 155-158. For the Chinese text 'Dui Deguo pohai jinbu renshi yu Youtai renmin de kangyishu' see Song Qingling, 1992, pp. 120-123.
- 13 Ni Moyan, p. 51.
- 14 Zhou Hua, *Bofu zuihou suiyue – Lu Xun zai Shanghai (1927-1936)* (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu, 2001), pp. 244-245.

- 15 Zhou Hua, pp. 246-248.
- 16 Cao Juren, *Lu Xun nianpu* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2011), p. 99.
- 17 Zhou Hua, pp. 249-252.
- 18 Lu Xun, *Lu Xun shuxin ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1973), p. 75.
- 19 Either on 20 or 21 May 1933; according to Lu Xun, 1976, 129, on 21 June 1933; Cao Juren, p. 99-100.
- 20 Zhu Zheng, 2005, p. 48.
- 21 Zhou Hua, p. 250.
- 22 Lu Xun, 1973, p. 81. The other friend mentioned is the female author Ding Ling.
- 23 E. g.: 'About the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Protection of the Cultural Essence in China and Germany' ('Hua De baocui youlie lun') and 'The Burning of Books in China and Germany. About the Similarities and Differences' ('Hua De fenshu yitong lun'), both published under his pseudonym Ru Niu in *Shenbao*, supplement *Ziyou tan* on 2 and 7 July 1933 respectively; see Lu Xun, *Lu Xun. Zawen quan* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 2000), pp. 464-469. Also Song Qingling repeatedly warned of the dangers of fascist Germany and other imperialist powers, i. a. in 'Fandui diguozhuyi zhanzheng – Shijie fandui diguozhuyi zhanzheng weiyuanhui Zhongguo daibiao de shengming', see *Zhongguo luntan*, 6 August 1933, see Song Qingling, 1992, pp. 126-129.
- 24 Cao Juren, p. 100.
- 25 Lu Xun, 1973, p. 106.
- 26 Lu Xun, 1973, p. 81.
- 27 Zhu Zheng, 2006, p. 88.
- 28 Cao Juren, p. 100.
- 29 *The China Press*, 17 March 1933; Kettelhut, p. 153.

A WILDLY IMPROBABLE BOOKSTORE

ONE STORE, A LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP AND A WORLD TRANSFORMED

BY JOHN D VAN FLEET

‘I used to tell strange, wild, improbable tales . . .’

Algernon Blackwood

FROM THE LATE 19th to the early 20th century, Japan arose with astonishing rapidity, to the level of a world power. During the same period of time, China fell into abject disarray, riven by warlord factions, and increasingly attracting the rapacious interest of Japan

In this political environment, one might imagine that a small bookshop in Shanghai, launched by a recently arrived Japanese couple in 1917, wouldn’t have had a promising future. Now include the fact that the husband had dropped out of middle school, and that the couple, both having converted to Christianity a few years previously, initially opened the ‘bookshop’ (rather too grand a term at its founding, it was not much more than a few upended crates and makeshift shelves) to provide Christian literature, in Japanese, to the Japanese expatriate population in Shanghai. As a hobby project for her, because his day job kept him on the road in east China, selling eye medicine, and therefore unable to help much in a project that targeted an especially small niche.

Now include the fact that the bookshop became a magnet for the leading literary figures of both China and Japan within only a few years of its founding – ‘ground zero for Asian literary modernism’, as one current China-focused writer described it.^a Lu Xun, the towering literary figure of early 20th century China, first visited the bookstore in 1927 and subsequently made it not only his professional base of operations, but his sole publisher. Later he would also hide there to escape the murderous clutches of China’s ruling Guomindang, and became the best friend and daily interlocutor of the bookstore’s Japanese co-founder, until Lu’s death in 1936.

a French, Paul. Lecture in Shanghai, 23 March 2019

Virtually every literate Japanese knows the name of Lu Xun (1881 – 1936) and virtually every educated Chinese, especially if he or she is from Shanghai, knows the name of Uchiyama Kanzō (1885 – 1959) and that of his bookstore, the Uchiyama Shoten [‘bookstore’ in Japanese] – and the extraordinary friendship these two men shared. How is it that the close relationship between a highly educated left-wing writer and a poorly educated bookshop owner could loom so large in the consciousness of two peoples who were then on the verge of a horrific war? (Fogel, 1)

Telling such a strange, wild, improbable tale would make Blackwood proud. Yet the Uchiyama Bookstore had a 29 year run in Shanghai (1917 – 1945) and still operates in Tokyo today. The tale of how this bookstore came to the prominence it achieved, and the importance it still commands, began thousands of years ago with the evolution of the *hanzi*, (汉字), known as Chinese characters, the region’s original and unifying written language. The story also includes the profound role reversal that occurred between Japan and China starting in the late 19th century, when Japan, a child of China, began to view its enfeebled parent with surprise, then condescension, and finally with Oedipal rage.

PEOPLES UNITED BY A COMMON BRUSH

‘We have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language.’

Oscar Wilde

Wilde and, apocryphally, Shaw, and myriad others have quipped about the gulf that the varieties of English-language experience have opened between the British and their former colonies. The situation was different in East Asia, from Japan and Korea in the east, to modern-day Vietnam in the south, to dozens of tribes and nascent civilisations in the southwest. The shared language experience created by common use of the written characters, the *hanzi* (汉字 – *kanji* (漢字) in Japanese) became an enormously powerful binding agent.

“Brushtalk” in particular became a communication foundation in the region for nearly 2,000 years. The Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese initially had no scripts of their own, so the speakers

of those languages imported the Chinese writing system, but kept their respective pronunciations and/or altered the imported Chinese ones.^b

Traditionally, the ink brush had served as the chief tool of literary expression in East Asia and was valued as one of the “four treasures” of the scholar. [...]“Brushtalk” (Chinese, *bitan*; Japanese, *hitsudan*) was the vehicle through which ideas, both profound and mundane, were exchanged during the Chinese dynastic period among Chinese of different regions and between Chinese and visitors from their tributary and neighbor states including Koguryo, Paekche and Silla on the Korean Peninsula, Vietnam, and Japan. [...]

Even today, one can see this scenario played out regularly in East Asia in which, for example, Japanese visiting China are able to ask the whereabouts of a particular kind of store or site of cultural interest, or to identify themselves by means of a name card, all without having to speak a word. (C. T. Keaveney 2009, 2 - 3)

This graphical linguistic commonality throughout East Asia became the first foundation of the improbable friendship and partnership between Lu Xun and Uchimaya Kanzō, of the bookstore that was their oasis, and of Asia’s literary modernism that would transform the region.

An epochal shift in the relationship between China and Japan served as the second foundation for the bookstore. This shift began when Japanese *cognoscenti* started to realise that Japan’s centuries long subservient relationship with China was no longer warranted.

b ‘Japan’ such as it was began importing the Chinese *hanzi/kanji* not long after the Japanese archipelago began ‘importing’ vast swathes of people, migrants from east and south China, many through the Korean peninsula, around the time of China’s Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), the ethnic infusion that became known as Japan’s Yayoi culture. The Japanese began deriving their phonetic scripts, *hiragana* and *katakana*, borrowing graphically from the Chinese characters, several centuries later, which allows for linguistic housekeeping, a necessity because the primary Chinese languages are not nearly as inflected as is Japanese. Today, the Chinese characters and the Japanese phonetic scripts are all integral to standard written Japanese. The terms ‘Chinese script’ (漢字, *hanzi/kanji*) and ‘brushtalk’ (筆談, *bitan/hitsudan*) themselves well illustrate the power of the brushtalk phenomenon. Each of the languages has a somewhat different pronunciation, but the characters, more ideographic than phonetic, mean, respectively, ‘China’ and ‘written character’ for the first pair and ‘(ink)brush’ and ‘talk/chat’ for the second pair, regardless of sound.

And then, starting in the mid 19th century, Japan recognized that China's 19th century experiences with the acquisitive Western powers was a "canary in a coal mine" for Japan's own sovereignty.

In *Beyond Brushtalk*, Christopher Keaveney uses for his cover the famous image of Lu Xun and Uchiyama Kanzō in the mid 1930s – their long and deep friendship being one evocation of the power of the brushtalk tradition (Keaveney 2009, cover).

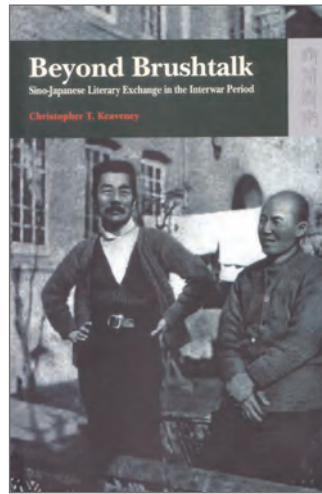


Figure 1: *Beyond Brushtalk* cover

THE CHILD BECOMES FATHER

‘The child is father of the man.’

William Wordsworth

After millennia of China parenting Japan, providing everything from religious sects to chopsticks to urban planning to the writing system, and even the people themselves (genotypes of the overwhelming majority of Japanese show that their ancestors arrived from the mainland millennia ago), by the end of the 19th century, the roles had reversed. The Japanese ‘child’ becoming father of the Chinese ‘man’, a China widely referred to the ‘sick man of Asia’ by the early 20th century. How did this role reversal come to pass? The genesis of the transformation can be found in the conditions in China and Japan that began in the 17th century, with the Manchurian Qing takeover of China in the 1640s and, on the opposite side of the East China Sea, the Tokugawa victories culminating at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. And, suitably for a tale about a bookstore, an essential difference between the Japan and China of the 17th to 19th centuries was the dramatic divergence in literacy rates.

PAX TOKUGAWA

From about the time of Tokugawa victory at Sekigahara, something remarkable started to happen to an entire class of Japanese society, a class representing about ten percent of the total population: they

were thrown out of work. The reason they were out of work was that there were no more battles to fight, unlike during the previous two centuries, Japan's Warring States period (*Sengoku*).

Those thrown out of work were the samurai. And similarly to what happened to the jobs of downsized manufacturing workers in the industrialised Western economies in the latter 20th century, those martial jobs weren't coming back. What is commonly referred to as Pax Tokugawa lasted from the early 17th century through the 1840s, nearly 250 years.

In 17th century Japan, the unintended consequence of Pax Tokugawa was that many samurai, having had their martial *raison d'être* disappear and needing something else to do, became absentee landlords. A scholar with one of the most daunting double-barrelled surnames you'll ever encounter, Hmeljak Sangawa, outlines the transition from warring fiefdoms to an urbanised society – in which the pen became much mightier than the (samurai) sword.

[...] when the political and military unification of Japan by Tokugawa Ieyasu at the start of the 17th century brought relative stability, economic prosperity and cultural revitalisation to Japan, conditions were met for the growth of educational facilities to meet the new needs for literacy of the warrior class with diminished military duties, of the growing merchant class and of village headmen in new administrative roles. (Hmeljak Sangawa, 154)

Over the course of two and a half centuries, Pax Tokugawa produced the remarkable unintended consequence of a society that was exceptionally urban, commercial, and literate for its time and location. Maddison asserts that 'by the eighteenth [century] there were large editions of books with polychrome illustrations and 40 per cent literacy of the male population'. (Maddison, 257)

Ronald Dore evokes the on-ground, individual impact of this socioeconomic revolution:



Figure 2: 1905 Tokyo street scene

It was a world in which books abounded. [...] There were story books for children, illustrated books, technical books, popular medical books, pornographic books, travel guides, novels, poems, collections of sermons [...]

And they were bought or borrowed at so much a day from book peddlers not simply by the samurai, but also or even chiefly by members of the other classes. By this time, the majority of town dwellers with a settled occupation and a good proportion of the farmers of middling status were literate. [...] It was a society which now depended on the written word for its efficient operation. (Dore, 2 - 3)

A 1905 image of a Tokyo woodblock print shop being mobbed by (literate) commoners. By the 19th century, woodblock printing had become the mass media of Japan, and later became Lu Xun's favourite artistic medium. (Dower, *Throwing Off Asia I: Woodblock Prints of Domestic "Westernization"* (1868 - 1912), accessed Nov 2019)

VICTIMS OF THEIR OWN SUCCESS

'The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been.'

Romance of the Three Kingdoms



Figure 3: Qing Empire Circa 1820

The China that the Manchurians conquered in the early 1600s had more people than any other polity on the planet, and was second largest only to the Russian Empire in square kilometres. The Qing then set about expanding their empire by a factor of more than two, from roughly seven million square kilometres to nearly 15, primarily by gaining Tibet and what is now Xinjiang in the mid-18th century.

The advent of trans-oceanic shipping in the 16th century drove demand in Europe for Chinese goods, especially tea, silk, and porcelain, and brought a massive influx of silver to China. Agricultural improvements accompanied the growth, dramatically reducing the age-old risk of famine, but only for a time.

These factors combined led to a tripling of the population in China over two centuries, but the vast majority of the hundreds of millions were on the farm, illiterate and unexposed to urbanisation. This distribution and lack of education turned out to be a time bomb.

[...] once the limits of expansion were reached, it became increasingly difficult for the state to both keep its newly conquered territories and deal with mounting environmental, demographic, and political challenges.

A series of rebellions broke out in the late 18th century, ‘heralding the end of the flourishing age’. As China’s population rose from 225 million in 1750 to 400 million in 1800, Qing officials voiced alarm over the increasing pressure on land resources. The demand for resources intensified in the 19th century, and “a broad ecological crisis mounted [...] To a great extent, then, the ecological crisis of the nineteenth century was a product of the very successes of imperial engineering of the eighteenth century, not of its failures (Edgerton-Tarpley, 6)

The table below reveals the decline in *per capita* GDP faced by the 19th century Qing Dynasty, and the promise of Japan at the time of the Meiji revolution (1868).

At about the high-water mark of the Ming Dynasty (1500), China’s *per capita* GDP is not so different from that of much of western Europe, and about double that of both Japan and India at the time. A century later, by the time of the Battle of Sekigahara and a few decades before the Manchu conquest of China and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644), China’s figure is already in decline, intuitive at a time

TABLE 9: GDP per capita levels in Europe and Asia, 725-1850 (1990 international dollars)

	England/ GB	Holland/ NL	Italy	Spain	Japan	China	India
725					515		
900					507		
980						1,247	
1020						1,518	
1050						1,458	
1086	754					1,204	
1120						1,063	
1150					479		
1280	679			957	552		
1300	755		1,482	957			
1348	777	876	1,376	1,030			
1400	1,090	1,245	1,601	885		960	
1450	1,055	1,432	1,668	889	554	983	
1500	1,114	1,483	1,403	889		1,127	
1570	1,143	1,783	1,337	990		968	
1600	1,123	2,372	1,244	944	596	977	682
1650	1,110	2,171	1,271	820	622		638
1700	1,563	2,403	1,350	880	610	841	622
1750	1,710	2,440	1,403	910	640	685	573
1800	2,080	1,752	1,244	962	732	597	569
1850	2,997	2,397	1,350	1,144	800	594	556

Sources: GB: Broadberry *et al.* (2015a); Broadberry and van Leeuwen (2011); Walker (2014); Holland/Netherlands: van Zanden and van Leeuwen (2012); Italy: Malanima (2011); Spain: Alvarez-Nogal and Prados de la Escosura (2013); Japan: Table 8; China: Broadberry *et al.* (2014); India: Broadberry *et al.* (2015b).

Figure 4: Bassino, Broadberry and Fukao, 33



Figure 5: An 1870 street scene in Guangzhou (Chan, accessed Nov 2019)



Figure 6: Shenyang 1912. While signs abound here and in the Guangzhou picture above, the percentage of China's population that could actually read was perhaps 10%, vs about 40% in Japan. One example of the power of the hanzi/kanji character system: educated visitors to China from Japan or Korea could read all of these signs, despite not being able to pronounce them. (Okuefuna, 204)

of continental-scale regime change. But by 1750, considered a high-water mark for the Qing, Japan and China are roughly equivalent in *per capita* GDP, not because of Japanese growth in the figure, but because China's *per capita* GDP had already collapsed by nearly 50%. Japan's figure would again increase, by nearly 25% in the coming century, to become far ahead of China's by the time of the first Opium War (1840s), after which China's figure would decline further.

An eminent Chinese military and governmental leader of the time, Li Hongzhang, wasn't confused about either his own country's challenges nor about the possible threat of a modernising Japan.

“Affairs in my country have been so confined by tradition that I could not accomplished what I desired”, [Li] replied when asked by a Japanese politician in 1884 why so little had changed in China, while Japan had modernized so rapidly. “I am ashamed of having excessive wishes and lacking the power to fulfill them.” Li could see wider repercussions too. “In about ten years,” he predicted, “the wealth and strength of Japan will be admirable – a future source of trouble for China.” (Fenby, 41)

SEA CHANGE

‘Japan and China had dramatically different responses to contact with the outside world. While Qing-dynasty China reacted to the prodding of the West by retracting like a sea cucumber, Japan swelled up like a distressed pufferfish.’ (Grescoe, 194)

Grescoe's sea-creature similes are apt. The major Western intrusions into east Asia – the British-led first Opium War in China and, 14 years later, United States Commodore Perry's arrival in Edo, now Tokyo, Bay – both came by ship.

Within twenty years of Commodore Perry's arrival in Tokyo Bay a “Civilization and Enlightenment” movement was translating the classics of the French Enlightenment and British liberalism into Japanese and advocating catching up with the West through democracy, industrialism, and the emancipation of women. Some even wanted to make English be the national language. The problem, as intellectuals such as Fukuzawa Yukichi insisted in the

1870s, was long-term: China had been the source of much of Japan's culture, and China had gone terribly wrong in the distant past. As a result, Japan was only "semi-civilized." But while the problem was long-term, Fukuzawa argued, it was not locked in. By rejecting China, Japan could become fully civilized. (Morris, 15)

In the forward to the English translation of the *Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, Japan scholar Carmen Blacker reminds us that Fukuzawa is:

[...] generally acknowledged to have been the leading educator of the new Japan, the man who above all others explained to his countrymen the ideas behind the dazzling material evidence of western civilization; who insisted that it was not enough for Japan merely to have the "things" of civilization – the trains, the guns, the warships, the hats, the umbrellas – in order to take her place with dignity and confidence among the nations of the modern world. It was also necessary for her to comprehend the learning which in the west had led to the discovery and production of these things. And this would require a drastic reconsideration of some of her most ancient and unquestioned assumptions about the nature of the universe. (Fukuzawa and Kiyooka, v)

Fukuzawa joined the first Japanese embassies to the United States (1860) and Europe (1862), and rapidly became Japan's intellectual tour guide for the West. He published, as Blacker describes,

Seiyō Jijō ((西洋事情), Things Western), which in 1866 sold no less than 250,000 copies, an unprecedented number for those days. Its immense success was due to the fact that it gave the Japanese public exactly the information about the West that it needed. (Fukuzawa and Kiyooka, x)

But Fukuzawa's most famous work of prose outside of Japan is one he didn't put his name to. With a title variously translated as (Argument for) Leaving/Throwing off/Good-bye Asia, the essay *Datsu A Ron* (脱亜論) appeared as an unsigned editorial in a Japanese

newspaper in 1885. Fukuzawa opens the penultimate paragraph of his essay with, 'It is our best strategy to leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast our lot with the civilized nations of the West'.(Dreyer et al, 45)

In *From the Ruins of Empire*, Mishra describes the China's inability to follow the same path.

The smallest move to imitate their Western adversaries provoked a backlash from the most powerful conservative forces in the country, the scholar-gentry, who worried about the loss of their judicial and moral authority over citizens exposed to European modes of thinking and action. In a country as large and old as China, the shock of the West did not really travel deeply enough to begin to force change until the last decade of the century. The intellectual world of the scholar-gentry, defined by strict adherence to Confucian values and absolute loyalty to the emperor, remained more or less unimpaired. (Mishra, 140)

By the time another decade had passed, Japan had demonstrated that they had not only heeded Fukuzawa's exhortation, but also become able to turn their recast lot to their advantage. In the first Sino-Japanese War (1894 – 1895), Japan was seriously overmatched in such metrics as naval tonnage.

At first, foreign observers assumed that Chinese forces would win. This was quickly proved wrong, as Japanese forces achieved victory after victory in what could only be considered a humiliating defeat of their larger neighbor. China's regionally based armies had a tendency to avoid battle, feeling that they did not have a stake in the outcome. Battleships, including some modern vessels whose capabilities exceeded those of the Japanese, were hoarded rather than used. Corruption siphoned money meant for military modernization into luxury items for dishonest officials. A subordinate of China's most outstanding admiral, Ding Ruchang, disobeyed Ding's order to put the flagship in a position to fire on the Japanese fleet and instead fired the main guns at the bridge on which Ding was standing. The admiral escaped death, but his leg was crushed, seriously

affecting his ability to direct the battle. (Dreyer, 47)

Admiral Ding's escape from early death was temporary. From his vantage point, he could see his fleet and forces being disintegrated. Facing likely execution by the Qing bureaucracy, had he returned to Beijing to report, Ding took a fatal dose of opium as he watched the denouement of the war.

Migita's print *After the Fall of Weihaiwei* incorrectly identifies Admiral Ding, who was dead by the time of the surrender ceremony, but, 'This woodblock print is an almost perfect example of how the Japanese saw themselves as totally different from the Chinese and fundamentally similar to the Westerners, seen here in the figures of

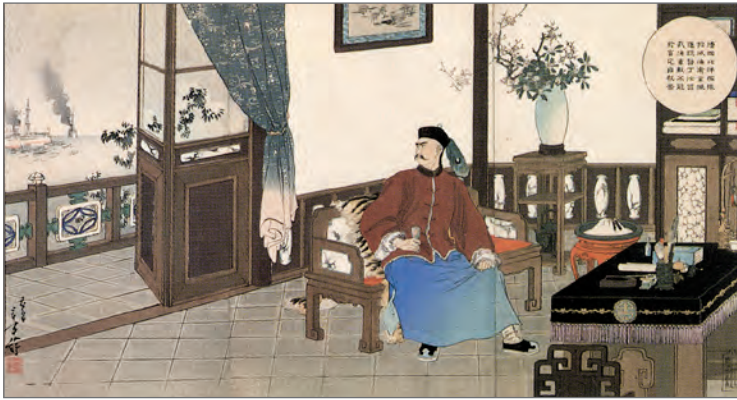


Figure 7: Admiral Ding Juchang [sic] of the Chinese Beiyang Fleet, Totally Destroyed at Weihaiwei, Commits Suicide at His Official Residence. Woodblock print by Mizuno Toshikata, February 1895 (Dower, *Throwing Off Asia II*, accessed Nov 2019)



Figure 8: After the Fall of Weihaiwei, the Commander of the Chinese Beiyang Fleet, Admiral Ding Juchang (sic), Surrenders. Woodblock print by Migita Toshihide, November 1895. (Dower, *Throwing Off Asia II*, accessed Nov 2019)

Western advisors standing behind the Chinese.’ (Dower, accessed Nov 2019). Widespread literacy in Japan also underpinned victory in the war. Vogel describes the specific, topographical advantage of the Japanese soldiers’ literacy.

One of the reasons the Japanese won the war is that they had such good information about what was going on in China. The Japanese soldiers had maps in their pockets, and they could read the maps. [...] the Japanese troops knew more about the geography [of China] than the Chinese. (Vogel, accessed Nov 2019)

This change wrought from the sea “wounded the Chinese in a way that the Opium War had not”, to quote Mishra, but also led to another unintended consequence – the largest migration in history of students from China to Japan, to learn about modernisation (Jansen 149). The brushtalk phenomenon, along with proximity, made Japan and Japanese infinitely more accessible to the Chinese in their quest for greater understanding of the modern world.

GO EAST, YOUNG MEN (AND WOMEN)

‘For good or ill, a large proportion of the history of twentieth-century China was made in Japan. It became a commonplace in both countries that Japan and China were “as close as lips and teeth.”’ (Mitter, 17)

China’s defeat in 1895 was a precursor to the Hundred Days Reform (summer 1898), which the Empress Dowager ultimately repelled, executing six of the ringleaders and driving the two most prominent, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao to exile in Japan. The Tongmenhui, which advocated the revolutionary overthrow of the Qing, was founded in Tokyo in 1905 by Sun Yat-Sen and a Who’s Who list of China’s eventual leaders in the early 20th century. They included Wang Jingwei, who would eventually be one of Chiang Kai-Shek’s most powerful adversaries, and who in 1940 accepted the ‘leadership’ of the Japanese collaborationist government in China, for which he is still reviled as a traitor.

Chiang Kai-Shek gained his military training in Japan at a special military academy established and paid for by Japan. Chiang joined the Tongmenghui in Japan in 1908 and served in the Imperial Japanese Army from 1909 to 1911. The Guomindang, which under Chiang

Kai-shek ruled much of mainland China until being defeated by the Communists in 1949, was born from the Tongmenhui.

The list of soon-to-be leaders in early 20th century China who studied/sheltered in Japan included Chen Duxiu, co-founder and first General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, and founder of *New Youth*, the seminal publication of modernist China, where Lu Xun published his most famous early essays, and Li Dazhao, the other co-founder of the Party.

Perhaps the most famous Saul-on-the-road-to-Damascus conversion in literary history also occurred in Japan, during the Russo-Japanese War (1904 – 1905). According to Lu Xun's own description, his transformation from student of medicine to literary provocateur and 'the sage of modern China' (Mao Zedong's phrase, in a speech on the one-year anniversary of Lu's death – 1937 – (Fogel 2019, 14)) occurred in a classroom in provincial Japan, when Lu and his Japanese classmates were viewing 'lantern slides' – illuminated images that were precursors to film slides:

[...] there were many war films, and I had to join in the clapping and cheering in the lecture hall along with the other students. It was a long time since I had seen any compatriots, but one day I saw a film showing some Chinese, one of whom was bound, while many others stood around him. They were all strong fellows but appeared completely apathetic. According to the commentary, the one with his hands bound was a spy working for the Russians, who was to have his head cut off by the Japanese military as a warning to others, while the Chinese beside him had come to enjoy the spectacle.

Before the term was over I had left for Tokyo, because after this film I felt that medical science was not so important after all. The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such futile spectacles; and it is not necessarily deplorable how many of them die of illness. The most important thing, therefore, was to change their spirit, and since at that time I felt that literature was the best means to this end, I determined to promote a literary movement. *Preface to Call to Arms*, (Lu 1956, 3)

During the time of an epochal shift in the power relationships in East Asia, Uchiyama Kanzō was going through his own transformation. By the time he was 15, he'd been out of school for a few years and had begun a desultory working-class career. In 1912, he converted to Christianity, becoming a pacifist evangelical not far in religious sensibility from Tolstoy, one of his favourite authors. In 1916, Uchiyama took his new wife Miki with him on his next trip to China. A year later, Miki would found the Uchiyama Bookstore.



Figure 9: Lu Xun in kimono, about 1909, the year he returned to China. (Pollard, xxiii)

THE TIDE REVERSES

Lu Xun returned to his native China in 1909, a relatively early drop in what would later become a flood of Chinese returnees. Many have recognised that an entirely new vocabulary, what scholar Victor Mair calls “round trip words”, was primary among the souvenirs these returnees carried with them. Two other scholars, Jansen and Jian, do a comprehensive job describing the phenomenon and its impact:

In the long run the cultural importance of the migration to Japan was probably greater even than its short-term political significance. [...] The student movement meant a great surge of translation from Japanese. [...] This flood of translation from Japanese affected Chinese vocabulary. There was a massive infusion, amounting to three fourths of the new vocabulary of those decades, of new terminology into Chinese in the form of Chinese character equivalence the Japanese had first worked out for themselves. (Jansen, 156 - 157)

More significantly, the Japanese practice of creating new words to accommodate new knowledge influenced native linguistic practice, hastening the formation of

modern Chinese. [...]

From this point of view, we may say that the flow back of Japanese loanwords into modern Chinese was the first significant requital of linguistic favors China received since Japan borrowed the Chinese writing system in the mid-4th century. (Jian, 306, 309, 325)

GROUND ZERO FOR ASIAN LITERARY MODERNISM

The figure who emerges as the unsung hero of Sino-Japanese literary relations was a little-known bookstore owner named Uchiyama Kanzō, whose bookstore in Shanghai became the hub of relations between writers in the two communities during the interwar period. (C. T. Keaveney 2009, 2)

In *The Subversive Self in Modern Chinese Literature*, Keaveney quotes others in referring to late Qing and early Republican era literature as a ‘giant melting pot’, but suggests that Japan was the cauldron.

[...]it was largely as a product of their experiences in Japan that Chinese writers of the May Fourth period launched their own literary careers. In Japan as exchange students, a number of May Fourth writers became conversant with Western literature through English and Japanese translations [...] Liang Qichao (1873 – 1929) was the first important Chinese intellectual to propose contemporary Japanese literature as a viable standard for Chinese writers. Liang, who fled to Japan after the failure of the Hundred Days Reform in 1898, advocated emulating the Japanese political novel that flourished in the 1880s. Liang and other late Qing intellectuals fled to Japan not only because of its proximity, but also because they saw in Japan a rapidly emerging power with a media infrastructure and communication system that would allow them to carry on their intellectual activities and reform movement from abroad. . . .

Liang’s contribution to a modern vernacular literature included importing Japanese sentence structures and vocabulary items along with adopting the form of the political novel. (C. K. Keaveney 2004, 2 - 3)

A key element in the alloy of Asian literary modernism was, of all things, a Norwegian housewife. Ibsen's *Nora*, in *A Doll's House*, had a tectonic effect not only on the turn-of-the-century East Asian literary worlds, but on broader society. In Japan, where the play was first performed in 1911, *Nora* became a primary inspiration for the first feminist movement, the Bluestocking Society (*Seito-sha* – 青鞥社), and their first publication, *Bluestocking*.

In an article entitled *A Root of Modernism in China: Ibsen*, author Shiela Melvin quotes Nanjing University professor He Chengzhou as saying, 'I would think Ibsen had a much larger impact on China than anywhere else in the world,' and reminds us that *A Doll's House* was 'an instant sensation in China. It spawned a whole class of early feminists known as "Chinese Noras"' (Melvin, accessed Nov 2019)

By 1918 the seminal modernist publication in China, *New Youth*, ran an 'Ibsen Issue'. The translation for *A Doll's House* was either *Nala*, the Chinese pronunciation of *Nora*, or *Renxing Zhijia* (人形之家), directly from the Japanese translation of *A Doll's House*, *Ningyo no Ie* (人形の家). The pronunciation is entirely different, because in this case the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters is not the borrowed-from-Chinese pronunciation, but the native pronunciations attached by the Japanese to the characters upon the original importation – *renxing*



Figure 10: The inaugural cover of *Bluestocking* (*Seito* – 青鞥), 1911 (public domain)



Figure 11: Early cover of *New Youth* (*xinqingnian*, 新青年 – 'La Jeunesse' as its official Western title, public domain)

and *ningyo*, respectively, for the character pair 人形 ('human form' in Chinese and 'doll' in Japanese) – and *jia* and *ie*, respectively, for the character 家 (meaning 'house/home' in both languages). This example typifies the 'round trip' vocabulary phenomenon.

Lu Xun based one of his fictional characters on Nora, and in his essay, *What Happens after Nora Walks Out*, taken from a Beijing talk in 1923, Lu imagines the real-world problems Nora might face after leaving her family and, inevitably, community, in characteristic rapier-like prose and modernist sensibility:

So for Nora, money (or to put it more elegantly, economic means) is crucial. It is true that freedom cannot be bought, but it can be sold. Human beings have one major defect: they are apt to get hungry. To compensate for this defect and avoid acting like puppets, economic rights seem to be the most important factor in present-day society. First, there must be a fair division of property between men and women in the family; second, there must be an equal division of power between men and women in society at large. Unfortunately, I have no idea how to obtain these rights, other than that we will have to fight for them, perhaps with even more violence than we have to fight for our political rights.

(Lu 259)

The Uchiyama's launched their bookstore just at the time that this literary and cultural tsunami from Japan, having centuries earlier travelled east across the East China Sea, carrying virtually all of what would become Japan with it, was completing the round trip, breaking on the shores of China, with Shanghai absorbing the greatest volume of the cultural flood tide.

The bookstore grew rapidly. The Uchiyamas moved from their initial location to a storefront property in 1924, and in 1929 moved to the most famous location for the store, 2050 Sichuan North Road. They had some years before expanded their offerings far beyond the original Christian works in Japanese, and had one of the larger customer bases of all bookstores in the city.

They had created not just a bookstore, but a haven where Chinese, especially returnees from Japan, of whom there were tens of thousands,

could meet, be welcomed and feel they were part of something larger than their immediate surroundings. Uchiyama Kanzo's regard for the Chinese would eventually gain him the trust of some of the most powerful political and cultural leaders in China of the early 20th century, a level of trust that few Japanese or other foreigners enjoyed.

By the mid-1920s, the reputation of the Uchiyama Bookstore had spread region-wide, and particularly in Japan. Virtually all Japanese *literati* visiting China in that decade would go to the bookstore. They included Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and the namesake of the Akutagawa Prize, Japan's Nobel, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. At Tanizaki's second visit to Shanghai, in 1926, he heard from a guest at a welcoming party that 'Chinese young artists are beginning a new cultural movement, and that Japanese novels and plays are being translated by them'. In her 2013 doctoral dissertation, Kato Naoko reports that this guest told Tanizaki,

[...] to go and see Uchiyama bookstore if he didn't believe this story. A few days later, Tanizaki visited the bookstore and put forth his request to Uchiyama, who promptly called around to arrange a group gathering. Indeed, this time Tanizaki was able to meet writer Guo Moruo, dramatists Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian, poet Wang Duqing, oil painter Chen Baoyi, and translator Fang Guangtao thanks to Uchiyama. (Kato, 77)

Following his visit to the bookstore, Tanizaki commented,

I was invited to have tea there while Uchiyama told me about the current situation facing the Chinese. He told me that out of 80,000 yen that he makes per year, one fourth is from what Chinese buy, and this percentage keeps increasing. The books range from philosophy, science, law, literature, religion, and art. (Kato, 67)

By 1927, an enormous number of Chinese men – and women – of letters had made the Uchiyama Bookstore their nexus. The tides of fortune were soon to carry China's greatest 20th century writer, by many accounts, to Shanghai and to the Uchiyama Bookstore, where Lu Xun would spend part of nearly every day for the remaining nine years of his life.

A WILDLY IMPROBABLE FRIENDSHIP

Lu Xun and Xu Guangping [the woman with whom Lu would live for his remaining nine years] reached Shanghai on 3rd October 1927. By the time of their arrival, Shanghai had become the center of the literary world in China, publishing the major magazines and housing the majority of leading writers, [...] They all could enjoy the protection of the International Settlement, where Chinese laws did not run. (Pollard, 119)

In his podcast *Kanzō Uchiyama, Lu Xun, and Sino-Japanese Friendship*, Fogel describes Lu Xun's arrival and early days at the store and with Uchiyama Kanzo

The Uchiyama Bookstore at this point was exceedingly well known ...[Lu Xun] goes into the bookstore a couple of days later and shortly thereafter meets Uchiyama, and they hit it off tremendously – it soon becomes a place where he would go practically every day. In fact, when he doesn't show up – he only lived a stone's throw away – they would send somebody over to make sure everything was OK. Lu Xun [...] had his own chair after a while [...] would sit there for hours and hours on end talking with people. Lu Xun, having spent many years in Japan was completely fluent in Japanese, and Uchiyama by this point was probably fluent in Chinese too. [...]

And Uchiyama saved Lu Xun's life several times. This was a volatile period in Chinese-Japanese relations. Not only was Lu Xun an object of Japanese military scrutiny, but the Guomindang and the various pro-Japanese elements among the Chinese . . . assumed that he was pro-Communist.

It's hard now for us to imagine that Lu Xun was anything but the deified idol that he has become. But in the period the Communists made his life miserable, the Nationalists made his life miserable [... and later] the Japanese [...] so the Uchiyama Bookstore was a place where he would come to relax. [...] He very much appreciated that when he would come there they could have meaningful intellectual discussions, even political discussions, but it didn't necessarily have to end in a bloodbath (Fogel 2017, accessed Nov 2019)

Lu Xun had this to say about his favourite interlocutor, publisher, and several times protector:

Many customers who come to gather here [the bookstore] worship the personality of that person [Uchiyama Kanzō]. Of course, I too am one of those fans. If you were to describe Kanzo's character in a single word, it would probably be "simple." Those who don't know him might merely see him as a fool. You see, his business policy is basically, "Whether they're Japanese or Chinese, people who read books can't be bad." For this reason, customers were allowed to not only read books while standing up, they were even offered chairs and treated to tea. There was never any policy about preventing shoplifting and customers who came in without money were given books on credit. Even when the charge account reached upwards of hundreds of yen, there was never a dour look. Considering this objectively, one couldn't help but call him a fool. Yet, when customers are trusted to that extent, they also respond to that trust with deep devotion. They start by taking special care in turning the pages of the books, then they begin forgetting about trying to shoplift, and despite other temptations, when some money comes in, they try to pay off their debts on the charge account. This is how the Uchiyama Bookstore became one of the biggest bookstores in Shanghai. (Robins, 13)



Figure 12: Lu Xun speaking at Peking Normal University, 1932, (Pollard, xxvii)

In 1931, the Guomindang rounded up five of the members of the League of Left-Wing Writers, which Lu Xun co-founded with the local branch of the Communist Party. The five and a dozen others were then executed. One of the five, Rou Shi (柔石) was particularly close to Lu Xun, who two years later wrote the essay *To Remember In Order to Forget*, commemorating Rou and the others.

On this day two years ago, while I was taking refuge in a boarding house, they were going to the execution ground. On this day one year ago, while I was fleeing to the British Concession to the sound of cannon fire, they were already buried in an unmarked grave. Only on this day this year am I sitting as before in my own lodgings. Everyone is asleep including my wife and child. Again my heart is heavy; I have lost a very good friend, China has lost a very good young man. (Pollard, 236)

Lu Xun was also a target in 1931. The boarding house he mentions was arranged by Uchiyama Kanzo – a Japanese-owned property, which would have been more difficult for the GMD to kidnap Lu from (Fogel, accessed 2019)

Lu Xun died on 19 October 1936, nine months before the Japanese launched their full-scale invasion of the mainland. Fogel suggests that more than ten thousand mourners passed by his bier as Lu lay in state from 20 – 21 October, and thousands more, blocking the streets, for his funeral on 22 October (Fogel, accessed Nov 2019). Even after Japan's broader China invasion in 1937 and occupation of Shanghai, the bookstore remained a thriving centre of literature and exchange, and Uchiyama continued to provide a haven for Chinese writers from Japanese troops patrolling the city.

He attracted at least one rather unexpected aficionado, Hayashi Hidesumi, who headed Japan's military police in the city, the dreaded Kempetai, from 1938 to 1942

'I would rather go to Uchiyama Kanzō than to listen to what the rōnin [freelance informers] say. . . To me, Uchiyama was the most reliable rōnin if I can call him that. Having said so, I am not the type who can go over to his place and introduce myself as Hayashi from Shanghai Kempeitai. . .

‘My salary at the time was 150 yen per month, and I spent around 70 yen on books. If there was something I thought I should read, I would just buy, buy, buy. When I returned to Japan from Shanghai, I had 49 boxes full of books, so I contributed a lot to Uchiyama Kanzō.’ (Kato, 153)

HEROES WITH THOUSANDS OF FACES

Not much remains of the Uchiyama Bookstore in Shanghai, at least physically. A museum of sorts lives on in the lobby of the ICBC bank branch that now occupies 2050 North Sichuan Road, in Shanghai’s Hongkou district, not far from the final location of the store, which was looted and forcibly closed by the Guomindang regime at the end of 1945. The remains of the two Uchiyamas, co-founders Miki and Kanzō, repose in the ‘Foreigners Cemetery’, part of the Song Qingling Memorial Park and mausoleum just west of downtown Shanghai. The book-shaped monument at the foot of their gravesite bears an inscription, often commented upon.

‘Through a bookstore, a bridge to cultural exchange,
‘In life becoming China’s friends,
‘In death becoming China’s soil,
‘Ah – such a couple.’



Figure 13: Uchiyama grave footstone



Figure 14: Lu Xun's tomb

Lu Xun's final resting place is not far away, in an eponymous park, up the street a bit from the Uchiyama Bookstore mini-museum. The Tokyo iteration of the Bookstore is alive and well, in the Jimbōchō district, the city's literary ground zero.

Today the Uchiyama Bookstore enjoys an outsized amount of attention for a retail establishment that's been out of business in Shanghai for seventy plus years. Books, doctoral dissertations, podcasts and other lectures have all appeared in recent years, featuring the bookstore and its famous patrons.

Brushtalk has driven a level of mutual understanding in East Asia that's virtual continues to this day. But perhaps the most powerful legacy of those times is the linguistic transformation that occurred in China, of which the Uchiyama Bookstore was such a powerful

embodiment, a century ago. In August 2012, a program director at China's CCTV 1 posted a piece exhorting his fellow citizens to remember one of the primary legacies of the May Fourth Era, and one of the primary Japanese influences on China today:

To all those people calling for the boycott of Japanese products and those using this opportunity to attack the property of your own countrymen. You need to know that the biggest Japanese export to China isn't cars, or television sets or manga. It's language. About 70% of social science terms used in Chinese today came from Japanese — 'society', 'economics', 'philosophy', 'environment', 'arts', 'medicine', 'law', 'rights', and yes, even 'protest'. If you love this country, then strive to help this country gain respect from others instead of using cheap means of displaying your intolerance. (horacelu)

And the Greatest Japanese Export to China Is . . .
reposted from the original and translated by Shanghaiist, 21 August 2012

In his seminal *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell, describes the hero's journey.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (Campbell 28)

In 1905, Lu Xun travelled to a world of what was to the Chinese of the time a region of supernatural wonder – an Asian country, a child of China, which had become a world power. Lu came back transformed, bringing back with him a vision of the peril of his people, but also their promise, and communicating that vision in literary works that shook the world of his time and remain essential reading in Chinese literature studies.

In 1916, the Uchiyamas made a homecoming of a different sort – genetically and culturally and, especially linguistically, the children of China, they rode the reverse tidal flow, returning to the land of



Figure 15: The plaque on the wall outside the Uchiyama Bookstore mini-museum on N Sichuan Rd in Shanghai, bearing the images of Lu Xun and Uchiyama Kanzō. The first lines of the descriptions do Miki a disservice – they say that Kanzō founded the bookstore in 1917, omitting her name entirely. The final lines indicate that the Shanghai city government has granted the site official historical status.

their ancestors, bringing with them literary boons and then joining with their Chinese cousins in resisting a mutant, virulent and deadly strain of Pan Asianism that had gained a stranglehold on the land of the Uchiyama’s birth. The epigraph of the Economist’s September 2012 Analects column suggests that, “with millennia of influence and perhaps only decades of war between them, surely both sides can see things another way.” (J.J./Economist, accessed Nov 2019)

Isaac Meyer concluded his podcast about the Uchiyama Bookstore with a similar sentiment.

In an age where it seems like Beijing and Tokyo are constantly at each other's throats, and where it can seem like that dynamic is inevitable, Uchiyama is a nice reminder that it is not. That even in their darkest moments, Japan and China have learned from and lived with each other for a long time, and that given the right circumstances and the choice to live up to those circumstances, they can do so again. (Meyer, accessed Nov 2019)

Uchiyama Kanzō timeline

- 1885-01-11 – born in Okayama Prefecture, west of Kobe
- 1897 – left school, apprenticeship in Kyoto
- 1912 – became Christian
- 1913 – first moved to Shanghai as rep for *Daigaku Megusuri Santendo* (Santendo University Eye Medicine)
- 1915 – returned temporarily to Kyoto, is introduced to Miki, marries
- 1916, March – back to Shanghai with Miki
- 1917 – Miki founds the bookstore
- 1924 – Bookstore moves to larger location
- 1929 – moved to the North Sichuan Rd location that would become the bookstore's most famous
- 1931 – hid Lu Xun from Guomindang (first time)
- 1945 – Miki died, Uchiyama Kanzō forced to close the bookstore and abandon everything, expelled from China by Guomindang, returned to Japan
- 1950s – appointed head of Sino-Japanese Friendship Association
- 1959-09-21 – died in Beijing

Lu Xun timeline

- 1881-09-25 – born in Shaoxing
- 1902 – went to Japan on a Qing scholarship to study Western medicine, attended Kobun Institute, cut off queue.
- 1904 – Sendai Medical Academy (now Tohoku U), met Fujino Genkur .
- 1905 – ‘Lantern incident’
- 1906, March – quit school, moved to Tokyo, made a short trip to China to marry (arranged) Zhu An
- 1909, returned to China
- 1912 – joined new Ministry of Education, moves to Beijing
- 1918 – published *Diary of a Madman*, for New Youth, *Ah Q* and others

soon thereafter, all republished in *Nahan* in 1922, which included the famous ‘iron house’ essay as introduction.

October 1927 – moved to Shanghai, becomes regular at Uchiyama Bookstore, begins openly living with Gu Xuanping

1930 – co-founded League of Left-Wing Writers, later in the decade considered for Nobel Prize for *Ah Q* and others

1936-10-19 – died of lung disease

Acknowledgement: the idea for this essay came in large part from conversation with longtime Royal Asiatic Society China member, devotee to the study of Lu Xun and Uchiyama Kanzō, and friend, Ms Marcia Johnson. Marcia not only helped me craft the initial idea, but has also been enormously helpful along the way.

John D Van Fleet moved to Japan in 1991, expecting to return to the United States in a few years. After ten years in Japan, he’s now been resident in China for 20. He currently serves as Director, Corporate Globalization, and adjunct faculty, Antai College of Economics & Management, Shanghai Jiao Tong University. A regular contributor for the *Asian Review of Books* and *Caixin*, Van Fleet’s first book, **Tales of Old Tokyo**, a scrapbook tour of the city’s history from 1853 to 1964, was published in 2015, while his second enterprise, *Squabbling Siblings, China and Japan from Antiquity to 2022*, is a work in (long) process, of which this essay will be a component. Van Fleet also serves as Chair, Education Committee, American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, and Secretary, Royal Asiatic Society China.



References

- Bassino, et al. “Japan and the Great Divergence, 725 - 1874.” (2015).
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949.
- Chan, A. *Sheung-mun-tai street in Canton, China*. 1870. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sheung-mun-tai_street_in_Canton,_A._Chan,_1870.jpg>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Dore, Ronald P. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.
- Dower, John. *Throwing Off Asia I: Woodblock Prints of Domestic “Westernization” (1868 - 1912)*. 2008. Massachusetts Institute of

- Technology. <https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/throwing_off_asia_01/gallery/pages/0000_016.htm>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- . *Throwing Off Asia II*. 2008. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/throwing_off_asia_01/IMP_44_74_1.html>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Dreyer, June Teufel. *Middle Kingdom & Empire of the Rising Sun*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Edgerton-Tarpley, Kathryn. *Famine in Imperial and Modern China*. March 2017. <<https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/abstract/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-133>>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Fenby, Jonathan. *The Penguin History of Modern China*. London: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Fogel, Joshua A. *Joshua Fogel: Kanzo Uchiyama, Lu Xun, and Sino-Japanese Friendship*. 26 January 2017. <<https://soundcloud.com/harvard/joshua-fogel-kanzo-uchi-yama-lu-xun-and-sino-japanese-friendship>>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Fogel, Joshua A. *A Friend in Deed: Lu Xun, Uchiyama Kanzo and the Intellectual World of Shanghai on the Eve of War*. Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2019.
- Fukuzawa, Yukichi and Eiichi Kiyooka. *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1899, 1966.
- Grescoe, Taras. *Shanghai Grand - Forbidden Love and International Intrigue in a Doomed World*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016.
- Hmeljak Sangawa, Kristina. "Confucian Learning and Literacy in Japan's Schools of the Edo Period." *Asian Studies* 5.2 (2017): 153 - 166.
- horacelu. "And the Greatest Japanese Export to China Is . . ." 21 August 2012. <http://shanghaiist.com/2012/08/21/and_the_greatest_japanese_export_to/>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Jansen, Marius B. *Japan and China: From War to Peace, 1894 - 1972*. Chicago: Rand McNalley College Publishing Company, 1975.
- Jian, Zhao. "Japanese Loanwords in Modern Chinese." *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 32.2 (2006): 306 - 325.
- 'J.J.', "Cross Currents." *Economist*, 27 September 2012 <<https://www.economist.com/analects/2012/09/27/cross-currents>>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Kato, Naoko. *Through the Kaleidoscope: Uchiyama Bookstore and Sino-Japanese Visionaries in War and Peace*. Austin: University of Texas

- at Austin (PhD dissertation), 2013.
- Keaveney, Christopher T. *Beyond Brushstalk: Sino-Japanese Literary Exchange in the Interwar Period*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009.
- Keaveney, Christopher K. *The Subversive Self in Modern Chinese Literature: The Creation Society's Reinvention of the Japanese Shishosetsu*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.
- Kobayashi, Kiyochika. "Kiyochika's Tokyo - I." 2016. *MIT Visualizing Cultures*. <https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/kiyochika_tokyo/index.html>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Lu, Xun. *Jottings Under Lamplight*. Ed. Eileen J Cheng and Kirk A Denton. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- . *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1956.
- Maddison, Angus. *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective*. Paris: Development Century of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2001.
- Melvin, Sheila. "A root of modernism in China: Ibsen." *International Herald Tribune*, 15 September 2006.
- Meyer, Isaac. *The Bookseller*. 22 September 2018. <<http://isaacmeyer.net/2018/09/episode-257-the-bookseller/>>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Mishra, Pankaj. *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012.
- Mitter, Rana. *China's War with Japan, 1937 - 1945: The Struggle for Survival*. London: Allen Lane, 2013.
- . *Lu Xun: Compassionate Cynic*. 25 April 2018. BBC Radio 4. <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b01jst>>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Morris, Ian. *Why the West Rules - For Now*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010.
- Okuefuna, David (ed). *The Dawn of the Color Photograph: Albert Kahn's Archives of the Planet*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Pollard, David E. *The True Story of Lu Xun*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2002.
- Qing Empire Circa 1820*. 29 April 2014. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Qing_Empire_circa_1820_EN.svg>. (accessed 30 November 2019)
- Riichi, Yokomitsu and Dennis (tr) Washburn. *Shanghai*. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2001.

Robins, Christopher. "Japanese Visions of Lu Xun in the Light of the Magic Lantern Incident." *Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus* 5.2 (2007).

Vogel, Ezra. *China and Japan: Facing History, A Conversation with Ezra Vogel* Jan Berris. The National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, 27 September 2019.

Unless otherwise indicated, photographs and translations are by the author.

Section 2:
**‘Despite the uncertainties of
such a posting’**

FOOTSTEPS IN THE FAR EAST: PART 1

WILLIAM BURGESS PRYER (1843-1899)

BY JUDITH ANN PEREIRA

THIS IS a series of two articles on the life of William Burgess Pryer. In this first article, Judith Pereira examines Pryer's life and work in Shanghai and the contribution he made to our understanding of the natural history of China.

ABSTRACT

The British Empire reached its zenith during the Victorian era (1837-1901). In the Far East, great inroads were made in trade and exploration into China, while, on the British home front, major reforms in social, religious and political attitudes occurred. The study of literary and fine arts along with natural history gained appeal in the middle classes, as did the yearning for travel to and adventure in the newly acquired territories.

One such Englishman, who grew up in the Victorian age and travelled to the Far East under the umbrella of the British Empire, was William Burgess Pryer. He arrived in Shanghai in 1864 and worked in the tea and silk trade. As a member of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (NCBRAS), Pryer was appointed Treasurer and later, the first Honorary Curator of the NCBRAS museum in Shanghai, China's first public museum, which opened in 1874. Pryer was also a keen naturalist and contributed to the fields of natural history, in particular, entomology, during his time in the Far East.

Pryer travelled to North Borneo in 1877 and became one of the territory's earliest British administrators. He was the first Resident of the East Coast of North Borneo and founded the modern town of Sandakan, prior to the British North Borneo Company (BNBC) taking over the territory.

EARLY DAYS IN LONDON AND SHANGHAI

William Burgess Pryer was born in London, England on 7 March 1843 and christened at St Stephen's Church, London on 2 June 1843.¹ He was the fourth of six children of Thomas Pryer and Isabel Charlton.² The Pryer family lived in Southwark and Peckham before moving to 11 Artillery Place, Finsbury Square, London, where their



Figure 1: William Burgess Pryer

father Thomas, a prominent solicitor and freemason, worked. Thomas took great interest in freemasonry, antiquities, architecture and archaeology.³ His passion for learning and writing was a trait inherited by several of his children, who displayed similar zest in their own careers. Unfortunately, Thomas died in 1851 at age 40 due to typhoid fever, leaving his young family in financial strife and, consequently, under the care of the Masonic Order of which he had been an active member.⁴

The eldest child, Isabel Jane, took a job as a governess at age 16 to support the family and in 1856, she married businessman Joseph Thorne. He, together with his brothers Augustus and Cornelius, ran a tea and silk business under the name Messrs Thorne Bros & Co. The couple moved to Shanghai soon after their wedding, where Joseph took charge of business from the Chinese end.³

There is scant detail of Pryer's early life in England. He probably received schooling or apprenticeships with the assistance of his late father's Masonic Brotherhood. In 1859, aged 16, Pryer went under the ice while skating on the Hampshire Ponds with brother Thomas Nehemiah, who unfortunately drowned.³ By 1861, at age 18, he had left the Pryer household, which was then living at Albert Villas, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town.⁵ In order to lessen the financial strain on their single mother, his eldest sister Isabel Jane, now Mrs Isabel Thorne, found an opening for Pryer as a clerk at her husband's firm Messrs Thorne Bros & Co. in Shanghai. Company records show that Pryer may have apprenticed at their London office at 4 Cullum Street prior to his departure to Shanghai.⁶ For Pryer, China would not only provide financial independence and an introduction to Chinese natural history but would also be the start of a lifelong journey in the Far East.

Pryer arrived in Shanghai, aged 21, in November 1864,⁷ and took up residence in the International Settlement. He was to spend 12 years in Shanghai as a clerk cum bookkeeper at Messrs Thorne Bros & Co.⁸ (known locally as *Yuen-Fong*) whose offices were also located within the International Settlement at 24 Keangse (*Jiangxi*) Road and later at the more prestigious location of 9A Yangtze Road (*The Bund*).⁹ With

the flow of trade and commerce firmly established by the mid 1860's, Shanghailanders, a term used pre-1949 for the mostly European and American foreign residents of the city, turned their focus towards recreational and other aspects of treaty port life. Pryer was actively involved in various sporting and volunteer clubs and would become closely associated with the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (NCBRAS).

THE VOLUNTEER AND SPORTSMAN

Shanghailanders christened newcomers to the settlements “*griffins*”, which actually referred to a breed of wild ponies in China.¹⁰ As a *griffin*, Pryer signed up for the Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC) in 1865.¹¹ The SVC was a multinational volunteer force set up in 1853 to protect the foreign concessions, which had on several occasions been held under siege by Chinese rebel armies.¹² The SVC had around 500, mostly British, volunteers by the 1870s, identified by their scarlet and black uniforms. When not “under fire” the SVC would participate in weekly drills, parades, route marches and sham fights. Pryer, reportedly an ex-champion boxer, with an excellent physique, was “a volunteer at a sham fight with the Navy on one occasion, two bluejackets rushed at him to take him prisoner, when he surprised them very much by picking them both up and making them prisoners”.¹³ He was also part of the Mih-Ho-Loong (*Fire Eating Dragon*) Hook and Ladder and Rifle Companies. These were the Shanghai Fire Brigade and infantry units formed in 1866 and 1870 respectively, which came under the auspices of the SVC.¹⁴ The Mih-Ho-Loong Fire Brigade, where Pryer was also a committee member, had the enviable task of organizing the eagerly anticipated annual Mih-Ho-Loong Ball.



Figure 2: The “A” Company of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps was made up mainly of British residents.



Figure 3: A Mih-Ho-Loong medal with motto “Say the word and down comes your house”.

Pryer was a prominent sportsman and was often mentioned in the sporting pages of the North-China Herald alongside fellow Shanghaianders R. S. Gundry, H. T. Wade and E. Holdsworth - editor of the North-China Herald, tea merchant cum shooting enthusiast and silk inspector respectively.¹⁵ Matches involving the Shanghai Cricket, Football and Racket Clubs, of which Pryer was also a member, took place at the centre of the Shanghai racecourse, circling what is now People’s Square, with team

players representing their *hongs* or trade. In one such cricket match, Pryer played for winning team “The World” vs. “Tea & Silk” alongside teammates Alfred and Henry Dent of Dent & Co.¹⁶ In the countryside,



Figure 4: Pryer (front, 1st left) with a cricket team c.1867.

Pryer took part in paper hunts organised by the Shanghai Paper Hunt Club, garnering top positions with Gundry and Wade.¹⁵ These “hunts” were devised in lieu of a proper fox hunt and featured 5 to 10 mile cross-country races along a pre-laid paper trail, often across graveyards and farmland, much to the annoyance of the locals! On the water, Pryer was an active member of the Shanghai Rowing Club, formed in 1863, which organised the spring and autumn regattas and boat races at Suzhou Creek and the Huangpu. Pryer’s team won the “Griffin’s Race” in 1867, and many more trophies were won in subsequent regattas in both the 8-oar and 4-oar categories.¹⁷

SECOND DAY.	
TUESDAY OCTOBER 31st, 1867.	
12:30 p.m.	
REN-O-WAY'S BOAT RACE.	
No Entrance Fee. Prizes—1st Boat \$15, 2nd Boat \$5. Distance, 1 1/2 mls.	
1. H.M.A. "GRIFIN"	2. H.M.A. "ARISTOCRAT"
3. H.M.A. "ADVENTURER"	
3 p.m.	
CAPTAIN'S PLATE.	
Prizes—1st Boat \$10, 2nd Boat \$5.	
Presented by the Captain of Shanghai. For Gigs owned by Chinese.	
Distance For \$5 per Boat. Distance, 1 1/2 mls.	
1. "BRIDGE WALK" (Gig)	2. "WHITE CROSS" (Gig)
3. "PUN TUN" (Gig)	4. "LILY" (Gig)
5. "PINE JUNGLE" (Gig)	6. "MINNIE" (Gig)
5:30 p.m.	
MERCHANTS' PLATE.	
FOR TWO PRIZES—PRESENTED BY THE MERCHANTS OF SHANGHAI.	
1st Prize \$20. 2nd Prize \$10. Distance, 1 1/2 mls.	
Entrance Fee \$5 per Boat. First Boat—\$60, Second Boat—\$40. If more than two start, Distance 1 mile.	
"ZOOLOGICAL" Crew.	
1. W. H. DRYDEN	2. R. S. GRAY
3. J. WATSON	4. D. LEWIS
5. R. BUCKLEY	6. F. RIND
7. J. WATSON	8. K. U. SMITH
9. J. WATSON	10. A. HAYES, Jr., Stroke
11. W. PALMISTAIN, Cox	12. C. J. ARBLET, Cox
4 p.m.	
BANKERS' CUP.	
Prize \$50. Presented by the Bankers of Shanghai.	
SENIOR SCULLS.	
Entrance Fee \$5 per Boat. Distance, 1 1/2 mls.	
1. E. HANCOCK	2. J. A. HAYLAND
3. S. GIBSON	4. E. C. LOW
4:30 p.m.	
BROKERS' CUP.	
Prize \$50. Presented by the Brokers of the Settlement.	
GENERAL CLUB RACE—Oarsmen's Trophy.	
Entrance Fee \$5 per Boat. Distance, 1 mile.	
1. "SHEPHERD" (8-oar)	2. "COLUMBIAN" (8-oar)
3. "WARRIOR" (8-oar)	4. "EAGLE" (8-oar)
5. "SHEPHERD" (4-oar)	6. "COLUMBIAN" (4-oar)
7. "WARRIOR" (4-oar)	8. "EAGLE" (4-oar)
9. "SHEPHERD" (2-oar)	10. "COLUMBIAN" (2-oar)
11. "WARRIOR" (2-oar)	12. "EAGLE" (2-oar)
8 oar races—OVER LAND AND WATER.	
A Prize given by the Chinese R.C.C. over a course marked out by the Committee. Entrance Fee \$1.	
1. H. COOPER	2. W. D. PRYER
3. J. E. COOPER	4. A. H. WATSON
5. H. A. CLARKE	6. W. E. STEPHENSON
7. H. A. CLARKE	8. F. RIND
9. H. A. CLARKE	10. C. J. ARBLET
SCRATCH RACE—CANTON FOUR: THREE—FOUR FIFTEENS.	
Open to all crews. Entries to be made on the spot and Crew chosen for by lot. Entrance Fee \$5 per boat. Distance, 1 mile.	

Figure 5: An 1867 Shanghai Regatta programme lists Pryer under “Brokers’ Cup” challenge. Pryer was also a member of the team that won the “Griffins Race” on the first day.



Figure 6: A four on the Huangpu c.1900-1910

Pryer's forte however, was athletics and he shone in the track and field events organised by the Shanghai Gymnasium. He was most active between 1866-1873, placing well in events such as long jump, distance races, walks, hurdles and sprints. Fifty years on, in 1915, The North-China Herald paid tribute to sportsman "Mr W. B. Pryer of British North Borneo fame".¹⁸

THE NATURALIST TRAVELLER

It is evident from his writings that Pryer was an enthusiastic amateur entomologist, specialising in *Lepidoptera* or butterflies and moths, before he came to China, and that among his mentors and friends were renowned entomologists of the day. Although his work during the tea and silk seasons was "a continual drive, from early morning till all hours of the night", he devoted much of his limited spare time to the collection of local *Lepidoptera* and *Coleoptera* (beetles), of which very little was then known to the Western world.¹⁹ Specimens collected around Shanghai and the hills of Fung-whang and Tungting were described in his first article "Entomology of Shanghai" published by the NCBRAS in 1867.²⁰ Pryer's account of excursions to the Snowy Valley in Chekiang (*Zhejiang*) province and Kiangsoo (*Jiangsu*) province, with a list of many exciting new specimens, was published in *The Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* in 1877.¹⁹ These collections were sent to England and showcased at meetings of the Entomological Society of London, of which Pryer was a member, by Pryer's brother-in-law, Percy Wormald.²¹ To assist in identification, Pryer consulted with "some of the best entomologists at home" in England²² - F. Moore, W. L. Distant, E. W. Janson, O. E. Janson and A. G. Butler - as well as his younger brother Henry Pryer. Henry had had a short clerical stint in Shanghai in 1871 with Adamson, Bell & Co. before moving to the firm's Yokohama branch in 1872. He later became a renowned naturalist in Japan.²³ The Pryer brothers were also members of the London Zoological Society.^{8,23}

After almost 9 years working for Thorne Bros & Co., Pryer finally earned 3 months leave and travelled to the Philippines in 1872, with the intention of expanding his butterfly and bird collections. He had by now, some skills in bird skinning and preservation. Pryer was inspired by *The Naturalist on the River Amazons* (1863) and *Malay Archipelago* (1869) by contemporary naturalists Henry Walter Bates and Alfred Russel Wallace respectively. Unfortunately, his travels in

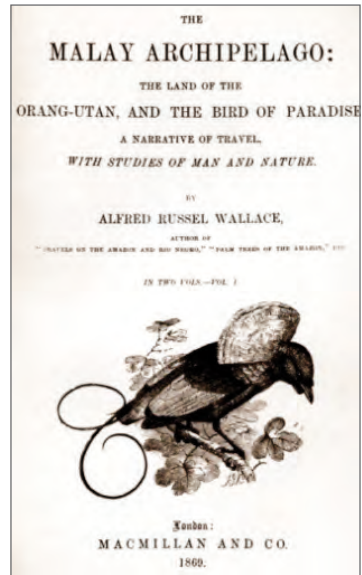
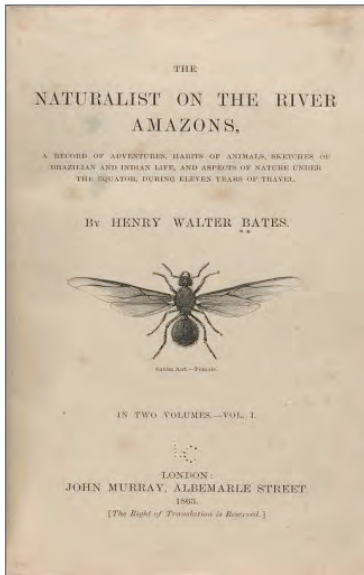


Figure 7: Pryer was inspired by the writings of Bates and Wallace. Like Bates, Pryer had no formal training but a great disposition to natural history and Lepidoptera. As for Wallace, Pryer was fascinated with his observations of the Malay Archipelago, where Pryer would soon head

the Philippines were plagued by inclement weather and bureaucracy and, as he was unable to retrieve his guns, hardly any specimens were collected. As monsoon winds stranded his party on remote islands, he chose not to dwell on misery and instead, swapped boots for bare feet, learnt how to handle giant snakes and literally weathered the storms with the natives, gaining a respect for their land and culture that was to augur well in his future posting to North Borneo.²⁴

Pryer's travels extended to the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, along the Straits Settlements, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Sumatra and the Riao Archipelago in Indonesia, the Sulu Islands in the southern Philippines and Japan before he moved to North Borneo in 1877. A keen eye, a penchant for collecting and a habit of recording details relating to the natural history, social and cultural anthropology of the places he visited provided data for future articles, and specimens to be identified by museums and experts.

THE MUSEUM CURATOR

Pryer signed up as member of the NCBRAS in 1867 and was its Honorary Treasurer from 1868-1870.²⁵ The NCBRAS held its meetings

at the Masonic buildings and had amassed a collection of scholarly books and natural history specimens that needed to be housed in a library and museum respectively. A scheme to realise a permanent address for the NCBRAS was put in motion by its members. Sir Rutherford Alcock, honorary member and Minister to China at the British Legation in Peking, liaised with H.M.'s Consul in Shanghai and in 1868, the latter granted the NCBRAS a piece of land on 5 Upper Yuen-ming-yuen Road, renamed 20 Museum Road in 1886 and now Huqiu Road.²⁶ A 2-storey building to house a lecture room on the lower floor and a library and museum on the upper floor was designed by T. W. Kingsmill and a generous donation from botanist D. Hanbury saw to its completion.²⁷

The new building was inaugurated at the first yearly meeting of the NCBRAS on 11 January 1872, where it was resolved that the library and museum be vested in the British and American Consuls in Shanghai, managed by the NCBRAS, and be open to the public. H. Cordier and W. B. Pryer were appointed first Honorary Librarian and first Honorary Museum Curator respectively. Of the exhibits already on display, *The North-China Herald* reported "a number of specimens in natural history, chiefly entomological" and included "a vulture, recently shot by the keeper of the Shaweishan lighthouse, and preserved by Messrs Pryer and G. Barton."²⁷ No doubt, the entomological specimens were from Pryer's growing collection.

A lack of funds and the difficulty in obtaining an expert to process incoming specimens meant that two years elapsed before any concrete plans were drawn for the museum. In early 1874, an informal committee comprising Messrs Fitzgerald, Pryer, Groom and Michie put forward a scheme for the museum, which was duly approved by the NCBRAS.²⁸ Preliminary expenses were covered by the Recreation Fund Trustees and an upper room of the NCBRAS was made available as planned. Pryer was able to engage an experienced taxidermist named Wang Shu Han, trained by the celebrated naturalist Père Armand David. An official museum committee was subsequently headed by Pryer.²⁸

THE 1ST COMMITTEE OF THE NCBRAS
MUSEUM

Messrs Medhurst and Stronach – Botany
Mr Kingsmill – Geology and Conchology
Mr Keswick – Reptiles and Animals
Mr Pryer – Lepidoptera
Mr Wylie – Archaeology and
Numismatics
Mr Quekett – Ichthyology
Messrs Cordier and Forbes – Ethnology
Messrs Hawtrey and Fitzgerald – Birds
Mr Taintor and Dr Gottburg – Industry
and Products
Dr Henderson – Microscopy
Père Aymeri



Figure 8: Père Armand David

Though not formally trained, Pryer was meticulous in correctly labelling the specimens and had duplicates sent 'to England, there to be inspected and named by the highest authorities [amongst them the British Museum] in their various branches, the same specimens will be sent back here, and not until then will names be affixed to any but the most well-known species,' and 'new species would be named after their collector'²⁸ He also compiled a *Catalogue of Animals and Birds in the Shanghai Museum on the 31st December 1875* with the hope that it would expand into a more comprehensive guide in future.²⁹

By the end of 1874, the NCBRAS museum opened its doors to the public, becoming the first public museum, not only in Shanghai, but in mainland China.³⁰ It was also known as the Shanghai Museum or *Yàzhōu wén huì bówùyuàn* (亚洲文会博物院 literally, 'The Asian Society Museum'). The mostly natural history exhibits included 256 bird specimens, 36 animal specimens and 14 reptile specimens.²⁸ Pryer's insect collection of some 3,000 specimens was also available for viewing on request,³¹ but was later withdrawn and taken back with him to England in 1876. The museum, although rudimentary at this stage, boasted that it could assist in identifying almost any bird or animal from the region by referring to its exhibits.³² Chinese and foreign artefacts and books on natural history soon joined the collection, which rapidly increased in value. The Shanghai Museum

collaborated with another museum that existed around the same time called the Zikawei Museum or *Xújiāhuì bówùyuàn* 徐家匯博物院 (later Heude), run by naturalist Père Heude of the French Jesuits Mission. The Heude Museum was a working museum fully funded by Western institutions but it was not open to the general public.³⁰

Pryer's contributions as the Shanghai Museum's first Honorary Curator from 1874-1876 was testament to his remarkable efforts as a naturalist in China.³³ The Shanghai Museum was to face many difficulties over the next 80 years in the form of temporary closures due to financial and political crisis and lack of adequate space to house its growing collections. Despite these challenges, the museum survived with the help of yearly grants from the Shanghai Municipal Council, donations and the tireless efforts of its curators.^{30,34}

Both the Shanghai Museum and Heude Museum were forced to close in 1952 and most of their collections were handed over to the Shanghai Municipality,³⁰ later to join the current Shanghai Museum and Shanghai Natural History Museum. The collection from the NCBRAS Museum alone comprised 20,000 natural history specimens



Figure 9: The old NCBRAS building on 5, Upper Yuen-ming-yuen Road, which housed the lecture room, library and museum, came to be known collectively as the Shanghai Museum. It stood from 1872-1930.

and 6,000 artefacts.³⁵ Unfortunately a great number of the early exhibits, comprising bird specimens, had deteriorated in the damp climate whilst in storage.

RETURN TO LONDON

Pryer's sister, Isabel Thorne, had returned to England with her children in 1862, followed by her husband Joseph Thorne in 1872. Upon her return to Britain, Isabel went on to pursue medical studies and was one of the proto-feminist group the "Edinburgh Seven" who championed the right for women to become doctors.³ In 1876, the Thornes relinquished their share in the Shanghai partnership to fellow partner and merchant J. A. Maitland and the firm came to be known as Maitland & Co.⁶ Pryer, by now a respected old China hand (*Zhōngguó tōng* 中国通), also returned to England and planned to settle down, but destiny had other plans.

Pryer returned to London in February 1876 but stayed for less than 2 years. It seems he ventured into dairy farming with the advent of urban dairies in London.³⁶ This interest in farming was to be a feature of his later life in North Borneo. He also took time to organise, consult and write articles relating to his collection of *Lepidoptera*, as only one-sixth had thus far been identified, with many new and unnamed species.^{19, 22} There was a flourishing market for natural specimens and Pryer sold his collection to the private collectors Messrs Salvin and Godman.⁸ This collection, along with others, was later passed to the British Museum,⁸ and today forms part of the 8.7 million *Lepidoptera* specimens kept at the Natural History Museum of London.

On 17 August 1877, Pryer married Minna Josephine Gertrude Roche.³⁶ He was 34 years old and she 24. He set out to North Borneo soon after in October 1877, with Baron Gustav von Overbeck, a German businessman and diplomat, leaving Minna behind. Sadly, Minna died of kidney failure on 14 May 1878, while Pryer was away.³⁷ He did not return to England until 1886 and much was to transpire in the interim.

Pryer's association with Shanghai and the NCBRAS were to serve him well in his next posting. Amongst fellow British officials and acquaintances, old China hands such as Sirs Alfred Dent, Rutherford Alcock and Walter Medhurst were to feature prominently during the infant years of British North Borneo. This "China connection" and Pryer's in-depth understanding of the Chinese work ethic were to play a major role in the administration of the new territory.



Images

- Figure 1 Paul French, “Shanghai’s Mih-Ho-Loong Cocktail” 2016 <<http://www.chinarhyming.com/2016/11/03/shanghai-mih-ho-loong-cocktail>> [accessed 11 September 2018]
- Figure 2 Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <<http://www.cngcoins.com>> [accessed 12 September 2018]
- Figure 3 Social Shanghai, 1911, Volume 12, p323, courtesy of Simon Drakeford <<http://www.treatyportsport.com/about-the-treaty-ports.html>> [accessed 4 April 2018]
- Figure 4 Nigel M. W. Harris, *Sampan Pidgin: Being a History of the Shanghai Rowing Club*, 1938, Shanghai: Mercantile Print. Co.
- Figure 5 Historical Photographs of China Collection, University of Bristol <<https://www.hpcbristol.net/visual/po01-025Ibid>> [accessed 30 November 2018]

Images not cited were sourced from Wikimedia Commons and the RAS Shanghai Collection



References

- 1 *England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975*, on FamilySearch genealogy website under William Burgess Pryer <<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/V5JD-5QK>> [accessed 10 July 2017]
- 2 London Census 1851, Ancestry.co.uk lists Pryer’s siblings born between 1834-1850.
- 3 Diary of Mrs Isabel Jane Thorne, Edinburgh University Library Special Collections; Judith Pereira, ‘The Life & Times of Isabel Thorne (1834-1910)’ in *the 4th Dominic Clan Reunion Souvenir Book*, 2017, pp. 41-48
- 4 Obituary of Thomas Pryer in *Freemason’s Quarterly Magazine and Review* Dec 1851, p. 79-80
- 5 London Census 1861, Ancestry.co.uk
- 6 Records of Thorne & Company Limited, London Metropolitan Archives
- 7 *North-China Herald* 12 November 1864, Passenger Arrivals
- 8 Obituary of William Burgess Pryer by O. E. Janson, *The Entomologist*, Feb 1899, p. 52

- 9 The collective “China Directories” published by A. Shortrede & Co., China Mail and Hong Kong Daily Press between 1860-1914 which listed all personnel, companies, institutions and addresses in the British Far East colonies at any given time.
- 10 Charles M. Dyce, *Personal Reminiscences of Thirty Years’ Residence in the Model Settlement Shanghai, 1870-1900* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd 1906), pp. 20, 183
- 11 North-China Herald 7 January 1865
- 12 Shanghai Volunteer Corps Centenary Dinner Program, 2 April 1954 <https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Asset/Source/bnBook_ID-1264_No-1.pdf> [accessed 9 June 2018]
- 13 Obituary of Mr W. B. Pryer in North-China Herald 16 Jan 1899, p. 48
- 14 North-China Herald 4 July 1874, p. 2; 14 January 1875, p. 22
- 15 North-China Herald 16 March 1867, p. 43; 6 May 1867, p. 50; 24 April 1868, p. 184
- 16 North-China Herald 16 September 1865
- 17 North-China Herald 4 November 1867, p. 333; 12 May 1871, p. 347; 28 October 1875, p. 430
- 18 North-China Herald 8 April 1916, p. 34
- 19 Entomologist’s Monthly Magazine, Vol. 14, 1877-1878, p. 52
- 20 W. B. Pryer, ‘Entomology of Shanghai’, Journal of the NCBRAS, No IV, December 1867, Article V, p. 74-79
- 21 Entomologist’s Monthly Magazine, Vol. 6, 1869-1870, p. 172; Vol. 10, 1873-1874, p. 72; Vol. 14, 1877-1878, p. 120
- 22 Curator’s Report, Report of the Council of the NCBRAS for the year 1875, ppvi-vii
- 23 Obituary of Henry James Stovin Pryer by J. T. C., The Entomologist 1888, p. 167; Ken Wilson, ‘An Amateur Naturalist in Japan: Henry James Stovin Pryer (1850-1888)’ in *the 4th Dominic Clan Reunion Souvenir Book*, 2017, pp. 49-61
- 24 W. B. Pryer, “Cosas Filipinas”, The British North Borneo Herald July-December 1898
- 25 Report of the Council of the NCBRAS for the years 1867, 1868, 1869 and 1870
- 26 Report of the Council of the NCBRAS 1868, Item IV, p. xii
- 27 North-China Herald 18 January 1872, pp. 34, 39
- 28 Curator’s Report, Report of the Council of the NCBRAS for the year 1874, pp. xi-xiv

- 29 *Catalogue of Animals and Birds in the Shanghai Museum on the 31st December 1875*, printed by the North-China Herald, Shanghai, 1876. This rare document is in the J.H. Fleming Collection at the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada
- 30 Tracey Lie Dan Lu, *Museums in China: Power, Politics and Identities* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014) pp. 62-78
- 31 North-China Herald 26 November 1874, p. 519
- 32 North-China Herald 2 December 1875, p. 542
- 33 North-China Herald 9 March 1876, p. 210; 25 January 1877, p. 84
- 34 Arthur de Carle Sowerby, 'The History of the Shanghai Museum', *The China Journal*, Vol. XIX, No 5, November 1933, pp. 219-224; *Journal of the NCBRAS*, 1934
- 35 陆其国,老上海的亚洲文会大楼, 27 June 2013 <<http://history.eastday.com/h/20130627/u1a7481191.html>> [accessed 5 April 2018]
- 36 Marriage certificate of William Burgess Pryer and Minna Josephine Gertrude Roche, 17 August 1877, obtained from General Register Office, England. Pryer's occupation is noted as "dairyman"
- 37 Death certificate of Minna Pryer, 14 May 1878, obtained from General Register Office, England

FOOTSTEPS IN THE FAR EAST: PART 2

WILLIAM BURGESS PRYER (1843-1899)

BY JUDITH ANN PEREIRA

IN THIS, the second of two articles, Judith Pereira explores the later life of William Burgess Pryer. Having returned to England in 1876 after a successful career in Shanghai, Pryer pursued a venture in dairy farming, married and continued in his passion for *Lepidoptera*. However, it wouldn't be long before he would be drawn once again to the Far East to play a key role in the transformation of North Borneo.

ACQUISITION OF NORTH BORNEO

North Borneo (Sabah) refers to the northern part of the equatorial island of Borneo. In 1860, the Sultanates of Brunei and Sulu exercised nominal sovereignty over the territory, but most communities had de facto independence, there were disputes over boundaries and piracy and lawlessness was rampant. Earlier attempts by the Spanish, Dutch and British to occupy parts of North Borneo had failed. In 1865, an American Consul to Brunei, Charles Lee Moses had secured from the Sultan of Brunei, in return for promised payments, a cession for ten years of a large territory to the north of Borneo, which he quickly sold to fellow American merchants Joseph Torrey and Thomas Harris.

The new owners set up a doomed settlement "Ellena" along the Kimanis River but were cash-strapped and forced to find a buyer. Torrey returned to Hong Kong, and in 1870, had piqued the interest of Baron Gustav von Overbeck, a German merchant and the Austrian Consul General of Hong Kong. In 1873, Overbeck, 'for the first time unfolded, to a circle of intimate friends and government officers, his project for the acquisition of a considerable territory on the magnificent island of Borneo, and the establishment there of an Austrian mercantile station' and it was noted that the 'President of the Oriental Museum gave his whole attention to the subject', a possible reference to Pryer, Curator of the Shanghai Museum at the time.¹ Overbeck was in charge of the Oriental display at the Vienna Exhibition of 1873,² and had procured Chinese items from Shanghai,³ and hence their acquaintance may have been made then.

Despite the lack of interest from his European counterparts in the purchase, Overbeck nevertheless, in 1875, travelled with Torrey to meet with the Sultan of Brunei to initiate negotiations. Overbeck then turned to his former employer, the businessman Alfred Dent, of Dent & Co., who foresaw the scheme's potential and agreed to part-finance the venture via a Dent & Overbeck syndicate; their initial plan was also to dispose of the concessions to the highest bidder. Overbeck's ambitious scheme finally gained momentum in 1877, when funds became available. The syndicate then recruited representatives to be stationed as animated "keep out" signs at the soon-to-be-acquired territory.

At this point, Pryer became involved. Despite the uncertainties of such a posting, as well as being newly married, Pryer rose to the challenge and embarked on what was to be a new chapter in South East Asian history. He arrived in Singapore in November 1877.⁴ A steamer named *America*, which had been specially chartered in London, arrived soon after for the next stage of the journey.

On 12 December 1877, the *America* left Singapore in great secrecy, bound for Brunei and carrying on board Messrs Torrey, Overbeck, W. Pretyman and Pryer. A precursory stop was made at Labuan Island to inform acting Governor William H. Treacher of the mission. Although the *America* was fully armed, Treacher encouraged the signing of a treaty by shadowing proceedings closely in his gun vessel *Hart*. After difficult negotiations, the syndicate obtained from Sultan Abdul Momin of Brunei a cession of the greater part of North Borneo on

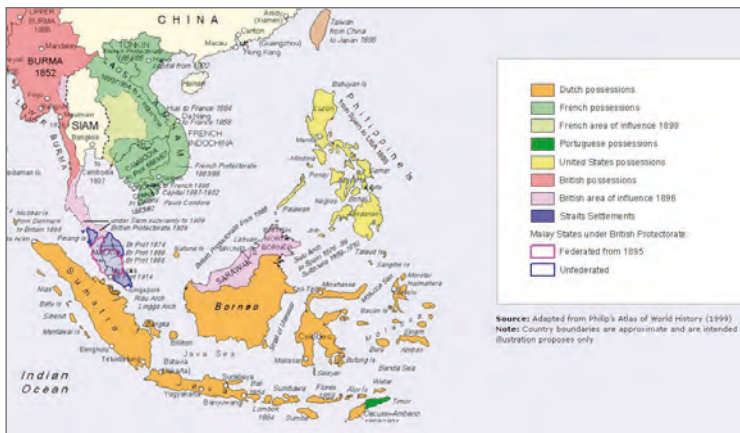


Figure 1: British North Borneo in relation to its neighbours (1870-1914)

29 December 1877. However, the Sultan of Sulu subsequently posited that the north-eastern part of this cession was under his control, thus necessitating a separate cession. The *America* set sail for Sulu and with the assistance of William Clark Cowie, a Scottish merchant, gun runner and friend of the Sultan of Sulu, the territory in dispute was ceded by Sultan Jamalul Alam to the syndicate on 22 January 1878.^{5, 6} The imminent Spanish colonisation of the Sulu archipelago was reason enough for the Sultan of Sulu to cede the territory in return for British protection, which Treacher, who engaged himself in the negotiations, represented. However, a restrictive clause inserted by Treacher in the documents prohibiting transfer of the territory to another party without British Government consent, thwarted the syndicate's original intention to "buy and sell". This restriction prompted the floating of a private company to develop the territory instead.⁷

With the paperwork completed and the Sultans' chops [sealed orders] issued, the syndicate laid claim to the whole northern portion of Borneo from Kimanis to Pandasan on the west and from Marudu to Sibuku on the east. The Padas Klias region, along with the still independent rivers of the West Coast, was only later fully acquired from Brunei in the twenty years to 1898. Overbeck divided the territory into three Residencies and assigned representatives; W. Pretyman in Tempasuk (*Kota Belud*) in the northwest, W. B. Pryer in Sandakan on the east coast and H. L. Leicester in Papar in the southwest.⁶

From Sulu, the *America* sailed to the East Coast of North Borneo and anchored in Sandakan Bay, with the syndicate taking actual possession of the territory on 2 February 1878.⁸ The three villages of Upak, Timbong and Kampung German were hidden in the trough of the bay away from pirates' view. In the early 1870's, Cowie and several German merchants had run the Spanish blockade for the Sultan of Sulu from Kampung German - "Germantown" - formerly known as Sandakan.⁹ Now, accompanied by the Sulu Sultan's emissary, Overbeck and his entourage:

proceeded in the steam tender *Enterprise* up the Kina Batangan river, penetrating nearly two hundred miles into the interior and only returning (very reluctantly) when their coal was entirely exhausted. No European keel had ever been on this portion of the river before, nor had the natives ever seen a white man. At every village on the route,

the new ruler was received with the utmost enthusiasm. On the return of the launch to Sandakan, Mr W. B. Pryer, formerly of Shanghai, was formally inducted into office as Governor of that portion of the grant [his actual commission was of Resident only] and at the same time appointed Vice-Consul of Great Britain, by the Consul-General of Borneo [William H. Treacher].¹⁰

Without further ceremony, Pryer was landed at Kampung German on 11 February 1878, along with a staff comprising a West Indian black man named Anderson, a “half-caste Hindoo” named Abdul and several Chinese labourers. Meagre supplies consisted of a barrel of flour, 17 fowls and half a dozen Snider rifles. After saluting Pryer, the *America* sailed off, leaving Pryer in charge of inaugurating law and order along a coastline of 300 miles ‘infested by pirates and marauders of the worst type’!⁵ Pryer hoisted the Dent house flag (*Paoshun*) alongside the British flag on Kampung German to assert that the territory was under new management and assumed duty as the first Resident of the East Coast, while the founders proceeded to incorporate a company.

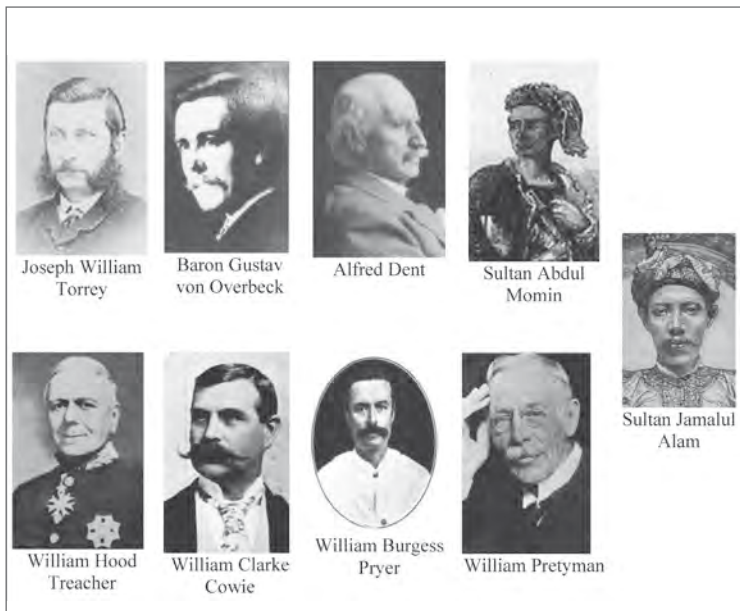


Figure 2: Parties in the acquisition of North Borneo (Sabah)

SETTING UP THE RESIDENCY

Overbeck's instructions to Pryer were to cultivate goodwill with the natives, to introduce changes with due regard to local customs, to enlist the native chiefs in administering local justice with recourse to the Resident and to ensure no land belonging to a native be sold.⁸ Treacher also required Pryer to gather information regarding the character and customs of the various tribes, the geography of the land and its trade, agricultural and mining prospects, as well as activities of foreign governments in the area.¹¹ Nevertheless, Pryer's official diaries (1878-1881) reveal how he had a relatively free hand in running his Residency, which he did with much gusto.¹²

Pryer's first administrative task was to impose customs duties on all trade passing through Sandakan port. He convinced the naturally disgruntled traders and native chiefs that by working together, they could defeat their common enemies, head hunters, pirates and extortionists, generally, who were major hindrances to trade. As the newly installed Resident, he proved his mettle, and elicited compliance, after successfully organising the natives and crippling an attack by head hunters on Timbong village.⁵

Pryer was put to the test in April 1878, when Cowie, dissatisfied with Overbeck's failure to charter Cowie's vessel, the *Far East*, became hostile to the venture and Pryer's authority. It is believed that Cowie instigated the Sulu Sultan, citing unfair customs duties, to reverse his decision and demand that the newly ceded territory be handed back. Risking certain death, Pryer fearlessly proceeded to lower the Sulu flag, but his resolve instead earned him respect from the natives, who rallied protectively to his side. Overbeck managed to pacify Cowie and in turn the Sultan, and the Paoshun and Union Jack were raised once more.¹³

Pryer had only been married to his wife Minna for about two months before leaving for North Borneo with Overbeck in October 1877. A gap in Pryer's diaries for the month of July 1878 suggests a time of grieving and coming to terms with the news of Minna's death from illness in May 1878. He did not return to London but remained in North Borneo, the only white man stationed on the East Coast for the next 4 years. Minna's death may have been the driving force behind his work. Armed with a charismatic personality and boundless energy, Pryer was a hands-on administrator who travelled to all corners of his Residency, getting to know the natives and their chiefs. He relied



Figure 3: Map of North Borneo 1888 and the flags of the entities vying for its North East portion: Spain, Britain, Sulu and Dent's Paoshun



on Anderson and Abdul as interpreters but quickly picked up Malay and Suluk (*Tausug*) and was in constant *bichara* [discussion] on all matters with chiefs and headmen as he explored the bay, the vast forests and huge rivers of this, as yet, unknown country. The sparse population of the East Coast had been ravaged and driven inland by Sulus, pirates, namely the *Illanuns* and *Baligninis*, and the *Sagai* head hunters. A smallpox epidemic had also wiped out inhabitants along the Kinabatangan River. The natives comprised of the sea-gypsy *Bajaus*, *Malays* and *Sulus* on the coast, whilst the *Buludupies* or *Orang Sungei*, *Tunbunwahs* and other *Dusun* tribes settled in the interior and along the rivers. The coastal natives and *Buludupies* were largely Mohammedans, whilst the interior tribes were pagans. Pryer was to

manage these ethnically diverse tribes without much bloodshed.

There was lucrative produce for trade: gutta percha [a type of latex], damar resin, beeswax, camphor and rattan that grew along the rivers, edible birds' nests from the caves of Gomantong, Bahalla (*Berhala*) and Madai, seed pearls from Labuk Bay and Sandakan, and *keema* [local clams], *trepang* [sea cucumbers] and sharks fins from the seas - much sought after by the Chinese, who had established, centuries-old trade links. However, access was unfairly controlled by certain chiefs who stationed custom barriers (*bintang marrow*) along the rivers and monopolised the collection of seed pearls and birds' nests in particular. These practices had remained unchecked as the previous Sulu rulers, pre-occupied with fending off the Spanish, had lacked authoritative presence and a state of near anarchy existed. *Parangs* and *creeses* (knives and daggers) would be drawn at the slightest provocation. Pryer set forth to gradually remove such barriers, opening up the bay and rivers to trade and with the intention of improving the ordinary natives' lot, such that they would accept British ascendancy. Men were stationed along river outposts, strategic trading posts were established, law and order maintained and trade disputes and rivalries settled through local courts, head-hunting was curbed; thus ending the vicious cycle of violence that prevented the natives from trading. With such protection, the natives began to shift allegiances in favour of the new order.¹⁴

Barely able to catch his breath, the Spanish threat loomed next on the horizon. On 4 September 1878, the Spanish man-of-war *Marquis del Duero* anchored in the harbour. Captain Lobe announced that Spain was to claim the newly ceded area and threatened to open fire if the Spanish flag was not hoisted. Pryer quickly gathered the Sulu and Bajau chiefs, who by now were mostly on his side and willing to stand by him. A plan was hatched and the captain invited for tiffin. With food being scarce, Pryer had to sacrifice his pet Argus pheasant! The natives were mobilised, all ceremoniously dressed for war, with their war charms on and armed to the teeth. With Cowie's *Far East* also at the ready, quite an impression was made, for after lunch, Captain Lobe retreated to his ship, had a palaver [an improvised conference] and a farewell drink with Pryer and vowed to return with reinforcements from Manila.¹³ He never did. The Madrid Protocol signed in 1885 ended the Spanish claim on North Borneo.¹⁵

Within a year of his arrival, Pryer had almost single-handedly

gained the confidence of the Bay and consolidated his authority. The relatively peaceful waters started to attract visitors, settlers and traders. By the end of 1878, a contingent of 6 *Somali* policeman was despatched to Pryer to assist in maintaining law and order, later to be augmented by Sikh and Dyak police, and a Court of Justice established to try all men equally. However, the threat of pirate attacks kept Pryer on his toes as he considered a new settlement with a better vantage point.¹⁴

THE FOUNDING OF ELOPURA (SANDAKAN)

In a region where the British trade monopoly was still being established, and Sulu ascendancy on the wane, much trade was conducted by armed groups who did not accept authority and became feared as pirates. Earlier European presence had also suppressed established regional trade, causing marginalised communities to turn to piracy.⁵ The pirate menace erupted on a large scale near Bahalla (*Berhala*) Island in May 1879, but Pryer and Cowie, with a force of Sulus and Bajaus, were successful in driving them out. With Treacher's influence, British naval vessels were deployed from thereon to safeguard the East Coast. The *Illanun* pirate stronghold at Tunku, on the southeast coast, came under British fire power later in the year and piracy was gradually suppressed.¹⁴

On 15 June 1879, Kampung German was accidentally razed to the ground. Pryer narrowly escaped through a window of his *attap* house, which was built on stilts over the water. He decided to relocate the settlement 12 miles closer to the harbour mouth at Buli Sim Sim, with its bubbling streams and thick jungle right to the water's edge.¹⁶ On 21 June 1879, Pryer cut down the first tree and founded the settlement he named Elopura (beautiful town).¹³ On a promontory, he built Fort Pryer to look over and ensure the safety of the bay, with a flagstaff and guns, which thankfully, were only ever used to fire salutes on special occasions.

An entry from Pryer's diary dated 12 August 1879 describes a typically busy day building the new township:

Kept the three gangs at work, killed a 12 foot crocodile in the weir, sent Suits in the boat to Bahalla to collect rattans, wrote to Pangeran Samah [the Buludupy chief controlling the lucrative Gomantong birds 'nests caves], settled two



Figure 4: Sandakan 1883. Photo by F. H. H. Guillemard of the yacht *Marchessa*, who described Sandakan as ‘neither picturesque nor beautiful, and even for a new settlement is... untidy ... but it is most certainly busy’, and that it was a ‘magnificent harbour’

or three matters with Hadji Omar, sent off gig to German for more planks, wrote up cash and got Promissory note from Haran for the last stores. Found a ridge of rocks, very thinly covered right across where we were making the Jimbatan [bridge] and had to pull down all the posts and started a new place, bagged a small wild pig that Boxer [Pryer’s dog] drove out, slopped about in the water for at least two hours and got stung by a medusa [jellyfish], superintended planting a lot of broken bottles round the fort pagar [fence], went into the question of short weights at the stores, arranged to give Qui Hing a gang of men to start building his house in ten days or under, changed my coat twice and my trousers three times in the course of the day. Sat down to a dinner of first-rate fish, partridge of probably a new species, and roast pig and apple sauce, no vegetables, brandy and water for drink, went to bed at 8 p.m.¹²

Pryer was appointed British Consular Agent on 7 July 1880¹⁷ and was a busy Resident with only one European assistant. Still, Pryer

made frequent trips into the interior and explored the Segaliud, Labuk, Sugut and Paitan rivers that ran into or close to Sandakan Bay.¹² On 23 February 1881, he explored the mighty Kinabatangan “one hundred and fifty miles further than it had ever been ascended by any European”,¹⁸

In procuring local labour, Pryer was faced with the issue of slavery, which prevailed in different forms - captured mistreated slaves; descendants of slaves who were relatively free to do as they wished, yet bound to a master; debt-ridden slaves. As most of the people on the coast were slaves, Pryer initially faced difficulty getting anyone to work for him for wages, “[...] they offered to work for me if I would buy them, but to work for wages was then looked upon...as much more degrading than being a slave.”¹⁹ Servitude was so ingrained that the concept of freedom was incomprehensible. As such, Pryer only bought or rather, freed, slaves who were maltreated and wished to be free, and they would work for the government for a specified time. The British adopted a staged approach to abolishing slavery, starting with suppressing the capture of slaves, and then ending slavery by descent.

Elopura began to take shape along the water’s edge where the natives and traders set up homes and shops along a raised wooden promenade called The Praya, from Spanish for “beach”; now called Pryer Road, and slowly progressed inland and uphill to where the Europeans preferred to settle.²⁰ Pryer built a 2-storey, 3-sided *attap* Residency or Government House on a bluff point with sweeping views of the Bay. Nicknamed the “Barn”, it later accommodated British officers and their families and served as a venue for government functions.²¹ With the town’s haphazardly built *kadjang* and *attap* houses posing a fire risk, Pryer drew on his experience with the Mih-Ho-Loong (the Shanghai Fire Brigade) and formed a voluntary fire brigade in 1884.²² After a major fire in 1886, better town planning and building materials were introduced.

The name Elopura gradually reverted back to Sandakan. Now out of hiding, the new Sandakan was blessed with an extremely well protected harbour, 15 miles long and 5 miles wide, which could provide anchorage for any number of vessels. The town grew into the East Coast’s largest settlement. By January 1882, it supported a population of 19 Europeans, 1,400 Malays and Sulus, and 450 Chinese.²³ In 1884, after Kudat in the north failed to flourish, Sandakan was elevated to North Borneo’s capital and headquarters of the British North Borneo

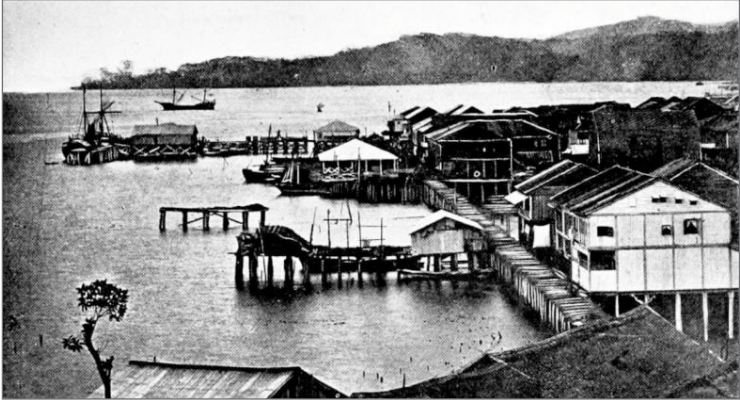


Figure 5: Located at the entrance to Sandakan harbour, The Praya extended to the pier, and provided anchorage for sea vessels. Sandakan c.1895.



Figure 6: Government House, aka the “Barn”, Sandakan, c.1887. The Europeans got around by foot or on ponies.

Company (BNBC). Sandakan later earned the nickname “Little Hong Kong” with its strong presence of ethnic Chinese migrants from Hong Kong, and a similar topography. Before the turn of the century, Sandakan already boasted 2 mission schools, a hospital, houses of worship, phone and telegraph services, metalled roads and the British North Borneo Herald newspaper (the Herald), amongst others. In 1883, the yacht *Marchessa*, on a world tour for survey purposes, anchored in the bay and the first photograph of Sandakan was taken.²⁴ Sandakan celebrated its 140th founding anniversary on 21 June 2019.

It had remained the capital until 1945.

AN OFFICER UNDER THE BRITISH NORTH BORNEO COMPANY (BNBC):

1881-1891

Overbeck failed to raise further capital and sold his rights to Dent in 1879. The British North Borneo Provisional Association Limited, formed in March 1881, managed the territory until a Royal Charter was granted in November 1881 and the British North Borneo Company (BNBC) was formed in May 1882. The BNBC was helmed by Alfred Dent (Managing Director), Sir Rutherford Alcock (Chairman) and a Court of Directors.⁶ Alcock represented British interests in the Far East and was impressed by North Borneo's strategic location along the commercial China trade route. At Pryer's suggestion, Treacher, with his vast knowledge of the country and fluency in Malay and Suluk, was appointed the first Governor of North Borneo in 1881. Treacher and Pryer continued to develop the territory in a very dynamic way under the BNBC. With the new system of government in place, Pryer's administrative duties were reduced and his days as an independent administrator were numbered.¹³ He was now accountable to the BNBC's Court of Directors and shareholders.

Resident Pryer had early on cleared the path for the BNBC to jumpstart North Borneo's development. On the East Coast, he opened access to the trade in jungle and sea produce, as well as a lucrative timber and logging industry, a by-product of the felling and clearing of trees during the building of Elopura.¹³ Hardwoods such as *selangan batu* and *billian* [ironwood] were much sought after in China, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Australia. Shanghai received its first vessel carrying timber from Sandakan in July 1887.²⁵ A sawmill was established in Sandakan by 1888.²⁶

Pryer oversaw an experimental garden in Silam, Darvel Bay which tested crops suitable for commercial cultivation, but it was a highly successful experiment by a planter from Sumatra that made tobacco the crop of choice. Through the "China connection", Sir Walter Medhurst, a former British Consul in China and distinguished NCBRAS member, offered, in his retirement, to assist the BNBC. He brought in the China Sabah Land Farming Company from Shanghai to pioneer tobacco planting. At that time the BNBC had envisaged an immigrant Chinese workforce of up to half a million labourers.²⁷ As Immigration Commissioner in Hong Kong, Medhurst initiated migration schemes

in 1882-1883 to recruit labourers to work the plantations.²⁸ Historians such as K. G. Tregonning have held him accountable for the recruitment of Chinese who were not the required agriculturists, but clearly the BNBC's court of Directors, who were firmly ensconced in England, had difficulty in deciding and communicating what they needed.¹³ It was up to Pryer, who was appointed Protector of Estate Coolies and Labourers in 1884,²⁹ to look elsewhere. Eventually, successful Chinese migration of mainly Hakkas and Cantonese from China, Hong Kong and the Straits Settlements made the largest contribution to economic expansion under the BNBC. With the initial success of tobacco, Dutch and German companies took up land for cultivation, buoying economic growth further through sale of agricultural land.¹³ For a time, North Borneo became synonymous with Dutch planters, Chinese coolies and British administrators!

In 1887, Pryer was appointed Resident of the Interior to oversee development in the Kinabatangan area, as well as Commissioner of the Gold Fields to facilitate the BNBC's quest for gold and minerals.³⁰ Reports of gold discovered up the Segama River in 1880 attracted mineralogists and expeditions were organised into the difficult interior over the next two decades, however, no discoveries of workable quantities were ever made. Pryer was appointed Superintendent of Immigrants and Agriculture in 1888 as more immigrants arrived to work the various plantations. He was also a magistrate and Sessions Judge.³¹

Described as a charming and likeable man, Pryer would enliven his colleagues' midday conferences 'by rushing in excitedly with his latest 'discovery' in Borneo's assets'.¹³ Always one to promote North Borneo's potential, he enjoyed giving tours of the forests, rivers and estates on board his trusty launches. Even while on furlough, he busied himself promoting the territory to potential investors at every opportunity, with the optimism and obsessiveness that was always his greatest strength and weakness. At the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, Pryer read a paper *British North Borneo and its Resources* to work up the interests of the country, which the English press labelled 'Our Youngest Colony', and had the honour of being presented as a gentleman 'of North Borneo' at a Levee held at St. James Palace by HRH the Prince of Wales, on behalf of Her Majesty.³²

However, the BNBC appeared to have grossly underestimated the immense task of developing North Borneo from scratch. It remained

undercapitalised and understaffed from the onset and lurched from one scheme to another. Pryer engaged in these struggles, though he was later to become disillusioned. Tobacco kept the BNBC afloat until dividends were finally declared in 1888, the year North Borneo became a British Protectorate. Pryer began to shy away from tobacco, which, he believed, ‘weakened’ the soil and was ‘the most unhealthy, most expensive and most risky of all cultivations named.’³³ Having successfully experimented with other crops, he encouraged the BNBC to promote cultivation of Liberian coffee, pepper, sugar cane, cotton and Manila hemp, rather than being over-reliant on tobacco as a single crop. In 1890, the idea of a railway for North Borneo to support the tobacco industry was first mooted by the charismatic Cowie,³⁴ who, upon his return to England, joined the BNBC and rose to the influential post of Chairman by 1909. Cowie was able to convince the Court of Directors in London by exaggerating his knowledge of the country, and the railway became the all-consuming focus of the BNBC. Pryer’s suggestions for agricultural diversity fell largely on deaf ears, prompting him to resign from the service of the BNBC in 1891 to set up his own plantations.

THE NATURALIST IN BORNEO

Pryer’s many excursions on the East Coast allowed him to explore as a naturalist. His article ‘Animal Life in Borneo’ in the 1881 issue of *The Zoologist* was an early summary of the territory’s fauna.³⁵ He had amassed sizeable collections of *Lepidoptera* and *Coleoptera*. In 1887, he collaborated with entomologist W. L. Distant to produce a list ‘On the Rhopalocera (*butterflies*) of Northern Borneo’, based on specimens which Pryer had collected in the vicinity of Sandakan.³⁶ In 1894, Pryer and Dick Cator, Secretary to the Governor and fellow lepidopterist, collaborated on *Preliminary List of the Rhopalocera of Borneo*; compiled from specimens from North Borneo and as far as Sarawak.³⁷

Pryer introduced the diverse ethnology of North Borneo in a paper ‘The Natives of British North Borneo’, which was read in July 1889 in London at The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.³⁸ Ethnologists have credited Pryer with ‘saving’ the Segaliud *Buludupies* from extermination by their Sulu oppressors.³⁹

During the brief existence of the North Borneo Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1893-1897), Pryer was a committee member in charge

of the zoology section of the museum. His articles on *Crocodiles and Alligators* and *The Length of Pythons* appeared in the society's journal, which, due to lack of funds, was published as a supplement of the Herald.⁴⁰ The society was formed by Dr Nicholas Belfield Dennys, also a former NCBRAS member, who was recruited by the BNBC and appointed Protector of Chinese in 1892.

Zoologists at the British Museum were able to identify the North Borneo species of two-horned rhinoceros as *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* based on the skulls and horns sent by Pryer in 1879.⁴¹ The British Museum also received consignments of bird skins collected in Sandakan by Pryer in 1881 and a new species *Dicaeum pryeri*, or Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, was named after him.⁴² Henry Nicholas Ridley, botanist at the Singapore Botanical Gardens is also said to have received a collection of North Borneo orchids from Pryer. In 1897, Ridley visited Pryer's Byte Estate in Sandakan and discovered a new species of begonia, which he named *Begonia pryeriana* after his host.⁴³

A "PEOPLES' MAN", A SECOND MARRIAGE AND PLANTING PROSPECTS

Six years were to elapse from the time Pryer first landed in Sandakan before he could go on leave. The inhabitants of Sandakan reportedly held him in high esteem. Rumours of his intended leave in March 1883 sparked such a reaction that they petitioned Governor Treacher and Dent to intervene and retain him for a further 3 to 4 years 'until the proper system of Government has been carried out' and 'for the sake of the happiness of the country and its inhabitants'⁴⁴ His enthusiasm extended beyond his job and he genuinely liked the people and it seems, they him. Before finally going on leave in October 1883, the:

new wharf was decorated [...] Mr Pryer, accompanied by the Governor and staff, was received by a large number of chiefs and natives, some of whom had travelled over 100 miles in order to testify their regard for him; many speeches were made, and the chief Hadji wished Mr Pryer a very speedy return. The Chinese inhabitants had presented an address some days before, and were present in large numbers at the wharf.⁴⁵

Pryer sailed off to Shanghai to visit friends. Unbeknownst to most, a new phase of his life was about to begin.

Pryer decided to give marriage a second try and on his return journey, he stopped at Singapore to marry Ada Blanche Locke at St Andrew's Cathedral on 10 December 1883.⁴⁶ Ms Locke was the daughter of the late Edward Locke Esq of Newport, Monmouthshire. Pryer was 40 years old and Ada 28. Pryer's sister had found a match for her brother in her old school friend Ada, a 'plain but intelligent' and yet a 'most delightful woman.'⁴⁷ Pryer initially did not like Ada but was not willing to reject her as she had travelled all the way from England. However, the marriage turned out to be a splendid union. Ada quickly became passionate about Borneo and engaged in her husband's vision and endeavours for the country. A resilient woman, she often accompanied Pryer on official trips to the interior, where he visited plantations and villages, cut new tracks as well as filled in for officers on leave. She capably helped to run the estates and her trips to the Kinabatangan and Darvel Bay were the first ever undertaken by a European lady. Like Pryer, she had a keen and observant eye, getting to know the people, their customs and the land. Ada was a lady of some means and an aspiring writer. In 1893, she co-wrote with Pryer the well-received *A Decade in Borneo*, a narrative of North Borneo and Sandakan's founding, and how Pryer had played a major role, and a call to invest in its potential spoils.⁵ Her diaries and short stories have been transcribed in *Mrs Pryer in Sabah* by Nicholas Tarling (1989) and the forthcoming *Reflections of a Curious Victorian Lady in North Borneo* by June Corpuz (2020) respectively. Mr and Mrs Pryer visited Shanghai in November 1885.⁴⁸ A new species of butterfly was



Figure 7: The Resident Mr Pryer stands behind a group of native inhabitants of Sandakan

named *Terias ada* in her honour in *On the Rhopalocera (butterflies) of Northern Borneo*.³⁶

Pryer believed that agriculture should be North Borneo's economic mainstay, especially in the East Coast, with its fertile soil liberally watered by numerous rivers. He continued to experiment with various crops. In 1889, he acquired a half-share of the Beatrice Estate, a 767-acre piece of land on the Sandakan Peninsula; the remainder in the name of Augustus Thorne,⁴⁹ which was leased to Hakka Chinese agriculturists who cultivated market gardens (or *Kebun China*) and grew experimental crops such as gambier. It also supported a cattle and dairy farm.⁵⁰ The Pryers managed the entire Beatrice Estate, living on it at their bungalow *Bintangor Besar*, named after a local tree. Ada also acquired Pulo Bai, an island in the Bay of Sandakan, where Pryer successfully grew coconuts, coffee, cocoa, sago, areca nut palms and bananas and even grazed ponies from Sulu and raised cattle.¹³ These ventures, however, never made the money that renting land to Chinese gardeners made on the Beatrice Estate.

Work began to take a toll on Pryer's health, prompting a return to England in March 1890 on urgent private matters and sick leave.⁵¹ He was by this time highly critical of the Company's restrictive agricultural policies, which led to his resignation from the BNBC in September 1891 after 13 years' service as a British administrator.³¹ After garnering some financial support for his own agricultural schemes, the British North Borneo Development Corporation Limited (BNBDC) and the Sandakan Plantations Ltd. (SPL) were incorporated in London and the Pryers returned to Sandakan in December 1891, ready to become planters.⁵²

The BNBDC and SPL acquired 105,000 acres of "uninhabited virgin forest" just outside Sandakan and commenced work on the BNBDC's estates, Byte and Kabeli, and the SPL's Western Jarvis estate with Pryer as manager.⁵² The estates grew what he described as promising crops of Liberian coffee, cane sugar, with a sugar mill on the Byte, coconuts and manila hemp. In 1894, the Loong Piasow Syndicate was registered locally to acquire and cultivate land south of Sandakan Bay.⁵³ Pryer had a devoted labour force of natives and migrants and much of the Pryers' time was now spent at the estates.⁵⁴ To encourage other planters, Pryer wrote, rather obsessively, articles and planting notes in the Herald under the pseudonym "Mynah" - a local bird whose name seems to echo that of his late first wife's, Minna.

He came to see himself as an authority on coffee planting.

The peace in Sandakan was disrupted in 1895 when Datu Muhammad Salleh (or Mat Salleh), a native chief, arrived with some 200 followers to submit a petition against poll taxes and local boat passes imposed by the BNBC. He requested a *bichara* with Pryer, who was away at the estates or the Governor, who was also absent. Made unwelcome and driven away by those BNBC officials on duty, Mat Salleh was later declared an outlaw on charges of murder and went on the run. Pryer offered to mediate twice but was refused by Governor Beaufort, his old sometime rival Cowie and the Court of Directors. A resulting native rebellion against the BNBC, that was to last till 1900, escalated into the sacking of Gaya Island and unrest on the West Coast, disruption of agriculture and the loss of many lives. Several historians believe that the outcome could have been different perhaps, had Pryer, with his relationship and knowledge of this society gained over many years, been allowed to intervene.^{13, 54}

Despite efforts, coffee planting proved unsuccessful and with falling prices, the BNBDG went into liquidation in 1898.⁵⁵ Pryer formed the India Rubber Company in 1897 to cultivate rubber instead.⁵⁶ He was assisted by botanist Henry Ridley, who was later credited with jumpstarting the rubber industry in Malaya, and the Wade brothers who came to Sandakan to set up the first rubber estate in British North Borneo at Bongaya.⁵⁷ Sadly, the experiment failed due to the unsuitable terrain on which the saplings were planted. Pryer's declining health and finances prevented him from heavy work and the estates, except for the Beatrice, fell into neglect. Had the rubber experiment succeeded, it would have been timely with the advent and growth of the automobile industry. Ironically, when the tobacco industry went bust, it was the rubber boom of the early 1900's that saved the BNBC and its expensive railway project from bankruptcy.

HOMEWARD BOUND

Pryer suffered from persistent stomach attacks that necessitated strong painkillers and extended sick leave. Weak and overworked, he returned to England in 1896 on doctor's orders to recuperate.⁵⁸ He never fully recovered but returned to Sandakan, determined to continue estate work. On what was to be his last journey home in October 1898,⁵⁹ he was detained at Lady Strangford Hospital in Port Said, Egypt for some weeks, where he displayed symptoms of caries of the spine and a

thoroughly disorganised digestive system. He succumbed to his illness, dying on 8 January 1899, aged 55 years. Pryer was buried at Port Said^{60, 61}; Ada continued the journey to England alone. The Pryers had brought up two wards, whom they left behind in North Borneo.

Sandakan continued to prosper as a timber town but was badly damaged by allied bombing in 1944. It was too costly for the BNBC to rebuild, and the concept of a company governing a country had become an anachronism. As such, the BNBC relinquished control of North Borneo and handed it to the British Crown on 15 July 1946. The capital was moved to Jesselton, now Kota Kinabalu, on the West Coast. As the winds of independence reached its shores, British North Borneo was once again called Sabah when it merged with Malaya, Singapore and Sarawak on 16 September 1963 to form the Federation of Malaysia.

Judith Ann Pereira was raised in Sandakan, Sabah and has a newfound interest in its early history. William Pryer was the guardian of her grandfather. Her awareness of William Pryer's connection with the NCBRAS was made through fellow RAS member Simon Drakeford's website.



Images

Figure 1 Adapted from page 197 of Philip's Atlas of World History as featured on <www.ehm.my> [accessed 11 March 2019]

Figure 2 1) Portrait of William Burgess Pryer from The Graphic, 21 January 1899, British Museum

2) Portrait of Baron Gustav von Overbeck from the Sabah State Archives, Koleksi Gambar Arkib ANS/RP/32

3) Portrait of William Pretzman from the Sarawak Museum

Figure 3 Map of Sabah from Charles P. Lucas, A Historical Geography of the British Colonies 1888 Vol. 1, p. 158, <commons.wikimedia.org> [accessed 5 January 2019]

Figure 4 Colonial Office Photographic Collection (CO 1069/546) held at The National Archives, U.K.

Figure 6 The Illustrated London News, 1 October 1887, p. 403; illustrations of British North Borneo from photographs by the Hon. Ralph Abercromby.

Figure 7 Frank Hatton, *North Borneo: Explorations and Adventures on the Equator*, 1885, p. 286, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington <<https://archive.org/details/>

Images not cited were sourced from Wikimedia Commons



References

- 1 *Von Overbeck's Expedition to Borneo* [translated for the Shanghai Courier from the *Oesterreichische Monatsschrift für den Orient*], The Celestial Empire 15 June 1878, pp. 573-575
- 2 Obituary of Baron Gustavus de Overbeck in *The British North Borneo Herald* 1 July 1894, p. 180
- 3 President's Address, Report of the Council of the NCBRAS for the year 1874, p. xxx
- 4 Straits Times Overland Journal, 22 November 1877
- 5 Ada Pryer, *A Decade in Borneo* (London: Kelly & Walsh Ltd 1893); June Corpuz, 'The Pryer and the Pongholo Chronologies (1833-1899)' in the 4th Dominic Clan Reunion Souvenir Book, 2017 pp. 17-40
- 6 British North Borneo Company, *Views of British North Borneo, with a brief history of the colony* (London, 1999)
- 7 Ranjit Singh, D, 'The Work of the Pioneering Residents of the Overbeck-Dent Syndicate in Sabah', 1878-1881, 12 November 2017, SEJARAH: Journal of the Department of History. [Online] 2:2, pp. 27-41
- 8 Letter from Overbeck to Pryer dated 10 February 1878, CO (Colonial Office) 874/187
- 9 Corpuz, Lala 'The Pryers, the Priest and the Pongholo: A Sandakan Story', Sabah Museum Journal Vol. 2, 2017
- 10 This early report by a Hongkong Daily Press correspondent was published in various newspapers, including the North-China Herald, 4 April 1878, p. 351. According to Pryer in his 'Accounts of Borneo' (CO 874/176, p6), the steam launch partly ascended the Kinabatangan to Sokaw (*Sukau*), which was 60 miles, and not 200 miles, inland
- 11 Letter from Treacher to Pryer dated 28 January 1878, CO 874/187
- 12 The diaries of W. B. Pryer (11 February 1878 to 12 January 1881). Originals kept at the National Archives in Kew, England under CO 874/67-69, with copies at the Sabah State Archives.

- 13 Tregonning, K.G, 'William Pryer, The Founder of Sandakan', Journal of the Malayan Branch of the RAS (JMBRAS), Vol. XXVII Pt. 1, May 1954, pp. 35-50
- 14 Black, I.D, 'Native Administration by the British North Borneo Company', 1878-1915, 1970, thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Australian National University
- 15 Tregonning, K. G, 'The Philippine Claim to Sabah', JMBRAS Vol. 43 P.1, 1970, p. 167
- 16 The British North Borneo Herald 1 January 1887, p. 3
- 17 Letter from Charles Cameron Lees (HBM's Consul General in Borneo) to Pryer dated 7 July 1880, CO 874/187
- 18 Pryer, W.B, *Diary of a trip up the Kina-Batangan River*, from the collection of E. P. Gueritz (Governor of British North Borneo 1904-1911) held at The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
- 19 Tregonning, K.G, 'The Elimination of Slavery in North Borneo', JMBRAS Vol. 26 P.1, 1953, pp. 24-36
- 20 Extracts of lecture by Mr J. J. Francis, Q. C. to the Hongkong Literary Society, from the China Mail, published in The British North Borneo Herald, 1 July 1889, p. 219
- 21 The British North Borneo Herald 1 March 1883, p. 7; 1 October 1893, p. 271-272
- 22 The British North Borneo Herald 1 November 1884, p. 4
- 23 *British North Borneo: Report by Governor Treacher, from 1 July to 31 December 1882*, from the collection of E. P. Gueritz (Governor of British North Borneo 1904-1911) held at The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
- 24 Guillelard, F.H.H *The Cruise of the Marchessa Vol. II* (London: John Murray, 1886) pp. 83-102
- 25 The British North Borneo Herald 1 September 1887, p. 206
- 26 The British North Borneo Herald 1 February 1888, pp. 319, 322
- 27 Report of the 1st Half-Yearly Meeting of the BNBC held on 27 June 1883
- 28 The British North Borneo Herald 1 March 1883, pp. 1-2
- 29 The British North Borneo Herald 1 March 1884, p. 8
- 30 The British North Borneo Herald 1 January 1888, p. 296; 1 April 1888, p. 20
- 31 The British North Borneo Herald 1 September 1891, p. 36
- 32 The British North Borneo Herald 1 August 1886, p. 136

- 33 Letter from Pryer to B. T. Kindersley (Secretary of the BNBC) dated 31 October 1890, CO 874/187
- 34 Report of the 16th Half-Yearly Meeting of the BNBC held on 17 December 1890, pp. 3-4
- 35 Pryer, W.B, 'Animal life in Borneo', *The Zoologist*, Vol. 5 October 1881, pp. 393-398
- 36 Distant, W. L and Pryer, W.B, 'On the Rhopalocera of Northern Borneo', *The Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, 1887, Vol. 19, 5th Series, pp. 41-56, 264-275
- 37 Pryer, W.B and Cator, D, 'Preliminary List of the Rhopalocera of Borneo', published in *The British North Borneo Herald*, August-November 1894
- 38 Pryer, W.B, 'The Natives of British North Borneo', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 16, 1887, pp. 229-236
- 39 Roth, H. L, *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo Vol. II*, (London: Truslove & Hanson, 1896) Appendices ccix
- 40 Danny Wong Tze Ken, 'The British North Borneo Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1893-1897) and its museum', *JMBRAS*, Vol. 73 No. 1, 2000, pp. 17-27
- 41 Roolmaaker, L.C, 'The Rhinoceros of Borneo: A 19th Century Puzzle', *JMBRAS*, Vol. 50 No.1, 1977, pp. 52-62.
- 42 Boulder Sharpe, R, 'On the Birds of Sandakan, North-east Borneo', *Proceedings of The Zoological Society of London* 1881, pp. 790-800; Gould, J. *The Birds of Asia*, Vol. 2 1853-1883, pp. 42, Plate 39 Illustration
- 43 H. N. Ridley, 'Begonias of Borneo', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 46, 1906, p. 252
- 44 *The Straits Times* 4 April 1884, p. 2
- 45 *Straits Times Weekly Issue* 3 November 1883, p. 7
- 46 Register of Marriages, St Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore, Vol. 2 (1877-1895), kept at The Diocese of Singapore, St Andrew's Village, Singapore
- 47 Henry Nicholas Ridley, *Book of Travels*, pp. 335-336
- 48 *North-China Herald*, 25 November 1885, p. 609; *The British North Borneo Herald* 1 February 1886, p. 23
- 49 Letter from Stephenson, Harwood & Co. (administrators of the Beatrice Estate) to Harrington Forbes (Secretary of the BNBC) dated 31 October 1917, kept at the Sabah State Archives under

- Beatrice Estate File, Receipt no.298. The Beatrice Estate was acquired in its entirety by the BNBC in 1917.
- 50 The British North Borneo Herald 1 March 1883, p. 6; the farm was managed by F. G. Wickham
- 51 The British North Borneo Herald, 1 April 1890, p. 103
- 52 The British North Borneo Herald 1 April 1891, p. 119; 1 February 1892, p. 39
- 53 The British North Borneo Herald 1 April 1894, p. 87
- 54 Tarling, N, *Mrs Pryer in Sabah; Diaries and Papers from the Late Nineteenth Century*, 1989, University of Auckland, Centre for Asian Studies. These are the transcribed diaries and papers of Ada Pryer, written between September 1893 to June 1898, where she writes mainly of estate life.
- 55 The British North Borneo Herald 16 September 1898, p. 277
- 56 The British North Borneo Herald 16 January 1898, p. 22
- 57 Henry Nicholas Ridley, *Book of Travels*, p. 297
- 58 The British North Borneo Herald 1 October 1896, p. 279; 16 October, p. 292
- 59 The British North Borneo Herald 15 October 1898, p. 308
- 60 Obituary of Mr W. B. Pryer in The British North Borneo Herald 1 February 1899, p. 44; 1 May 1899, p. 137
- 61 *British Armed Forces and Overseas Deaths and Burials 1896-1900* on Findmypast genealogy website under William Burgess Pryer <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD/OVS/DCON/001047/033&fulfillmentTypeKey=9441>> [accessed 28 November 2018]

THE CHINA POETRY OF MARGARET MACKPRANG MACKAY, 1934-1938

BY PAUL FRENCH

MARGARET MACKPRANG was born in 1908 in Stamford, Nebraska. She was educated at the University of Nebraska and the University of California, Berkeley, graduating in 1928. After university she worked on the staff of the *Daily Californian* for a while before joining an advertising business in San Francisco and then deciding to embark on a round-the-world tour. On this trip she met Alexander "Alex" Mackay, a hotel manager from '...a pioneer British family in North China and an active sportsman.'^a They married in 1932 and settled in China where Alex was the manager of the Imperial Hotel in Tientsin (Tianjin).

The couple divided their China time between Tientsin and Peking (Beijing). The Mackays inhabited a large house at the far end of Race Course Road,^b just beyond the British Concession. Race Course Road ran south west towards the race course and the Tientsin Country Club. Travelling back into Tientsin the couple would pass D'Arc's Hotel, the city's Masonic Temple and the Russian Consulate. Socially they were members of the Country Club, where members took tea on a large terrace overlooking substantial lawns with spacious grounds laid out with flowers and trees. The entrance hall to the Country Club was lined with paintings of the Scottish Highlands and English hunting scenes in the style of George Stubbs. The couple were keen travellers throughout Manchuria and northern China, and visited Korea. Alex had spoken Mandarin Chinese virtually from birth; Margaret took intensive language classes.

While living in northern China, Mackprang Mackay became a prolific poet. Indeed it seems to have been her life in China that inspired her to write verse. If she did write poetry before moving to Tientsin with Alex, it was presumably for private consumption and never published. After settling in China Mackprang Mackay's work appeared in various American newspapers from the early 1930s. The majority of her poems, all specifically concerning China, appeared

a 'Obituaries: Mrs. Mackay, Bay Writer', *San Francisco Examiner*, October 17, 1968.

b Race Course Road is now divided into two and renamed Zhejiang Road and, towards the end where the Mackays lived, Machang Dao.

in *The Christian Science Monitor* between 1934 and 1938. The newspaper hired her as a regular columnist to provide poems for their pages, which were syndicated around the United States to numerous provincial newspapers. Many of these poems specifically mention Peking and perhaps offer a foreign resident's feel for the city in the mid-1930s.

Street Noises, Peking

Down the gray hut'ung smeared with age
The lotus root seller
Shouts above his basket
With a see-saw of sound
The water barrows come squeaking
In a twisted course;
The housewife leans from her door,
Shaking her crow-black head
At the mender of kettles;
The cloth vendor
Tap-tap-taps
On a globe of wood;
The rickshaw men bend, grunting,
To the shafts;
The babies with red twined pigtailed
Screech joyfully
Out of the way of passers-by;
While the blind beggar beats his gong,
Seeing not, but hearing
The squawking barrows, the yodelling
Vendors, the
Hard breath of the rickshaw men,
The pounding tinkers,
The staccato housewives, the chirping babies, and
The dull thick rhythm of a thousand feet.
(First published July 1934)

Peking Silk Shop

The bolts on the high shelves
Are like the colors of flowers,
 Purple and ivory,
 Azure and vermillion,
Pale green and brilliant yellow,
 Pink like mimosa bloom
And amber like sunlit honey,
The ancient tribut (*sic*) silks^c
 Lie on the shelves
 In prism masses,
 Once, long ago.

*

They came a thousand miles –
Borne in windblown sampans,
 In wooden carts, slowly
 On marching camels,
And on the burdened backs of men –
 Tribute to the Son of Heaven^d
 From provinces a month away.
 And now –
 Like the colors of flowers,
The bolts lie musty on the high shelves
 In prism masses.
(First published September 1934)

Imperial Yellow: A Peking Vignette

In the porcelain shop,
 In sky-blue boxes,
 Dynastic pieces
 Of Imperial Yellow
As the heart of a lotus;
 One, as the wings

c The apparent misspelling of 'tribute' appears in the newspaper edition. Though *Peking Silk Shop* first appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*, this version transcribed from *The Gaffney Ledger*, September 22, 1934.

d Son of Heaven is the sacred imperial title of the Chinese emperor. It originated with the ancient Zhou Dynasty and was founded on the political and spiritual doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven.

Of a Chinese oriole,^e
One, as the sun
On the Lunar New Year;
One, as the tiles
On the Palace roofs;
And one as bright
As the golden joy
In the eyes of the young mother
Showing her first-born son.
(First published July 1935)

Lotus Time in the Imperial Moat
(Peking)

Grass shivers like silent laughter on the golden-tiled roofs.
And in the great high halls of the hollow palaces
The silken throne-coverings of Imperial Yellow
Are smudged by the proletarian fingers of the dust.
But out in the long, gray, marching moat
Which once stood brave and hugely strong
As a thousand-thousand warriors
Round the proud Forbidden City –
The lotus blooms again.

*

Time has shadowed the gorgeous friezes –
Peacock-blue and green, yellow and lacquer-scarlet,
And tarnished the ancient burnished bronze
Of the altar incense burners
One by one have vanished the Sons of Heaven,
With their jewels and their silks and porcelains,
And their myriad courtiers kneeling in brilliant robes –
But the lotus blooms again.

*

Yet even as then in the moat's cool, silent waters
Unguarded now, unseen by the eyes of kings,
The vast green leaves of the lotus move
Like the heavy wheels of imperial chariots.
And the blossoms massive as marble purely wrought,

e The black-naped oriole (*Oriolus chinensis*) is found predominantly in eastern Siberia, north eastern China, Korea and northern Vietnam as well as being widespread across India.

Are no less powerful in their perfection
merely because an Empire has fallen –
Ah, the lotus blooms again.
(First published September 1936)

There is also one short piece of prose that appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor* that is descriptive of Peking at the time –

Dust Visitation in Peking

‘A sheet of paper rises abruptly on end, tilts itself off the table, and scuttles across the ground with a rasping noise. One hurries after it, retrieving it in a little whirlpool of dust. Returning, one finds the other papers on the table jumping up and down. The sky has altered during one’s absorption. No longer a flawless blue, it has changed to dull opaqueness.

Steadily the blue recedes from the sky and the drabness takes possession. The sun becomes a mere pale coin in the sky, and presently it fades entirely. The sky lowers, until it seems to be only a few hundred yards overhead. In color it is tawny; in texture it is heavy as slush – heavy with Gobi desert dust.

Save for an unaccountable ground-dust now and then, there is little wind. It is almost silent.

Everywhere the dust falls – extraordinarily fine dust; one scarcely sees it dropping close at hand. Yet when one looks about, the trees and houses even a short distance away are blurred behind a fawn-colored veil.

There is a taste of dust on the lips, a coating of it on the head and the clothing. Glancing down, one sees it in little tawny drifts and ripples, settling everywhere.

Next morning all the housewives and servants in Peking will be busy, scooping up great pans of the fine, sandy, ruddy dust – so unlike the common grey-clay dust of the Peking countryside. For this is a Mongolian dust-storm.²

(First published August 1936)

While it was primarily Peking that seems to have fired Mackprang Mackay's creative imagination, she did also write several poems about Tientsin, including:

Sewing Woman
(Tientsin Street Scene)

 Patiently she sits
In the scalloped shadow
 Of the tile eaves,
 Her sleek black head
Bent over her big needle,
 The brass thimble-ring
 On her finger –
 Mending the coats
And sewing the coarse cloth shoes
 Of passers-by.

*

 Only now and then
 Does she raise her face
To speak to the red-clad baby
Playing in the dust beside her;
 And into her eyes,
 Like a phrase of song,
 Comes a smile.

(First published March 1937)

Other poems published in *The Christian Science Monitor* are not specific to Peking or Tientsin and are more general in their descriptions of China. For instance:

Springtime Scroll

 Long ago,
With a hand awed to stillness,
 A master raised his brush
To put spring on this scroll.

*

 He caused the hills to rise
Like carven waves, transfixed
 Before a mist of green:

He caused willows to hang
In clouds of new leaves,
Pale and floating;
He caused the peach trees
To tremble with pink
In the quiet valley.

*

Long ago,
With a hand awed to stillness,
A master raised his brush
To put spring on this scroll.
(First published May 1934)

Snow Scene, China Village

The earth moves in a white trance,
Muted to the soft secrets of the snow
Along the lane the camels stalk,
Leaving the gentle crunch
Of padded prints
Carved into purity like marble
Human feet have stippled paths
From door to door
Of houses moulded whitely,
Snow over clay;
And the tiny tracks of children
Wreath the mounded well
Down from the heights of willows
The white streamers hang encrusted
Over the soundless field where grew the cane
And around the red-walled temple
The dark pines are stung to fragrance
Under a white burden of beauty.
(First published, January 1936)

Chinese Twilight

The first star shines in the pale lapis sky
Above the peaked roof of the city gate,
On its studded wheels
A square wooden cart

Jolts along the road
Under the willows.
The carter walks home to his supper
Through the muted dust;
And his little song
Rises in curving cadences –
Up to the crescent roof,
And the first star.
(First published March 1937)

Crane on the Temple Roof

Taking form out of the pink twilight,
A white crane flies on his strong wings
To the temple roof –
Resting for a moment
On the very tip
Of the broad uplifted eave.

*

And when he soars away again,
It is almost as if the sacred roof line
Were taking wing, delicately
In the same wide curve –
Flying off
To become one
With the rose dusk.
(First published April 1937)

In 1937 and 1938 the Mackays toured quite extensively through Japanese-occupied Manchuria (then renamed Manchukuo), including a trip across the border into the then Japanese colony of Korea and the town of Genzan.^f The couple also visited the Diamond Mountains^g and travelled on the Seoul-Mukden (Shenyang) Express train. These trips occasioned at least one poem:

Children With Flowers (Manchuria)

Returning from the village school,
Five Japanese children

f Genzan is now Wonson in North Korea.

g Now Mount Kumgang or the Kumgang Mountains in Kangwon-do, North Korea.

In gay kimonos
Clatter down the leaf-shadowed path
On their wooden sandals –
(Clackety-clackety-clack!) –
Each with an armful of wild flowers
Plucked on the hill.

*

One small girl
Seizes an orange tiger-lily
From her brother's bouquet
And runs away with it –
(Clackety-clackety-clack!) –
Her smooth head tilted over her shoulder
And her black eyes bright with laughter.
(First published January 1937)

As well as her frequent appearances in *The Christian Science Monitor* between 1934 and 1938, Mackprang Mackay was also published in respectable poetry journals, including Harriet Monroe's *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* in the April 1935 edition.^h This edition of Monroe's journal is of especial interest as it is titled the "Chinese Number". Monroe was a great lover of Chinese poetry, and things Chinese, championing Ezra Pound's *Cantos* for instance. The April 1935 Chinese Number of *Poetry* was edited by Harold Acton (then residing in Peking and teaching at Peking National Universityⁱ) with an editorial by him commenting on contemporary Chinese poetry. It also includes translations of modern vernacular poetry from China by Acton himself, some translations of Tang poems by the scholar and translator Helen B. Chapin, and a poem entitled *Temple of Heaven* by Monroe herself. Mackay's contribution is entitled *Under a Peking Peach Tree*.

Under a Peking Peach Tree

Resting in the pink shade,
A figure in faded blue,
She sits with her dull hands
Crossed on her trousered knees.

h *Poetry*, April 1935, Volume XLVI, Issue 1.

i Now Peking University (aka PKU or Beida).

One by one
The pink blossoms fall
With a light fragrance
On her tight grey hair;
And over the fields
Where the young green stirs
With beginning life,
Her eyes follow the flight
Of a pattern of wild geese
Winging north
Above a sunken temple.

*

In all the green fields
They alone are old –
The old temple
Under the swift-flying birds,
The old woman
Under the pink-flowering tree.
(First published April 1935)

By 1938 Mackprang Mackay decided to transition from poetry to prose and published her first novel, *Like Water Flowing*^j which deals with the foreign colony of Peking and the travails of two Eurasian children. Her second novel *Lady With Jade*^k (1939) was set around 1930 and is that of an American, Moira Chisholm, who separates from her husband and stays on in Peking, a city to which she feels she has become deeply attached. Moira is sybaritic and an aesthete with a passion for beauty and Chinese style. She opens a curio shop, selling old brocades and jewellery, antiques and local crafts. She is successful, the shop does very well and she becomes something of a celebrity among the foreign population of the city. But slowly she withdraws into her collections. She refuses marriage twice, then finally does fall in love only to renounce the marriage at the last minute. She decides that no man, no partner can ever be a satisfactory substitute for the immaculate, classic perfection of the jades and *objects d'art* to which she has given her life and which she now just wishes to retain for herself and not part with.

j Margaret Mackprang Mackay, *Like Water Flowing*, (New York: John Day in Association with Reynal & Hitchcock, 1938).

k Margaret Mackprang Mackay, *Lady With Jade*, (New York: John Day, 1939).

Mackprang Mackay returned to America, living in Honolulu, in the autumn of 1939 – the war situation in northern China had simply become too precarious. In late 1941 she published *Valiant Dust*,^l a novel that dealt with the life of the foreign community of Tientsin in the last two decades of the nineteenth century through the eyes of the Scottish Maclaren family, essentially a version of the Mackprangs. In 1943 she published *For All Men Born*,^m a story spanning September 1941 to June 1942 in Hawaii and focussed on Pearl Harbor.

She continued to live in Hawaii during the war, having received the news in late 1942 that her husband had been killed during the Burma Campaign. In 1953 she published her memoirs, *I Live in a Suitcase*.ⁿ She continued to write prose rather than poetry. More novels followed, seventeen in all and mostly set in Hawaii. Her last published work was *The Violent Friend*,^o a well-received novel about the life of Mrs Robert Louis Stevenson published in 1968. By this time Margaret had moved to London where, in October 1968 she died, aged sixty.

Paul French was born in London and educated there and in Glasgow, before living and working in Shanghai for many years. He is a widely published analyst and commentator on China and has written a number of books, including **Midnight in Peking**, a true crime investigation of a young woman's murder in the last days of colonial Peking, and **City of Devils**, a tale of two self-made men set against a backdrop of crime and vice in 1930's Shanghai. He has recently completed a 12-part Audible Original series titled **Murders of Old China**.

l Margaret Mackprang Mackay, *Valiant Dust*, (New York: John Day, 1941).

m Margaret Mackprang Mackay, *For All Men Born*, (New York: John Day, 1943).

n Margaret Mackprang Mackay, *I Live in a Suitcase*, (New York: John Day, 1953).

o Margaret Mackprang Mackay, *The Violent Friend*, (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

‘ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FIGURES OF OLD CHINA DAYS’

THE STORY OF ‘BILL’ ARTHUR JACK WILLIAM EVANS

BY SIMON DRAKEFORD

ABSTRACT:

This essay tells the story of the extraordinary life of A. J. W. Evans, an Old China Hand, who worked for British American Tobacco from 1922 to 1950. In many ways his story is typical of so many men of his class and generation who were able to take advantage of career opportunities in the British Empire or at its periphery. The path was well trod: leave school at eighteen, join a company for training, get posted overseas, play sport, join the club, return ‘home’ every four or five years, find a wife, start a family, and so on.

During his career he was posted to Shanghai, Hankow (now Wuhan), Mukden (now Shenyang), Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Like many men of his generation, he was caught up in the events of World War Two and the turbulent years that followed it. It was during these years that his story changed from mundane to extraordinary.

By drawing together the contents of three previously separate family archives and setting them in the context of their times by reference to contemporary newspapers and memoirs, the amazing and ultimately tragic story of Bill Evans can be told.

EARLY DAYS

Arthur Jack William Evans, ‘Bill’ to his friends, was born in West Bridgford, south of Nottingham, on 6 April 1902, to Welsh parents Arthur ‘Taff’ Parsonage Evans and his wife Annie ‘Nancy’ Elizabeth, nee Williams.^a

By April 1911, the family had returned to Wales, living at 43 Plasturton Avenue, Cardiff, a twenty-minute walk from Cardiff Arms Park, the ground where the Welsh rugby team had famously beaten the All Blacks six years earlier. The family were comfortably middle class. ‘Taff’, hailing from Wrexham, was an insurance manager. Bill had a brother ‘Ted’ Edward Percy Evans, who was six years younger than Bill).

a Unless otherwise noted, all biographical information is sourced from www.ancestry.co.uk.

Tragedy hit the family with the death of Bill's mother, aged forty, from cancer in 1914, when Bill was twelve years old. Taff remarried in 1918 to Winifred Lucy Vellacott.¹

A family photo shows that in 1917, Bill was attending Bristol Grammar School, a member of the school's rugby first XV.² After leaving School, Bill first joined the staff of the Royal Exchange Assurance Co. before joining the large cigarette conglomerate British American Tobacco BAT. During his time in Bristol he was a member of the Schoolmaster's Cricket Club and Bristol Rugby Club.³ While training with BAT in Liverpool, he played rugby for the city's famous Waterloo Rugby Club.⁴ He enjoyed sport and was very good at it, a distinct advantage for a young man considering a life overseas.

A SHORT HISTORY OF BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO

In October 1901, the American Tobacco Company purchased the British cigarette manufacturer Ogdens Limited based in Liverpool, England. The purchase was tactical, enabling the American Tobacco Company to gain access to the protected British market for manufactured tobacco products.⁵ This provoked an immediate response by the British tobacco industry, which resulted in thirteen British firms amalgamating under the banner of the Imperial Tobacco Company. By the time this tobacco war was resolved about one year later, the changes wrought served to 'shape the future of the international tobacco industry throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.'⁶ The two rival conglomerates agreed that they would trade exclusively in their own domestic markets and concocted an arrangement about trading in the rest of the world. The two companies formed a joint venture, creating the British-American Tobacco Company.⁷

During the decade following its founding, events conspired to leave Britain as the most influential party in the joint venture. By the end of World War One, the London based directors were able to exert control over the management of BAT, such that 'from this point onwards the company functioned unambiguously as a British-based multinational.'⁸

FROM LIVERPOOL TO SHANGHAI

After his training in Liverpool, Bill Evans travelled to Shanghai in the early 1920s, probably the summer of 1922, as one of many young men who committed themselves to four years away from England. As was

the normal practice at large companies in those times, these young men typically did not get married until after their first, or sometimes second, contract.

On his arrival, he immediately entered into the city's social and sporting life. The first rugby game he played was 17 November 1922. His early performances were good enough to earn him the honour of representing Shanghai. Despite narrowly missing out on selection for the Shanghai Interport team in February 1923, he did make the Easter trip to Tientsin (Tianjin) in the north of China, where a year earlier, the BAT cigarette manufacturing facility had been set up.

In late January 1925, he travelled to Hankow (Hankou) on the S. S. *Loongwo* during the Chinese New Year holidays.⁹ Accompanying him on that trip were two players who would attend Evans wedding some seven years later, Edward 'Ted' McLaren and John Crisford Stewart. Also on the journey was his friend John Edmund Jupp; more than seventeen years later, in October 1942, Evans and 'Juppo' would embark on an altogether different boat journey.

After four years of service, Bill returned to England in May 1926, basing himself with his father in Bristol. He was back in Shanghai by the end of November 1926, listed as playing rugby in one of the season's warm-up matches.

Evans' final season playing rugby in Shanghai was also his most successful. By the time the 1927-28 season started, rugby in Shanghai had grown considerably, largely thanks to the arrival of more than 20,000 soldiers sent to defend Shanghai and multinational companies such as BAT from the Chinese Nationalist threat.¹⁰ In that season he played against the visiting Japanese champions Meiji University, which resulted in a heavy defeat for Shanghai, although one report noted that 'Evans played his usual cool and heady game',¹¹ while another stated that Evans 'at stand-off half, was excellent and played the most finished football, selling the dummy on more than one occasion with complete success'.¹²

Next up for Evans that season was Shanghai's arch rivals Hong Kong. A few weeks later, Evans poignantly turned out against the Welsh Regiment who overwhelmed Shanghai 30:0. Next came the eagerly anticipated series of games against the US 6th Marines who were visiting from Tientsin. Evans played in two matches in the three-match series, both victories. In his first match, 'the finest individual effort came from Evans, whose spectacular try later on was a sheer

delight: it was a relief to see that he did not come to grief when he sold the final dummy to a player over the line.¹³

ON TO HANKOW

Sometime after his final game in April 1928, he received news of his second posting – to Hankow, a city on the Yangtze River in the heart of China. He was issued a passport there in March 1929.

After a second quadrennial with BAT, Bill once again enjoyed a furlough. Passenger lists show that in April 1930 he departed Yokohama bound for San Francisco, presumably to see his mother's relatives who were living on the US West Coast. A month later he travelled from New York to Liverpool, allowing time to visit his family in Bristol before heading back to Japan via London, and then to Hankow in August of that year.

While his rugby playing days were now in the past, Evans was still a formidable cricket player. In September 1932 he opened the batting and scored 63 and 23 not out, helping Hankow beat Shanghai by 10 wickets, taking 3 wickets for good measure.¹⁴

Evans' life changed in Hankow when he went to the theatre. According to Bill's niece by marriage, this is what happened:

Bill went to see an amateur dramatic play in which Irene took a major part and [he] took a liking to her. He then wrote 2 letters: one to Irene saying how wonderful she was and how dreadful the other female star was: and the other to the other female star saying how wonderful she was and how dreadful Irene was. He then purposefully put the letters each in the wrong envelopes, posted them and waited for results! Irene rose to the bait and they never looked back.¹⁵

Irene's surname was Le Bas or Lebas depending on who was using or writing the family name.¹⁶ Her father, Monsieur Edmond Georges Lebas had joined the Chinese Maritime Customs in 1897 and was posted firstly to Canton and later to Santuao Fujian on China's southeast coast¹⁷ where Irene was born on 17 November 1905.¹⁸ Irene's mother was Guinivere Bidwell, part of the Bidwell dynasty, several of

whom were prominent Shanghai rugby players.^b Educated overseas, Irene attended finishing school in Paris with Daphne Du Maurier, who was also friendly with Irene's brothers, Maurice and Cyril. Their families remained lifelong friends.¹⁹

After their engagement in June 1932,²⁰ Bill and Irene were married in Hankow on 5 October 1932. Among the wedding guests was Scottish rugby international Edward 'Ted' McLaren^c who was soon to marry Joan Bidwell, Irene's cousin.

EARLY MARRIED LIFE

The new couple settled down to life together in China. Evans was entitled to another furlough in 1934. An unpublished, part-biographical, part-fictional account of his life written by his cousin Eileen De Crespo suggested that when they returned to England, Bill was forced to spend time resting, recovering from a gastric ulcer.²¹

A letter written to his father and stepmother in March 1935 offers a glimpse of Evans' humour and the loving relationship he shared with his wife:

After reading this over Irene has just said that I haven't said anything about ourselves. All I can say is that I am getting more handsome than ever and followed by everyone – dogs as well! My nagging wife insists that I say she has a stiff neck, but otherwise is just as uninteresting as ever! Bill [To which Irene noted] 'It isn't true, I'm not uninteresting am I? But I really have got a stiff neck. Love Irene.'²²

In September 1936, on the occasion of the fourteenth inter-port cricket match between Hankow and Shanghai, Shanghai won the game in which Evans excelled. Across the four innings he took eight Shanghai wickets and scored one hundred and forty-two runs.²³

In mid-May 1937, Bill and Irene again returned to England, Bill's fourth furlough, this time via the Trans-Siberian Express. They took

b For a detailed account of the Bidwells in China see Simon Drakeford, *It's a Rough Game But Good Sport: The Life, Times and Personalities of the Shanghai Rugby Football Club*, (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2014), pp. 125-43.

c Ted won five international caps for Scotland and scored three tries. He played alongside Olympian Eric Henry Liddell. They were friends in Tientsin in the 1930s and both imprisoned in Weih sien Camp in March 1943. Unfortunately, Liddell did not survive the War. He died 21 February 1945 of a brain tumour.

the train in preference to a sea voyage to help him recover from a recurrence of his ulcer.²⁴ On their return to China, they spent a week or so in Shanghai before being posted to the far North of China, to Mukden, part of the Japanese-controlled puppet state of Manchukuo since 1932, the ‘puppet’ being Puyi, the last Chinese emperor.

Life continued in Mukden, with occasions for both grief and celebration. In June 1938, sad news reached Evans. His father died at the Scarborough Hospital after being taken ill while visiting Ted, his younger son. The following December, Evans hosted a party in his Mukden home for ‘Jakes’ Jacqueline Lebas, his sister-in-law, on the occasion of her twenty-first birthday.²⁵

SAFETY AND DANGER

In November 1939, Evans was told that he was to be posted to Hong Kong²⁶ and that his wife had been booked on the *Empress of Russia*, headed to the United States, scheduled to leave Shanghai on 1 December 1939. The couple left their northern home and spent their last days together in Shanghai. De Crespo takes up the story,

The final parting had been upsetting. He had been given permission to stay in Shanghai with Irene until her boat sailed. Most of the American ladies she knew had left some weeks earlier and she was not looking forward to the prospects of a rather lonely voyage. Then came the news that the “Empress of Russia” had been withdrawn for war work and that passage had been booked for her on a Japanese liner sailing on the 13th of the month.²⁷

The boat, the *Tatsuta Maru*, did indeed sail on 13 December, arriving in San Francisco on New Year’s Day 1940.

Later, during the Second World War, the *Tatsuta Maru* was used by the Japanese navy to transport a contingent of prisoners of war from Hong Kong to Japan.²⁸ As we shall see, Evans became a member of a similar contingent, travelling on the *Lisbon Maru*.

The Japanese invaded Hong Kong on 8 December 1941, curtailing Evans’ plans to go on leave to be reunited with his wife. Despite being a civilian, he did not hesitate to do his bit,

When hostilities broke out in Hong Kong I was a civilian

doing A R P^d work, but two days before Hong Kong surrendered I got tangled up with the Navy and met Edmund [Jupp] at the Aberdeen Industrial School, where he and the other members of the Mine Watching Branch of the H.K.R.M.V.R., [*sic*] were stationed as they were fighting on land in the hills around Aberdeen.²⁹

Evans had first met Jupp in Shanghai in 1924 when they had shared housing for a while.³⁰ While in Shanghai, Jupp had been engaged to Irene Lebas, years before Bill successfully wooed her.³¹

After the surrender of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941, Jupp and Evans stayed together. They spent the first month in the Japanese POW camp at Sham Shui Po, a camp specifically for military personal which had previously been the barracks of the Middlesex Regiment and an Indian Battalion, and was therefore well suited to its new role housing military POWs.³² The next three months were spent in North Point with the captured Canadian soldiers. Evans recalled that,

The Japs weren't brutal – they simply didn't care. Once we had only rice for 39 consecutive meals [...] They gave us nothing, not even medical supplies.³³

On 18 April 1942, Evans and Jupp were transferred back to Sham Shui Po, remaining there until 25 September. From this time, there was a general deterioration in the health of the 'inmates.' Ebbage, a fellow POW, estimated that between May and December 1942 the number of deaths in camp was 'probably of the order of 200'.³⁴

NEWS FROM CAMP

From Sham Shui Po, Jupp and Evans were sent on board the *Lisbon Maru* with more than 1,800 fellow inmates for a sea voyage to Japan.³⁵ Two days before, Evans was allowed to send news from the camp to his wife. One of the requirements of the Japanese authorities was that all letters should be typed or written in capital letters.³⁶

IRENE MY DARLING,
MY SECOND LETTER TO YOU BRINGS YOU NEWS
THAT I AM EXTREMELY FIT, BUT THAT I EXPECT

d Air Raid Precaution duties.

TO BE LEAVING HONG KONG SHORTLY FOR AN UNKNOWN DESTINATION [...] NO NEWS AT ALL YET FROM SHANGHAI BUT EVERYONE THERE SHOULD BE SAFE AND COMFORTABLE. AND YOU, MY DARLING. SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU ARE SAFE AND HEALTHY [...] NO LETTER FROM YOU OR ANY NEWS – THAT IS THE HARDEST THING TO BEAR [...] I LOVE YOU SO VERY MUCH, MY OWNEST AND WANT YOU TERRIBLY [...] GOD BLESS YOU ALL MY LOVE, IRENE DARLING.³⁷

There is another undated letter, also referred to by Evans as his second letter. Based on its contents, it was probably written after the above letter because it refers to news from Shanghai.

IRENE, MY DARLING,
MY SECOND LETTER, WRITING WHENEVER ALLOWED [...] THE TWO NEVILLES LEFT WITH REPATRIATED AMERICANS, ARRIVED MOZAMBIQUE, PROBABLY NOW WITH LOVED ONES. LUCKY DOGS, HOW I ENVIED THEM, HOW MY LONGING FOR YOU WAS INTENSIFIED [...] PRAY NEVILLE TELLS YOU WHERE I AM, THAT AM BEING VERY WELL TREATED. SOME MEN HERE HEARD FROM SHANGHAI RELATIVES. ALL SEEMS WELL, EVERYONE LIVING IN OWN HOMES. SO YOUR FAMILY SHOULD BE ALRIGHT* [...] READ PSALM 37. A GREAT TONIC IF DEPRESSED. AT SEVEN EVERY MORNING I PRAY FOR AND TO YOU IN OUR CAMP CHAPEL. IT BRINGS YOU VERY NEAR TO ME. CRICKET, BRIDGE, FRENCH, READING, POKER KEEP ME OCCUPIED [...] GOD BLESS YOU

BILL.³⁸

THE NIGHTMARE SHIP

About the journey on board the *Lisbon Maru*, Evans recalled that,

e Irene's French family in Shanghai were not interned by the Japanese because they were considered allies by virtue of the French in Shanghai being controlled by Vichy France.

We were on board two days before we sailed and on the mornings of the 26th and 27th [September 1942] diphtheria suspects were being sent off the ship back to the camp. Directly we arrived onboard, the dysentery cases and other sick men needed segregation and the only thing to do was to put them on the steel decks, in any space that could be found between the various hatches, etc., and there they laid on their blankets with a tarpaulin to cover them when it rained.³⁹

When they finally set sail on 27 September 1942, 'Edmund lay down next to me - we had no beds, simply a straw mat on the steel deck of the hold and we did everything on board, as we did in camp.' They were incarcerated with 400 men in their hold, which were intended for the transport of cargo rather than humans. There were three holds, each containing 400-800 men.

At 07:00 on the morning of 1 October 1942, unaware that the ship was transporting POWs, the US submarine *Grouper* torpedoed the *Lisbon Maru*. The Japanese battened down the hatches incarcerating the men in the hold. Evans recalled that:

The men in the hold then got a little excited when they realised what had happened and [Pollock] then got up and addressed everybody and told them to lie quietly. Smoking and talking were forbidden to conserve any fresh air that might be in the hold.⁴⁰

Evans described the conditions in graphic detail:

[...] our sole sanitary facilities down in the hold were two or three buckets, I leave it to your imagination to realise what happened when these buckets were filled, as out of the 400 men in our hold there were about 20 with dysentery [...] We were battened down all night in complete darkness and without any air and I can assure you that the conditions were absolutely unbelievable and during the night Edmund left my side [...] to try to find one of the buckets.⁴¹

Evans continued to describe the dramatic moments later that morning,

The ship gave a terrific lurch to port and it was then the men managed by sheer brute force to force open the wooden hatch boards and get out onto deck. I managed to get [out] myself, say about 3 or 4 minutes after the first people were out, [...] as we arrived on deck the ship from the bridge to the stern was completely submerged and the bows were sticking right out of the water [...] I made my way to the bows of the ship, as did many hundreds of others, and it was when I had been on deck for a few minutes I thought of Juppo – as I used to call him – and shouted for him.⁴²

There was no response. Evans stayed on board the ship for the next forty-five minutes before it finally sank and had a clear view of what happened next.

By the time the first naval contingent had scrambled out onto the deck, it was seen that the military from Nos. 2 and 3 holds were already out of their holds, and hundreds of men were already in the sea swimming in the direction of five or six Japanese auxiliary craft which were cruising slowly between the ship and land which could be faintly seen in the distance. When the naval men got out of the hold some jumped over immediately into the sea, and some of these were shot at by the Japanese, while others crowded together with some of the military men on the bows of the ship.⁴³

By this time, the sea was covered in bodies, wreckage and men desperately trying to stay afloat.⁴⁴ As the tide started to bring this detritus closer to land, seeing that a maritime disaster had occurred Chinese fisherman courageously set out to try to rescue survivors. Evans was one of the fortunate men picked up. Realising that many men had made land, the Japanese made haste to try to recapture as many men as possible. They started violent and intimidating house-to-house searches rounding up nearly all the prisoners.

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

In the end only three men remained free. Evans, William C. Johnstone, and James C. Fallace. They were initially concealed on Qingbang Island in a sea cave called the 'Child Cave'. Only one person could get through the entrance at a time and at high tide the entrance was entirely hidden. They stayed there for six days, all the time with Japanese war ships cruising the area searching for survivors.

On 8 October 1942, the escapees were taken by sampan to another island, and after a short midnight meal, left on a larger junk headed for the island of Wooloo [Hulu] arriving there early in the morning. While there, Evans wrote a hastily compiled note to two senior BAT officials in Shanghai urgently requesting money. The tone and contents of the letter offering clues as to his mental state:

My dear Tiencken or Savage,^f

I am in desperate straits, require money urgently. It is a matter of life & death, so please let bearer have at least five thousand dollars. I have escaped ~~from~~, & am trying to make my way to Chungking [Chongqing], so every dollar you can let me have will help me to get away & save my life. I have most important news for our government. Cannot explain more fully but bearer knows all.

For gawd sake do all you can.⁴⁵

Escorted by Chinese guerrillas, they made their way overland to a Chinese junk. After a four- or five-hour sea journey, narrowly escaping a Japanese destroyer, the travellers docked and again trekked across land, arriving at the guerrilla's main camp of Kuochu in the evening of 9 October 1942. They rested for three days, the men were able to have a hot bath, - their first in ten months - clean clothes, and food. After their short recuperation, now wearing Chinese clothes, they set off again, guarded by the guerrillas, by now trekking in mountainous terrain. After a final journey by junk up an estuary, they arrived at a small town named Changste, under the control of the Chinese National Army. By 16 October, two weeks after they had been torpedoed, they arrived by sedan chair transport at Lian Wang and were able to send a cable to the British Embassy, making them aware of their escape and

f This is most likely Ernest Sherwood Savage an American department head in BAT Manufacturing and Leaf department and Henry Victor Tienken, a British Company Director of BAT. Both were interned in Pootung POW Camp in Shanghai in February 1943.

requesting funds and instructions for their trip to China's war-time capital in Chungking.

The capital was still an arduous journey away, but they were travelling in free China along a route that many before them had followed to safety. The path took the men to China Inland Missions run by foreign missionaries who were able to attend to their various medical needs, and through numerous towns and cities under the care of courageous Chinese civilians.

On 16 December, the men were in Kweilin [Guilin] where a photograph of Evans wearing a Chinese robe was taken. The three men flew by American transport plane to Kunming, where they were interrogated by American Bomber Command Officers and other intelligence officers who were keen to find out as much as possible about their journey. At this point Fallace and Johnstone headed to India while Evans was ordered to fly into Chungking, arriving there on 22 December, 81 days after being rescued.

A clipping from a Bristol newspaper from August 1943 reporting an interview with Bill's brother adds more detail with a distinctly local flavour:

My brother eventually arrived at Chungking and was put up in the Embassy quarters, where, to his astonishment, he met two old Bristolians – T. J. Fisher (an attaché at the Embassy) and Professor Gordon King (who escaped from Hong Kong in March 1942) [...] On Christmas night in Chungking the three toasted Bristol and roared out "Sumus Bristolenses" the school song!¹⁴⁶

Evans flew to Calcutta on Boxing Day.

FROM INDIA TO AMERICA

From Calcutta, Bill travelled by train to New Delhi where on 10 January 1943 he wrote a very long letter to his anxious wife.

Irene, my own precious darling,
Here I am at New Delhi staying with a delightful family named Storey. He is the Inspector at Tobacco Co no.1. here and lives in a lovely bungalow with a huge garden and his family consist of his wife Jean (8) Carol (6) and Elizabeth

(10 months) [...] When I arrived at the bungalow I was greeted by Carol leading a huge Arndale named Scruffy and she said “This is Scruffy – but she has a fever!” When I met Mrs Storey, I said I was sorry that Scruffy was sick. She said ‘She’s not sick – she’s on heat!! [...] I’ll now give you details of what has happened to me since Chungking. I left there on 26th at 10.30 A.M., by plane and was in Calcutta by 10 P.M. at night! Marvelous [sic] isn’t it! [...] Stops – one at Kunming for ½ hr and the other at Dinjan in Assam for ½ hr and the scenery was magnificent.^g [...] When I arrived there, I was met by Mr Baker’s car – he is the chairman of The I.T. Co. [Imperial Tobacco Company] and driven to his house – still in my Chinese long gown! [...] the next morning Mrs Baker asked me if I had a relative in Bristol who used to live in Somerville road named Arthur! I said yes my Father [...] Well I left Calcutta 30th by train and arrived at New Delhi 1st Jan where I had been told to report at General Headquarters [...] I told them I wanted a thorough medical examination’ so I went into hospital for 4 days and had a complete rest and examination. Heart, lungs all o.k. But am under par due to the privations I have been through. I had my eyes tested by [...] the best eye man in India and he tells me that I have Retro Bulbar Neuritis and need rest and building up [...] I cannot focus to read ordinary size point like books and newspapers and glasses are no use [...] All I want, I know, my precious, is to be under your care to see I get the right food and loving attention [...] Otherwise I feel well, and it’s such a mental relief to be out of China and the possibility of recapture by the Japs and also to have relief from air raids [...] I have heard this afternoon that I cannot get a plane trip to the States! I am so disappointed as I hoped the Americans could possibly wangle me across but in spite of pulling all sorts of strings and seeing General Stilwell himself it can’t be done [...] As soon as permission arrives I will be off to you by first possible boat [...] I have only received one letter from you which arrived in Chungking

g Dinjan became prominent during WW2 when its airfield was used by transport planes to fly over the infamous ‘Hump’, i.e. the Himalayas, the only way to supply much needed goods into China.

on 23rd Dec. What a lovely Xmas present!!!! [...] I have met so many wives here – ex Malaya, Burma, China, etc. who know nothing about their loved ones. So we must count ourselves lucky, my truest. It was a miracle I escaped, and something Divine really guided my footsteps. As I went off to hide, I hesitated, but something just seemed to push me in the back as I halted. It was all so risky and uncertain but God showed me the way- of that I am sure!! [...] Keep smiling Cuddles, your own Bill.⁴⁷

Evans' optimism regarding how quickly he would return was misplaced. After leaving New Delhi, he travelled by air to Cairo where the local head of BAT, yet another Bristolian, named Mr Chate, entertained him. He then flew to Lagos where, he was hosted by an 'Old Cliftonian, but, nevertheless a Bristolian.'^h Somehow he travelled across the Atlantic to Trinidad and Bermuda and from there, on 11 March, he flew to Baltimore with British Overseas Airways Corporation, arriving on 12 March 1943, his long wait was nearly over, the next day he made the short trip to New York and was finally reunited with Irene.

In a note scrawled on a scrap of paper dated 13 March Bill wrote, 'It's been a long swim to the most beautiful face in all the world!!! For our second honeymoon with all my love, Cuddles love Bill.'⁴⁸

DESPERATE PLEAS FOR NEWS

Between March and May, Bill and Irene made their way to Canada. They first stayed on Vancouver Island, Canada at 1484 Beach Drive, Victoria, overlooking the harbour. Evans sent a cable from there on 1 May 1943 to Edmund's father J. A. Jupp.

While living at Beach Drive, he received many letters from anxious friends and relatives of men on the *Lisbon Maru*, desperately seeking news about what had happened. Increasingly frustrated by the lack of news and conflicting information that the relatives of men on the *Lisbon Maru* were getting from the authorities, Evans wrote to the Colonial Office, Casualties Department seeking some official line on what was known.

I should appreciate it very much if you would furnish me with the correct and latest information on the subject of

^h Clifton is located on the outskirts of Bristol.

the missing or survivors of the *Lisbon Maru*. I should also like to suggest that it would ease the worries of many, if a public statement was made in the Press or Radio as to exactly what information the Government has received, for as things now stand relatives are completely mystified as to the actual fate of their dear ones.⁴⁹

Evans' letter was from the heart – now in safety, he was receiving a continual reminder of other's suffering as they searched for news of their loved ones.

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS

News received in early July would have raised Bill's spirits. A letter from the High Commissioner in Ottawa informed him that 'His Majesty The King has been pleased to approve the award of a Commendation in recognition of your services during your escape from Hong Kong.'⁵⁰

Finally, he also received some news about his friend Jupp, but it wasn't good. On 18 October 1943, one year and 16 days after the sinking of the *Lisbon Maru*, Bill wrote a heart-breaking letter to Jupp's father,

Dear Mr Jupp, Futile as letter writing is in these circumstances, I feel I must write to express my deepest sympathy over the news of Edmund's death in Japan after all the anxiety, first the good news of his safety in Japan and finally his death, it all seems so awful, and I find it difficult [to] realise he has now gone.⁵¹

Jupp had been recaptured after surviving the sinking. He was sent to Japan arriving in Moji in the evening of 10 October 1942. With other survivors he boarded a train, which travelled firstly to Kokura, thence to Hiroshima, and on to Kobe. At Kobe, a group of about 350 men including Jupp left the train and were marched to Osaka #2 Branch Camp (Kobe) arriving around 13:30 on the eleventh. Jupp died during the night of 12 October 1942, the first of many to die in that camp.⁵²

STARTING AGAIN

After the War, Bill recuperated in Canada and travelled with Irene to England in November 1945 before heading back to the Far East.

While in Hong Kong, he was a prosecution witness in the trial of the 'Military Court for the Trial of War Criminals No. 5' of Kyoda Shigeru, the civilian master of the *Lisbon Maru*. Shigeru was accused of committing a war crime by closing the hatches of the holds of the vessel when it was sinking. For his part, Bill described the situation from the viewpoint of the naval personnel in hold number one. The trial ran from 23 October 1946 until 29 November 1946, the accused was found guilty and imprisoned for seven years.⁵³

After the trial, Bill and Irene returned to somewhere in China: the passenger manifests of their furlough to America and England in the summer of 1949 records them as being residents of China. In the King family archive there is a tantalising clue as to their whereabouts: an order for a three year subscription to the magazine *Better Homes and Gardens* for AJW Evans of Tsingtao (Qingdao), dated 17 December 1948. They took their leave as the civil war in China reached its peak, the Communists sweeping all before them, capturing Shanghai even as the Evanses were leaving Kobe on 24 May 1949, arriving in New York nineteen days later. On 10 August, they travelled from New York to England, and on to Scarborough, to visit Bill's younger brother Ted.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

After their holiday, Irene and Bill embarked on a new adventure with BAT in South East Asia in January 1950. They were based in Singapore although Bill was rarely there, as his new role as an Inspector required a lot of travel. The King family (Bill had a nephew named Richard King) has letters from this period, recording their day-to-day lives, which are sometimes mundane, but always showing great affection. In a letter from Bill to Irene dated 12 April 1950, he referred to an earlier telephone conversation:

It was lovely to get your letter, darling, but not as lovely as to hear your voice over the 'phone. Don't be in such a hurry to ring off when the operator says the three minutes is up. I'll tell you when to ring off. But it is marvellous to be able to talk to you over the phone.⁵⁴

In the same letter Bill commented on the untimely death of Ted McLaren

It really is awfully sad about Ted McLaren, only 47!! And he looked so well when we saw him last. Poor dear Joan, - as you say she will feel completely lost. It's a funny thing, but when he and I went out to have a "Pee" at Gerard's Cross, he said to me "you know Bill, we've both been damned lucky in the wives we've got! I was rather surprised at him saying this as Scots don't generally share their feelings. Of course, I had to agree with him!!

A few days later on 14 April, in a letter discussing his flight details for his onward journey to Jakarta thoughts turned to the future:

I won't stay a moment longer in Java than I have to, you can bet your boots on that - I'll try and do a good job, race all I have to see and then make tracks for S'pore and you, my Cuddles. When I'm there I will write to Sargent and find out what plans for the future he has for me.⁵⁵

Three days later Bill wrote to Irene after arriving in Java on a Constellation aircraft, he excitedly reported that it, 'only took 2 ½ hours at the most. It seated over 40 people and is very good. I think it does over 300 miles an hour.'⁵⁶

After a long delay in immigration, the hotel arrangements were unsatisfactory:

Accommodation here is an awful problem and the first night I shared a small room with two Dutchmen - one of them B.A.T. It was not very nice but on Sunday I was moved to another room, where I share with an American. ... nobody in the ruddy hotel speaks English. I mean the boys, only Dutch and Javanese and to get anything done is a bit of a pantomime. But I'm getting on.⁵⁷

Evans was writing every few days. His letters give insights into the life of a travelling tobacco manager in the early 1950s. He celebrated St George's Day at a ball at the local club and then went with his friends the Hargoods to a buffet supper hosted by somebody from the General Electric Company (G.E.C.), before heading onto the Club, noting that after having plenty to drink, 'Fortunately they have a

curfew here, dancing stopped at 11:45.' On the next day, a Sunday, Bill managed eighteen holes of golf with his work colleague Knight, teeing off at 8:45, in hot and humid weather which was enjoyable 'in spite of a lousy exhibition of Golf.' After tiffin with Knight, and a good 'shut-eye', Evans went to church and was joined by the young padre at the Hargoods' house for supper.

On the following night, Evans hosted a group of six for dinner at a local café. On the next day, he had been invited to another party, but feeling the effects his very active social life, politely declined, claiming that he had another engagement.

Evans' travels continued around the islands of Indonesia with his colleague Knight. His long letters discussed the events of the day, particularly the aftermath of the successful communist takeover of China the previous year,

I see Hainan has fallen and the capital taken without firing a shot. [...] I wrote to Potter yesterday to ask if he had any news of what I should do after Java other than returning to Indo-China, so hope to get his reply within 2 weeks and before I leave here [...] The China business is really depressing and I hope and pray I don't have to go back there [to China]. I think you feel the same don't you. If you really feel you definitely don't want to go, then say so frankly and I'll see what can be done about it. This country is no picnic, believe me, but China must be awful.⁵⁸

A CHANGE OF PLAN

In his letter to Irene of 4 May 1950, he let her know there had been a sudden change of events. In the first instance she was to return from her sojourn in Penang to Singapore as quickly as possible where Bill hoped they might be able to meet. But it wasn't that straight forward. The BAT man in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), a Mr Rose, was 'being allowed to resign', and Bill was asked to cover the vacancy until a new man arrived. The problem was that, 'until they know they can get him his passage, they are not telling him that they are getting rid of him. (All this very very confidential. Don't tell a soul!!!!).'⁵⁹

Bill's hope was that Mr Rose would be booked on the 17 May boat. If he were, Bill would be able to leave Java and meet Irene in Singapore before he went onto Saigon. If not, the next available boat for Mr Rose

wasn't until 18 June. Bill told Irene:

Now comes the part that you won't like. If he goes on the June boat, I am not to return to Saigon till early June, which means that I won't leave Java until late May and then have a few days in Singapore before going to Saigon. I shall have to carry on with my Java trip.

Bill had also received news from his boss, and told Irene that his boss had said that he:

...can rely on being somewhere in South East Asia until August at least. After that I cannot tell you where you will be sent, but you can be quite sure that you have no need to worry about your future.

Luck was with Bill, after their month-long separation, he was able to leave Java a few days later and finally see his wife again. Bill eventually arrived in Saigon sometime in mid-May 1950.⁶⁰

TRAGEDY

Bill's good fortune in getting to see Irene soon turned into horrific bad luck. On 8 June, while travelling in Saigon with his brother-in-law Maurice Lebas, who also worked for BAT, they were driving from the factory in Cholon, on the southern outskirts of Saigon on the Rue Legrand de la Liraze. A witness reported that Mr Lebas and his guest Mr Evans and all the staff of the Directorate left around 18.00 PM.⁶¹ As they drove away, they were stopped by a group of four Vietnamese Communist Viet Minh agents disguised as policemen. Allowing them no chance to react, the terrorists opened fire with automatic pistols. Evans was shot through the head and died instantly. His brother-in-law was more fortunate, he was able to get out of the car unharmed and run towards the cars of the colleagues, which were following. While fleeing he was shot twice in the arm and was taken to the Grall Hospital.⁶² Twelve days later, it was reported that the police had arrested and charged four Vietnamese with Evans' murder.⁶³

An old work colleague of Evans summed him up eight years later in his own memoir, 'We lost not only a sportsman whose prowess on the Welsh rugby field was at one time famous, but one of the most

popular figures of old China days.⁶⁴

A few weeks after the murder it was reported that a clue to Evans' murder had been found during a police raid intended to foil a terrorist plot. During the raid, the police seized the Ford car used by Evans' murderers and discovered photographs which showed that the Viet-Minh agents had plans to shoot Bao Dai, his Prime Minister, Tran Van Huu, all the Cabinet, and senior Government officials.⁶⁵

AFTERMATH

Bill's cousin Eileen recorded her memories:

The whole unpleasant and tragic incident left the problem of Arthur's [i.e. Bill's] burial. Many times throughout his long stay he had been so near to death that it would have been inevitable that his body would remain in China. Now it seemed fitting that it should be returned to England; that his Far Eastern adventure should complete the cycle, and his body be found room in some quiet spot in the West Country from whence he had started out.

So it was arranged. Weeks passed in complying with regulations and obtaining clearance, but eventually the great lead coffin was placed aboard the S.S. Eumaeus and commenced its journey of several thousands of miles to the Port of Avonmouth. It was a long drawn out and sad business but finally it was accomplished.⁶⁶

Bill was laid to rest at Greenbank Cemetery, Bristol. The King family archive contains a certificate from the cemetery confirming that they will maintain the grave for 75 years from March 1951.⁶⁷

On 4 September 1950 Irene wrote to her brother Maurice, still recovering from the ordeal which had killed her husband,

I do hope your operation is over with and that this time it will be very satisfactory. Poor you. I have been thinking about you so much and praying all is well. I realise you cannot write yet but a post-card from Mimi just telling us how you are progressing would relieve our minds a great deal.⁶⁸

After the funeral, Irene visited Bill's family, and recorded her thoughts,

...had two nights in Scarborough with Teds and Margaret but that set me back again and I have decided, come what may, I shall not return there for at least a year. He is so like Bill that even Jakes nearly broke down and said she didn't know how I could stand it for an hour so you see, it is not just me making a fuss about nothing.⁶⁹

In a passenger manifest dated 16 April 1954, Irene travelled first class from Hong Kong to London where she stayed at Earl's Court, London. Under the column 'Profession Occupation or Calling of Passengers', she recorded herself as 'Independent' - a show of defiance and strength in adversity. In the early 1960s, Irene moved to Melbourne, Australia, to be near her younger sister Jakes.⁷⁰ She died on 29 June 1989, in Melbourne, thirty-nine years after her husband's violent death, hopeful, no doubt of a final and lasting reunion.

SIMON DRAKEFORD (*simon@drakefords.com*) is a British born, freelance sports history writer. He lived in Hong Kong and China from 1998 to 2013. He was in Shanghai from 2006 to 2013, where he was a member of the Royal Asiatic Society in Shanghai and for a while its Honorary Treasurer.

His first book *It's a Rough Game But Good Sport: The Life, Times and Personalities of the Shanghai Rugby Football Club* was published by Earnshaw Books in 2014. On his return to the UK, he obtained a Master's Degree in Sport History and Culture from De Montfort University. He is now writing his second book, *The Thundering Herd*, which tells the remarkable story of the U.S. Fourth Marines rugby playing adventures in China from 1927 until 1940.



References

- 1 Email correspondence with author by David Evans, Bill Evans' nephew and his wife Diana (*Evans Email*), 25 February 2019.
- 2 Family documents, email correspondence and photographs from Richard King (*King Collection*), School Photograph.

- 3 *King Collection*, Clipping of an unknown Bristol Newspaper from 1943.
- 4 *Evans Email*, 25 February 2019.
- 5 Howard Cox, *The Global Cigarette: Origins and Evolution of British American Tobacco, 1880-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 19.
- 6 Cox, p. 21.
- 7 Cox, pp. 76-77.
- 8 Cox, p. 116.
- 9 *North-China Daily News (NCDN)*, 23 January 1925, p. 17.
- 10 Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search For Modern China: Second Edition*, (London: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd, 1999), pp. 330-41.
- 11 *NCDN*, 27 December 1927, p. 14.
- 12 *NCDN*, 29 December 1927, p. 16.
- 13 *NCDN*, 20 March 1928, p. 17.
- 14 *China Press (CP)*, 19 Sep 1932, p. 6.
- 15 *Evans Email*, 23 March 2019.
- 16 *King Email*, 25 March 2019.
- 17 Robert Nield, *China's Foreign Places: The Foreign Presence in China in the Treaty Port Era, 1840-1943*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), pp. 195-96.
- 18 *North China Herald (NCH)*, 19 October 1932, p. 81, Obituary of E. G. Lebas.
- 19 Daphne Du Maurier, *Myself When Young*, (London: Virago, 2004), p. 85.
- 20 *NCH*, 6 Jul 1932, p. 39.
- 21 Family documents and photographs from David Evans and his wife Diana (*Evans Collection*), unpublished manuscript written by Bill Evans' cousin, E. M. De Crespo, *Anatomy of a Story*, pp. 4-5.
- 22 *King Collection*, Letter from Bill Evans to his parents dated 21 March 1935.
- 23 *NCH*, 23 Sep 1936, p. 541.
- 24 *Evans Collection*, De Crespo, pp. 96-99.
- 25 *NCH*, 4 Jan 1939, p. 41.
- 26 Family documents from Jupp family members (*Jupp Collection*), letter written by Bill Evans to J. A. Jupp, 10 May 1943 regarding his son Edmond Jupp, who had been on the *Lisbon Maru*.
- 27 *Evans Collection*, De Crespo, p. 114.
- 28 Tony Banham, *We Shall Suffer There: Hong Kong's Defenders*

- Imprisoned, 1942—45*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), pp. 110-14.
- 29 *Jupp Collection*, 10 May 1943.
- 30 For more details about Edmond Jupp see Drakeford, pp. 112-19.
- 31 *Jupp Collection*, 10 May 1943.
- 32 Major Victor Stanley Ebbage MBE BEM, *The Hard Way: Surviving Shamshuipo POW Camp 1941-45*, (Stroud: Spellmount, 2011), p. 84.
- 33 *Seattle Times*, 8 August 1943, p. 1.
- 34 Ebbage, pp. 135-37.
- 35 *Jupp Collection*, 10 May 1943.
- 36 Greg Leck, *Captives Of Empire: The Japanese Internment of Allied Civilians in China 1941 – 1945*, (San Fransisco: Shandy Press, 2006), pp. 307-16.
- 37 *King Collection*, letter written by Bill Evans to his wife Irene, 23 September 1942.
- 38 *King Collection*, letter written by Bill Evans to his wife Irene, September 1942.
- 39 Tony Banham, *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru: Britain's Forgotten Wartime Tragedy*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), p. 43.
- 40 Banham, *Sinking of the Lisbon Maru*, p. 74.
- 41 *Jupp Collection*, 10 May 1943.
- 42 *Jupp Collection*, 10 May 1943.
- 43 *Jupp Collection*, 10 May 1943.
- 44 The narrative of the Evan's escape from the sinking *Lisbon Maru* to his arrival in Baltimore has been summarised from the book translated from the Chinese by Major (Ret'd) Brian Finch MCIL, *A Faithful Record of the Lisbon Maru Incident*, (Hong Kong, Proverse, 2017). The first-hand account by Evans (pp. 185-188) has been used as the main timeline but differs in some respect to the narrative elsewhere in the book.
- 45 *King Collection*, letter from Bill Evans to Tienken and Savage, 8 October 1942.
- 46 *King Collection*, clipping from a Bristol newspaper from August 1943.
- 47 *King Collection*, letter from Bill Evans to Irene, 10 January 1943.
- 48 *King Collection*, a note from Bill Evans to Irene, 13 March 1943.
- 49 *Jupp Collection*, letter written by Bill Evans to The Colonial Office 23 June 1943.

- 50 *King Collection*, letter from the High Commissioner in Ottawa to Bill Evans, 3 July 1943.
- 51 *Jupp Collection*, letter written by Bill Evans to J. A. Jupp, 18 October 1943.
- 52 Banham, *Sinking of the Lisbon Maru*, Chapter 12 and p. 139.
- 53 *Barnham*, Appendix 1.
- 54 *King Collection*, letter written by Bill Evans to Irene, 12 April 1950.
- 55 *King Collection*, Letter from Bill Evans to Irene 14 April 1950.
- 56 *King Collection*, Letter from Bill Evans to Irene 17 April 1950.
- 57 *King Collection*, Letter from Bill 17 April.
- 58 *King Collection*, Letter from Bill Evans to Irene 25 April 1950.
- 59 *King Collection*, letter from Bill Evans to Irene, 4 May 1950.
- 60 *Liverpool Echo*, 9 June 1950, p. 7.
- 61 *King Collection*, Witness statement dated 27 January 1969 of Truong-Van-Sau and Tran-Van-Thau, who were following in car behind Evans. Translated from the French by author.
- 62 *Liverpool Echo*, 9 June 1950, p. 7.
- 63 *China Mail*, 20 June 1950.
- 64 John Stericker, *A Tear for the Dragon*, (London, Arthur Barker Ltd, 1958), p. 176.
- 65 *Belfast News-letter*, 13 July 1950, p. 4.
- 66 *Evans Collection*, De Crespo, pp. 4-5.
- 67 *Evans Email*, 25 March 2019. Grave number 195PPTT.
- 68 *King Collection*, letter from Irene Evans to her brother Maurice Lebas, 4 September 1950.
- 69 *King Collection*, letter from Irene, 4 September 1950.
- 70 *Evans Email*, 23 March 2019.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE ART SCENE IN BEIJING IN THE MID-NINETEEN EIGHTIES

OBSERVATIONS OF AN ART-LOVER DURING THE
YEARS 1984-86 AND A LITTLE BIT BEYOND...

BY CHRISTOPH VON WALDERSEE

ABSTRACT:

In this essay the author shares with us his experiences in Beijing in the 1980s where he witnessed a turning point in Chinese art. In a period ushered in by Deng Xiaoping's 'Four Modernisations', many Chinese artists, such as the artists of the Star Group and the No Name Group discovered and realised their own potential. At this time, New China's artists were not only able to suddenly see art from outside China, but also create new versions of 'Guo Hua', or 'National' art – a concept in line with the stipulations of communist China after its foundation in 1949.

I probably didn't expect much from the arts when I decided to go to Beijing and start my fellowship in Political Economics, which was part of the official German-Chinese Cultural Exchange programme granted jointly by the German and the Chinese governments. I knew about, of course, the ubiquitous inks: flowers and birds, bees and rocks, scenic valleys with steep mountains, waterfalls or winding brooks, with twisted trees on cliffs and nestled huts with tea-drinking men inside, or fierce looking temple guards. And, certainly, the socialist propaganda pieces, which I had always thought of as uninspiring and both mind and soul numbing.

My stay in China was intended to allow me, like other students and researchers from all over the world, to 'study China', its people, traditions and culture, while learning the Chinese language, plus doing research on a topic of a pre-defined interest. Mine was to compare the different situations of foreign debt in various countries and decide whether this would influence the nation's political decision-making. In the case of China, unlike the Philippines or Poland in those days, the Chinese government claimed there had been no foreign debt since it came into being 解放以后 (jiefang yihou) "after liberation", in other words since 1949. I wanted to explore whether there might be ways for a nation with a rising economy, like China, to keep its hands free

from being bound by pressure from others when making political decisions, debt free. I thought China would be an excellent example to work on, as many people in those days already thought of China as an emerging power with a clear will to follow its very own road, politically, economically and, of course, culturally speaking. How much all this would be intertwined I hadn't fully imagined when I decided to investigate this. However, the field where I would have least expected it to become evident to me was the arts.

In the mid-1980s, most topics that should and would have been of interest to me for my subject of study were “internal”, which meant off-limits, 内部 (nei bu). In other words, my plan was looking more and more likely to be in tatters and I had to accept that I would hardly be able to piece something telling together. That weighed heavily on me but what could I do? Instead of giving up I tried many ways and eventually, here and there, I would get a hint, a small step in the dark, trying to paint myself a picture of how the Chinese reform model might work, how it would go ahead and what the underlying rationale might be. That kept me busy, though it was frustrating at times. But then, everybody who tried to study something as a foreigner in China, to bring anything meaningful to paper, struggled with this in those times.

Despite our frustrations, we had wonderful talks on everything else, had parties to go to, met with people from other countries, and even sometimes had some daring Chinese talking to us strangers, 老外: the ‘Lao Wai’. It wasn't without risk for Chinese, as they would be “asked” to report about their foreign contacts. They were usually heavily supervised when seeing friends from abroad. So, things were never easy with them, always conversations were a bit covert or in otherwise awkward circumstances, such as meeting for a chat outside the campus, for a cup of tea in one of the little state-owned shop-restaurants in WuDaoKou, having a warm afternoon beer with oily peanuts. But it was fun.

During my first weeks in Beijing, I had been introduced to someone who was planning to study in Germany. He wanted to bring back new ideas for China's economic reforms. It was early November 1984 when he took me out for lunch to a small restaurant that he said was private, a great rarity in those days. It was halfway between Peking University and the New Summer Palace. We met at the Language Institute's gate near WuDaoKou from where we took off by bicycle. We cycled along the “big” road that had two broad lanes by then, passing

through villages and vegetable fields, overtaking donkey carts while cautiously paying attention to the manholes often missing their lids, a thing everybody was used to on Beijing's roads back then.

The restaurant had five or six tables. The dishes were simple but quite good. There were other guests and it seemed word had got around that this tiny place served decent food. We hadn't finished our lunch at 4pm and were the only guests left in the place. The sun was setting, and people were already flocking in for dinner. Dinner time back then was between 4 and 5 pm, and by 6 o'clock the streets would be empty, everybody home. We had had an exciting talk on economic reforms, on where this should lead, and on many topics regarding both East and West Germany, our system of a social market economy and so on.

When we were about to leave, I said to him that I really liked the two scrolls decorating the otherwise empty walls of the little restaurant. The afternoon sun lit the scene and in that light the two pairs of pheasants, a cock and a hen each, were beautifully composed, set between rocks and shrubs, well-placed grass and flowers. To me it seemed as if there had never been anything more delicate than those two scrolls. The paintings had fascinated me throughout our conversation and now, as we were about to leave the restaurant, I said to my new friend that the pair of scrolls had truly taken my eye so much that I thought I had hardly seen such a lovely set of paintings, especially when hung so close together. He was surprised but couldn't help agreeing when he looked at the wall. My Chinese language skills were barely existent, so I had to ask my friend whether he thought these paintings could be old. He didn't have a clue and asked the owner of the place. He smiled and said "Of course they are! Do you like them?" I told him through my new friend that I hadn't expected to find such delight and joy in seeing traditional Chinese art. The owner seemed pleased. And, suddenly, I plainly asked my new friend whether he could ask the owner if he would sell the scrolls, which, it turned out, he would. We quickly agreed on a price. I think it was 65 Yuan, which was only slightly less than my monthly rate paid by the Chinese Ministry of Education. So, this was a high price for me and certainly for him too, as our meal couldn't have been more than probably 3-5 Yuan for the two of us, everything included. We agreed that I would come back the next day to pay him and get the paintings, which I did. And so, these two scrolls, a truly elegant pair of paintings, a typical "birds and

flowers” scene, surely the work of a great master, laid the basis for what would become my ongoing fascination with Eastern Art.

That newfound love quickly merged with my already existing joy of art. In Germany, I had started collecting contemporary art at the age of 16 while still in school, buying a drawing from “an artist”, another student, hardly older than me. So when I came to China at the age of 32, I had collected art for some years, with a particular fascination for abstract art. Funny that I had now chosen the opposite of what I usually liked; two paintings done in the classical style of Chinese traditional art, bought right from the walls of a restaurant in a tiny village outside Beijing. What for me was the most remarkable thing in this: while I did fall in love with these pheasants, the rocks and flowers around it, I said to myself: ‘Now this is China. And this is what you’ll find here’. I felt like I had made a significant step forward in learning to appreciate Eastern Art, which is what I saw in those scrolls. ‘Now’, I said to myself, ‘try to grasp the “other” concept of it, the beauty in its tradition, as you are in another world now, in another aesthetic cosmos, following different rules and concepts. That’s it, and don’t try to find the other “other”. ‘Modernity as a concept, a step in progressing in civilisation by achieving cultural excellence, probably does not exist and perhaps may never exist – here. So, let’s focus on what’s available and enjoy it.’ Those were my thoughts back then. How wrong I was!

Most buses in those days had only windshields in front and no windowpanes on the sides, making a ride in them cold in winter and baking hot in summer, dust engulfing you just as if you were riding your bike. Going to town, it was better to just take your bike; you would arrive faster and no more dusty than you would have had you taken the bus. In and around the Peking Hotel you would always see friends. Going there was a bit closer than to YouYi ShangDian, the Friendship Store, the one and only other serious place where you could find a cup of COFFEE(!), a COLD beer, some Russian black bread and a decent loo. And, of course, all the famous treasures of China: tea, silk, jade, preserved fish, paper cuts, cloisonné and lacquer ware and plenty of “Guo Hua”, ink paintings with dragons, “ShanShui” (mountain and water), flowers and birds, the famous crab or the galloping horse, hanging gourds, charming Tang ladies chatting, old men drinking a cup or two etc. All that at prices today no-one would believe. The International Club, next door, featured a bookshop and more ink paintings, done by different artists, though with the same

imagery. I always thought the club was the better place for books on Chinese art, calligraphy, jade carvings, ancient pottery or silks, and so on. I also thought it offered slightly more interesting ink paintings and calligraphies. Later, I found out they were mostly done by contracted masters, though some left me with the impression of strokes in a bit more loose or “modern” style. Still, none of these works ever matched my pheasants from that modest place, where nobody would have expected to find anything of class.

In short, visiting the many places in Beijing that sold art, I didn't see anything that would make me question my spur of the moment decision. The dizzying amount, of what started to look the same everywhere, didn't allow me any judgment on “quality”. I now know that it wasn't easy for anyone to determine “quality” and that apparently a safe judgment would largely be felled by a “harmoniously friendly agreement” plus a subtle sense of being supportive to what the authorities would uphold as art. I learned this from many years of dealing with the authorities in charge, and they did teach me my lesson. Result: the safest way to underpin a judgment of an artist's work, officially, was to praise it in line with what someone of authority could live with. That always required, and still does, a sagely nodding movement of your head, while murmuring something vague. I learnt there would be a “hierarchy of enshrinement” stating what is art and what is not. While in former times the imperial court was both the ultimate judge and as such also the ultimate reverence, respect in the 1980's would originate in the “correct” topic, the “right” thought and the “proper” attitude, all along the official lines of the New China after liberation. Officially speaking.

Surprisingly, of all places in East Asia only in New China would art be named “Guo Hua”, literally meaning “national art”. After 1949 this became the embodiment of what could be a work of art: ink on paper. Thus, praising the “traditional”, in other words the officially acknowledged style in Eastern aesthetics, helped to define and declare such artwork as being pure; uncontaminated by non-Chinese e.g. “foreign” influences. This would be in line with what the New China would see as being of true Chinese origin, an offspring of the Chinese civilisation, and all it stands for. Ink on paper is, and was, always used all over Asia, not only by China, but the term “Guo Hua” isn't understood or used anywhere else.

The shock came when I least expected it. I had been invited to see

a friend, who had arrived in Beijing for a “look and see” trip before being posted there. He was with the German Foreign Office and would oversee the German Chinese cultural exchange programme, from which I had received my scholarship. He was staying with someone from the embassy, where I had been invited to meet him. Upon entering the drawing room of the German diplomat, I saw a painting that immediately nailed me to the ground. You almost wouldn’t call it a painting, it was more something of thick strokes, not ink but oil colour, practically thrown onto the canvas: black, yellow, some white, on raw canvas done in wild, agitated, almost frenetic strokes. It looked as if someone had literally been slashing heaps of oil colour; maybe with a spatula or perhaps really a knife. The picture struck me. All I could say to these two gentlemen, both of whom I didn’t really know well was ‘whoever did this, I would buy a blank canvas from him and would know exactly what’s on it’^a. We all became good friends. But I don’t think they caught the meaning of the stunned words the picture had made me speak. I hadn’t just uttered them – I really meant what I had said. And I still do.

The picture, although I will sadly never own it, became the cornerstone of a profound admiration for the works of one of the most independent artists in Beijing in the 1980s. He wasn’t just at the centre of Chinese modern art in Beijing, rather he was one of the key protagonists in it. Let’s call him Lei Xin here. At the time, he was already seen by the informal Beijing ‘modern’ art scene as one of the most daring artists, astonishing his artist friends around him with his wild, expressive strokes, as if he was in fact celebrating calligraphy - not ink on paper, but with oil colour on canvas. His works, at least those works of his I saw, were abstract but his figurative works from the mid and late 1970s, when he was still experimenting with expressionism and abstraction are spectacular, too. What all had in common, even the most meditative ones were rhythmically dancing lines and strokes, colours thrown together, raw or mixed, colours no-one had ever seen together. Only one by one did well-known names spring to my mind: Willem de Kooning, Emil Nolde, Jackson Pollock, Karel Appel, Karl Otto Götz, all of them world-famous artists, though

a In fact, the artist (who of course knows this story) has referred to this idea of a blank canvas, more than 30 years later, by producing a work of art in which he has screwed together 111 blank canvasses and exhibited it as such. It is a line of standing canvasses where each canvas has been screwed next to the other, always in a way that you cannot see whether anything has been painted on to any of the canvasses (or if anything else has been done to them).

some of these names he hadn't even heard of and, as it turned out, the painter had hardly seen more than tiny depictions of such works. There were similarities between the works of these artists and his own, but it wasn't possible to say what exactly they were.

I never met anyone, then or now, who would have been able to describe the colours he used, and is still using, without getting stuck in descriptive words. His colours, and how they are melted together, are sitting next to each other or on top of each other, creating their own cosmos of harmony; his strokes done by brushes or knives or spatulas, some even applied by grass brooms or bundles of twigs; his compositions, all were uncompromisingly wild, creating violent, almost aggressive expressions – on edge. Other artists like Zhang Wei, Wang Luyan, Ma Kelu were all exploring similar expressions and their works were also wild, unrelenting and very 'un-behaving'. But none would be as complex as his, from whatever perspective one might look at them. All highly remarkable artists, producing beautiful, often unorthodox works, but somehow none of them would go as far as my preferred one, fearlessly expressing a hurt soul and the traumatised feelings of being forced into a society with a system of artistic expression that simply wouldn't allow him to tell his full story. That stood out.

Lei Xin's works couldn't be compared to any other artist in that grey, monotonous and widely uninformed Beijing of those days. A place where thoughts as much as lives, sometimes even people's feelings, were very much running along the same official tracks, as "suggested" by a largely "harmonised" socialist society. Through him and his wife, an equally talented artist whose quiet and contemplative works impressed me too, I quickly met many of their friends, practically the whole art scene of Beijing, many of them gifted, all curious and uncompromising, and literally all self-taught.

Beijing was full of non-conformist and very different artists of all ages. I still deeply admire Lei Xin's art and am still collecting it. I'm very much cherishing and, also, collecting the works of his wife, too, whose art is so different from her husband's. They both became very close friends, we try to see each other often, even though they have both since long reached the world's Mount Parnassus of contemporary art, are known and appreciated all over the five continents, with many major museums having exhibited and bought their works, in China, all over Europe, in the US, in Australia, Japan and Korea. Time

and again they both surprise me with their endless creativity, their diligence, their artistic unobtrusiveness, pushing their boundaries and always reaching new levels.

How did they get where they are today and what was it like to witness it? In 1979, the “Four Modernisations” were declared by Deng Xiaoping. These opened up many new opportunities, allowing farmers to become rich; reformed the economy by introducing competition among state owned enterprises and some selected foreign importers; allowed science to break loose from ideology in tiny doses and, finally, reformed the military sector, making it capable of providing a credible defence of China’s territory. As all this was happening, the cultural sector started gaining some self-confidence, too. People were longing for normality in what they could read, listen to, see and they were longing to create again. After more than two decades of propaganda they were tired of listening to revolutionary songs, seeing nothing but glorified socialist ‘realism’ on their walls, tired of the reading the ever-same stories or seeing them on stage.

People wanted to find again their very own, very personal and unique feelings, wanted to express and maybe even speak about them, not only in self-criticisms as public repentance, but in their very own words, language, expressions. They wanted to show true feelings, listen to others and share their joys, their fears, their emotions. They didn’t want to be declared bourgeois for singing along to an old pre-revolutionary song, for reading a story from the times when the rich Chinese language told of more than praising the fulfilment of 5-year-plans. They wanted to put a stop to being declared the enemy of their own culture only because they celebrated elements that dated back longer than the revolution and hadn’t been officially authorised by someone.

Many artists started to reclaim their cultural expression, strangely not by rediscovering their old masters but surprisingly by seeing what came from outside. As so often when politicians try to tell people to rely entirely on ‘their own roots’, glorifying their origins, the pristine and unique source of ‘themselves’, finding their way back to who they once were, what gave them their identity – that is when the people look outwards. People themselves suddenly are the ones to long to make a difference, to create something of their own and express themselves in a different way to what their neighbours do: in a friendly way, but distinctively. In music, in literature, in fine arts,

the catalyst that helped most to put an end to the isolation of Chinese culture, or what had been declared as such, were two art exhibitions in Beijing in the late 1970s. The first eye-opener was a show of French impressionists' paintings in 1978 and the other was an exhibition of German expressionist art shortly after that. The shock that these two exhibitions sent through the Chinese culture was like an earthquake. Both exhibitions became an awakening for many Chinese artists and art critics.

For a period of 10 years it could have been a deadly or at least a seriously damaging mistake to own a book that showed more than pictures praising revolutionary spirit. It could have proved a hidden bourgeois attitude, or it could be seen as a hint that there were persons discussing things other than propagandistic, idolised stories, looking at something other than depictions of the 'right' ethos. In pictures, in music, in poetry - anywhere. Anything 'foreign' would be even worse as it would be regarded as non-Chinese, possibly even traitorous, an inroad of the foreign powers. Culture was the element to identify and to unify the nation of the New China. Humming a Mozart tune, quoting a line from Shakespeare, owning a tiny photograph of the Mona Lisa, all that could mean serious trouble; destructive self-criticism in public, jail, and in some cases being beaten to death. Art could put one's life in terrible danger. No wonder that this resulted in either an impoverished ability to express oneself or in a hidden art scene where people would continue to draw, paint, write calligraphy, poetry, and music. I quickly realised that practically all my new friends had dared to do just that, even during the fiercest years of 1970s, laying the bedrock for what is now China's contemporary art. And I was allowed in, sharing their pictures, their music, their calligraphy and poetry. The art, which I saw being created right under my nose, the art I was allowed to see in their apartments;^b my friends gave me the feeling of being part of it.

We spent many long nights with loads of (warm) beer, some Bai Jiu, cigarettes by the packet, discussing, dissecting and comparing the works of Kandinsky, Malevich, Picasso, Nolde, Pollock, Miro, Rothko, and many others. We discussed philosophy and its influence on the arts. A few great philosophers had been translated into Chinese, like Heidegger, Piaget and Sartre, but the ideas of Foucault hadn't got through to China. We listened to music, mused about the impact of Mozart, Bach and even

^b Later to be called "Apartment Art"

the Rolling Stones were a topic, too. We discussed how the art markets would function, what it meant to be under the spell of an art dealer or of an abusive collector. We discussed what Robert Rauschenberg meant when he said his Chinese “colleagues” should go easy on what they did (‘relax, folks!’), which they didn’t like to hear at all as they had just escaped the campaign against ‘spiritual pollution’ of the early 1980s. In fact, they almost got into a serious row with Rauschenberg over it. The world-famous artist, whom they had admired until then for his success, his “independence” and rebellious art, but who nevertheless had paid a serious amount of money to be allowed his own show in the Chinese National Museum of Fine Arts. We all saw right through this attitude but then still went to study his installations and paintings, of course. We were all duly impressed, and the works had an influence, except for one: a very long, deep red monochrome that ran the title “Revolution”. It was regarded as obscene.

The unofficial Beijing art scene had become famous and viewed as somewhat heroic all over the country ever since it had organised the XingXing Dui MeiZhan in 1979, the Star Group’s art exhibition outside the China National Museum of Art. The group, most of whom I met and became friends with during my study time, had put their works on the fences of the little park in the southeast corner of the museum’s gardens, immediately attracting thousands of spectators – and the police. After they had negotiated a space to show their works, the situation calmed, and the informal group of artists started work on preparing the first ever show of contemporary, non-conformist art in China. It was becoming a huge magnet, and not only for Beijingers. In fact, it became so immensely popular that it was closed by the authorities on the second day. Artists and others came from as far as Kunming and Guangzhou to see the works and even joined them in exhibiting their own works, which were even less likely to be shown publicly in their hometowns.

I witnessed the results some years later myself. In 1985 I had been asked by the German-Chinese Cultural Exchange Programme to organise and hang an exhibition of the German 19th century artist Max Klinger in Kunming. So, I went. Before going I got a hint that I could find an artist there who had joined the Star Group in 1979, having come up to Beijing all the way from Kunming, three days’ travel by train.

While we were hanging the works of Max Klinger in the Yunnan

provincial museum in Kunming, a group of 'official' calligraphers and ink painting masters had been sent to 'assist' me preparing the show. When all was ready and they were happy and about to leave, they wanted to show me their own works. Impressive though nothing unexpected, we discussed their works in a good mood. By the end, when we were about to set out for dinner, I asked one of them for the Kunming Star Group artist. I had been told his name, but no-one had ever heard of an artist of that name. One even said they knew each and every artist in town, so I must have misspoken the name. I repeated it and then one old master bent over, whispering into my ear never to mention this name again. I asked him why and he said, this man wasn't an artist but a charlatan. Then we left for the banquet.

The next morning, as we were putting the last finishing touches to the exhibition, I was asked to the entrance. There stood a middle-aged man, unsettled and cap in hand, with fluttering eyes, who said: "You wanted to see me?" He was the artist I had heard of in Beijing, but he flatly denied having ever done art. I felt sorry for his discomfort and quickly ended the encounter, making some excuses. He left and I carried on in the halls of official art and fame.

Two hours later, the room filled up with officials of all ranks for the grand opening and lots of praising words were heaped on 'my' German artist, who by then had been dead for more than half a century. In his lifetime, he had faced some troubles himself for having portrayed the failed German Revolution of 1848, but had later become one of the spiritual fathers of Käthe Kollwitz, who herself came to be highly admired as an artist by the Chinese revolutionaries for showing so unflinchingly social tragedies in the German capital of the late 1890s, early 1900s. When everyone was leaving, I found by accident a tiny paper with some characters written on it in the pocket of my jacket. It showed the name of my unofficial Kunming artist and his address! I had absolutely no idea how this got into my pocket so, after I had dutifully attended the banquet with all the officials, in other words by about 8 o'clock, I changed into something more relaxed and made my way to the address written on the slip of paper. It brought me to the backyard of a large rundown building, then up a couple of flights of open-air stairs, then all along a narrow balcony from which the number of doors allowed me to guess that the flats behind couldn't be very big at all. When I reached the door the paper indicated, I carefully knocked on it. No-one answered and so I, somewhat more discreetly,

knocked again. I heard some shuffling and the door opened. The same man who had been so frightened to have been called to meet me stood there, quite self-assured and very friendly, asking me inside. He was a totally different person, especially when I told him who had given me his name in Beijing. We had the most wonderful time, sharing some great conversation and he showed me his works which he pulled from his stash underneath his bed – there were hundreds! The small room became a huge exhibition hall with lots of absolutely non-conformist art. I saw similarities to artists he had never heard of, like Hannah Höch, a German Dadaist artist from the first half of 20th century, or Man Ray, de Chirico, Kurt Schwitters and many others. His works were completely self-taught and told of a genius. We spoke until midnight and then I had to leave, though not without an invitation to return the next day.

When I got there the next evening it was late, about 10 o'clock, and there were voices and laughter from inside. I hesitated to knock but when I finally did, everyone dropped silent. My artist carefully opened the door a bit. When he saw me, he smiled and opened the door wide. Upon entering I couldn't believe my eyes: out of the eight to ten people sitting there, smoking and drinking, I knew by person at least half of them from Beijing: artists and poets. The others were from Shanghai, also artists and poets, many of their names familiar to me as well. We had a cheerful evening and lots of drinks and many cigarettes. But that poor artist had to wait another 20 years to make it to the top. Today he has joined the ranks of his friends, some of them now world-famous painters and writers, some can live from their work, though not all. The Beijing art scene was in fact a China-wide art scene – well-connected all over the country.

Artistic expression is a powerful tool. It has always been the fear of the controlling elite that it could break free. It is the language of liberty; it can never be domesticated for a purpose. When suppressed, it won't stay so for long. So, even in the 1960s and 70s there were artists who worked in secret, on cardboard taken from containers made to carry food, or other household items. I have seen paintings on newspaper sheets glued together so that they would better hold the colours, or tiny paintings, as small as a stamp, depicting scenes that would leave you with the impression of a huge work of art, in the format of a big canvas. When looking at these micro-masterworks you could virtually breathe the air of freedom the painter had been physically longing for

when creating them – he was in jail when he made them. There were poets who rhymed on their feelings, on a cloud in the sky, on a tree twig in spring, just as a daring painter would depict the same with a brush, with pencil or ink or even oil colours. There were composers who would never listen to the tunes they wrote; painters unable to share their works with anyone else. Despite everything, many of these works still exist today, though it took decades before they could safely be presented and published, exhibited and appreciated by us. But they exist because the ones who made them kept them secreted away in safe places.

I have myself seen collections of photographs of many, now well-known, artists: painters, poets, singers and musicians enjoying outings together and they have told me how they inspired each other, how they exchanged works, portrayed each other, tried out different styles, copied each other and bestowed the works on each other when they had completed them. Today these works and the photographs of the different protagonists are powerful proof that artistic expression cannot be conquered nor silenced for long. Today, 40 to 50 years later, some, though still far too few, of these works are slowly starting to attract the attention they deserve by entering the public domain through a small number of enthusiastic art dealers, private collectors and museums. Thanks to the tireless commitment of a small group of people these treasures can finally be catalogued, curated, exhibited, valued and even still bought. Many of these artists are now in their 60's and older, only a tiny number have reached individual fame, most of them still unrecognised except for the ones that were able to become part of the world's art talk. Some never learned how much they came to be appreciated because they have died.

Feng Gudong, for example, was a painter born in 1948 who died in 2005. From a privileged background with close links to the highest ranks of the New China, he was seen by his friends as an audacious radical, admired by almost an entire generation of young artists throughout the 1970s till the early 1990s. When I was introduced to him in the summer of 1985, I found him and his works both very frightening, dark, gloomy, showing crooked, deformed people in hostile rooms, or abstract forms similarly twisted and tortured, in terrifying colours. Sculptures were in dark wood, full of foreboding. But then the terror had been real, it had actually happened; no-one had been able to escape it. When we met, he lived in a slice of a

dilapidated house in a village to the west of the Old Summer Palace. We sat in his garden, gazed at his works, he chain-smoked, as did many of the artists, he drank far too much, again like many of the artists, and he didn't talk. He wasn't interested in how or even whether I liked his works. I had been brought along by other artist friends who saw in him their grandmaster and almost worshipped him. But he, it seemed to me, didn't value their respect, putting on a mixture of shyness with bad-tempered reactions to whatever was said. This is what I remember.

Much later, in 2005, again in summer, I felt drawn to an exhibition in 798 Art-District which Feng Guodong's friends and admirers had put together the night after he had died. It showed all of his works they could find. Suddenly I understood what his friends had seen in him. Without having been able to study the works of artists like Salvador Dali, Picasso, de Chirico, Braque, Max Ernst plus many others we consider the heroes of the 20th century's Western art, he seems to have had the same visions, taken the same scrupulous steps towards leaving behind figurative depiction, trying to reach pure form, pure content, full abstraction. The sad feelings that struck me when criss-crossing this labyrinth of treasures was that I didn't find a single work of his where he had reached his final goal, the totality of abstraction. Instead my old dislike hit me again and I left the exhibition.

Outside I started to question why I couldn't seem to understand his work, so I went back in. While I had left the scene with a feeling wavering between anger and admiration, I still couldn't come to terms with this artist and his works. I just couldn't understand what the quintessential part in his work was: his unbending will and courage to sacrifice any beauty for the sake of truth, being the soulful yet fervent rapporteur of his generation, how they had been treated, and in the end denied their lives. While he deliberately ruined his life, his works depicted the calamity of the Chinese people in the 20th century, when decade after decade people in China were denied any beauty, any deeper happiness, had their hopes and beliefs time and again destroyed by warlords, by occupation, by war and civil war, by ideology that ruined society as well as nature, and even by physical starvation. Feng Guodong, and more so his art, can be seen as the crystallisation point, the watershed of Chinese contemporary art. For that his friends admired him.

However, it took me another three years before I finally started to see this. In 2008, I went to the opening of a well curated exhibition of

Feng's works, again in the 798 Art District. Pictures were hung in a way that now really anyone could see their outstanding importance and influence on many important artists of modern China. In a room next to the exhibition hall a video was playing. It had been filmed in the yard of Feng's home, the same courtyard I had been to almost 25 years before. Five contemporary Chinese artists, all of them well known to me from the 1980s, were discussing, with an art critic one generation older, the importance and influence of Feng Guodong and his work on Chinese contemporary art in the 20th and 21st century. It was the time of the last hours of Feng's life. So, while his friends had gathered to honour his life, his work, his unbowed courage and personality, he was dying, under the care of his wife, who had been the muse he had lovingly portrayed many times. They are the only works of his I have ever seen that lived up to the meaning of beauty, because she was indeed, herself, the incarnation of beauty and grace. So, Feng had been able to create beauty, but he had also dared to leave it behind and saw in himself the chronicler of what had happened to him, to his family, his people and his culture. This was understood by his generation, who still admire him. They now carry on pushing the boundaries of where art can go.

Feng's influence on all my artist friends in the Beijing of the 1980s, most of them whom even today are my closest friends, is undeniable. When I dive into their works, I can see traces of his art. Some have copied him, some tried to distance themselves, some desperately try to 'contradict' him while others still struggle to be rid of his influence. It is impossible to connect names to this, but it can be seen. One day there will be art historians who work on this period. They won't be able to make sense of the Chinese contemporary art scene from the 1970s all the way through to the early 2000s without truly re-evaluating the works of Feng Guodong. As for myself, I have seen one more exhibition of Feng's art. I still don't own any of his works, but I have learned to appreciate his art. I can finally see the inner beauty of his works.

The two best-known groups of artists who could be seen as offsprings of Feng's influence are the No-Name (无名WuMing) Group and the Star (星星XingXing) Group. Most members of these two groups and their works are now slowly being documented and it shows how closely their works are related to each other, artistically speaking. While Feng's influence, rather than in colour or form, is instead in

personality - how to be radical and uncompromising, there is another man who has influenced a number of artists from a different angle. Let's call him Pu Zhang. He is almost one generation older than most of his adepts. While Pu Zhang's works are hardly known to anyone other than insiders, most of his 'students' have had considerable success and their works have been appreciated and bought by private collectors as well as museums worldwide.

Pu Zhang was born in the 1930s and grew up in Shanghai and Beijing. His parents belonged to circles where, at a young age, he could meet Russian artists living and working in China. He must have been a very diligent apprentice as he not only copied hard what he saw but inhaled what his Russian friends would teach him in technique, in art theory, in history of art and in aesthetics. But as his parents also enjoyed collecting ink paintings and calligraphy and hence knew many local artists, he also became familiar with Chinese art, its techniques and materials. As a young man he fought in the Korean War and in 1955 he was sent to Tibet. Wherever he was, he painted and wrote poetry. So today he looks back on a life as full of beauty as of horror, both always present wherever he served. His slightly academic style paired with his gift to teach made him a great friend of many members of the No-Name Group as well as some of the Star Group.

Where today Pu's works are seen as perhaps a bit shallow, they do deserve a second, deeper look and to hear the story behind their creation. It is not only that he had to use these glued newspapers or cardboard pieces to have something to paint on during the darkest hours of the second half of the 1960s and during the 1970s. He dared to depict motifs that would, if discovered, immediately land him in jail – and they did. His works would no doubt identify him as bourgeois, and what that meant during those days is known. He composed his works on principles he had learned from his Russian artist friends. But he combined it with the aesthetics from classical periods of Chinese arts, relating to scrolls in particular from late Ming dynasty to early Qing Dynasty, from the Yangzhou school, but also looking back to famous masters and their compositions from the Song Dynasty and earlier. In other words, he tried to merge principles from two worlds in creating his own world. And just as with Feng's art, Pu Zhang would never succeed in getting over the line where fully abstract art begins. It would only be his friends, his adepts, who would cross that line and open that new dimension. I have seen works where he tried and then

gave up. He silently accepted his inability to take that step and instead returned to his roots. However, his personal tragedy starts here: he once said to me that he would now only work on topics no-one else would dare to touch. He started to report his country's miseries, again as a chronicler, a storyteller. While Feng Guodong would furiously destroy old aesthetics and how to perceive art, Pu Zhang is now working on an unencrypted pictorial chronicle of what he has seen and gone through in war and in times of turmoil. When he told me about it, he said it is a painstakingly slow process because sometimes he has to stop painting as he isn't able to see what he is doing anymore. His eyes would be full of tears with emotions overwhelming him. He also said the new works would be big, much bigger than the ones he had been doing so far, because now the canvas would have to carry so much burden, such tragedy, so much still needed to be told.

I suppose this has now also become a story of how art can evolve. For almost 50 years, Beijing has been a hotbed of modern art, of new poetry and contemporary music, sometimes overlapping, often very much in private and clandestinely. It is now one of the most artistically thriving places in the world, despite some types of art still being theoretically forbidden. But the testimony is alive and can be visited, in museums and collections all over the world, including China, including Beijing.

Chinese art has found its place in the canon of art among all the other cultures of the world and it seems that the 1980s were a crucial time period. I feel that the time I spent there, back then, was at the turning point for Chinese art. It was then that many Chinese artists discovered and realised their own potential in comparison to other centres of cultural activities. It was the time of their coming out, when they were not only able to see art from outside China, but also create it themselves. When they were also able to personally meet foreign artists, museum directors, curators, collectors, and interested people from other countries.

It was the time when they had to defend their own new-found language of culture, confronting artists like Robert Rauschenberg telling them to "relax". Times when they could meet people like the director from Germany's National Gallery in Berlin, against whom they had to defend their reasons for using oil colour instead of ink to 'write' on canvas instead of paper, which he, as the head of a national gallery, simply couldn't perceive as art. Times when they could try out

what impression an installation would make on Chinese audiences. Times when they could start using concept art instead of the concept of a Chinese character or simply mix them. Everything was tried out.

The 1980s, when all that was suddenly possible and when it did indeed happen, witnessed the shift in China's art scene, irrespective of the age of the protagonists. In this decade, Chinese artists spread out across the world, trying to tell their story in their own artistic language, no longer bound to only ink and paper. It was a thrilling time and the results are legend! And I was allowed to share some of these moments.

***Christoph von Waldensee** has worked with and lived in China since the early 1980s. Besides working in development and 'green' finance, he has been an art collector for decades. Today he lives with his wife Pia in the Bavarian countryside where they turned their home into an open house for their artist friends and others from all over the world.*

Section 3: 'Exploring old neighbourhoods'

ON YANGSHUPU ROAD

BY DUNCAN HEWITT

ABSTRACT:

Shanghai's dramatic history has created a legacy of significant old buildings that continue to fascinate visitors to the city. Yet the severing of many connections with the city's past left some once significant parts of Shanghai all but forgotten for several decades. This essay focuses on Yangshupu Lu in Yangpu District, once known to foreign residents as Yangtzepoo Road, and home to unheralded historical treasures.

What is it about Shanghai's history that attracts so many of the city's foreign residents, and a growing number of locals, to spend a significant proportion of their free time exploring old neighbourhoods and digging into the city's past? It's a question I must have asked myself many times over the past two decades, not least when faced with the quizzical looks of local residents as I take photographs in a run-down old lane in a remote corner of the city.

The dramatic nature of the city's history is part of the fascination, and the sheer beauty and uniqueness of many of Shanghai's old buildings is another factor. The fact that so much has been demolished over recent decades has undoubtedly given us an added impetus to cherish and document what remains, as a link to that spectacular past. Yet for me, there's another, almost counter-intuitive factor at work here: despite all the demolition, I am constantly amazed at just how much of old Shanghai remains, not just in the well-known, downtown areas, but out in much further-flung corners of the city. The Shanghai of the 1930s and 40s was already a huge metropolis - and its scale, combined with the way in which the forces of history have severed many connections with the city's past, means that some areas seem to have become largely forgotten, certainly by the foreign residents of today. (The pain of much of the city's history has also perhaps made discussion of some aspects of the past more awkward, or at least less enthusiastically embraced, while the rush for progress over recent decades has not always encouraged a focus on days gone by.)

And so I sometimes feel that much of the city's unique history is still out there yet somehow hidden, buried just below the surface.

At the same time, the intensity of what happened here over the past century and a half means that once you start digging below that surface, you will quickly find layer upon layer of different periods of history, closely packed one on top of the other, like fossilised substrata, just waiting to be unearthed. An example that always springs to mind is the old headquarters of the once hugely influential British chemical company ICI on Sichuan Road behind the Bund; here the old company name, 'Imperial Chemical Industries China', can still be seen in faded English letters above the front entrance, while on the vertical pillars above, peeling red and white slogans from a later era praise Chairman Mao as "the great helmsman". Similarly, when Shanghai shop signs are taken down for renovation, they often reveal shop names from earlier eras - in English, in long-form Chinese characters, or simplified characters - or sometimes old revolutionary slogans.

In fact, compared to many other cities, where history is less controversial and more unambiguously embraced, Shanghai is more likely to suddenly reveal historical treasures which were previously presumed long gone. This has been increasingly the case in recent years, as the authorities in some parts of the city have begun, albeit inconsistently, to place greater emphasis on some aspects of Shanghai's urban heritage.

And so, over the years, I have repeatedly discovered, to my surprise, that places I had believed long disappeared actually still exist, sometimes simply disguised by a new name. Lunghua Camp, where the Japanese interned westerners, including the future author JG Ballard, who immortalised it in his novel *Empire of the Sun*, in World War II is one example: most of its main buildings remain intact, as part of the Shanghai High School. Another case in point is St John's University, alma mater of many of the elderly Shanghainese who one would still often meet, speaking elegant English, in the 1980s and 90s. The university's striking red and grey brick buildings, with traditional Chinese roofs, are still well preserved in their own quiet bend of the Suzhou Creek behind Zhongshan Park, their anonymity all but guaranteed by the institution's new name, the East China University of Political Science and Law.

More recently the main buildings of St John's former subsidiary, the girls' school St Mary's Hall, attended by writer Eileen Chang and other luminaries in the 1930s and 40s, have reappeared, at the centre of a new shopping mall. The school had been taken over by a university, which

later sold the land for commercial redevelopment. Similarly, 2018 saw the re-emergence of the legendary Columbia Country Club, where the young JG Ballard caught dysentery in the swimming pool and where his family and other foreigners were taken for processing before being interned by the Japanese. After many decades mouldering away inside a state run biological institute which had taken over its premises, it re-opened its doors in 2018, its clubhouse and colonnaded swimming pool intact, as part of the new Columbia Circle development.

When I visited the new Shanghai History Museum in the former race course club, shortly after it opened in 2018, I was surprised to see a picture of the ‘Louza’ (Laozha) police station, infamous for its role in the shooting of protesters by the Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) of the former International Settlement on May 30th 1925 – an event which provoked a general strike that spread to Hong Kong and Guangzhou, as well as causing a scandal outside China, and eventually led to the Municipal Council allowing Chinese citizens^a onto its governing body for the first time.¹ There is a prominent memorial to these events in a corner of People’s Square, but the Louza police station itself seemed to have vanished into the mists of time; I had never before seen a picture of it, nor realised that it had been such a large Victorian-style building. Imagine how much more surprised I was, then, to find myself, one year later, standing in front of the actual building itself, on a side street just behind the Nanjing Road pedestrian zone. It was much cleaned up, the red and grey bricks almost unnaturally new looking, but an official sign made it clear that this was indeed the place, though the large and lush garden of the old photograph had long since been built on^b, leaving just a courtyard in front of what is now known as the Shanghai Business and Tourism School.²

Of course one might ask whether it really matters whether or not an old building still exists, particularly one with such an infamous past. Yet if we seek to understand history, as many do, then it’s undoubtedly easier to imagine past events when you have seen the site, know the lie of the land and, sometimes, have even had the chance to talk the locals in the area about their memories.

One part of Shanghai where I knew there must be more such ‘buried’ historical treasures, but which I had somehow had never managed to visit in 15 years in the city, was Yangshupu Lu, known to foreign

a The first Chinese members of the SMC were finally admitted in 1928.

b The building was restored in 2009

residents in an earlier era as Yangtzepoo Road. This long tree-lined avenue - its name means Poplar Tree Shore - wends its way east from Hongkou towards Baoshan, parallel to the banks of the Huangpu River. It had, I vaguely knew, been an important centre for Shanghai's modern industry and for utilities too, thanks to its position by the river. Once, crossing the Yangpu Bridge, I'd looked down and caught a glimpse of the astonishing waterworks, a kind of vast faux-mediaeval fortress containing a series of water treatment pools, built beside the river by the SMC, the Municipal Council of the former International Settlement, in grey and red brick, in several stages from 1880 to the 1930s.

There were evidently other survivors of that era out there too. Once, in the early 2000s, I'd searched online for information about the Shanghai Number 17 Cotton Mill, the factory which had been one of the hotbeds of worker radicalism during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s. It was here that Wang Hongwen, a former soldier from the northeast, rose from being a machine operator, and later a security official, to lead a workers' rebellion and become a member of the Gang of Four, the radical clique led by Mao's wife Jiang Qing.³ Indeed, as a taxi driver in the area would one day remind me, Wang eventually became "deputy chairman of the party" - though it was an era that few people seemed to want to discuss these days. To my surprise, however, I found that the company still appeared to exist, with a rather basic-looking website advertising its award-winning yarns and fabrics, and an address which sounded far away along Yangshupu Road.

A couple of years later I went to the launch of a new book, *Yangpu – Where History Lives On*, by Deke Erh (Er Dongqiang), the photographer and writer who had produced so many great works on Shanghai architecture with Tess Johnson.⁴ This book, which Tess Johnson also helped edit, had been written at the request of the district government and appeared to have benefited from access to official archives. Here I discovered an array of previously unimagined historical survivors, many of them along Yangshupu Road: the old municipal power station with its giant chimneys; the 1930s' gas works that had once provided 80 per cent of the city's gas supply; a whole range of factories from GE to Lux Soap, via Jardines' textile mills; and, most unexpectedly of all, several elegant residential compounds built by British and Japanese companies for their factory managers. In the book I also found recent pictures of the stunning campus of the former University of Shanghai, even further out towards the mouth of

the river; I had previously only seen ancient images of this place, and had assumed it was long demolished.

The significance of Yangpu's industrial heritage was emphasised for me once again when I read Jie Li's *Shanghai Homes*,⁵ in which the Shanghai-born, Harvard-based academic dissects the culture of the Shanghai *longtang*, that symbol of the city's history and way of life. Li's fascinating analysis focuses on two specific lanes, both in Yangpu, which had been home to her maternal and paternal grandparents; one was built for a British company, the other for a Japanese company, in markedly different styles.

And yet for many more years I still didn't manage to explore any of this for myself, though I often thought about doing so. Perhaps it was the fact that the metro didn't seem to go anywhere near that part of Shanghai? Or maybe there was just too much to see downtown? It was certainly not because I didn't like exploring remote areas of the city: I'd been to much of Hongkou, to most of the nooks and crannies of the old town, to old lanes and industrial sites in Putuo and Zhabei; I'd even written a chapter on the once fashionable residential lanes and gardens way out on Hongqiao Road. But for me, like most people I knew, foreigners or locals alike, Yangpu, or at least the part of it beyond the university district around Fudan and the nearby old administrative centre at Wujiaochang, seemed to have pretty much fallen off the map.

In fact that may have actually have been part of the problem. Unlike most of the former French Concession and former International Settlement, and much of Hongkou too, the eastern side of Yangpu District was not included in the classic 1946 Shanghai street directory, that veritable bible of old Shanghai in two volumes, which details every building, every *longtang*, and the names of most major factories and even some individual shops and restaurants. There was no doubt that the absence of this resource made it harder to research the area, and in some cases more difficult to find the location of particular places. Gradually I met a few adventurous souls who had actually visited the area: Michelle Blumenthal, the late lamented president of the RAS, had begun researching it before her untimely death in 2012. Her predecessor Peter Hibbard had, I later discovered, also tracked down the sites of some of the old British companies in the district. But for most people I met, the area remained uncharted territory.

And yet, as anyone who has lived in Shanghai for any length of

time knows, much can change in a short time: unexpected places suddenly become fashionable, long-forgotten areas revive, at the same time as others are demolished. And so, one day in 2015, I found myself accompanying my daughter to a children's party at what was fast becoming a popular venue, a new chocolate factory known as "the chocolate theatre". All I knew was that it was somewhere out in the north of the city; it was only as our taxi progressed eastwards through the narrow streets that I realised we were heading inexorably towards Yangshupu Road. We passed the brick fortress of the old municipal waterworks, followed by long stretches of old two-storey houses with timbered upper floors, and, on the other side of the road, what seemed to be old factory compounds. Some of these had apparently been modernised; others had a very ancient air, their old dark brick buildings clad in dusty creepers. Eventually a pair of massive chimneys came into view, and we soon came to a halt beside a paved forecourt, the entrance to a pedestrian zone. Beyond it were several buildings, obviously recently renovated, in cleanly scrubbed red brick, some with the distinctive saw-tooth roofs of early 20th century textile workshops. A large sign proclaimed that this was the "Shanghai Fashion Centre."

The compound was deceptively large. To get from the road to the chocolate venue took a good five minutes: we passed through what seemed to be a fashion outlets mall. There were branches of the Gap, Levis, Esprit; a modernised building with Nike logos on one side and Adidas at the other end; and a Starbucks and other cafes and restaurants. Finally we arrived at a sloping water feature, which rose up towards a riverfront walkway; the tops of boats and the cranes of the nearby shipyards were just visible beyond. Next door, the Zotter Chocolate Theatre seemed to have been parachuted in from another world, with its big glass windows, colourful exterior cladding, high ceilings and vibrant interior decoration.

As the children flung themselves enthusiastically into the chocolate experience, with its displays of cacao beans and 70% Ecuadorian liquid chocolate on tap, I found myself wandering outside, impressed by the covered riverfront deck, and the spectacular views of the chimneys next door. These, I now realised, were part of the old Shanghai Power Company power station, opened in 1913 by the SMC; at the time its 105 metre high chimney was the tallest structure in China. But what I really wanted was to find out more about the compound I was in.

Initially all I could find was a big electronic screen admonishing

visitors not to spit or throw litter, or to reveal too much of their chests or backs. Finally I came across a small sign on the wall, with several paragraphs of densely written Chinese. These assured me that I was currently standing in 'the biggest fashion centre in East Asia', part of the Shanghai government's push to make the city the world's 'sixth fashion capital', after New York, London, Paris, Milan and Tokyo. Here people could 'get in touch with fashion, learn about fashion, feel and experience fashion'. For those more interested in experiencing history, the sign divulged that the factory had opened in 1921, with a wharf big enough for 150-ton ships. There was no reference to the factory's original name or owner (though later I was to discover it had been the Japanese owned Toyo, later Yufeng, Spinning Mill, manufacturer of products such as 'Celestial Peach' brand yarn). But the text did note, matter-of-factly, that it had subsequently been known as the 'Shanghai Number 17 Cotton Mill.' My jaw dropped. This place, with its Toys R'Us outlet, its Samsonite luggage store, and, as I later discovered, its venue for fashion shows sponsored by the likes of Maserati and Tatler, had been the cradle of worker rebellion and political ferment in Shanghai in the 1960s and 70s. It was here that Wang Hongwen had worked before he became a member of the Gang of Four.

Needless to say there was no acknowledgement of this history on the sign, in fact no reference at all to anything that had happened in the second half of the twentieth century, though there were a few older photographs. This was hardly surprising: from an official perspective, and indeed in the view of many ordinary people, the 1960s and 70s are widely seen as a time best forgotten. Yet for someone fascinated by Shanghai's ups and downs, such information is precious. There was also the fairly startling irony that the epicentre of the proletarian uprising against capitalism and bourgeois foreign tendencies was now a shrine to globalised consumerism. How very Shanghai, I thought.

After this first visit I found myself returning to the area increasingly frequently, aided by the fact that it had just been effectively connected to the city centre by the opening of a new metro line. After a 30 minute journey, you had only to hop out of line 12 at Aiguo Lu metro station (who knew Shanghai had a street named Patriotism Road?) walk past a block of new high rises, then along Dinghai Road with its bustling street market, and you were soon at the Fashion Centre.

The walk revealed some of the area's other treasures. The street market itself was so lively and down-to-earth it was almost like being

back in 1980s' Shanghai. High above it, behind the tiny two-storey shop-houses selling live seafood and the vegetable stalls spilling out onto the pavement, loomed an astonishing building. It was a 10-storey, red brick, modernist tower, with a stepped wing on either side. This was an art deco gem, one that I'd heard of but never seen: the office building of the famous EWO brewery, built in 1936 by Jardine, Matheson and Co., the original Hong Kong and Shanghai *taipans*, to exploit the growing market for beer in China. After all, they already had a successful track record in marketing addictive substances to the country. They launched Pilsner and Munich-style lagers, brewed by Messrs Karl Renner and F. Koeniger. The beers, promoted with the slogan "Here's Luck," alongside an image of the deco factory building glowing in red, quickly became popular in China, though the company was also affected by the growing backlash against foreign products in the country in the late 1930s.⁶ The crates of Suntory lager piled up outside the decrepit-looking storehouse in the factory yard made it clear that the brewery, taken over by the state in 1953 to make domestic brands such as Seagull and Bright beers, was still functioning.

The next block yielded another apparent art deco treasure - a two-storey, streamline *moderne* building, an entire block long, faced in red brick, with big round porthole windows on the upper level. It appeared to be home to a car park and a car repair centre. This seemed so ignominious for such an elegant building that I wondered if it was simply a modern replica, but I soon discovered it had also been part of the old Toyo (Number 17) Cotton Mill: this was the north block, built in the 1930s, the height of modernity at the time. It had reportedly been one of the few factories in the country with air conditioning.⁷

That, at least, was what it said in Deke Erh's book, which featured photos from the early 2000s, when the factory and its vast workshops seemed to be intact, pre-Fashion Centre. Attempting to research the company, I came across a few minutes of fascinating footage in a TV documentary made by Britain's Channel 4 in the early 1980s, which focused on the revival of music making in China after the Cultural Revolution. It opened with scenes of workers at the Number 17 Cotton Mill playing music in their spare time, waltzing in the canteen and performing concerts for a large audience of female textile workers.⁸ This period was perhaps the last hurrah of socialist production, a time when the company was apparently booming as the economy revived after the Cultural Revolution, and the big old Shanghai brands had

yet to see their status as the nation's most sophisticated manufacturers usurped by imports from Hong Kong and upstart private competitors. Over the next decade the company led the way in developing new types of fibres and fabrics, under its new Longtou (Dragon's Head) brand. By the early 1990s, I discovered in a book published by Tongji University, it had been partially privatised and listed on China's fledgling stock market, raising sufficient funds to buy dozens of new spinning machines from the U.S. At that time it had almost ten thousand workers.⁹

Yet somewhere in the past two decades all of this had gone. The Dragon's Head name lived on in a hi-tech industrial park, one of the many enterprises now operated by the city's textile holding company (which still earns billions of dollars a year, both from more modern factories in other parts of China, and from licensing arrangements with brands like Disney), but here on Yangshupu Lu the giant factory had left only some tastefully renovated buildings and a few paragraphs on a sign. Somewhere after the year 2000, when Dragon's Head was still listed as one of Shanghai's "famous brands", the firm had been restructured, like so many of the city's old state-run enterprises, which were facing new competition from private and foreign companies, and attempting to shed the burden of providing welfare to their thousands of workers and retired workers. (Between 1995 and 2000, the number of people employed in Shanghai fell by 1.2 million^c, largely as a result of such restructuring, according to economist Yasheng Huang.)¹⁰

Still, it seemed that there should be plenty of people who remembered the old days; and so, on one of my next visits to the area I started asking people I met. Initial responses were unpromising: the staff in the discount outlets that now filled the old glass-roofed workshops were mostly in their 20s or 30s, and many seemed to have quite a sketchy grasp on the past. One said she knew this place had been a cotton factory but wasn't sure about the details; another remembered it had been called the "Number 17 factory", but wasn't too certain what it had made: 'There's a lot of history, but our generation aren't so sure about it,' she said. 'My parents' generation might know.' Another thought the place might have been a rice warehouse, and explained succinctly why so little knowledge had been passed down: 'Our generation don't know and our parents don't talk about it,' she shrugged.

c The number fell from 7.9 million to 6.7 million.

Yet though these staff members were all Shanghainese, most of them were from other parts of the city, so I went to look for some real 'locals' who might know more. In my experience in Shanghai, if you keep asking about the past, you'll eventually find someone who knows. I headed out across Yangshupu Road to look for one of the factory's old residential compounds, which I'd read about in Deke Erh's book. It was hard to imagine in this dusty windswept corner of town, but just half a block away, hidden behind a row of shops and a school, was a secluded residential lane, with dozens of charming two-storey cottages, each with elegant decorative features and its own small garden. It had been built for senior staff of the Toyo Company, and later became home to officials from the Number 17 mill.

And some of the latter, or at least their descendants, still lived here. 'This used to be such a nice environment,' said one man who had grown up here. 'In the past outsiders weren't allowed in, this was just for the cadres.' It still looked pretty nice to me, though apparently the football pitch behind a wire fence to one side, which seemed to be part of another compound, had originally been a private garden for the factory managers too. But presumably things had not always been so good here, I ventured, not wanting to ask too directly about painful history. 'Oh sure, everyone had problems in the Cultural Revolution,' the man replied immediately. 'Everyone's house was searched. That was really a time of chaos.' He himself had been sent away to the countryside for a decade. 'You know Wang Hongwen, the head of the rebel faction? He lived round here,' he added matter-of-factly. 'Over there,' he added, with a vague nod in a westerly direction.

Later I met another resident who said Wang had once come to his house and asked him to join the rebels. 'But I refused,' he said, proudly. It must have been a brave decision. In those days so many people were denounced for failing to show sufficient revolutionary zeal. Wang himself led workers to attack rival groups at other factories, and by early 1967 production in many of the textile mills had ground to a halt. Later that year a rival faction to Wang's Workers General Headquarters at one point surrounded the Number 17 mill, trying to get Wang to come out.¹¹ But he won the fight, at least until 1976, when he was arrested with the other members of the Gang of Four. Sentenced to life in prison in 1981, he died of cancer at the age of just 56 in 1992.

When I left the lane, I followed the slightly vague direction in

which the first man had pointed, and walked back through the market street and into another residential lane, in the shadow of the old brewery. Here the atmosphere was completely different. Everything seemed older and more decrepit - tightly packed rows of red brick and grey-plaster houses lined narrow alleyways, with ancient concrete beams across them for hanging washing. This was classic high density 1920s' housing, built for the workers from the Toyo Mill, though there was one row at the back with slightly grander houses which looked like they had once had tiny gardens; these, the locals said, had been the homes of what they still referred to as the "Number Ones", an old Shanghainese-English patois term for the factory foremen. And, yes the residents said, it was in this compound that the rebellious Mr Wang's mother-in-law had lived, and at one point also his wife, who had worked in a nursery operated by the Number 17 Cotton Mill.¹²

There was certainly no nostalgia for that era here. 'People wouldn't do such brainless things again, we're better informed now,' said one local. But the tough experiences of the past seemed to have made these people tough too. For some years, it turned out, many of them had been waging a campaign calling for the local authorities to relocate them. They said they had been promised long ago that the area would be demolished, and they would be moved to modern apartments or receive compensation so they could buy new homes, but then nothing had happened, even as other old neighbourhoods nearby had been cleared. And so they had painted slogans on the walls in the central lane of the compound; some evenings they would go outside onto the pavement, drumming loudly in the hope of attracting attention to their cause. Eventually they stopped, but the slogans continued. The radical traditions of the area died hard, it seemed.

And the more I visited the area, the more I began to understand how much the people of these old industrial heartlands must have been through: Shanghai might have had some of Asia's most modern industry in the 1920s and 30s, but conditions in the textile mills and other factories were notoriously harsh - as shown by the reports filed by the then Shanghai Municipal Council factory inspector Rewi Alley, who eventually joined the Communist Party of China.¹³ Strikes for better conditions or higher pay were frequent. In early 1926, for example, there was a strike by more than 3,000 workers at the Jardine's spinning mill further west on Yangshupu Road, and one involving 10,000 workers at another Japanese cotton mill. Indeed it was the

shooting of a worker during a strike by textile workers at a Japanese mill that had led to the protests of 1925, and - following the subsequent shootings at the Louza police station - the May 30th movement.

A very visible reminder of the injustices of the old days of industry could be found right next door to the former Number 17 mill. Inside the entrance gate of the former Yangshupu power plant stood a larger than life bust of a proud-looking worker. He was Wang Xiaohe, a union representative at the power station, who had organised a strike here in 1948 in sympathy with striking workers at one of the nearby cotton mills. For his troubles, Wang was executed by the former Nationalist government, shortly before it lost control of the city to the Communist armies some six months later. He had also lived in the area, in Invigorating Voice Lane (Zhensheng Li), which, according to Deke Erh's book, had been part owned by the infamous Shanghai crime boss Du Yuesheng (who also controlled the fish market on nearby Point Island, at the end of Yangshupu Road, but more of that later).¹⁴

And just behind Dinghai Road, in between the former Number 17 mill and the lane where its workers had lived, I found the remains of another factory with a legendary but sometimes bloody history. The old red brick building, on a street corner opposite a bustling wet market, looked more or less derelict: the window panes on its upper floors were broken, the walls covered in ivy. Yet the protected building signs next to its still-guarded entrance made it clear that this had once been one of Shanghai's most modern factories, a woollen mill built in 1934, in reinforced concrete and steel, by the British firm Patons and Baldwins.

The name may mean little today, but P&B was one of the UK's biggest companies at the time, a founding member of the original FT30 Index on the London Stock Exchange. It produced wool for knitting, under the Patons Rose and Baldwins Beehive brands, and was famous for its knitting patterns too, along with the book 'Woolcraft: A practical guide to knitting and crochet.' After World War II it would open the largest wool factory in the world, with 4,000 staff, in Darlington, County Durham. In 1961, it merged with the thread manufacturers Coats to form Coats Patons, which later became Coats Viyella, and is now known simply as the Coats Group.

Patons had been selling products in China for some time, but its decision to move into manufacturing in Shanghai was a response

to growing competition from Chinese and China-based Japanese companies.¹⁵ It invested heavily, not just in the factory but also in building a luxury home for its manager, known as the Cloister, on the Avenue Lafayette [today's Fuxing Road West].¹⁶ But the timing was bad: war and unrest meant that Patons was one of the last British companies to open a new factory in China in the 1930s. The plant, known to locals as the "Bee factory" after its Chinese brand name, saw production affected after the Japanese took control of much of eastern China, including the outer areas of Shanghai, in 1937. It was formally taken over by the Japanese in 1941, and though the company regained control of the plant in 1945 and continued operations well into the 1950s, times became tenuous. In 1951, one of the firm's "sub managers" was, according to historian Jonathan Howlett, executed as a counter-revolutionary.¹⁷ The company was presented with large bills to pay before it was allowed to close its China operations, which it finally did in 1959, making it the last British firm to quit the country.¹⁸

The factory, renamed the Shanghai Number 17 Woollen Mill, continued to function through the second half of the century. But somewhere in Shanghai's great restructuring of the late 1990s and early 2000s, it had gone the way of so much of the city's state-owned industry and closed its doors. The watchman on the gate said it had been bought by a Hong Kong investor, but it seemed to have been shut for years, and a large area behind the main factory building had already been redeveloped as a high-rise residential compound. Some of this area had apparently once belonged to the factory, which was famous for its amenities: even in the late 1940s, Patons and Baldwins had continued to invest in infrastructure, building a new welfare building for its staff, 'the like of which did not exist in China', with changing rooms and baths, a cafeteria-style canteen with a hall for entertainment, a nursery, a clinic and a library,' according to Jonathan Howlett.¹⁹

Margaret Blair, the daughter of a British police officer, who grew up in Shanghai in the 1930s and 40s, once stayed with family friends who worked at Patons, and recalled that the compound 'was divided into an area for houses, set in spacious lawns, a park with a children's playground, and a factory area with high walls and spaces between the buildings paved in concrete. There was also the clubhouse where we could have lunch.' She even went roller-skating there. But in her memoir *Gudao, Lone Islet – The War Years in Shanghai*, she also

emphasises just how remote the area was considered at the time, describing it as being ‘just outside Shanghai’ and adding that it had ‘a macabre fame because of its location near a bend in the Huangpu River where, in a quirk of current, bodies of those drowned or ‘buried’ in the river^d washed up and had to be pushed off again with long poles to continue their slow journey to the sea.’²⁰

A part of the ‘area for houses’ which Margaret Blair visited is, remarkably, still visible. At the other end of the new residential development, away from the factory building, a row of two storey villas remains. One appears in good condition; the others are apparently partially collapsed and almost concealed by dense foliage, behind a high wall. To one side, just about visible behind a rusting metal gate, stands a much bigger building, like a large European farmhouse, decrepit and poorly maintained, yet clearly still inhabited. Was this the manager’s house, or the clubhouse? A man who comes to the gate doesn’t seem to know - nor will he grant access. It all adds to the mystique of a compound whose survival, in this area dominated by factories and, increasingly, by new high rises, already seems surprising.

And subsequent walks in the area behind Yangshupu Road throw up further unexpected discoveries. One block west lies Longchang Road, known as Glen Road in the days of the SMC. Here modernisation seems to be even more dominant: I arrive by subway and emerge in front of a large shopping mall next to the multi-lane traffic of the recently widened Changyang Road. Yet as I head into Longchang Road, I soon catch sight of a little old residential lane where the houses still have vestiges of the original bamboo fences around their tiny gardens. Crossing the road, I follow an unprepossessing entrance into a residential compound, turn a corner, and suddenly find myself in a far bigger lane, filled with striking, rather Germanic-looking houses in grey pebbledash. The buildings seem to have emerged fully formed from the 1930s, their dark maroon arched window frames and steep gables giving them a very Gothic air - and something of the atmosphere of a haunted house too. What was this place, I wonder? Soon I find a hint: a faded, ancient-looking sign, painted from right to left in long-form Chinese characters, above the door of a bigger, detached house at the end of the lane. It reads, only partially clearly, ‘Number 1 [...] Cotton Mill Clinic.’

d The ‘burials’ mentioned here refer to the custom of floating the corpses of poor people, whose families could not afford a funeral, out into the river, which (it was hoped) would carry them out to sea.

A friendly old retired gentleman, out strolling in the lane, tells me that these houses had been built for the managers of what had originally also been a Japanese-owned mill, later renamed the Number 12 Cotton Mill. He and many of the inhabitants had worked in the factory, and had moved in after it was nationalised. ‘This was a high quality place,’ he said, ‘it even had its own swimming pool.’ But that had been redeveloped when some of the land was sold off to build a high-rise compound next door, and the factory itself had been demolished some years ago. When I went to look for the site of the factory, out on Yangshupu Road near the old gas works, all that remained was a rather elegant art deco-style gateway. At least someone had decided to preserve the entrance, I thought – until a nearby security guard later told me he thought that this would eventually be demolished too.

Longchang Road yielded other gems too: a long row of unique two-storey red brick houses, built in the 1930s by a Japanese real estate developer, each with a small walled courtyard, stood at an oblique angle to the street. At least one still had its original letterbox marked with the English word “Letters”, though the interiors had apparently been designed in a Japanese style. Just across the road was a grand neo-classical building, the former Eastern District Police Station of the old International Settlement, and next door the former police residential quarters, built by the Municipal Council in 1932. The latter building, well known in Shanghai architectural circles, was extremely modern for its time: a five storey concrete structure, with spacious rooms and apartments around a central courtyard, central heating, and even centralised rubbish chutes at the corners of its internal veranda. But it had not been enough to satisfy all its residents: while the Yangtzepoo Station, as the police post was known, played an important role in policing the International Settlement (with its “Red Maria” armoured response vehicles often being sent clanging down Yangshupu Road to tackle disturbances in the city centre) many of the police officers who lived there felt isolated and often dispirited – like Maurice Tinkler, a British inspector in the Shanghai Municipal Police who is the subject of Robert Bickers’ book *Empire Made Me*.²¹ Posted to the station in 1929, he and his colleagues despaired of a lack of nearby drinking places. ‘This wasn’t Shanghai, this was the SMP’s Siberia,’ notes Bickers. After just a short time, Tinkler was so bored that he got drunk one night and let off fireworks in the residential compound, throwing some of them ‘into the rooms of various sleeping men’. This had the

(possibly desired) effect of getting him transferred back to the city centre, though he was demoted for his pains.²²

For me though, the more I visited, the more fascinating this area of the city seemed. As so often in Shanghai, when you start looking into a topic, it begins to throw up an ever increasing number of historical tangents, all of them worthy of further research. Just round the corner from the Number 17 Cotton Mill, opposite the ageing gasometers of the former Asiatic Petroleum depot (now owned by Sinopec) at the eastern end of Yangshupu Road, was an ancient looking metal bridge with an elderly sign which stated, in English: 'Tinghai Road Bridge, built by Whangpoo Conservancy Board 1927'.

The bridge led across a reed-filled creek to Fuxing Island, a narrow spur of flat land about a mile long, which had an other-worldly quality. Its long main street had few shops or restaurants; those it did have seemed to be mainly state run, and the whole place had the feel of China back in the 1980s - which was perhaps not surprising since it was mainly home to state-run enterprises. Originally known as Zhoujiazui Island in Chinese, and Point Island in English, it had been developed in the early 20th century as the headquarters of the department in charge of dredging the silt from the Huangpu River. The KMT government later built a circular-shaped fish market here, in an attempt to monopolise the seafood industry, with a little help from gang boss Du Yuesheng, who was the market's director.²³ In the 1930s several shipyards opened here, after being ordered by the Municipal Council to move further away from the city centre.²⁴ One was the forerunner of what later became the major state-run Zhonghua yard; another was a repair yard built by Moller Marine, whose Swedish-British owner was famous for his Disney-castle-like fantasy house, now the Hengshan Moller Villa Hotel on Shanxi Road South.²⁵ In the middle of the island was a sports ground belonging to the river conservancy board. This is now a public park, and is home to a small Japanese-style villa, where KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek is rumoured to have spent his last night in Shanghai before fleeing from the advancing Communist armies in May 1949.²⁶

In the other direction along Yangshupu Road stood the remains of the gas works, with its crumbling dark brick office buildings which looked far older than their 85 years, and its gasometer with what was, at the time of construction, a state-of-the art roof that rose and fell as the volume of gas inside fluctuated.²⁷ Not far away was the

Shanghai Soap Factory, originally built by the UK's Lever Brothers, the forerunner of Unilever, to produce Lux Soap in the 1920s. Further north, there was the old waste water treatment plant, with its art deco administrative building; and, out on Jungong Lu, an old cold storage plant, a huge, hulking, strangely sinister-looking grey shape, situated next door to the Yangpu Railway Station, which was built to transport cargo to and from the area's factories in the 1920s. Jungong Lu was also home to a handsome converted dye factory, now a 'creative cluster'; and next door, the headquarters of Maling, famous in China since the 1930s for its canned foods, including China's version of Spam. And, at the far end of the road, on the campus of what is now the Shanghai University of Science and Technology, I finally found what had once been the original 'University of Shanghai', opened by Baptist missionaries in 1915. Its buildings lived up to the old images I had once been so struck by in a book: a stunning array of dormitories, a library with stained glass windows, an old chapel that now served as an auditorium, and a crenelated tower at the centre of the campus. There were also a dozen or so charming individual houses set among the trees; these had once housed missionary staff and were now home to 'cultural centres' belonging to different countries.

But while much of the area around the eastern end of Yangshupu Road can sometimes seem like a throwback to a bygone age, it is, as many of the residents I met seemed to realise, likely to be affected by major changes in the near future. In 2017 the Yangpu district government invited foreign diplomats and journalists to a presentation, held at the "Shanghai Fashion Centre", at which they explained their plans for a major redevelopment of the district's waterfront, promising riverside parks and walks, along with significant investment in new industries to create a 'hotbed for creation and innovation'. Many of the area's old factory sites were inside the new zone, but officials were at pains to stress that conserving much of its industrial heritage was an important part of their plans. 'We are proud of your yesterday,' said one of the slogans projected on the screen, over pictures of some of Yangpu's famous old buildings, though the next one added: 'We know you are ready for a leap-jump'. So proud were they of the project, in fact, they had even invited a boy band, complete with backing dancers, to perform a song especially composed for the occasion.

Yet laudable as the plans sound, and while several of the old housing compounds for factory managers now have signs stating

that they are protected, it seems clear that old Yangshupu will never be quite the same again. At some of the factory sites, it appears just a handful of old buildings will be preserved. At the gas works, for example, just two administrative buildings and two gasometers now remain on what was once a vast site. Further west, near the Yangpu Bridge and the old waterworks, officials proudly guided journalists along the new waterfront walkway on the site of one of Jardine's old cotton mills, past one old house that had been a manager's residence and a few pieces of elderly dockside equipment. But of the stunningly beautiful and unusual futurist-style building from the 1920s, with its distinctive 'tiger's eyes', photographed by Deke Erh in his book a decade earlier, there was no sign.²⁸ Officials asked about it didn't seem to know anything - had it simply been demolished in the intervening decade?

And the promotional material produced for the new 'Yangpu Riverside' features an artist's impression of the area, apparently showing what it will look like some years into the future. With the exception of a few old factory buildings and some green spaces near the riverfront, most of the zone - on both sides of Yangshupu Road, between the former Number 17 Cotton Mill in the east and the Yangpu Bridge some two miles to the west - seems to consist of modern, medium-rise office towers and new residential blocks. That would appear to spell the end for many of the area's less upscale old residential neighbourhoods. Just across the road from the gas works and the power station, a whole stretch of old lanes, including some of the wood-fronted houses on the street which gave the area its distinctive character, was being readied for demolition in 2019, with most of the residents already gone. The lane where martyred strike leader Wang Xiaohe lived seemed likely to be among them. Slogans hanging nearby proclaimed 'Reconstruct the old lane district; bring happiness to all the local people,' and 'Leave your ugly old lane today; tomorrow we'll repay you with a comfortable home.' For the residents of the old lane housing former Number 17 Cotton Mill workers, who had been campaigning for relocation, this would probably be good news. Yet much of the area's distinctive atmosphere - and much of its connection to its unique history and its role in Shanghai's urban development - will undoubtedly be lost. How many stories will be lost too, as Yangshupu's residents are scattered to the four corners of the city?

Of course, this being Shanghai, there will always be more to explore, more surprises in store. On my way back from Yangshupu one day, I stopped off at Fudan University, on the western side of Yangpu district. Here there are streets lined with modern cafes and shops, and several old office buildings and factories have been repurposed to house creative hubs and tech incubators. Yet just a stone's throw away, I found the still beautiful remnants of a large garden built in the early 1920s by wealthy businessman Ye Yiquan (T.U. Yih) for guests at the International Racecourse in what was then known as Kiangwan (now Jiangwan). Ye and other Chinese investors including legendary Ningbo tycoon Zhu Baosan (Chu Pao-san) founded the racecourse in 1910, and it soon began to compete with the foreign-established Shanghai Race Club, not least because it was the first such establishment to admit Chinese members.²⁹ In the early 1930s, after complaints about noise from neighbours, Ye closed the clubhouse and gardens, and donated them to a state-run medical institute for use as a tuberculosis hospital.³⁰ Many of the ponds and pavilions and some of the original buildings still remain among the trees, behind the modern Shanghai Tuberculosis Hospital which was later built on the grounds.

Visiting this unexpectedly peaceful, atmospheric garden was a reminder that however much we may lament the disappearance of parts of old Shanghai, there is still more to be discovered - and hopefully this will be the case for a long time to come. There are also, for example, the old Christian gravestones I came across, lining the edge of a lake in one of Yangpu's parks. But that's a story for another time, a topic for another exploration...

Duncan Hewitt is a former BBC China correspondent and Newsweek Shanghai correspondent. He studied Chinese at the University of Edinburgh, and first lived in China as a student from 1986-87. He became interested in Shanghai history after spending time as an extra during the filming of J.G. Ballard's novel Empire of the Sun in the city in 1987.

*Since moving to Shanghai in 2000 he has written widely on the city's history and development, including in his book **Getting Rich First – Life in a changing China** (Vintage, 2008). He also wrote a chapter on the history of Hongqiao Road for Tess Johnston's walking guide *Still More Shanghai Walks*. He has also worked at the Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong; his published translations*

include short stories by Nobel laureate Mo Yan, (*Explosions, Renditions Books*, 1991) and He Jiahong's crime novel *Hanging Devils* (Penguin, 2012). He is currently an affiliate of the Lau China Institute, King's College London.



Bibliography

- Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me – An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*, Penguin Books, London, 2004
- Margaret Blair, *Gudao, Lone Islet: The War Years in Shanghai – a childhood memoir*; Author House, Bloomington, 2017
- Deke Erh, *Yangpu—Where History Lives On*, Old China Hand Press, Hong Kong, 2005
- Isabella Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai: Colonialism in China's Global City*, Cambridge University Press, 2017
- Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes – Palimpsests of Private Life*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015
- Jeremy Marre, *No. 17 Cotton Mill Shanghai Blues – Music in China*, Channel 4, London, 1985
- Nie Shunsheng and Lou Chenghao (eds.), *Lao Shanghai Gongye Jiuzhi Yiji* ("Traces of former industrial sites of old Shanghai"), Tongji University Press, Shanghai, 2004
- Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, *Proletarian Power – Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1997



References

- 1 Isabella Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai: Colonialism in China's Global City*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 149
- 2 Qiao Zhengyue, "Witness to Police History in Shanghai," Shanghai Daily (shine.cn), 28th July 2018
- 3 Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, *Proletarian Power – Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1997, p.44
- 4 Deke Erh, *Yangpu - Where History Lives On*, Old China Hand Press, Hong Kong, 2005
- 5 Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes – Palimpsests of Private Life*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015
- 6 Jeffrey Pilcher, Wang Yu, & Jackson Yuebin Guo, "Beer With Chinese Characteristics': Marketing beer under Mao," *Revista*

- de Administração de Empresas, 58(3), 303-315. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/s0034-759020180310>
- 7 Deke Erh, op. cit., p.63
- 8 No. 17 *Cotton Mill Shanghai Blues – Music in China*, dir. Jeremy Marre, Channel 4, London, 1985 - accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oRH80_GB30
- 9 Nie Shunsheng and Lou Chenghao (eds) *Lao Shanghai Gongye Jiuzhi Yiji* ('Traces of former industrial sites of old Shanghai'), Tongji University Press, Shanghai, 2004, p.16
- 10 Yasheng Huang and Yi Qian, "Is Entrepreneurship Missing in Shanghai?" in Josh Lerner and Antoinette Schoar (eds) *International Differences in Entrepreneurship*, University of Chicago Press, 2010, p.322
- 11 Perry and Li, op. cit., pp.140, 88 & 129
- 12 *ibid.*, p.102
- 13 see e.g. W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War*, Faber and Faber, London 1938, 1986, pp.235 -243
- 14 Deke Erh, op. cit., p.261
- 15 Brett Sheehan, *Industrial Eden*, Harvard University Press, pp. 80 - 81
- 16 Michelle Qiao, "Spinning a yarn about a factory called the Cloister," *Shanghai Daily*, 23rd February
- 17 Jonathan J. Howlett, "Decolonisation in China 1949-59," in Jonathan J. Howlett and Robert Bickers (eds.) *Britain and China 1840-1970, Empire Finance and War*, p.18
- 18 Jonathan J. Howlett, *Creating a New Shanghai: the End of the British Presence in China (1949-57)*, University of Bristol, PhD Thesis, 2012, p.275
- 19 *ibid* p.270
- 20 Margaret Blair, *Gudao, Lone Islet – The War Years in Shanghai – a childhood memoir*; Author House, Bloomington, 2017, p.110
- 21 Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me – An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*, Penguin Books, London, 2004, p.192
- 22 *ibid.* pp.193-4
- 23 Deke Erh, op. cit., p. 231; Brian G. Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and Organized Crime*, University of California Press, 1996, pp.209-212
- 24 Nie Shunsheng and Lou Chenghao (eds), op. cit., p.104
- 25 *ibid.* p.108. The Moller shipyard was renamed Hudong Shipyard in 1952.

- 26 Deke Erh, op. cit., p.284; Yang Fan, “Fuxing Island Station,” Global Times Metro Shanghai, 2nd December 2014
- 27 Deke Erh, op. cit., p.31
- 28 *ibid.*, p.49
- 29 see e.g. Austin Coates, *China Races*, Oxford University Press, Hong Kong, 1994, pp.164-167; Michelle Qiao, “Honesty lays foundation of a ‘Tudor-style’ Shanghai building,” Shanghai Daily, 22nd December 2018
- 30 Erh, op. cit., p.287

THE CONSERVATION CHALLENGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND GOOD DESIGN IN ASIAN HERITAGE CITIES AND TOWNS

BY ELIZABETH VINES

ABSTRACT:

Many Asian cities are undergoing rapid urban renewal and infrastructure development as people flood into urban centres seeking jobs and housing. By 2050, more than two-thirds of the global population will live in cities. Development must respond to the challenges of growth, but should also retain the legacy of the qualities that make a city liveable, including the surviving historic built environment and cultural heritage. In Europe, the traditional city centres are recognised as important cultural assets but in Asia, old buildings are more often torn down and replaced with steel and glass skyscrapers.

Managing change to historic urban areas is a challenge; cities are always undergoing change and redevelopment. Even when the surviving heritage is protected, ensuring new development responds to the heritage context can be problematic. In Asia, with the explosion of population growth and pressures on colonial cities, the demand for the modern and new is often at the expense of preserving what little is left of previous architectural expressions. This article looks at the importance of city sustainability and how retaining built heritage contributes to this sustainability. It also addresses important design issues related to new development such as how to fit a new building into a heritage context, how to retain scale and character and how a city's heritage fits into the global context of broad sustainability goals.

INTRODUCTION: CITY SIGNIFICANCE AND AUTHENTICITY

Heritage character and cultural values of cities vary from place to place. The cultural significance of a city is the sum of the values that a place has and how these values provide continuity of the past into the present. These values can include the aesthetic appeal of a place (including a rich architectural legacy), its history, social and spiritual practices, patterns of uses, landscaping qualities and scale. Each of these values may have tangible and intangible aspects and it is essential that both are identified and planned for. Cultural significance includes



Figure 1: Large modern high-rise developments at a very different scale to the existing streetscape. (Johor Bahru, Malaysia)

the fabric (physical material), setting, use, associations and meanings of a place. It may exist in buildings and in city spaces (tangible heritage), and in the activities in those places (intangible heritage). Heritage cities have many layers of culture, including the significance of the place for the First Nations or indigenous people, who are so often overlooked in the planning process.

STANDARDS AND CHARTERS

There are now many standards, charters and guidelines which provide frameworks for the management of the cultural significance of a city and assist with decision making about heritage conservation, including identification, management and protection. The traditional Western approach to conservation is encapsulated in the *Venice Charter* (1965)¹ and the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter* (2013).² These charters emphasise the authenticity of the original physical fabric and the need to add new materials/development in a way which fits into the context of the place, adding a new layer of history which is distinguishable from the old.

In Asia, the issue of historic authenticity differs as many traditional buildings are frequently repaired on a cyclical basis by local communities, be they religious or secular. The Asian approach, as described in the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994), places emphasis on maintaining the condition of the place, utilising



Figure 2 Yangon, Myanmar, still has many consistent low-rise streetscapes, and is attempting, through recent planning revisions, to prevent demolition and erosion of the identified special character.

traditional building skills and renewing earlier fabric with new materials using traditional methods.³ The *Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia* (2009) stress that the safeguarding of authenticity is the primary objective and prerequisite for conservation.⁴ Whilst such charters have no legal status, in certain cases they have become a conservation code of practice for the countries concerned and have acquired a quasi-legal status due to adoption by governments and other agencies. Charters guide decision-making and bring the expertise of bodies like UNESCO into guideline frameworks.

However it is the local government's statutory planning framework which determines if protection can be achieved via regulation and policies that support heritage conservation. The UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)* (2011) has been developed in response to the challenges facing heritage cities today and can provide a guiding framework for managing dynamic change.⁵ The HUL recommendation states

historic urban landscape is the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of “historic centre” or “ensemble” to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting (HUL definition 8)

and continues,

provides the basis for a comprehensive and integrated approach for the identification, assessment, conservation and management of historic urban landscapes within an overall sustainable development framework (HUL definition 10).

This HUL recommendation is being adopted as a framework in some Asian urban centres, and more broadly internationally as part of UNESCO's conservation agenda.⁶

THE URGENCY OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE NEED FOR GLOBAL COMMITMENTS BY ASIAN AND INTERNATIONAL CITIES

A city needs to be sustainable, with management of energy consumption, housing, waste and mobility (public transport, car travel and walkability), whilst providing a safe place for its inhabitants. Conservation for historic cities and identified heritage areas should be holistic and not just about buildings, spaces and activities. As more and more people move to cities to find jobs, successful cities will be those that employ all of their resources, including their cultural heritage, to promote a healthy environment for investment and community. Historic city cores and their cultural assets have an important role in differentiating a city from its competitors and in improving "liveability" and economic viability. Liveable cities are generally those that have a healthy economic base through the provision of local jobs, active street life (including markets and outdoor dining), and vibrant social and artistic expressions. It is no coincidence that liveable cities are generally those that retain their cultural heritage significance and cultural identity, both tangible heritage (built and landscape) and intangible social practices.

Cities are now signing up to environmentally sustainable commitments, and retention of a city's heritage assets is a key ingredient. Heritage conservation is a sustainable form of development, as it retains the embodied energy of a building, preserves scarce and high quality building materials and is a source of building trades employment in upgrade works undertaken.

At the international level, there are now new and urgent frameworks in which to consider the broad issue of city sustainability, and at the

local level, the implementation of the HUL model. At the United Nations General Assembly, in 2015, four years after the introduction of the 2011 HUL recommendation, 193 UN member states unanimously adopted the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030.⁸ The SDGs, which came into effect in January 2016, include a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. The SDGs acknowledges that cultural heritage and urban sustainability are inseparable.

Goal 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities - Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable ... to ensure access to safe and affordable housing...investment in public transport, creation of green public spaces, and improved urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive

Target 11.4 recommends that governments ‘strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage’. The future of our cities depends on taking these goals seriously and many cities now are benchmarking their activities in relation to these SDG goals.

In addition to the SDGs, the UNISDR *Sendai Framework*⁹ and the UNESCO *Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development* (2016) provided groundwork for the UN Habitat III meeting held in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016¹⁰. All these reports contributed to the formulation of the *New Urban Agenda* (NUA).¹¹

VISIONARY HERITAGE STRATEGIES

The protection of a city’s liveability and a neighbourhood’s cultural heritage should be a key objective in a city’s strategic plan. It needs to be part of an integrated approach to planning and is as important as issues of land use, built form, traffic management and environmental sustainability.

Asian Cities should formally adopt liveability and heritage strategies which retain identified heritage items and encourage sympathetic infill in heritage areas, in order to maintain the heritage values of their city. A succinct heritage strategy, which summarises the recognised heritage values, outlines objectives, policies and achievable actions, is a key to

achieving practical heritage outcomes. This can then be translated into the legal Planning Framework with political commitment to its implementation. Identifying what is important to the community can be undertaken by a variety of means. Involvement of communities in the identification and recording of their cultural assets is essential by undertaking heritage surveys and cultural mapping. These assets are both tangible (quantitative, such as heritage buildings) and intangible (qualitative, such as traditions, rituals, and activities). Key components of a heritage strategy must include a detailed heritage inventory (knowing what you value and want to keep), heritage protection mechanisms, heritage incentives, and heritage promotion.

INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION

Positive incentives assist in achieving integrated conservation in cities and neighbourhoods. These incentives successfully encourage the retention and conservation of cultural heritage places and can be provided in a variety of ways. Grant funding can be structured in a variety of ways, and often stimulates multiplier effects of grant money, by facilitating projects that would otherwise not happen. In many cases, the dollar value of the grant is multiplied many times in the implementation of a project. *Think City* is an example of a Malaysian agency which supports a variety of heritage grants for buildings over 30 years old, undertaking building conservation, greening projects such as new parks, and community gardens, and supporting cultural mapping projects.¹²

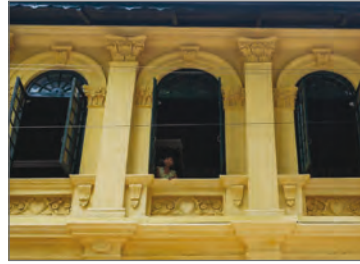
In 2009, the Hong Kong government introduced a *Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme* which encourages not-for-profit organisations to ‘adaptively reuse’ government-owned heritage buildings.¹³ These organisations are required to provide detailed plans of how their historic building/complex will be conserved, how the historical significance will be retained, how the social enterprise will be operated in order to achieve financial viability and how the local community will benefit. The Hong Kong government pays for the renovation and up to HK\$5 million in a one-off grant to cover initial operating costs with the organisation contributing a nominal amount. To date, approximately 25 projects have been supported with a variety of dynamic and innovative uses and outcomes.

Recognising successful projects and using these as model case



Figures 3, 4: An example of the Hong Kong government's Revitalisation Scheme - the former North Kowloon Magistracy has become the campus of the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in Hong Kong. Original interiors including the court room and the police cells are retained in its new use as an art college.

studies is important. The UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Awards, which commenced in 2000, have significantly raised the level of debate of conservation projects in the Asian region.¹⁴ A total of over 200 projects have received UNESCO Heritage awards providing a show case of examples in the Asian region. Training programs for heritage skills development and model conservation projects can be undertaken on buildings at risk, with skilled traditional tradesmen and crafts people undertaking conservation repair works and educating younger



Figures 5, 6: Model Conservation Project in Yangon, Myanmar, before conservation (left) and after conservation (right - photo courtesy of Turquoise Mountain). The projects provide technical know-how for solving typical structural and material conservation issues.

workers. Model Conservation Projects provide a key learning tool with many successful examples undertaken in a variety of locations in Asia, such as the Turquoise Mountain project which has conserved a run-down significant heritage building in Yangon, Myanmar.¹⁵

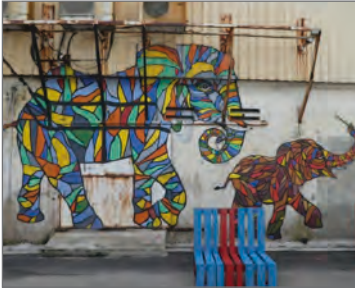
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE PUBLIC REALM, CITY CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Cities flourish where a wide variety of strategies build a sense of community, through provision of safe gathering places, city parks with attractive planting, community gardens, walkable streets and opportunities for cultural expression. In denser historic inner city areas, the shared public realm is a precious commodity, which needs to be carefully and strategically managed. It is an essential complement to the built environment, both heritage and contemporary.

Cultural centres, art galleries, street art, wall murals and the positioning of cities as creative artistic hubs is developing worldwide. Art transforms and personalises civic spaces, providing visual



Figures 7, 8: Tree planting softens the urban environment as well as lowering temperatures (Kuala Lumpur (left)), and street vendors add vibrancy and life to city streets, as well as providing for small business opportunities (Yangon, Myanmar)



Figures 9, 10: Butterworth (left) and Penang (right), Malaysia, are now renowned for varied street art and signage, with brochures and popular guided tours which explain to visitors the historical linkages with the art represented

interest and enriching the unique sense of place. Public and street art provide visual variety and can transform previously run-down neighbourhoods. Artists and communities negotiate appropriate locations for public and street art creating opportunities for emotional expression and for friendship networks through collaboration.

GOOD DESIGN FOR NEW INFILL DEVELOPMENT

The design quality of new development is a critical component of a liveable city. New development should be undertaken in an architectural style which is compatible with the surrounding unique character of the city, complementing its heritage. When new development responds to its setting and context, a unique sense of place is maintained. While a new building may be iconic, it should also be in harmony with the existing built environment, a careful insertion responding to the existing scale and character. A successful infill development is a contemporary piece of design of its own time and should not copy or replicate heritage buildings.



Figures 11, 12: These examples utilise materials, colours and details which disrupt the streetscape context.



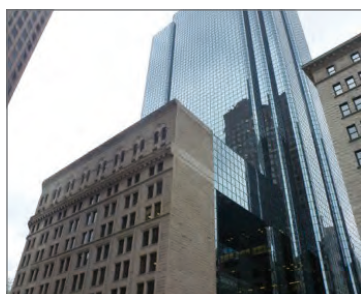
Figures 13, 14: Infill 1960s development reflects the, form, siting, materials and colours of the adjoining earlier buildings (Penang, Malaysia (left) and Montreal, Canada (right))



Figures 15, 16: Buildings can be retained where there is a will. This nearly ruined building (left) was saved from demolition and successfully rebuilt and adapted to a new use (right) (Penang, Malaysia)



Figures 17, 18: Removal of a later “modern” add-on facade can reveal the original facade, reinstating the heritage character (Penang, Malaysia)



Figures 19, 20: Although the front wall is retained, the highly visible rear additions completely dwarf the streetscape.

Development guidelines ensure that new development respects the character of the place and design review by qualified and skilled personnel should be undertaken to determine the appropriateness of the proposed design. The retention of the building facade only (facadism) is only successful if it retains the streetscape character with the higher new development behind barely visible. However, where new development is visually over-bearing and clearly visible, retaining a facade can make a mockery of conservation, and should not be undertaken.

CONCLUSION

There are many challenges for conservation in Asian cities - and the importance of sustainability and liveability of cities is becoming more urgent. Holistic planning must include retention of the unique cultural significance of the place in the face of pressures of population increase and development. The need for urban mobility, upgraded public infrastructure and other urban imperatives must be balanced with the desire to retain the unique character of each place. The next generation should be able to appreciate its historic and cultural past, before it is all swept away.

Elizabeth Vines is an award winning conservation architect, urban designer, author and experienced public speaker concerned with and making our cities more liveable and making a better future for our built cultural heritage. She is a past President of Australia ICOMOS (2012 – 2015), visiting Professor at Hong Kong University, and Adjunct Professor at Deakin University, Melbourne.

Elizabeth consults to a wide range of Government authorities and local councils throughout the region and is a consultant to UNESCO, the European Union, the Getty Institute and the World Bank. She worked on an EU project in Yangon to assist with formulating a heritage management plan for the city, and was a Getty Scholar in Los Angeles in 2016 researching creative heritage cities. She works on urban revitalisation programs for historic precincts and restoration projects on significant historic buildings throughout Australia and Asia. She is the author of numerous books and publications on heritage issues.



References

- 1 ICOMOS (1964) *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice Charter)*
- 2 Australia ICOMOS. (2013) *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance.*
- 3 UNESCO (2009) *Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia: Professional Guidelines for Assuring and Preserving the Authenticity of Heritage Sites in the Context of the Cultures of Asia.*
- 4 UNESCO (1994) *The Nara Document on Authenticity*
- 5 UNESCO (2011) *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*
- 6 *The HUL Guidebook* (2016) *Managing heritage in dynamic and constantly changing urban environments. A Practical Guide to UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* (2016) http://www.hulballarat.org.au/resources/HUL%20Guidebook_2016_FINALWEB.pdf Includes eight case studies implementing the HUL recommendation: Ballarat (Australia), Shanghai and Suzhou, (China), Cuenca (Ecuador), Rawalpindi (Pakistan), Zanzibar (Tanzania), Naples (Italy), Amsterdam (Netherlands)
- 8 *Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs) and New Urban Agenda* <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/10/newurbanagenda/>
- 9 UNDRR, (2015) *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda, with seven targets and four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks <https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework> Also of relevance - the UNISDR - Ten Essentials for Resilient Cities <https://www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/toolkit/article/the-ten-essentials-for-making-cities-resilient>
- 10 *Culture: Urban Future; Global Report On Culture For Sustainable Urban Development* (2016) <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/d2hhdC1pcy>
- 11 Resolution adopted by the UNESCO General Assembly on 23 December 2016 71/256. *New Urban Agenda* Note that this built upon the *Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement> and

the *Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Areas*. <http://www.fao.org/giahs/en/>

- 12 *Think City* public grants programme provide “financial support for projects by individuals or organisations that aim to improve cities. Projects may range from physical improvement of buildings with heritage value to cultural activities that strengthen community ties”. <https://thinkcity.com.my/grants/what-is-tcgp/>
- 13 This incentive scheme provides funding for government owned historic buildings in Hong Kong which are suitable for adaptive reuse, with non-profit organisations invited to submit proposals <https://www.heritage.gov.hk/en/rhbt/about.htm>
- 14 see <https://bangkok.unesco.org/theme/asia-pacific-heritage-awards>
- 15 see <https://turquoisemountain.org/myanmar/urban-regeneration/merchant-street>



Bibliography

- Vines, Elizabeth (1996) *Streetwise: A Practical Guide for the Revitalisation of Commercial Heritage Precincts and Traditional Main Streets in Australian Cities and Towns*. National Trust of Australia (NSW)
- Vines, Elizabeth (2005) *Streetwise Asia: A Practical Guide for the Conservation and Revitalisation of Heritage Cities and Towns in Asia*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.
- Vines, Elizabeth (2018) *Streetwise Design: A Practical Guide for New Development and Adaptive Reuse in Asian Liveable Heritage Cities*. Think City, Sdn Bhd, Penang, Malaysia

Section 4:
‘The entire thing smells fishy’

MISS SHANGHAI: THE YEARS OF INFAMY

BY KATYA KNYAZEVA

ABSTRACT:

The Miss Shanghai beauty pageants were held almost every year between 1929 and 1947, and they usually precipitated a scandal. The competition of 1929 led to a court case and the recasting of votes. In 1931, Chinese activists protested against bathing suits on the catwalk. The pageant in 1933 advertised Hollywood connections that were fabricated. In 1947, the crown was tossed around on stage, taken from one girl and given to another. Gleefully outraged public debates erupted in the press after the competitions: the fairness of the voting was dubious, the organisers were criminal, and often the charitable fundraising was a sham. Different organisations fought for the privilege to elect Miss Shanghai – or disavowed any connection to the pageant. The proceedings ranged from international press events in stadium-size venues, to dodgy nocturnal business in cheap cabarets. Conditioned by the changing political, economic and racial makeup of the city and channelling ideas and fashions of the day, these shows were a rude, but fertile social almanac for pre-liberation Shanghai.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, hundreds of beauty competitions take place in China; some are local events, while others are stages in global contests. Discussions of the roots of these pageants tend to link them to early twentieth-century “flower elections” in urban centres like Shanghai, in which courtesans were ranked according to their appearance, manners and performing skills.¹ Then histories tend to leap to the 1946 contest Miss Shanghai, widely publicised at the time. It is sometimes designated as China’s first beauty pageant, when in fact it was the last of its kind. From the middle of the 1920s to the late 1940s, citywide beauty competitions were held almost every year, and they drew their inspiration from international trends as well as from the local urban culture.

In June 1926, after three years of construction, the new amusement centre Palais Oriental opened on Avenue Joffre, owned by the entrepreneur Michael Ting, son of Ding Ziqian (one of the earliest

compradors in Shanghai, allied with the British firm Westphal, King & Ramsay, Ltd). French architects Alexandre Leonard and Paul Veysseyre designed the Palais Oriental in the “French style,”² with three oversized arches on a beaux-arts façade. Equipped with a movie theatre, a roof garden and an open-air dancing hall, it promised to become ‘the most luxurious and up-to-date cinema and dancing palace in the Orient.’³

At the end of the first month of operation, Michael Ting announced his intention to organise the Oriental Beauty pageant, in which ‘a committee composed of both local prominent Chinese and foreigners’⁴ would choose a beauty queen. Ting promised to commission a stone statue of the winner and to persuade the Municipal Council of the French Concession to install it on a public square, ‘in a custom usually observed in beauty competitions on France.’⁵ His ambitions quickly outstripped his resources, and by the end of the year the Palais Oriental cinema was taken over by the Peacock Motion Picture Corporation and renamed the Paris Theatre, while Michael Ting concentrated his theatrical energies on creating floral arrangements for the yearly Autumn Flower Show.⁶

In January 1928, an announcement of a beauty contest appeared on the pages of the local daily Shanghai Zaria. Founded in 1925, this was the largest Russian-language newspaper in the city, selling almost 3,000 copies a day to the Russian expatriate community. The Shanghai Zaria editors judged the candidates – all Russian girls – *in absentia*, using the photographs sent in by the readers. The three finalists were recent arrivals from Harbin; two of them were married. The beauty queen, Claudia Semenoff, received her prize during *thé dansant* at the Carlton Café, in the International Settlement.⁷

In February of the next year, a Harbin-based Russian daily attempted to repeat the success of the Shanghai competition, but the contest quickly devolved into a press battle, when a competing daily disparaged the appearance of the most popular candidate and accused the organisers of using “a cheap way” to boost subscription rates. This prompted an uncle of the slandered candidate to storm the office of the organisers and throw stationery around the room. In the end, Harbin newspapers proclaimed it was ‘a disgrace for any self-respecting Russian woman to let herself be advertised in this manner.’⁸ Most of the candidates withdrew from the pageant.

1929: LEPER MISSION CARNIVAL ON CONEY ISLAND

In March 1929, the Shanghai bi-weekly Eastern Times Photo Supplement (Tuhua Shibao) published a photograph of a seated girl in a bulky patterned cotton dress; her name was Zhou Shuping. The Chinese caption announced her wedding to Li Zongkan, while the English caption added that Zhou was ‘known as the most beautiful lady of Shanghai.’⁹ The North-China Daily News, Shanghai’s largest English-language daily, reprinted the image and explained that Zhou was deemed beautiful because her features complied with the following standard: ‘She had to be pretty without resorting to paint and powder, have a smiling and dimpled countenance, a face like the seed of the watermelon, eyebrows like the quarter of a moon, good teeth, a handsome nose and pretty ears. Her forehead had to be high, but not too high to disfigure her face; she had to be of medium height. No mention was made of her hands, ankles, etc.’¹⁰

Zhou Shuping was the daughter of the prominent local industrialist Zhou Jingjue (now remembered as the founder of Chinese philately). She had graduated from the elite McTyeire School – the alma mater of the famed Song sisters – where she had won prizes in sports and music competitions. She also spoke fluent English and was an ardent socialite – just the right kind of young woman to embody a modern ideal.

Chinese-language periodicals had been reporting on beauty pageants abroad since the late nineteenth-century. The contests gained momentum in Europe in the early 1920s, and the Shanghai public could read detailed reports of these events in local tabloids. In 1926, portraits of foreign beauty queens in gowns and tiaras began to appear on Shanghai’s front pages. A 1929 issue of the Eastern Times Photo Supplement published a composite of portraits of contestants for the title of Miss World in Paris, where a candidate from Hungary took the crown. Shanghai was ready for a beauty pageant of its own.

Shanghai’s first full-scale beauty pageant took place in September 1929, in the New World amusement centre, comprised of two buildings at the western end of Nanking Road, overlooking the Racecourse. Guidebooks described the New World as ‘an amazing agglomeration of halls, theatres, menageries, distorting glasses, refreshment rooms, Chinese and foreign, [...] roof gardens on different levels where hundreds of people drink tea and eat, and there is always something new.’¹¹ Westerners had been comparing it to London’s Crystal

Palace and New York's Coney Island, so in 1929 the management refurbished the northern building, renamed it Coney Island and organised the Charity Exposition and Carnival – a combination of a fair, a convention and a charity fundraiser, with the proceeds from all rides and shows going to the Chinese Mission to Lepers to build a new hospital for 200 patients. The impresario of the fair was E. K. Fernandez, nicknamed the Barnum of Hawaii, who 'held carnivals and exhibitions in almost every clime, entertaining thousands of persons of almost every nationality.'¹² Among the many rides and attractions, Fernandez ordered a delivery of a sixty-foot high Ferris wheel, capable of carrying twenty-four passengers.

The central event of the Leper Mission Carnival, as the press called it, was the beauty contest. It was organised by William Lee (Li Yuanxin), who was one of the directors of the New World and simultaneously president of the Chinese Mission to Lepers. Having previously lived in Australia, Lee had experience organising fundraisers coupled with beauty contests for the Chinese community there.¹³ To successfully transplant this event to Shanghai, Lee needed to break the association of beauty contests with "flower elections" among prostitutes. He would class the contest up by only inviting the daughters and the wives of the city's commercial and political elite to participate.¹⁴ In September, candidates' portraits started to circulate in local foreign and Chinese press. Some of these women had previously taken part in fashion shows and exhibitions for Lee's charities – among them Yu Danhan, the daughter of the ex-chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce Yu Xiaqing, and Elsie Kwok, the daughter of the director of Shanghai Mint and the managing director of the Wing On Department Store George Kwok Bew (Guo Biao).

The public was supposed to vote by writing the name of the preferred candidate and mailing it to the management of the New World. Multiple votes could be purchased for additional money. The voting went on for three weeks, with updated rankings published weekly. To encourage the purchase of votes, The China Press published a fake letter, signed Red Lips, which reminded the reader that over '200 Shanghai international beauties' were enrolled in the contest, and Red Lips intended to win it: 'I will go to my comprador friend and tell him to buy all the votes.'¹⁵ Red Lips tried to pique the curiosity about the prizes: 'What kind of car he will get in return for his check, I certainly don't know. Perhaps it's an asthmatic Ford or a rickety third

hand six-cylinder tummy shaker, or the alternative, a free round trip on a tram steamer, steerage.¹⁶ The winner of the title Miss Shanghai was actually promised a choice between ‘a free trip to the United States with an opportunity to visit Hollywood, the home of cinema, or a high powered six-cylinder automobile.’¹⁷ Controversy quickly arose, and the Leper Mission was accused of ‘making money out of a charitable scheme.’¹⁸ There were questions whether any money would actually go to the lepers; criticism was widespread enough to force William Lee to defend his philanthropy in the press.

For most of the voting period, Elsie Kwok was leading the race, with Phoebe Wong, the chief accountant of the Asia Realty Co., the runner-up. As the end of the contest approached, supporters of other candidates took the suggestion of Red Lips and began to buy vast amounts of votes. By the end of September, Yu Danhan rose to the second position. The charms of the accountant Phoebe Wong and Helen Yun, who was an employee of the North-China Daily News, could not compete with the financial infusions buoying more subsidised girls, and Wong and Yun fell to fourth and fifth places. Another finalist, Amy Chun, the wife of the former shipping manager of the China Merchant Steam Shipping Company, had powerful backing, but only sufficient for third place. There were no western candidates in the top five, and only one Western name – Lilian Jacobs – among the top fifteen.

On midnight of September 30, the three-week contest, like a horse race in syndication, finally came to a close. In the final hours of the voting, it was a battle between the Chamber of Commerce (Yu Danhan) and the Shanghai Mint (Elsie Kwok). By midnight, Yu Danhan had an advantage of 5,000 votes over Elsie Kwok. But as the commission set about the final calculations, the Kwok team drew a wild card: one of the lower-ranking contestants, Helen Yun, after some negotiation with representative of George Kwok Bew, expressed a desire to donate all of her 89,000 votes to Elsie Kwok, which brought Kwok’s total count to over 208,710, surpassing Yu Danhan’s 145,090.¹⁹ The jury, consisting of Chinese and Western business elite, paused to review the legitimacy of this last-minute vote transfer – and then approved it.

Elsie Kwok, the daughter of the man who printed the money, was Miss Shanghai 1929. When given the choice of her prize – a trip to Hollywood or the six-door Essex Coach – she chose the car.

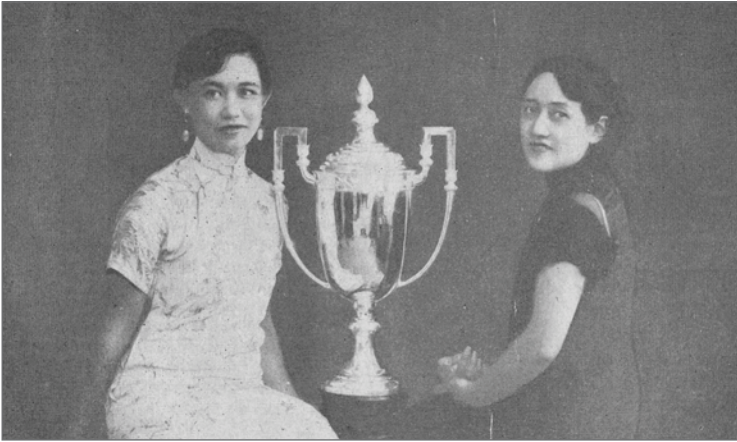


Figure 1: 1929: Elsie Kwok and Mrs. Ma. *Le journal de Shanghai*, July 19, 1931.

1931: THE CURSE OF THE BATHING SUIT

The Leper Mission Carnival was touted as a brilliant success, but Shanghai's Coney Island struggled to stay afloat; in February 1931 it closed, leaving 45,000 dollars of debt in rent.²⁰ There were, however, other "Coney Islands" all around Shanghai; the name was assigned to amusement centres and dancehalls, riverside beach resorts and fish markets.

One of these Coney Islands opened in July 1931 in the remote Yangshupu area, on the grounds of a popular greyhound-racing track owned by the local magnate W. R. McBain. The new resort, called Luna Park, cost more than a million taels to build. It offered 'typically western forms of recreations,' a 'Japanese tea house, a German beer garden, a Chinese restaurant and a European one.'²¹ A 'kaleidoscope of amusements,' like in New York's Coney Island, included the merry go-round, the scenic railway 'with breath-taking dips and scream-inducing loops,' 'towering' Ferris wheels and 'innumerable games of chance,'²² as well as a spacious dance floor under a wooden canopy.

Luna Park's main attraction was its open-air swimming pool – supposedly the third largest in the world – equipped with diving boards and slides, 'sandy beaches and a shady waterfall.'²³ The wholesome environment happily justified the wearing of bathing suits in public. Since the prophetic 'It had to come'²⁴ caption under the photo of Peggy Jones in the one-piece bathing suit at Chicago's Clarendon Beach in 1920, bathing suits had been diminishing in size and clinging closer to the figure.²⁵ Shanghai's foreign community

was conscious of the trend, and in 1930 a light-hearted pageant took place in the swimming pool at the Foreign YMCA. Members of the women's sports section paraded in "old fashioned" bathing suits, to demonstrate 'the many ways in which pleasure may be derived from the swimming pool during the summer months.'²⁶ Ogling women in beachwear seemed stylish and legitimate.

In June 1931, the management of the Luna Park announced 'the first pageant of the international kind'²⁷ in Shanghai. The candidates had to fill out application forms in downtown movie theatres and mail them to the organising committee. Chinese and foreign applicants were supposed to be assessed separately on different dates; those not wishing to appear in a bathing suit could compete in an evening gown in yet another sub-group. The top eight candidates in each of the four groups would all meet and compete in the final round, to elect Miss Shanghai and her "lady of honor." The top prize was an inscribed silver goblet. Emphasising the continuity with the 1929 contest, local papers published the photograph of Elsie Kwok demonstrating this trophy.²⁸

Remembering that the beauty queen of 1929 chose a car over a trip to Hollywood, the Luna Park spent 7,000 taels on a Buick with an eight-cylinder engine from the Andersen & Ferroggiaro salon and exhibited it in their showroom on Bubbling Well Road. The popular English-language daily, *The China Press*, printed a provocative cartoon: a string of skimpily-clad young women sashaying on a catwalk in beach hats and tiaras, with wide ribbons dangling between their breasts identifying them as "Miss America," "Miss Italy," "Miss Russia," "Miss China" and "Miss France." The contestants were led by the curvaceous "Miss Shanghai" in a revealing bathing suit, whose face was concealed beneath her blond bobbed hair, with a bold question mark hanging above it.²⁹ The paper reported that Luna Park's offices were flooded with hundreds of applications, from 'girls of all nations, ageing between 15 and 23.'³⁰

While public interest was at a fever pitch and applications were pouring in, the Shanghai Chinese Women's Association publicly petitioned the Greater Shanghai Bureau of Social Affairs to prevent Chinese women from taking part: 'The contest is in reality just a cloak to incite wantonness,' and 'an insult to the feminine sex,' which will 'display women's nakedness in public'³¹ and affect public morals. The Bureau of Social Affairs took no action, but the Luna Park was compelled to clarify via the press that 'the pageant is in no way a



Figure 2: 'Problems of a beauty contest,' by Sapajou. *The North-China Daily News*, August 13, 1931.

bathing beauty contest,' and that all entries were subject to scrutiny to maintain 'high moral standard' and to 'insure contestants against undesirable associates.'³²

As the preparations for the September gala continued, another venue snuck in a one-off bathing suit pageant. The Lido nightclub, on Medhurst Road, organised a 'bathing beauty contest of an international nature.' It was a small event centred on a swimming pool; candidates did not have to sign up in advance and could join spontaneously on the night of the contest, which commenced at midnight.

In August, the progressive and competitive Japanese residents of Shanghai elected their own beauty queen. Over the course of two

months, the judges based in the office of the daily newspaper Shanghai Nippo assessed 120 photographs and biographic details of girls mailed in by the readers. A booklet with all the candidates' portraits was distributed free of charge to the subscribers; the voting coupons were printed in the paper. Having received almost 11,000 votes, the twenty-year-old Takeko Inouye, 20, was proclaimed Miss Shanghai. Inouye had arrived in Shanghai at the age of 17, lived with her chaperones in the French Concession and attended the SMC Public School for girls. Inouye's height of 5 feet and 6 inches, described as 'exceptionally tall,'³³ might have played a role in her election, or in her subsequent victory of the national title Miss Japan, held in Tokyo a few weeks later. Inouye managed to win both titles *in absentia*, on the sheer appeal of her photographs, which may be a testament to the exceptional skill of the Shanghai's portrait photographers.

On August 23, 1931, The China Press published six photographs of the leading contestants for the Luna Park contest. Lilian Jacobs, the veteran of the 1929 pageant, posed in a bathing suit, stooping over a mandolin. The five other finalists, also in bathing suits, were Russian girls. Considering the relative poverty and uncertain political status of Shanghai Russians, it was hardly surprising that they took every opportunity for publicity and material prizes. Society pages of local newspapers suggested some happy scenarios for entrepreneurial and good-looking women. A marriage to a European was a ticket out of statelessness: newly minted wives would walk out of the consulates with freshly stamped European passports in their hands. But not every Russian in the Luna Park competition was destitute: one of the finalists, Helen Sloutsky, was the daughter of a prominent Shanghai conductor Alexander Sloutsky, in charge of the symphony orchestra at the Lyceum Theatre.

'Save for the defection of the Chinese and the Japanese, the first Miss Shanghai contest was a great success,' announced the French daily *Le journal de Shanghai*.³⁴ On the night of the final round, on September 7, 1931, the Luna Park swimming pool was crowded. The organisers had scrapped the plan to hold four separate rounds and assessed all the candidates at once. Other than Helen Sloutsky, the list of finalists included Rene Stibbe (UK), Lucy Cherakova (Russia), Kathlyn Wilder (Ireland) and Selina Gesu (a Russian from Harbin who claimed to be Turkish). The finalists had to walk around the pool first in evening gowns and then in bathing suits. The China

Press speculated this catwalk must have been an ordeal, because ‘as amateurs they were unaccustomed to the eyes of 1,500 persons being fastened on their limbs, torsos and faces.’³⁵ The loudest applause went to Lucy Cherakova, a ‘petite and buxom’³⁶ brunette who danced at the Majestic Cabaret, but the sensible judges chose Helen Sloutsky to be Miss Shanghai. Prizes for the beauty queen included a vanity case filled with Colgate-Palmolive products, a leather jewellery box with a silver cigarette case planted inside, ‘a gold and enamel compact and lip stick from Richard Hudnut, gowns from Flora and bathing suits from Fidelity Mills.’³⁷

‘Tall and well-rounded for her age,’³⁸ the seventeen-year-old Sloutsky dutifully expressed her surprise at her victory. A blitz interview on the spot extracted her home address (111 Route Vallon), established her proficiency with the piano and her affinity for riding horses. Sloutsky surprised the journalists by stating she had not coveted the Buick because she already had a car. After the interview Sloutsky consoled her friend Lucy Cherakova, who in spite of her popularity with the crowd did not receive any prizes for the second place.

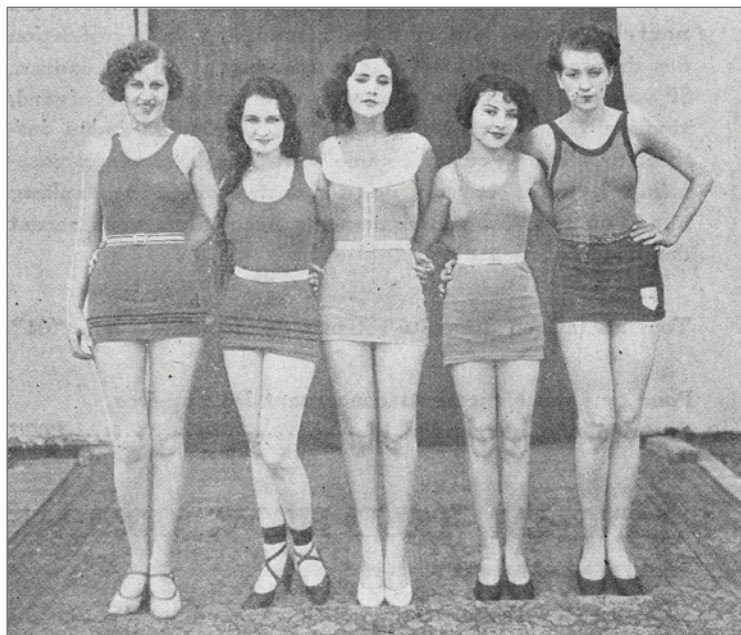


Figure 3: 1931: Finalists, left to right: Rene Stibbe, Kathlyn Wilder, Helen Sloutsky, Lucy Cherakova, Selina Gesu. *Le journal de Shanghai*, September 13, 1931.

Helen Sloutsky married the French A. Crosnier in 1933 and directed plays at the Lyceum Theatre, but the press kept on calling her Miss Shanghai 1931 until the end of the decade. In 1933, Lucy Cherakova enrolled in the Shanghai beauty pageant again. The “Turkish” Selina Gesu went on to win the crown of Miss Qingdao in 1934, in a heated race dubbed ‘the battle of two blondes,’³⁹ competing against Julia Strijevsky, the beauty queen of Beidaihe. The odds changed in favour of Gesu at the last minute, most likely with the help of a jury member, baron Reginald d’Auxion de Ruffe, a Shanghai-based French lawyer. The 21-year-old Gesu began an affair with the 56-year-old; she married him in Shanghai shortly before his mysterious assassination in 1941.⁴⁰

1933: THE YEAR OF THE CINEMA

1932 was marked by the Japanese armed incursions in Shanghai and the incineration of the district of Zhabei, north of the International Settlement. The atmosphere was grim; no beauty pageants were held that year. The attack on the city uprooted many Russians who had been living in Zhabei. As they resettled in the French Concession, they put a strain on the existing infrastructure and public services; in February 1933, the Rotary Club proposed a beauty pageant to raise funds for the completion of the new Russian School for Poor Children. Shanghai’s prime amusement palace, the Canidrome, offered space and put the resident orchestra at the services of the event, while R. Stanley Dollar, of the Dollar steamship empire, promised to finance the winner’s trip to Hollywood.⁴¹

Movie glamour infused every aspect of the contest that year. Information about the pageant appeared under the rubric ‘Footlights and Films’ in the North-China Daily News, interspersed with screening schedules at leading Shanghai theatres. To promote the movie-themed contest, Shanghai newspapers reminded the readers about the Chinese origins of two Hollywood actresses whose films were seen in Shanghai. One of these stars – ‘our own Lyda Roberti’⁴² – had been a vaudeville performer, whose entire family had travelled from Warsaw (then part of the Russian Empire) across Siberia to China to escape the Bolshevik revolution. After her family circus went bankrupt in Shanghai, Roberti became a dancer in the Carlton Café and eventually saved enough money to sail to the USA, where the Paramount Studios classified her a ‘vamp and a man-killer’ type.⁴³ Roberti’s film *Kid from Spain* opened

in Shanghai at the same time as the public started to vote in the Movie Queen competition.

Another China prodigy was the Tianjin-born Sari Maritza (a pseudonym of Dora Patricia Detering-Nathan). Her Paramount production *Forgotten Commandments* played in Shanghai in July 1932. Born to a wealthy British-Austrian family, Detering-Nathan learned English from her parents, Chinese from household servants and French and German from private teachers. When she was twelve, her family left China and moved to London.⁴⁴ The actress's exotic Chinese provenance was broadcast by her Hollywood promoters and then by the Shanghai press. The contest of 1933 was going to launch another movie star from China, so in March, a photograph of Sari Maritza standing next to Sir Victor Sassoon, one of the major sponsors of the contest, circulated in Shanghai papers.⁴⁵ The Shanghai tycoon purchased a large number of votes to aid the charity cause, and promised to distribute his votes evenly between the eventual finalists.⁴⁶

A hundred fifty-seven contestants were said to be made up of over forty nationalities; however, more than half the names in the contest were Russian. Among them there were Mrs. Sapajou (the wife of the North-China Daily News resident cartoonist Sapajou), Lucy Cherakova (the runner-up in the 1931 competition), Julia Strijevsky (who later won the title *Miss Beidaihe* and competed for the crown of Qingdao), Natalya von Heyking (baroness by birth) and Zenia Girrard De Soucanton (baroness by marriage). There were also a number of Western socialites – Dallas Lee Franklin, Nanette Barraud, Jennifer Stenhouse, Isabelle Farquharson, Margaret Sinclair and the wife of the Italian Consul Count Giorgio del Bono. All three Chieri sisters competed: Mathilda, Itala (the budding drama actress) and Laura who had won the Weihaiwei beauty contest the year before ('dark Italian olive complexion and hair; gray eyes'⁴⁷). Frequently tagged 'popular members of the younger set,'⁴⁸ these women were the mainstay of the local society pages, and at least one was a radio personality: Ann Bachara, the star of the amateur hour on Hong Kong radio, performed 'an entirely new series of songs'⁴⁹ in Shanghai, to inspire the purchase of votes in her favour.

A number of photography studios offered free sittings to the contestants, to present them in a Hollywood screen-appropriate manner. The portraits were then displayed in the lobbies of thirteen participating theatres – Broadway, Capitol, Carlton, Cathay, Embassy,

Isis, Lyceum, Nanking, Paris, Peking, Ritz, Strand and Willies – and also projected on the movie screen, giving the public a chance to appraise how these new stars would align in the Hollywood constellation. Movie tickets were bundled with voting coupons, which could be dropped into ballot boxes over the thirteen days of the voting period; extra votes could be purchased at 1 dollar per 100 votes.

There were only fifteen Chinese names on the candidates' list, but knowing that the Chinese comprised the overwhelming majority of moviegoers, one reader of the North-China Daily News, who signed as "Australian," feared that the Chinese contestants would extract all the votes from their local fan base and come to dominate the finals.⁵⁰ In reality, only one Chinese girl made it to the finals, because the Chinese public largely ignored this contest. Aspiring actresses had more direct auditions for the silver screen than signing up for a protracted and confusing pageant organised by the Westerners. China's film industry was booming, and Shanghai was its capital. In 1933, over a hundred feature-length films were made in the city.⁵¹ Stars were born by the dozen, and actresses – such as Hu Die (Butterfly Wu), Xu Lai and Chen Yumei, among scores of others – enjoyed unprecedented celebrity and public following. For a brief moment, being cast in a movie was a real possibility in Shanghai. There were insanely popular dance competitions in major amusement centres and dance halls, where a skilled and charming entrant could earn the title of the "dance empress,"⁵² and a studio audition. Simultaneously with the Rotary-organised Movie Queen contest, Chinese movie magazines and commercial brands held a number of pageants and elected "movie queens," "tobacco queens" and "standard beauties" among entertainment personalities as well as among amateurs.⁵³

By the end of the voting period, a total of over 250,000 votes were recorded. All the candidates were invited to the Canidrome Movie Ball, where 26 finalists were invited on stage, after being made over with "Max Factor's Hollywood Makeup," one of the sponsoring brands. The final round was captured on film. The jury, consisting largely of fathers and husbands of participants as well as major sponsors of the contest, had elected the Russian Nina Barsamova to be the Movie Queen of Shanghai. The petite Muscovite – 157 cm, 49 kilos, 'brown eyes and crinkly, wavy hair'⁵⁴ – had been living in Harbin until two years prior, when her father died and she had to move to Shanghai, together with her mother and sister Maria. Both girls worked as manicurists at the

Cathay Hotel salon; Maria competed in the pageant, too, under the name Mooser Barsamover. Sir Victor Sassoon himself crowned Nina on the Canidrome stage. She continued to work in the Cathay salon for the next few weeks, waiting for her trip to Hollywood.

All the finalists received prizes. The runner-up – the Italian Laura Chieri – was awarded a round trip to Japan, a number of outfits and a portable gramophone. The third prize winner – the American Charlotte Kingsbury – received a Philco Radio and some furs, dresses and bags; other finalists received makeup travel kits from Max Factor – most of which were forgotten and left in the backrooms in the commotion of the celebrations.⁵⁵ The gross take of the ball in Canidrome surpassed the expectations and amounted to 33,000 dollars. The construction of the new Russian School continued, and soon the two-story building at 737 Avenue Petain, designed by the prominent local engineer Hans Berents, was inaugurated. A year later, Laura Chieri married Count Francois de Courseilles de Barbeville of Normandy in a luxurious ceremony in the Catholic St Joseph's Church.⁵⁶ The fourth finalist, the British Margaret Sinclair, acted in the Amateur Dramatics Society's plays in the Lyceum Theatre and later became a star of a local radio show for children.

Nina Barsamova sailed from Shanghai on the liner President Hoover on May 27, 1933, and three weeks later arrived in San Francisco, “into the lap of Rotarians and ritzy hotels.’ Soon photographs began to appear of her operating a movie camera in a studio together with the actor Warren Baxter, then side by side with the actress Boots Mallory. Barsamova's China background, already exotic, received an extra layer of glamour when the San Francisco Chronicle tacked on her fictitious affiliation with the Russian royal family; another paper called her a ‘pretty little red.’⁵⁷ Barsamova appeared as an extra in two films – *Penthouse* (1933) with Warren Baxter and Myrna Loy, which opened in Shanghai's Grand Theatre in December – and *Bolero* (1934), with Carole Lombard and George Raft.⁵⁸

There was a press announcement, that the filmmaker and producer Buddy De Sylva heard Barsamova's hard Russian accent and exclaimed, ‘Exactly what I want!’⁵⁹ but he had to make his musicals without her: in early November 1934, Nina reluctantly boarded the same President Hoover liner and sailed back to Shanghai. She had stayed in the USA as long as her US visa permitted, and according to her, the absence of work permit prevented her from getting more roles, so she scaled down her expectations, and studied makeup at the Paramount Beauty



Figure 4: 1933: Nina Barsamova arrives in Los Angeles, June 6, 1933. *Acme News*, courtesy of Rotary Club Shanghai.

School. She announced a plan to open a beauty salon in Shanghai,⁶⁰ but soon after her return she met a hai-alai referee Paulino Ituarte and married him in a well-attended ceremony in the Catholic Church of Christ the King, on Rue Bourgeat, in July 1936; the reception in the Hai-Alai Auditorium, where Ituarte worked, was said to be splendid. The couple had two daughters and settled in California around 1949.

1935–1947: THE RUSSIANS REIGN

In 1935, Shanghai was hit by an economic recession. In the absence of other organisers, the non-commercial association of Russian artists,

actors and musicians, self-titled HLAM, took over the organisation of the pageant. To avoid 'commercialisation of the contest',⁶¹ HLAM forbade the purchasing of votes. Instead, the public would cast their votes after seeing the entrants paraded in front of them, so that 'unlike past contests, the power of money would be nil.'⁶² The main prize amounted to a diamond ring and earrings from the Ural Jewellery Store. Two former beauty queens of Shanghai – Helen Sloutsky and Nina Barsamova – would be present to award the winner at the Canidrome on August 2.

Owing to the contest's poor publicity and less-than-lavish prizes, it attracted only a small number of entries. A journalist of the North-China Daily News claimed that only seven girls signed up for the competition. Whether or not there was a first round, the seven finalists were Tamara Labutina, Miss Sergeievskaya, Miss Amador, Miss Pals, Miss Temer, Tania Sokol and Miss Kotliarova. The nineteen-year-old winner, Tamara Labutina – a brunette, born in Omsk, Siberia – was a stenographer whose father had been implicated in theft, gambling and drug trafficking in Shanghai.⁶³ Soon after her victory, Labutina married a British army officer surnamed Hodgman and eventually travelled to the US, where she intended to take up 'aviation, modelling and/or Hollywood.'⁶⁴ Labutina claimed that she had acted in 40 Chinese movies over the course of six years, sometimes appearing alongside Hu Die (Butterfly Wu): 'I was often the only white girl in the cast, and the pictures often had me marrying an Oriental and then tracing down the psychological development.'⁶⁵ While her husband was serving in India, Labutina was in Canada, posing for tabloids and waiting for "an actress visa" to return to Hollywood.⁶⁶ She never mentioned her winning the title of Miss Shanghai 1935, perhaps because she considered it a confused and inconsequential experience.

In 1937, the Russian and the western-organised Miss Shanghai pageants went separate ways. The Russian pageant became a nocturnal annual event in the recently opened Arcadia Cabaret, on Route Courbet. That year the contest had only a handful of contestants, all Russian. Under the pressure from the cabaret administration, the HLAM Association removed the limit on the purchasing of the votes and they were offered in the cabaret's box office at a dollar per hundred. The fiancé of a contestant named Nina Voronenko, 20, deposited his monthly paycheque and pawned his coat, yet his 265 dollars' investment failed to guarantee Voronenko's victory, so Marina

Homiakoff, 19, became the favourite. Her sponsor, the eighteen-year-old George Hardoon, nicknamed “Playboy” and “Millionaire,” was from a famous merchant family; his stepmother, Liza Hardoon, had just publicly disassociated herself from George’s debts and threatened to disown him. Hardoon was known to court multiple Russian girlfriends.⁶⁷ Immediately after her victory, Homiakoff left the cabaret in the company of another man, a land broker.⁶⁸

Two weeks later, a Western-run “bathing beauty” pageant took place in the Lido Beach Resort, on Medhurst Road. The jury was multinational and so were the finalists: the crown went to Lily Goodwin, 21, ‘clad in a white knitwear bathing costume;’⁶⁹ Daisy Bulldeath was second, and Woo Wen-ching was third.

In the following years, the Russian HLAM continued to organise yearly contests at the Arcadia, always on the 14th of July – possibly choosing this date to improve the mood among the Russian police and fire fighters in the service in the French Concession who were routinely excluded from the Bastille Day celebrations in the French Club. There is a depiction of the 1940 pageant in Arcadia, penned by the singer Alexander Vertinsky:

At ten sharp the orchestra played a march. The contest has begun. The sleazy-looking emcee cavalierly dragged the girls one by one onto the stage, like kittens from a sack: “Number one – Miss Asphyxia! Number two – Miss Amphibia!” (Girls had to use pseudonyms.) The public muttered: “Wow, this one is ugly.” “Number three – Miss Libido!” The public whispered: “What a horse.”

“Number four. Miss Insurance.” A girl in black silk dress with silver patches stood on the stage in the limelight. She was pathetically thin and resembled a merchant’s glazed coffin. The public wondered: “Is she in mourning?” Someone explained: “She’s the widow of the Unknown Soldier.”

“Number five. Miss Hypotenuse.” A skinny girl with frizzy hair and spaghetti-thin legs was about to faint. The anxiety, the bright stage lights and prolonged waiting in the chicken coop brought her on the verge of collapse. The audience refused to vote. All the interesting girls were sitting at the restaurant tables.⁷⁰



Figure 5: 1940: The jury at the table including Aleksandr Vertinsky (extreme left) and Sir Victor Sassoon (third from left, seated). *LIFE*.

Vertinsky's memoir is replete with declarations of longing for "mother Russia" overpowering the singer in every "hostile" foreign place he had lived since his emigration in 1920 – Constantinople, Warsaw, Paris, Berlin, San Francisco, New York, Shanghai. Writing about the pageant, Vertinsky made sure to criticise Shanghai's Russians for amusing themselves with pageants at the time when the USSR was under the attack from Nazi Germany. He fails to mention that he was the head of the jury of the contest and later stayed after the show to dance a few rounds with his 19-year-old girlfriend Lidia Tsirgvava.

The American photographer A. T. Hull, Jr. was in Arcadia during the 1940 contest and left a detailed visual record of the event.⁷¹ Hull's photographs show the enthusiastic public at the tables in the garden, the crowded dance floor, contestants marching on the catwalk and a dignified-looking jury station, with Sir Victor Sassoon presiding over the jury. Vertinsky continued:

[...]the evening was about to turn sour when a corpulent Chinese man approached the jury table. He was a famous businessman: he owned several currency exchange shops on the Bund. The public whispered: "The pheasant is here." He spoke in universally understood pidgin: "Our lady wanchee be missee. How much?" He produced a thick wallet from the pocket of his robe and started to count the banknotes. The owner of the restaurant emerged behind

his back: “This way, please.” Two waiters appeared on both sides of the benefactor and pushed him toward the cashier. Ten minutes later the majority of the votes “elected” his lady. She was Russian and a professional prostitute.⁷²

The “shy and demure” Galina Soldatenko, 18, who won the crown, hid from the press after the show. A week later she married a certain Nicolay Pavloff, who turned out to be a criminal, and divorced him the following year.⁷³ Vertinsky’s off-handed comment about a prostitute might refer to the winner of the 1941 contest – an event that prompted a satirical report in the Russian newspaper Slovo:

Last night there was the Miss Shanghai pageant; the ladies chattered about it non-stop. One girl in our alley fought with her mother: “I want to be elected.” Her mother, a smart damsel, says: “Look at yourself, Glasha. You’re not exactly a goblin, but your face is far from a beauty queen material.” But that girl is stubborn: “Mother, who should be talking? Makeup makes any mug beautiful, and I am rather pretty to start with.” But the mother insists: “Glasha, makeup sticks to the face in winter, but in this heat your mascara and your rouge will be dripping from your chin. In this weather they will probably choose a natural beauty.” But who can stop the girl? She painted her face, threw on a gown with a fur train and rode off to the contest.⁷⁴

The 1941 winner, Faina Hablieff, 19, had been the runner-up the year before. She came to Shanghai with her younger brother in 1932, together with their parents, who died soon after their arrival. Hablieff’s brother grew up in the Russian Orthodox orphanage, while Faina ended up in Japanese-occupied Dairen; when she returned to Shanghai in 1939, a note on her registration card suggested she could have been a prostitute.⁷⁵

Also in 1941, the Argentina Night Club held its first ever Miss China competition – a nightclub event justified by a professed fundraising drive for the Shanghai Refugee Relief Association. The first prize was 1500 dollars and ‘a screen test for Hollywood,’⁷⁶ conducted at the local branch of the Universal Pictures Corporation. The announcement of the contest caused confusion among the public: can a foreigner be

Miss China? (The organiser, the publisher Hal P. Mills, said yes.)⁷⁷ In the finals, Western girls outnumbered the Chinese, but Wang Meimei, a local cabaret performer, won the crown. Wang donated most of her cash prize to charity.

As the Japanese military occupation progressed, the foreign settlements were occupied and pageants became too difficult to organise. While the allied nationals were herded to internment camps, the Russians remained free, but struggled with unemployment, inflation and food scarcity. A nightlife of sorts continued at the city's periphery, but no notable pageants took place until the end of the Pacific War.

In July 1946, the first post-war beauty pageant received a great deal of press coverage, locally and abroad; it was interpreted as a sign of recovering China and of Shanghai's business returning to normalcy. The organiser of the competition was the notorious Du Yuesheng, an opium Mafioso turned financier and politician. Having lost the grip of his opium empire during his wartime absence from Shanghai, Du was seeking to rebuild his networks of influence. He chose a worthy cause – the aid to the refugees displaced by the floods in Jiangsu province – and announced that the election of Miss Shanghai would be a major fundraising event. No one dared refuse the invitation to Du's charity enterprise; every Chinese with money, status or celebrity became involved. If previous pageants had often excluded professional entertainers from being contestants, Du cordially invited everyone – showgirls, opera actresses, taxi dancers and “family girls” – which included teachers, office clerks, ‘artistes and girls in the independent professions.’⁷⁸ He also secured the participation of a number of local opera stars and movie starlets.

The issue of bathing suits in public was back in the news; that summer the Hollywood movie *Bathing Beauty* (1944) was a huge Shanghai's box office hit, and Du Yuesheng made his finalists compete in swimming and acrobatics. The pageant was a success as a fundraiser. Among the highlights of the event was Du modestly declining an offer to give him the presidency of the Shanghai Municipal Council. He would continue to exercise his influence on the local politics and economy through informal networks.⁷⁹

The final round of Miss Shanghai 1946 took place on August 20 in the New Zealand Ballroom, on Kiangning Road. The ten finalists, out of 3,000 entries, were mostly entertainers. During the final round they



Figure 6: 1946: Runner-up Xie Jiahua in New Zealand Ballroom. *Getty Images.*

assumed the role of taxi dancers, selling dances to the audience of men for 10, 50 and 100 thousand Chinese yuan (one of the objectionable slogans was 'dance one more dance, save another life').⁸⁰ The girl who amassed the most value in dance tickets was pronounced Miss Shanghai. This was Wang Yunmei, who had been something of an underdog, outperformed by better-known actresses and showgirls with higher vote count. Rumours ascribed Wang's stash of expensive dance tickets to the patronage of the orchestrator of the event, Du Yuesheng.⁸¹ Wang Yunmei disappeared from the public eye soon after her victory. The second runner-up Xie Jiahua, 19, first starred in a movie, then plunged into an unhappy marriage, then killed herself, all within two years from the contest. This 1946 pageant etched itself in the public memory, becoming the backdrop of Wang Anyi's *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* (1996).

Unnoticed by the press, in early September 1946, a Russian beauty pageant was resurrected in the Arcadia Cabaret, where Zina Koretskaya was proclaimed Miss Shanghai. The only known photograph shows her sitting in her swimsuit, bare legs crossed in the air, next to a grinning American G.I.⁸²

In August 1947, in an 'attempt to bring pulchritude of all nations together on one stage,' a citywide beauty pageant returned to the prestigious Canidrome. However, public interest was so low, that on the night of the finals the emcee started to pick young women from the dining tables and drag them on stage by the hand. As the audience was prodded to vote, the names of Chinese contestants were repeated, but foreign ones were omitted, witnesses later claimed.⁸³ When the calculation of votes revealed that the winner was the Russian Olga Guy – one of the last-minute entrants from the audience – the Chinese spectators protested and 'scrambled to buy more tickets.'⁸⁴ After a quick recount, the emcee removed the crown from Olga's head and put it on the runner-up, Zhang Yuqing. Local press was inundated with letters, demanding an investigation of the procedure and questioning the legality of the accompanying money transactions – 'the entire thing smells fishy'⁸⁵ – but it was never clear what city agency adjudicated beauty pageants.

In 1948, in the Jewish area in Hongkou, Ruth Wachsmann won the beauty contest at the Mascot Roof Garden, the open-air venue on the roof of the Broadway Theatre; the finalists were Vera Hirschberg and Jenny Ungemuth.

The following year, Communist rule was established, and there were no more beauty pageants for half a century. Yet the glamour of Miss Shanghai lived on for many years after the demise of the contests. Rumours have it that Zhou Shuping, the ‘first beauty of Shanghai’ – unelected, yet undisputed – let her stardom go to her head. Having relocated to Hong Kong before the Communist Liberation of China, she became a mainstay in the streets of Tsim Sha Tsui, hobbling on high heels and dressed like a starlet; locals knew her as the “Old Beauty.”⁸⁶

Olga Guy, the four-minute Miss Shanghai of 1947, still finds the theft of her crown amusing. Now 95 and living in Connecticut, she recalls: “I won, and I never even entered.”⁸⁷



Figures 7: Shanghai beauty pageant winners. Left to right, top row: Zhou Shuping (1929), Elsie Kwok (1929), Takeko Inouye (1931), Helen Sloutsky (1931), Nina Barsamova (1933); middle row: Tamara Labutina (1935), Marina Homiakoff (1937), Margaret Venevsky (1938), Galina Soldatenko (1940), Faina Hablieff (1941); bottom row: Wang Meimei (1941), Wang Yunmei (1946), Zhang Yuqing (1947), Olga Guy (1947), Ruth Wachsmann (1948).



References

- 1 Elizabeth J. Remick, *Regulating Prostitution in China: Gender and Local Statebuilding, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 64.
- 2 *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette*, June 5, 1926.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 *The China Press*, June 29, 1926.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 *The North-China Daily News*, November 16, 1930.
- 7 *The North-China Daily News*, January 21, 1928.
- 8 *The North-China Herald*, March 7, 1929.
- 9 *Eastern Times Photo Supplement (Tuhua Shibao)*, March 6, 1929.
- 10 *The North-China Daily News*, March 9, 1929.
- 11 Charles Ewart Darwent, *Shanghai: a handbook for travellers and residents to the chief objects of interest in and around the foreign settlements and native city* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1920), p. 29.
- 12 *The China Press*, August 9, 1929.
- 13 John Fitzgerald, Mei-fen Kuo, 'Diaspora Charity and Welfare Sovereignty in the Chinese Republic: Shanghai Charity Innovator William Yinson Lee (Li Yuanxin, 1884–1965),' *Twentieth-Century China*, Volume 42, 1, (2017), 72–96 (p. 91).
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 *The China Press*, August 31, 1929.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 *The China Press*, August 14, 1929.
- 18 *The China Press*, August 31, 1929.
- 19 *The North-China Daily News*, October 4, 1929.
- 20 *The China Press*, June 16, 1931.
- 21 *The China Press*, July 18, 1931.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 *The China Press*, May 30, 1920.
- 25 Angela J. Latham, 'Packaging Woman: The Concurrent Rise of Beauty Pageants, Public Bathing, and Other Performances of Female "Nudity,"' *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Winter (1995), 149–167 (p. 152).
- 26 *The North-China Daily News*, June 21, 1930.

- 27 *The North-China Daily News*, June 20, 1931.
- 28 *Le journal de Shanghai*, July 19, 1931.
- 29 *The China Press*, June 28, 1931.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 *The North-China Daily News*, July 27, 1931.
- 32 *The China Press*, August 10, 1931.
- 33 *The China Press*, August 17, 1931.
- 34 *Le journal de Shanghai*, September 2, 1931.
- 35 *The China Press*, September 8, 1931.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 *The China Press*, August 10, 1931.
- 38 *The China Press*, September 8, 1931.
- 39 *The China Press*, August 25, 1934.
- 40 *The China Press*, June 14, 1941.
- 41 *The North-China Daily News*, February 17, 1933.
- 42 *The North-China Sunday News*, February 12, 1933.
- 43 *The Private Life and Times of Lyda Roberti*. Accessed at www.glamourgirlsofthesilverscreen.com/show/546/Lyda+Roberti/index.html
- 44 *The China Press*, July 31, 1932.
- 45 *The North-China Daily News*, March 16, 1933.
- 46 *The China Press*, April 6, 1933.
- 47 *The China Press*, August 23, 1932.
- 48 *The North-China Sunday News*, March 12, 1933.
- 49 *The China Press*, April 21, 1933.
- 50 *The North-China Daily News*, February 23, 1933.
- 51 *Movietone*, January 12, 1934.
- 52 Andrew David Field, *Shanghai's Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919–1954* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010), pp. 142–144.
- 53 Shao yi-Sun, *Urban landscape and cultural imagination: literature, film and visibility in semi-colonial Shanghai 1927–1937* (University of Southern California, 1999), pp. 390–391.
- 54 *The China Press*, April 29, 1933.
- 55 *The China Press*, April 30, 1933.
- 56 *The China Press*, March 12, 1935.
- 57 *Spokane Chronicle*, June 24, 1933.
- 58 *St. Louis Dispatch*, January 28, 1934; *San Francisco Examiner*, November 3, 1934.
- 59 *Spokane Chronicle*, June 24, 1933.

- 60 *The China Press*, November 17, 1934.
- 61 *The China Press*, July 27, 1935.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 *Russian emigrants' registration cards*, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, USA, Record Group 263, Publication M1750.
- 64 *The North-China Daily News*, July 13, 1941.
- 65 *The Gazette (Montreal, Canada)*, June 4, 1942.
- 66 *The Province (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)*, May 5, 1942.
- 67 *The China Press*, July 10.
- 68 *The China Press*, July 16.
- 69 *The North-China Daily News*, July 27, 1937.
- 70 Aleksandr Vertinsky, *Dorogoi dlinnoiu (Those Were the Days)* (Moscow: Astrel, 2009), p. 270.
- 71 *Google Arts & Culture*. Accessed at <https://artsandculture.google.com/search?q=shanghai%20hull%201940>.
- 72 Aleksandr Vertinsky, *Dorogoi dlinnoiu (Those Were the Days)* (Moscow: Astrel, 2009), pp. 270–271.
- 73 Russian emigrants registration cards.
- 74 Slovo, 1941-07-12.
- 75 *Russian emigrants' registration cards*, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, USA, Record Group 263, Publication M1750. *The North-China Daily News*, July 13, 1941.
- 76 *The China Press*, September 4, 1941.
- 77 *The China Press*, July 12, 1941.
- 78 *The North-China Daily News*, August 8, 1946.
- 79 Brian G. Martin, "Eating Bitterness: Du Yuesheng and Guomindang politics in Shanghai, 1945–49," *East Asian History*, 29, 6 (2005), 129–152 (p. 143).
- 80 Janet Y. Chen, *Guilty of Indigence: The Urban Poor in China, 1900–1953* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 190.
- 81 *Zhongguo Dianshibao*, Volume 4, 2010.
- 82 *The Brooklyn Citizen (Brooklyn, New York)*, October 17, 1946.
- 83 *The North-China Daily News*, August 14, 1947.
- 84 *Star Tribune*, August 12, 1947.
- 85 *The China Press*, August 13, 1947.
- 86 *Zhou Shuping*, Accessed at <https://www.easyatm.com.tw/wiki/%E5%91%A8%E5%8F%94%E8%98%8B>
- 87 Angelica Kaner, correspondence, July 16, 2018.

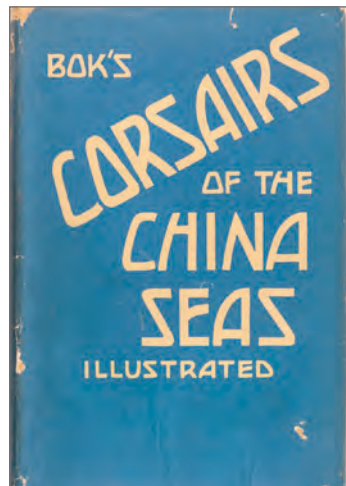
WHO WAS “BOK”?

BY PAUL FRENCH

IN THE EARLY 1930s London and New York bookshops actively advertised the latest adventure stories written by the pseudonymous author “Bok”. No details of Bok’s background, author photos or obvious clues were given to the writer’s real identity. Bok’s novels were all set in China, most featured piracy, smuggling and organised crime along the southern Chinese coast, Hong Kong and Macao. The advertising and book blurbs often played directly into the tropes of the “*Yellow Peril*” genre established in the preceding few decades by writers such as Sax Rohmer, M.P. Shiel, Herbert Ashbury and others. Yet, Bok’s books were seemingly well researched and appeared to be a form of narrative non-fiction with details that indicated the author had indeed spent significant time on the China Coast. Who was Bok?

Books on China with slightly sensationalist titles have always sold well. Bok’s *Vampires of the China Coast* was published in 1932 by Herbert Jenkins Ltd of London. The novel was clearly intent on mining the established market for excitably titled China books. A year later the mysterious “Bok” published a second book – *Tong*, issued by the same London publisher. The two novels were published in the United States, in 1933 and 1934 respectively. Two more titles on the same theme of piracy and the criminal elements of the southern China Coast followed - *Corsairs of the China Sea* (1936) and *Piracies, Ltd* (1938).

Both *Vampires of the China Coast* and *Tong* are novels and obviously played to the already long-running tropes, in both fiction and non-fiction, of the Yellow Peril and Far East adventures. Both books featured white women in peril in China with white men coming to their rescue. The two books both portray the Chinese



(southern Chinese in both cases) as outlaw cutthroats with a taste for the diabolically violent. *Vampires of the China Coast* is a tale of pirates, in particular the female pirate Lai Choi San (whose actual existence is the subject of some debate, as mentioned later). *Tong* is a story revolving around a southern Chinese triad-organised crime group.

Bok's initial success clearly spurred the anonymous author to write more. In 1936 *Corsairs of the China Sea* appeared and, in 1938, *Piracies, Ltd.* (or *Piracies Limited* in some US editions) – both published by Herbert Jenkins and both further mining the same material – southern China, pirates, organised crime.

The question addressed here is who was the author “Bok”? Obviously a pseudonym, the name is never explained in either book, nor does there appear to be (despite an exhaustive search) any indication online or in any reference books. However, Bok is of interest as, though the published novels may be sensationalist and play into certain anti-Chinese tropes, they do contain a certain amount of seemingly accurate information. The author seems to have had both familiarity with the underworlds of the southern Chinese coast and South China Seas piracy in the first decades of the twentieth century, as well as some experience of residing in the region.

Before considering the true identity of Bok brief summaries of the novels may be useful.

- *Vampires of the China Coast* was first published by Herbert Jenkins Ltd, a publisher based at No.2 York Street in the St James's area of London, in 1932. The first edition ran to 331 pages, included fifteen woodcut plates of various scenes of piracy on the South China Seas (which *Country Life* described as, ‘frankly horrible’ – referring to their gruesomeness rather than artistic quality^a). The book retailed for 10s 6d (Net). It is a realistic description, in novelised form, of the pirates of Bias Bay, near Hong Kong^b. Chan Yuk Fai is deported from Liverpool for drug trafficking. He arrives in Canton (Guangzhou) during a communist uprising and witnesses murder and looting. With a young girl he escapes Canton to join a pirate band, eventually becoming their leader. *The Guardian* newspaper was not overly enthusiastic in their

a ‘New Books’, *Country Life*, October 15, 1932, p.xcii.

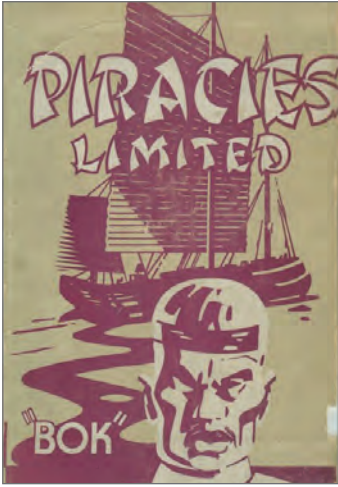
b Now Daya Bay in Guangdong Province.

review describing the book as, ‘crude sensationalism’ with ‘meaningless villains’ and a style that is a ‘series of clichés’. The reviewer, “DFA”, writes that Bok, ‘...seizes every opportunity of introducing scenes of bloodshed and murder, enlivened wherever possible by description of the more messy types of torture.’^c While the *Guardian*’s review is scathing it does attempt to shed some light on the anonymous author’s identity. While admitting that he does not know for sure the author’s true name. DFA suggests it might be Arthur Mills who, the reviewer claims, wrote a book recently detailing scenes of Chinese pirates. This is the author Arthur F.H. Mills (1887-1955) who wrote several dozen adventure novels, which have all been almost totally forgotten.

- *Tong* follows on in much the same vein as *Vampires of the China Coast*, and was published a couple of years afterwards. However, it was largely ignored by reviewers at the time. The story follows the emergence and activities of a Chinese criminal organisation.
- *Corsairs of the China Seas* was published in 1936 by Herbert Jenkins at 10s 6d (net). It was 302 pages long and contained a series of black and white photographic plates. The London *Observer* newspaper gave the book a good review praising its action scenes and suggesting that, ‘whoever “Bok” may be, he seems to know the life and ways of the last remaining pirates.’^d The main villain character, Wong, was thought to be particularly well sketched by Bok. The book is dedicated ‘to the Spirits of that ghostly company of Freebooters, Bandits and Communists, who have been gathered by their Forefathers.’ The story includes detailed descriptions of Macao’s Fan Tan casinos, the local opium trade, Communist insurrectionists in Canton, life in Hong Kong, as well as Macao.

c *The Guardian*, September 30, 1932, p.5.

d ‘The Last Pirates’, *The Observer*, May 24, 1936, p.9.



- *Piracies, Ltd.* was published in 1938, as ever by Herbert Jenkins and once again priced at 10s 6d (net). It was 282 pages in length and again with a number of black and white photographic plates. It is another of Bok's fictionalised accounts of piracy in Southern China.

Throughout the brief career of “Bok” across these four novels the press repeatedly stated (excepting the *Guardian's* one suggestion of

Arthur F.H. Mills) that they were unaware of the author's true identity. And this does genuinely appear to be the case. So, who was “Bok”?

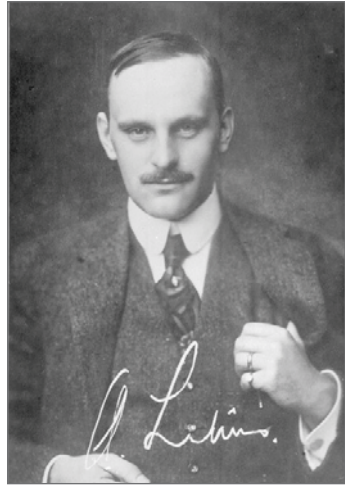
As the *Guardian* briefly mentioned him, we should consider Arthur Frederick Hobart Mills. Mills was the brother of the preparatory schoolmaster and children's author George Mills and was married to the adventurer Lady Dorothy Mills (née Walpole). The two had married in 1916 after Mills's service in the First World War was cut short by injury. They divorced in 1933 after he was caught in an adulterous affair. Lady Mills's adventures took her to Liberia, Turkey, the Middle East and Venezuela, though not to China. Mills was a jobbing author of crime and adventure novels that have not stood the test of time. However he did write a number of adventure novels set in China, which probably suggested to the *Guardian* reviewer that Bok might in fact be Mills. *Yellow Dragon* (1924) follows the adventures of a British soldier in Hong Kong, though the *Melbourne Age* noted that despite a promising start it quickly descends into melodrama^e. Ultimately, and particularly due to the level of detail of southern China and Hong Kong life and society, it seems unlikely that Mills is Bok.

The most likely candidate for the person behind “Bok” is Aleko Lilius (1890-1977), a Russian-Finnish writer and journalist who visited the China Coast seeking adventures to write about. He found them, and produced lurid accounts of piracy and murder which

e ‘Recent Fiction’, *Melbourne Age*, August 30, 1924, p.4.

became his 1930 bestseller *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates*^f.

Lilius had been born in Saint Petersburg in 1890 though he left with his family for Helsinki just before the Bolshevik Revolution. Throughout his long and wide-ranging journalistic career he rather obscured his origins and nationality to add a little spice to his resume. He was at various times described as Russian, Finnish-Russian, English, Swedish and American. His work appeared in any number of newspapers, magazines and pulp



fiction journals across Europe, in England and in the United States, usually with the idea of bringing some exotic and thrilling adventures to readers mired in the pre-war Depression or suffering under post-war austerity. His books were internationally known, not least because his wife (and secretary), Sonja Maria Lilius, was multi-lingual and translated them all into English, German and Swedish.

While researching *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates*, Lilius lived much of the time in the Philippines, using his home in Zamboanga as a base to explore the South China Sea, Hong Kong, Macao and notorious pirate locations such as Bias Bay. His time in the Philippines was unfortunately cut short after an accident where Lilius's Studebaker was hit by a train of the Manila Railroad Company at a crossing. Both his wife and daughter were severely injured. He was to go on to live in America (though constantly travelling) before returning to Finland to end his days as a painter. He died in 1977.

In 1931 the *New York Times* reviewed *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates*:

A meeting with a mysterious woman pirate chief, Lai Choi San, with several thousand ruthless buccaneers under command, is described in the volume *I Sailed With Chinese Pirates*, which is published today by D. Appleton

f First UK edition, Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1930; First US edition, New York: D. Appleton & Co, 1931; reprinted international edition, Shanghai: Earnshaw Books, 2010.

& Co. Aleko E. Lilius, English journalist, while traveling in the Orient, according to the publishers, succeeded in winning the confidence of this unusual woman, and he accompanied her and some of her desperadoes on one of their expeditions on a junk equipped with cannon. Mr Lilius's publishers describe him as the only white man who has ever sailed with these pirates...^g

Readers were thrilled, but how much of Lilius's story should we swallow without asking any questions? Certainly Lilius liked to indulge in thrilling prose and he certainly felt most comfortable when he was at the heart of the story, engaging in some act of daring-do. Still, it appears that everything substantive in *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates* is largely true and Lilius's experiences are faithfully recorded. It should also be noted that Lilius isn't exaggerating the threat of piracy in the South China Sea and particularly around Hong Kong and Southern China in the 1920s. The area was indeed infested with pirates who menaced both commercial and passenger shipping as well as vulnerable coastal communities. Lilius provides us with a detailed list of ships attacked during the 1920s to prove the point.

There are a number of reasons to conclude that Bok is actually Lilius writing anonymously and rehashing his adventures from *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates*. Bok is the Swedish and Norwegian word for book



Pirates of the South China Seas

g 'Chinese Pirates', *New York Times*, November 15, 1931.

– Lilius was of part-Swedish extraction and spoke the language. It is also the case that he may have worked on the Bok books, or indeed have effectively “sub-contracted” the books to his wife Sonja – who had shared many of his adventures, worked as his editor on *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates* and was a Swedish speaker (hence Bok)

Due to his car accident in the Philippines he was unable to embark on any new adventures for a number of years, and so needed to maintain an income by “recycling” his former reportage and experiences as he recuperated. Though Lilius was to move to the United States, throughout his career he invariably sold his book rights first to English publishers. *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates* was first published by J.W. Arrowsmith of Bristol.

Finally, and crucially, both *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates* and *Vampires of the China Coast* feature the story of the Chinese lady pirate Lai Choi San and both books have some of the same photographs included as do later books by “Bok”. Lai Choi San (Mountain of Wealth) is often referred to as China’s most famous female pirate, after Ching Shih who was active in the early 1800s Qing Dynasty. While we have substantial evidence of Ching Shih’s existence and activities, when it comes to Lai Choi San, we have only Lilius’s *I Sailed With Chinese Pirates* as evidence of her supposed twelve-junk pirate fleet based out of Macao, and her activities between Macao, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Lilius’s graphic portraits of the cut-throat pirate queen Lai Choi San thrilled readers and indeed some photographs have been labelled as being of Lai Choi San, though with no formal verification.

It seems that Arthur Ransome may have been inspired by Lilius’s account of her when he wrote his Swallows and Amazons novel *Missee Lee* (1941), where the children come to China and encounter a female pirate queen. Lai Choi San was also the model for the “Dragon Lady”, one of the main villains which appeared in the long-running American comic, radio and TV series *Terry and the Pirates* created by Milton Caniff. However, there is no official record anywhere of Lai Choi San except in Lilius’s fun, but questionable, memoir.

In closing, I subject to the court of public opinion, based on the evidence above, that Bok was indeed Aleko Lilius.

Paul French’s biography appears elsewhere in this volume.

YOUNG SCHOLAR'S ESSAY

A Study of China's Vernacular Dwellings

BY INEZ K.N LOW

ABSTRACT:

“Vernacular dwelling” is a term used to describe a typical place of residence for the common people. Within China’s vast territory and unique geography, many regional subcultures have been formed; as a result, dwellings can be seen in different architectural styles throughout the country. The dwellings are a reflection of the special personal connection between man and their respective cultures, values, and environments. Their subcultural traditions and architectural forms mirror their particular paths of societal evolution, telling tales of their governance, social strata, extent of specialisation, population, economy, art, and level of sophistication. Many factors came into play in their development along the historical timeline.

This essay analyses the relationship between vernacular dwellings and the path of societal development in China by looking at dwellings from different regions. It starts with a discussion on Beijing’s courtyard-style dwellings, which represent the epitome of Chinese civilisation. Such quadrangle courtyards embody many Chinese cultural influences such as fengshui, aesthetics, Confucian values, and family oriented social organisation. The essay compares the courtyards in northwestern China with residences in Jiangnan: both traditional, affluent regions with strong merchant cultures. This is followed by a discussion on dwellings that were products of local geopolitical pragmatism, specifically the cave dwellings in northwestern China and the earthen dwellings in southern China. Finally, the essay zooms in on a representative ethnic minority’s dwelling in southwestern China. It is interesting to note the unique characteristics of each of these subcultures, which are overlaid by a veil of commonality.

INTRODUCTION

The progress of humanity leaves its footprints in many different forms, the most distinctive being architecture. Heritage structures and dwellings carry essential clues, as they develop over time, which define a civilisation and the complexity of its society.

China's vast territory, coupled with its varied geographical landscape, gave rise to the formation of many regional subcultures. These regions were originally autonomous states that were segregated from one another by natural barriers. Centuries of wars and conquests brought all these regions under a united Middle Kingdom. While great empires like the Romans and Ottomans rose and fell, the Chinese empire has remained intact as a civilisation till the present day. The continuity of this civilisation, as well as its culture and values, have left its marks on many of the architectural designs.

One of the most interesting factors is the formation of social fabric in the Chinese civilisation. Sociological research indicates that the maximum size of a group bonded by effective communication is 150. Beyond this threshold, individuals must be brought together by a higher cause or common belief in order for some form of government to work.¹ China has been the most populous civilisation throughout history, with more than 400 million people by the end of the *Qing* Dynasty (1644 – 1912). However, there is no dominant indigenous religion. While the ruling emperor at any given time was bestowed with an absolute and lofty stature, Confucian values took a central role in defining the relationship within families, between people, with the emperor, and within the country. This formed the 'glue' of the society. The implication of such values is reflected in many architectural forms of the various subcultures.

Vernacular dwellings are structures that ordinary people live in. Their architecture influences the relationship between humans and nature, while satisfying society's production needs. Inevitably influenced by local climates, landforms, and the availability of natural resources, they provide an intimate insight into the lives of common people, reflecting the status of socioeconomic development, as well as cultural norms and traditions shared by the designers, builders and residents. The wisdom is captured in the common phrase: 'adapt to local conditions, optimise use of materials available' - *yin di zhi yi, yin cai zhi yong* (因地制宜、因材致用).

In addition, *fengshui* (风水), or Chinese geomancy, has had a prevalent influence on the architectural designs of vernacular dwellings. It is a field of study originating from ancient China, dedicated to the harnessing of *qi*, or energy forces, to harmonise individuals with their surroundings. Vernacular dwellings also offer clues to the general aesthetic values via the décor of the residences

in different regions and across time. Specifically, various symbols or other representations were commonly used in the homes of common people for auspicious reasons, or to express their hopes and wishes.

BEIJING QUADRANGLE COURTYARDS

The quadrangle courtyard or *siheyuan* (四合院) is the most symbolic architectural , dwelling across many Chinese cities. *Siheyuans* could be found in northern China as early as the Western Zhou dynasty (1,045 - 771 B.C.). They embody the essence of Chinese wisdom and philosophical infusions, such as social organisation, Confucian values, *fengshui* and aesthetics. Their prevalence also provides testimony to the cultural integration that took place over the history of the unified kingdom.

Siheyuan literally means “four-integrated-courtyard”, with “four” representing east, west, south, and north. One courtyard was enclosed with four surrounding single-story buildings that faced inwards. The quadrangle formed a closed, harmonious living environment within, which was centred around the family. A typical courtyard was built along the north-south vertical axis, with structures symmetrically arranged. Doors were placed along the vertical axis. Larger courtyards, covering up to several acres, may have had three or more doors leading to the main building.

Beijing’s *siheyuans* are considered the most elegant. Beijing only became significant after the *Yuan* dynasty (1279–1368) formally made the city its capital. Massive city construction ensued, and residential quadrangle courtyards were built along with palaces and government official buildings. Residents who moved into Beijing during that time were mainly rich or high-ranking officers. Their priority was to get land to build their private residences. The common quadrangle courtyards were situated along narrow streets and lanes known as *hutong*, which connected the neighbourhood together. Solemnity, elegance, peaceful environment, and intricate ornaments were what characterised the Beijing *siheyuans*.

The influence of imperial decree can clearly be seen in the architecture. Sumptuary regulations were developed during the *Yuan* dynasty to regulate the overall scale, dimensions, colours, and ornamentations of the courtyards. These regulations continued throughout the succeeding *Ming* (1368 – 1644) and *Qing* dynasties, which also established their capitals in Beijing.² Thus, the size and

designs of the *siheyuans* provided indications to the social status of the residents, and the social organisation of society at large. The large quadrangle courtyards were for the royals and high officials, while the medium or small courtyards were for the commoners.

The family values based on the Confucian philosophy were also reflected in the layout of the *siheyuans*. Quadrangle courtyards had a fixed arrangement for the principal rooms, aisles, wings, back cabinet houses, and inverted rooms. Filial piety or *xiao*, meaning respect for one's parents, was considered the root of all Confucian values.³ Hence, the principal rooms, being the most important, were given to the elderly members of the family. The hall where memorial tablets of ancestors were displayed was located in the central part of the principal rooms. The living rooms of the grandparents were located on the east, while those of the parents were located on the western side. The wings were for the younger generations, while the back cabinet rooms were for maids or servants.

Siheyuans were also designed closely in accordance with Chinese geomancy studies, or *fengshui*. This is considered an ancient Chinese architectural science, and has been deeply ingrained in design of traditional Chinese settlements for thousands of years. From the selection of land and positioning of the courtyard, to the determination of specific measurements of each building, designers took meticulous care to optimise the *qi*, or energy flows. It was believed that this would enhance one's life by bringing it into harmony and balance with the surroundings. In addition, the *siheyuans* were also typically decorated with carvings and paintings which embodied folk customs, traditional culture, and aesthetic values. There were symbols and mascots included in the décor displaying auspicious connotations. *Siheyuans* were indeed a culmination of Chinese societal sophistication and reflected the wisdom of its civilisation.

SHANXI COURTYARDS

Shanxi has some of the most glorious manors in all of China, from the *Qing* dynasty. In the relatively flat urban areas, people built brick-and-tile courtyard houses with unique local characteristics. Most of these exquisite manors were spread along the ancient trade routes used by local merchants. This merchant culture, and the resulting opulence, was characteristic of the Shanxi culture.

Dating back to the Spring and Autumn period (170-476 BCE),

the earliest Shanxi merchants made their fortunes through trading local goods such as salt, iron, cotton, soybeans, tea, and silk. Some also gained wealth through industries such as coal mining and cement making. It was only after the 19th century that the merchants engaged in financial services such as pawnshops and banking.

During the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties, the Shanxi merchants, also known as *jinshang* (晋商), flourished through transporting grain to feed troops along the northern part of the Great Wall frontier. They were granted licenses that entitled them to sell salt at monopoly prices. They embarked on what was called *zouxikou*, or “going to Xikou,” which referred to merchants trekking far beyond the Great Wall to find potentially lucrative prospects that were not available locally. From the 16th to 18th century, trading expanded, and included long distances. It was interesting to note that although these merchants travelled far for trading, they would return to their hometown to build their manors when they became prosperous.⁴

Like most other courtyard-style buildings in China, a typical Shanxi courtyard house was also an enclosed rectangular courtyard with buildings on three or four sides. This included an outer and inner courtyard. The outer courtyard unfolded from east to west in a rectangular shape, with a gate built at the south-eastern corner; the inner courtyard was spacious, with the main building situated at the northern end facing south. As the *jinshang* began to thrive during the *Qing* dynasty, many massive courtyard houses sprang up, with some featuring numerous layers of courtyards. For instance, the grand courtyard of the *Qiao* family, located in the Jinzhong basin, had six large and 20 small courtyards. It covered a total area of more than two acres, containing 313 residential houses.⁵

Despite the disparity in the extent of opulence, both the grand courtyards and the common courtyards shared certain common features. The northern province of Shanxi was often afflicted by sandstorms during springtime and subjected to strong chilly winds from the northwest during winter. Hence, high walls were built to protect the courtyard residents from these natural elements. The high walls could also function as barriers to fend off burglary attempts for the more prosperous families. Secondly, all courtyard houses in Shanxi were built with thick solid timber pillars, stone brick walls, and tiled roofs. Thirdly, the houses were richly decorated with exquisite and elaborate wooden, stone, and brick carvings. The wooden carvings,

typically outlined in gold, were placed at the most prominent sites in the dwellings. Stone carvings mostly featured intaglio patterns, and were found at the bases of the pillars, railings, and gate piers. Brick carvings could be found on roof ridges, decorated walls, screen walls, shrines, gable wall heads, and gate towers.⁶

A comparison between the Beijing quadrangle courtyards and the Shanxi courtyards shows that Confucian family values played a similar and significant influence on the architectural layouts. Characteristics such as respect for the elderly, harmony with the surroundings, as well as inward-focus of the courtyard buildings, were present in both Beijing and Shanxi courtyard dwellings. The key differences lie in the architectural dimensions, the height of the dwellings, as well as the complexity of the ornamental decor. Shanxi courtyards were narrow and elongated; the Beijing dwellings, on the other hand, had wide square courtyard spaces. The Shanxi dwellings had walls that were much taller than the Beijing quadrangle dwellings due to climate and security needs as described above. Finally, the carvings and paintings within the Shanxi courtyards were more dense, complex, and exquisite; whereas the decorations of the Beijing quadrangle courtyards were more plain. This showed the stark contrast between an opulent merchant culture and a structured political capital-city culture.

JIANGNAN TAIMEN

Jiangnan is an area situated south of the Yangtze River, which is traversed with countless canals across the fertile delta flood plains. The favourable natural environment enabled settlers there to engage in fishing, farming, and silk production. This meant that they not only had enough resources to survive, but also a surplus to trade.

With the building of the north-south Grand Canal as the major waterway transportation during the *Sui* dynasty (581 – 618), trading became easier, hence, the resource-rich Jiangnan area prospered. From then on, the area had been affectionately called the “prosperous Jiangnan”, known for its commercialised market-oriented economy. Characteristics of such trade and affluence were reflected in the Jiangnan town plans and vernacular dwellings. With the area being remarkable for its hydrography, the resident’s life was centred around the water ecosystem. For example, in a typical town, the front of a dwelling facing the streets was often used as a shop, while the back facing the canal was used for stocking goods transported via

waterways.⁷

One of the most representative Jiangnan canal residences is the Shaoxing riverside dwelling. Shaoxing is a city situated at the northern foot of Kuaiji Hill, which is south of the Hangzhou Gulf. This was a very densely populated plain covered with large numbers of river tributaries. The ancestors of this region, the *Yue* people, designed the city around the natural rivers and lakes. As one could imagine, small bridges, flowing streams and cottages were characteristic of the landscape. The larger houses in Shaoxing were called *taimens* (台门). They were actually a form of courtyards arranged in rows. *Taimen* was originally a 'respectful title' used for residences belonging to influential families. Over time, the traditional residential pattern in Shaoxing took *taimen* as the orthodoxy. Eventually, all courtyards of a certain size were also called *taimens*.⁸

Taimens could be one or two-storied elongated buildings. The front gate, reception hall, main room and back hall all ran along the principal north-south axis. On both sides of the principal axis laid the bedrooms, storerooms and kitchens. Patios for natural light and ventilation connected rows of rooms together. A large *taimen* could consist of five or more rows of rooms. Unlike the courtyards in northern China, these Jiangnan courtyards may not be strictly symmetrical, but they were built with due consideration to *fengshui*.

Shaoxing merchants who achieved success in businesses would return to their hometown and build houses to honour their families and ancestors. They attached a great value to the relationship with family and home, which is the core of Confucian teachings. It was also interesting to note that residents who lived in the more luxurious Jiangnan houses typically belonged to the merchant class, while those who lived in large quadrangle courtyards in Beijing were mainly high-ranking government officers. In both these respects, there are similarities between the Shaoxing and Shanxi merchant cultures.

One unique aspect of Shaoxing, and Jiangnan at large, was that the people emphasised the poetic and artistic aspects of life. In some very exquisite *taimens*, there were very intricate wood and stone carvings, reflecting a very high level of aesthetic sophistication. The Shaoxing merchants were also less ostensible than their Shanxi counterparts. For example, houses in Shaoxing were mainly built in white, black and grey. This was because they wanted to portray that they were pursuing noble ideals instead of seeking fame and wealth. The Shaoxing people also had

an intriguing way of naming their residences. Namesakes ranged from the surname of the owner or master of the house, to the official rank of the owner, to the type of business the owner engaged in.

The architecture of Jiangnan, while largely influenced by the wealth of the merchant class, presented a more subdued style compared to the majestic presence of Beijing and opulence of Shanxi. The elegance was reflected more in their attention to finer details representative of the southern Chinese culture.

CAVE DWELLINGS

Cave dwellings, or *yaodong* (窑洞), are an ancient form of abode that dates back more than 4,000 years. *Yaodongs* could be seen in many areas in northern China where there were thick layers of loessial earth, particularly on the highlands of Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan, Hebei, Gansu, Ningxia, and Inner Mongolia. The northwestern territory of Shanxi has a rural landscape peppered with cave dwellings, where people still live, as they have for centuries. In contrast with the opulent manors in the urban areas of Shanxi, cave dwellings were a distinctive form of residence in the rural areas. People in this region creatively utilised the availability of a natural resource, – soil – to construct these dwellings.

Yaodongs are essentially recessed cavities or holes in the loessial earth. They can be structures of stones, bricks, or tamped earth built at ground level. In the past, the availability of other building materials was scarce, and economic conditions were not advanced enough to bring in building materials from outside the region. Peasants therefore had to dig into the loessial soil or “yellow earth,” just as the prehistoric people had with their limited materials, in order to build houses.

Loessial soil is a fine-textured, windblown silt from the Gobi Desert and Mongolia that forms a 50- to 200-metre deep layer. The layer of soil is free of stones, making it easier for peasants to dig through. Excavating a cave was a slow process. Farmers had to physically dig the caves themselves, using only the common farming tools available. Excavated walls were then coated with plasters of loess to slow the drying and flaking of the interior. A later innovation of papering walls with newspapers, colourful posters or photographs brightened the living space, while protecting the walls from absorbing condensed moisture. It typically took about 40 days to excavate a cave, and more than three months to dry before living in.⁹

Cave dwellings had no three-dimensional external forms that could be built to create internal space; they acquired their identity from the internal forms. However, the cave dwellings that have evolved in recent times should not be seen as primitive caves. There were three main types of *yaodongs*: the cliffside *yaodong*, sunken *yaodong*, and surface or hoop *yaodong*. The cliffside *yaodong* cut horizontally into the slopes of elongated ravines, following the irregularity of the topography. The sunken “courtyard-style” dwellings were excavated large pits, at least six meters deep, with all four walls dug. The surface *yaodong* dwellings were imitations of the underground forms, using structured arches to mimic the appearance and basic features of *yaodongs*.

Although the forms of all these three types of dwellings may differ, the overall structures and functions were similar. The most commonly known structure was the sunken *yaodong*. The individual chambers typically interlinked to form an underground house with many rooms. Although the chambers were separated, they were walled around a common courtyard. In a sunken courtyard setting, only one wall is south-facing. This face became the location of the main chambers, dedicated to the parents and grandparents of the family. The eastern and western sides were for other family members. The chambers along the south were used for storage purposes and for stabled animals. This unique subterranean dwelling provided insulation from the natural elements, with its interiors being cool in the summer and warm during winter. To provide additional warmth during the winter, the residents used a *kang*, or heated brick bed, which could be built along the outer wall, and connected to stoves situated in another chamber.¹⁰

This layout is another display of the pervasive cultural and architectural influence of the Chinese civilisation. Even in remote highland caves, Confucian values were at play. The cave dwellings also represented the society’s adaptation to the environmental conditions, exemplifying the wisdom of Chinese adaptation.

MINXI EARTHEN DWELLINGS

Another symbolic architectural style that displayed the Chinese adaptation to their local environmental, and even political, conditions is the Minxi earthen dwellings of southern China. Minxi is a mountainous region in the southern part of Fujian, home to several million *Hakkas*. *Hakka*, pronounced *kejia* (客家) in Mandarin, literally means “guest people.” This contrasts with the word *zhu* (主), meaning

“owner”, which is used to describe the local native residents.

It is believed that the Hakkas were northern *Han* Chinese, who progressively migrated southwards due to war, poverty, and chaos. The first migration took place at the end of *Eastern Jin* dynasty (265 - 420) as a result of invading tribesmen from the north. The *Hakkas* moved southwards from their original homes to the present-day Hunan and Jiangxi provinces. At the end of the *Tang* dynasty (618 – 907), the *Huang Chao* uprising led to a second migration by the *Hakkas*, with a greater number of them headed further south to Jiangxi and Fujian provinces. Up until the *Song* dynasty (960 - 1279), the *Hakkas* lived in relative isolation and peace, allowing their culture to prosper. After the fall of the *Song* dynasty, the *Hakkas* moved to the neighbouring Guangdong province. It was during the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties that frequent fighting between ethnic groups and high levels of banditry forced *Hakkas* to change their lifestyles.¹¹ Eventually, they constructed the earthen dwellings that provided stronger defence capabilities.

The earthen dwellings, also known as *tulou* (土楼) or clay buildings, are rammed earthen structures that resemble fortresses. They have gigantic architectural volume. Due to the geographic conditions of Minxi, the main material used to construct earthen dwellings was a mixture of fine laterite, fine sand from the river, silt from the bottom of the paddy fields, and recycled ancient wall mud. The ingenious *Hakkas* used these materials to compensate for the lack of raw materials normally used for solid buildings. This type of architectural structure has existed for centuries, but was only studied by scholars from the last half of the 20th century.¹²

Tulous came in multiple forms and shapes, but the body of the dwelling was typically round, square, or in the form of a five-phoenix clay building. This was because the Chinese ancestors believed that the sky is round and the Earth is square. In addition, the round shape also represents unification and perfection, which is a foremost ideal for the Chinese people. The earliest settlers settled in the earthen dwellings that were not fully closed, such as the horseshoe-shaped dwellings and the five-phoenix dwellings, since they were then not seriously threatened. As the necessity of defence became imminent, the *Hakkas* reconstructed their dwellings into enclosed round or square-shaped earthen dwellings.¹³ With the significant emphasis on defence needs, *tulous* were built to be quakeproof, fireproof, and theft-proof and to provide good ventilation and day lighting.

The clay dwellings are two- to six-storey buildings with military defence features. The first storey of these buildings have no windows; this is where the kitchens and the dining rooms are located. Small windows and storage rooms are found on the second stories. The third and higher stories are where the bedrooms of families are situated. The central area of the dwelling is the most significant part for residents, as it is the hub for social activities and communication between the different families. It was also usually where the ancestral hall, school, or stage was located.¹⁴

In analysing the architectural forms of the *Hakkas*, it was noted that they conformed with the “*bagua*” theory, or the eight trigrams of the *Taoist* cosmology, widely known as part of *fengshui*. Confucian values were evident from the fact that they paid respect to their ancestors. On the other hand, the communal living nature of the *Hakka* earthen dwellings led to the absence of a typical harmonious single family-centred society found elsewhere in China.

YUNNAN ETHNIC MINORITY DWELLINGS

The diversity of ethnic groups, magnificent natural scenery, and mysterious creatures are what characterise the southwestern province of Yunnan. To the west, the province is surrounded by high mountains reaching up to the Tibetan highlands and dangerously deep valleys cutting through the land. On the eastern side, the landscape is a plateau embroidered with undulating low mountains and round hills. Amongst the uneven terrain lay numerous fault basins, called *bazi* (坝子) by the natives. *Bazi* are generally lowlands surrounded by gently sloping hills and irrigated with a network of rivers. The fertile thick soil layers were formed over time by alluvial deposits, making farming possible in such a high altitude. In fact, Yunnan’s varied topography nursed over 18,000 plant species and a great range of animals.¹⁵

The isolation created by natural barriers in Yunnan nurtured the autonomous development of many different tribes that represent most of the ethnic minorities in China. Fifty-one out of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China are represented in Yunnan, and their members make up a third of Yunnan’s overall population.¹⁶ With so many distinct cultures congregating in the same region, Yunnan boasts a large variety of languages, writings, festivals, as well as vivid customary costumes.

Representations of ethnic minority lifestyles can be seen through

the lens of the ancient city of Lijiang, located north west of the province. The settlers there were mostly the *Naxi* people, who inherited the unique *Dongba* culture. The *Dongba* language consists of 1,400 picture-like characters that are still being used today. It is the only hieroglyph system of writing actively in use in the world, and it was recognised as a world heritage by UNESCO in 2003.¹⁷ Walking through the ancient town of *Dayan*, the streets, lanes, dwellings, courtyards, and shops reflect the historical legends, vestiges and vicissitudes of the *Naxis*. Tribal villages, established in the 7th century, marked the beginning of societal development in Lijiang. As agricultural production reached a certain level, commodity exchanges and rural fairs were established for trading of farm surpluses. Market towns then emerged as an embryonic form of modern cities and towns. During the *Yuan* dynasty, Mongolians crossed the *Jinsha* River to Lijiang. The son of the general leading the conquest started the construction of *Dayan*, which was the predecessor to the Lijiang ancient city. It set the foundation for the development of towns along the rivers that surround Lijiang.¹⁸

The dwellings in Lijiang are a portrayal of the seamless relationship between man and nature, as well as of the crossbreeding between the *Naxi* and *Han* cultures. Vernacular dwellings carried the heritage of the local culture, yet permeated with the serenity of the natural surroundings. They were characterised by simplicity and harmony with natural beauty. Lijiang dwellings had also evolved from batten seam houses (*Naxi* folk houses) to courtyard-style dwellings, which were evident of *Han* influence. These *Qian Hou yuan* houses were typically two-storey buildings constructed with barked timbers and mud bricks.¹⁹ The general layout comprised of principal rooms, a wing house, a dress circle, and a house made of straw and wooden beams. Like the *Han* courtyards, principal rooms were used for family gatherings, meetings, cooking and offering sacrifices to Gods or ancestors. The wing house was also called the Buddhist scripture hall, whereby the second floor was designated for worshipping and ceremonies conducted by lamas, whereas the first floor was designated for the bachelors and guests. The dress circle was usually where the bedrooms of young maids were located, while the straw storehouse was located on the second floor of the gateways. The cattle sheds were located on both sides of the gate on the first floor. Big yards were built in front of the dwellings to hold large communal events such as festivals, weddings, or funerals.²⁰

The Lijiang vernacular dwelling design encompasses some interesting traits. Firstly, it displays a good match with the local topography and resources. Secondly, it showed inclusiveness and Han influence as part of its societal development. Lastly, it was incorporated Buddhist features coming from the Tibetan highlands. These features resulted in a unique blend not seen in other provinces of China.

CONCLUSION

China has endured most of her five thousand year history as a united civilisation, although wars and turbulence may have caused disruptions from time to time. There is a remarkable continuity of the ancient *Han* culture, even when China was ruled by foreigners during certain periods, such as during the *Yuan* and *Qing* dynasties. It can be argued that the dominance of the *Han* culture lies in its inclusiveness, as well as its infusion into many aspects of people's daily lives under a feudalistic system. At the centre of it was the Confucian philosophy that defined the structure of the civil society and the relationships between people. This was clearly embedded into the design of vernacular dwellings, which reflected how people live their lives. More impressively, such influence can be seen in many vernacular dwellings of the many subcultures scattered across a vast territory.

Beijing became the capital of the Chinese civilisation only during the last eight hundred years. Significant political centralisation and influence was evident from the imperial restrictions on dwellings in the capital city. It showed a clear demarcation of social strata in the society and the dominance of the emperor. The Beijing *siheyuan* was the epitome of Chinese civilisation. Other than reflecting its social-economic achievements, it provided testimony to how Confucian values glued the society together over such a long history. The dwellings also inherited ancient wisdom such as *fengshui*, as well as traditional aesthetic values.

China also possessed a rich tradition in trade and business. In historically affluent areas such Shanxi and Jiangnan, wealth was accumulated via commodity exchange, or industrial and agricultural production. The merchant culture resulted in more exquisite dwellings of different styles, such as the opulent Shanxi courtyards and intricate Jiangnan *taimens*. While reflecting uniqueness of the regional subcultures, the common threads of Confucianism and *fengshui* ran through them. Since they were further away from the capital city,

political influence became less significant.

In the rural countryside, the Chinese adapted well to their environmental constraints. In the northwestern part of the territory, in areas such as Shanxi, *yaodong* dwellings were prevalent. Leveraging the surrounding landforms comprising mainly of loessial earth, settlers created homes by digging and forming artificial caves, or even subterranean courtyards. In southern China, on the other hand, security needs took priority for the *Hakkas*. They adopted communal living for pragmatic reasons, adopting earthen *tulou* structures that could also function as defence against invaders. However, the common Confucian influence was evident in both these subcultures despite their architectural disparities.

Ethnic minorities, mostly concentrated in Yunnan, have been an integral part of the larger Chinese civilisation. They retained many of their colourful traditions, even though their indigenous tribal languages may have faded into history. The dwellings, such as those of *Naxi* in the city of Lijiang, displayed harmony with the environment. Even though geographical barriers isolated these tribes before modern times, *Han* and Confucian influence can be seen in the layout of their houses. The additional influence here was that of Buddhism.

China has thrived as an enduring ancient civilisation possibly due to its ability to infuse Confucian values throughout the daily lives of her people, as well as its inclusive *Han* culture. From the dwellings, it can be noted that most of them are inward-facing, representing a special value attached to family and home. Vernacular dwellings provide the lens through which we can look into the kaleidoscope of history.

Inez K.N. Low is a 10th grade student at the Shanghai American School. She has a great passion for art history and humanities. One of her research projects at the Innovation Institute program in her school is focused on analysing, through the lens of history, the correlation between art imaging, creation and humanity. In her spare time, she enjoys creating thumbnail illustrations. She is also an avid pianist and fencing sportswoman.



References

1. Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, reprint edition (Harper Collins, 10 Feb 2015), pp. 28-36.
2. Shan Deqi, *Chinese Vernacular dwellings*, trans. by Wang Dehua, illustrated edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 25 Aug 2011).
3. Robert Oxnam, 'Confucian Teaching', Asia for Educator, Columbia University, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/at/conf_teaching/ct02.html.
4. Ronald G. Knapp, *Chinese Houses: The Architectural Heritage of a Nation*, illustrated edition (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 15 Jan 2006), pp. 248-255.
- 5 'Top 5 Traditional Courtyard Houses to See in Shanxi', *Top Chinese Travel*, <https://www.topchinatravel.com/shanxi/top-5-traditional-courtyard-houses-to-see-in-shanxi.htm>.
- 6 'Ancient Shanxi houses strong yet elaborate', *Shanghai Daily* (October 19, 2014), <https://archive.shine.cn/sunday/now-and-then/Ancient-Shanxi-houses-strong-yet-elaborate/shdaily.shtml>.
- 7 Ella Ye Lu, 'Jiangnan Water Towns and Its Potential Development in the Modern Time', (November 23, 2009), http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_mMs-QzDEGtK/SzE-bMxmCwI/AAAAAAAAAL0/yT8TNlfiGAc/s1600-h/jiangnan16.jpg
- 8 Shan Deqi, *Chinese Vernacular dwellings*, trans. by Wang Dehua, illustrated edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 25 Aug 2011).
- 9 Ronald G. Knapp, *Chinese Houses: The Architectural Heritage of a Nation*, illustrated edition (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 15 Jan 2006), pp. 274-281.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 'Defining Hakka Identity: From History to Culture to Cuisine', *Asia Society*, <https://asiasociety.org/northern-california/defining-hakka-identity-history-culture-and-cuisine>.
- 12 'Earthen Buildings of Hakkas', *Nouah's Ark*, 2014, https://www.nouahsark.com/en/infocenter/culture/architecture/styles/earthen_buildings.php.
13. Shan Deqi, *Chinese Vernacular dwellings*, trans. by Wang Dehua, illustrated edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 25 Aug 2011).

- 14 Ronald G. Knapp, *Chinese Houses: The Architectural Heritage of a Nation*, illustrated edition (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 15 Jan 2006), pp. 184-191.
- 15 'Yunnan Travel Guide', *Travel China Guide*, <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/cityguides/yunnan/>.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 'Old Town of Lijiang', UNESCO, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/811>.
- 18 'Old Town of Lijiang', *Chinaculture.org*, (2017-07-18), http://en.chinaculture.org/2017-07/18/content_1039575.htm.
- 19 'Residential Houses in Lijiang', *Travel China Guide*, <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/yunnan/lijiang/residential.htm>.
- 20 Shan Deqi, *Chinese Vernacular dwellings*, trans. by Wang Dehua, illustrated edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 25 Aug 2011).

BOOK REVIEWS

Embarking on a journey with Chinese and Asian authors: The Royal Asiatic Society China Book Clubs in Shanghai

BY DAGMAR BORCHARD AND PETER HAGAN

The Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) book Club was founded as one of our many focus groups nearly ten years ago and constitutes a core component of RAS China in Shanghai. Two years ago, we split into two book clubs, Fiction and Non Fiction. Both book clubs meet once a month.

FICTION

Our club unites interested readers in inspiring discussions of great novels and short stories by Chinese and Asian authors. We meet most months with a longer summer break in July and August, mostly in the cosy and quiet cafe of Garden Books, which is maybe Shanghai's most famous English Book Store. Garden Books is on Changle Road in the heart of the former French Concession, a convenient downtown location, with good access to public transport.

Our mission is to bring not only valuable Chinese fiction, but also fiction from Asian authors to our RAS community that may have otherwise been overlooked. During these years, we have read great books by Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tibetan authors in English translation, as well as Asia-related works by Western authors.

In the last two decades, there has been a veritable boom in scholarship about world literature. Chinese literature is becoming more worldly, while scholars of world literature are increasingly recognising and including Chinese literature in programmes of study. We hope that by adding one more book each month, we will gradually build up our own Chinese and Asian literary encyclopaedia, in other words, creating a guide to reading modern and contemporary Chinese and Asian authors. Our discussion leaders provide background on the authors' biographies and the content of the novels.

The selection of the titles depends on what our members wish to read and regard as important for their understanding of China and Asia. RAS China is getting stronger by the year, and our Fiction Book Club is proud to be part of that strengthening and growth.

In the past years, we have read some wonderful books and enjoyed

some inspiring discussions. Among them are such classics of modern Chinese literature as *The Diary of a Madman* and *The Story of Ah-Q*, two very famous short stories by Lu Xun, often called the father of modern Chinese literature and arguably the greatest writer of modern China; *Rickshaw Boy* by Lao She, one of the most acclaimed and popular writers of the twentieth century; *The Family* by Ba Jin, one of the most popular Chinese novels and essential for understanding Chinese society; Shen Congwen's *Border Town*, beautifully written and considered a masterpiece for its portrayal of Chinese rural life.

As to contemporary Chinese authors, we included several books by Mo Yan, winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize for Fiction; by Yan Lianke, a much debated and controversial novelist dealing with sensitive topics; Wang Anyi, a Shanghai writer with her masterpiece *Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, depicting life in the *longtangs*, the crowded, labyrinthine alleys of Shanghai; *Massage* and *The Moon Opera* by Bi Feiyu, one of China's young rising talents as well as Jia Pingwa's *Happy Dreams*, a powerful depiction of life in quickly changing Xi an.

Recently, we added writings on and by minority peoples in China. Among them are works like Chi Zijian's *The Last Quarter of the Moon* on one of the last remote reindeer-herding tribes of north eastern China and *Red Poppies*, a suspenseful saga of a clan of Tibetan warlords during the rise of Chinese Communism by Alai, a Tibetan novelist writing in Chinese.

In the upcoming year of 2020, you may expect to encounter a selection of great fiction works that will change your view on the region and the world, and will stay with you for life. On our list for 2020, we have:

Wang Anyi: *Fu Ping* 2019

Qiu Xiaolong: *Death of a Red Heroine* 2000

(the first volume of his Inspector Chen series)

Jokha Alharthi: *Celestial Bodies* 2018

(winner of The Man Booker International Prize 2018)

Ocean Vuong: *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* 2019

Tash Aw: *We, The Survivors* 2019

Jia Pingwa: *Ruined City* 2016

Lu Wenfu: *The Gourmet* 1982

Besides, we still have a universe of fiction waiting to explore, from

long venerated authors from China such as Ding Ling, Mao Dun and Eileen Chang; and from Japan Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Mishima Yukio, Natsume Sōseki and Tanizaki Jun`ichirō, to modern and rising stars such as Hang Kang from Korea, Banana Yoshimoto and Harumi Kawakami from Japan or Tash Aw from Malaysia as well as writers of Asian descent publishing in English or French. Also modern Chinese authors that are gaining more and more attention of readers and critics in recent years like Liu Cixin with his much acclaimed science fiction novels, Liu Zhenyun, Xu Zechen or Can Xue and many others wait to be added to our reading list.

We welcome not only your attendance, but also your recommendations. Active members of our Book Club are the essence of our success.

Please contact me, **Dagmar Borchard**, for more about our book club, and how you can be more involved. Email: dagmar.borchard@t-online.de

WeChat: LimingDagmar1961

Special thanks to Marcia Johnson and John Van Fleet for their support as frequent discussion leaders and for adding wonderful titles to our list of books.

NON-FICTION

The Non-Fiction Book Club also meets monthly, normally at Garden Books, but may use other venues for special events. The Non-Fiction Book Club focuses on recent socio-political research books about China but it also includes works about the greater Asia area and topics genres that range from academic research to memoirs. Some of the authors of the books studied have given presentations to the book club when they have been visiting Shanghai.

Recent nonfiction books include: *The Patient Assassin: A True Tale of Massacre, Revenge, and India's Quest for Independence* by Anita Anand, 2019 - the dramatic true story of a celebrated young survivor of a 1919 British massacre in India, and his ferocious twenty-year campaign of revenge that made him a hero to hundreds of millions; *Postcards from Tomorrow Square: Reports from China*, by James Fallows, 2008 - since December 2006, *The Atlantic Magazine's* James Fallows has been writing some of the most discerning accounts of the economic and political transformation occurring in China; *My Several Worlds: A Personal Record*, by Pearl Buck 1954 - often regarded as one of Pearl

S. Buck's most significant works, *My Several Worlds* is the memoir of a major novelist and one of the key American chroniclers of China; and coming up: *Maoism: A Global History*, by Julia Lovell, 2019 - the power and appeal of Maoism have extended far beyond China. In this new history, Julia Lovell re-evaluates Maoism as both a Chinese and an international force, linking its evolution in China with its global legacy.

The convenor of the Non Fiction book club is **Peter Hagan** (peter.james.hagan@gmail.com). His review of *Imperial Twilight - The Opium War and The End of China's Last Golden Age* by Stephen Platt can be found on the following pages. *Imperial Twilight* was a 2019 Non-Fiction Book Club book.

BOOK REVIEW

Imperial Twilight - The Opium War and The End of China's Last Golden Age

BY STEPHEN PLATT

(PUBLISHED BY KNOFF, NEW YORK 2018)

REVIEWED BY PETER HAGAN

IN JULY OF 1817 on St. Helena, Napoleon Bonaparte was awaiting the arrival of Lord William Amherst who was on his way home from China. Amherst had led a second visit to the Qing Dynasty court, hoping to improve relations between China and Great Britain, but had failed to even meet with the emperor, because he had refused to kowtow - as his predecessor, Lord George Macartney had done during the Qianlong Emperor's rule. In a poetic turn, as Amherst returned to England, his ship, the *Alceste*, crashed into a rock near St Helena. Napoleon, chatting with his Irish doctor, Barry O'Meara (who had accompanied him into exile), while waiting for the rescued castaways, suggested that Amherst was a fool for not following the customs in China. O'Meara stated that England had nothing to fear from China, for it had the Royal Navy. In *Imperial Twilight*, Stephen Platt quotes one Napoleon's famous predictions:

And with that, the joking ended. Napoleon's eyes turned dark. "It would be the worst thing you have done for a number of years, to go to war with an immense empire like China[...] You would doubtless, at first succeed[...] but you would teach them their own strength. They would be compelled to adopt measures to defend themselves against you; they would consider, and say 'we must try to make ourselves equal to this nation. Why should we suffer a people, so far away, to do as they please to us? We must build ships, we must put guns into them, we must render ourselves equal to them.' They would get artificers, and ship builders, from France, and America, and even from London; they would build a fleet," he said, "and in the course of time, defeat you."

Napoleon's observation, made many years before the Opium

War of 1839 started, illustrates the vision that Stephen Platt hopes to share with his readers in *Imperial Twilight - The Opium War and The End of China's Last Golden Age*. Platt paints a grand canvas of this eclipse of empires in the early nineteenth century—China, crossing its meridian and entering into a long decline, while Britain rose to new nationalistic heights through its victories in the Napoleonic Wars and developments following the industrial revolution. The Opium War was the point where the arcs of those two empires crossed.

Today, we remember the Opium War as the moment the British government, egged on by the indignant free traders, sent its indomitable navy to support the illegal drug trade. The resulting unfair treaties brought humiliation for the Chinese court, unrest throughout the empire, and caused untold misery for thousands of Chinese opium addicts. This narrative is at the foundation of modern Chinese nationalism, with its focus on lost national integrity that must be regained. Yet, as Platt states in his introduction, ‘If we take this war not as a beginning but as an ending, and shift our sights instead back into the era before it took place, back before that ostensible dividing line with the modern era, we find a China that was powerful, prosperous, dominant, and above all envied.’

To illustrate this, Platt goes far, far back: quoting for example, a visiting French sailor in 1615, and many other Europeans who saw China as a ‘wealthy, powerful, civilized state’ and ‘strong, unified empire’. He reminds us that ‘we too easily forget how much admiration China used to command. Because of its great strength and prosperity in the late eighteenth century, Europeans viewed China in a dramatically different light than they did the other countries of the East.’

How did this view come to change so much? Platt takes us through a series of unfortunate events; where misunderstanding on both sides caused inflammation, despite, in many cases, better intentions on the parts of the players. He dismisses the common trope that the clash was inevitable, and introduces the readers to ‘the many others, now mostly forgotten, who stood against the more familiar currents of their time and can remind us how differently the course of events might have gone’.

In *Imperial Twilight*, Platt examines the history of the Opium War through the political, economic, and social problems in the Qing Dynasty and British Empire - both dealing with problems that come from an enormous, diverse populace - and how the British narrative

about the Chinese empire changed by 1839, becoming, for the first time, bold enough to consider using violence to further its economic interests in China. Both nations were in a state of great change, which was poorly understood by the other.

On the Western side is a cast of British and American men and women who tried to get beyond their limited confines in Canton—traders, explorers, missionaries, government agents, and smugglers. Platt creates intimate portraits of these through careful examination and study of diaries, missives, past publications, periodicals, public edicts, and laws. It is the journals of key individuals that are most evocative: we learn that Lord George McCartney, the first English ambassador to China, had planned his first impression meticulously, preparing a ‘suit of spotted mulberry velvet’ complete with feathers to meet the emperor, and privately was so enraptured with the Chinese people he encountered on his way to the imperial court that he wanted to bellow over the water ‘Oh, brave new world that has such people in it!’ Another member of the ill fated embassy of 1792 was James Dinwhiddie, a Scottish engineer, astronomer, and natural philosopher, who was put in charge of the mechanical devices the British had brought as gifts. He was to be responsible for assembling a giant planetarium and conduct demonstrations of a diving bell and a hot air balloon. Although he had never flown in a balloon before, he promised that he ‘would make his very first ascent in a balloon in Beijing, for the benefit of the Chinese emperor and the awe of his people’, and ‘surprise the Chinese with the power, learning, and ingenuity of the British people.’

On the Chinese side, meanwhile, Platt patiently tells the story of an empire that is ‘in decline from a lofty, almost unimaginable height, riven by internal pressures of overpopulation, official corruption, and sectarian dissent’. He describes courtiers, officials, and military advisors who were trying to preserve the current order, as well as rebels, charlatans, and fringe dwellers who sought to subvert it, and also the reform-minded Confucian scholars ‘who - far from clinging blindly to tradition - proposed creative and pragmatic solutions to the problems of their time.’ Here again, Platt’s wide ranging research is evident, as he quotes from Chinese and Korean sources, to provide insights not generally provided by the western observers of the period - he uses the confessions of Zhang Zhengmo and other rebels for example, to paint a picture of the events leading to the White Lotus Rebellion.

Due to the boom in population during Qianlong's reign, influxes of poor Southern and Eastern settlers moved into the mountainous region between Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Hubei, to clear space for farming. Zhang Zhengmo would have seen his province, considered the frontier of China, change into an overpopulated, overtaxed, and overworked area that was repeatedly punished for its poverty. When he led the White Lotus Rebellion, he and his followers fought what they saw as the cruelty of the ruling dynasty, and for the return of the Ming. He was executed for his actions, but what he did marked one of many fissures in the empire at the time. And while peasants in rural China fought against Qing soldiers, palace eunuchs and advisors took advantage of the growing uncertainty to line their own pockets. Chief among these was Heshen, a former palace guard turned advisor to Qianlong, who was able to embezzle so much wealth that by the time he was executed in 1799, it is estimated that he had more wealth than the emperor himself.

Such were the undercurrents swirling beneath the surface at the time of Britain's attempts to force an ambassador into China, and to change the way their trade was conducted. At the time, it was one of many irritants that the Qing Empire was dealing with but the resulting war came to impinge on all of China's dealings with the outside world over the next century and a half. As Platt argues, 'No event casts a longer shadow over China's modern history than the Opium War... The war occupies that place not because it was so destructive; in fact, it was relatively small and contained. It caused none of the large-scale dislocation that China's major internal wars of the nineteenth century like the Taiping Rebellion did.' Rather, the Opium War is symbolic: it was the watershed moment where China's weaknesses were laid plain to the world and to its own people.

Platt's style is lively, poignant, and at times very funny, but always the reader is aware of his sincere and thorough scholarship. His book is painstakingly researched; he gives thanks to many librarians in Britain and the United States, as well as the descendants of key players who had let him examine their family archives of letters and journals. He was fortunate to be able to access new material, and bring the benefits of this to his book: the Royal Asiatic Society in London acquired important personal papers of Charles Manning just as Platt was beginning to write about him, and he was able to track down the typescript of Charles Elliot's letters, which had 'gone missing at the

National library of Scotland.' The book includes a hefty bibliography, running to more than 20 pages, for the benefit of the serious China scholar.

It has been more than 200 years since Napoleon made his prediction. In recent years, we have witnessed the build up of China's blue water navy, the establishment of naval bases far from China's shores and a global port-building project, not to mention the ever-growing web of the Belt and Road Initiative. Platt observes that China's worldly aspirations - to play a leading role in the UN, to host the Olympics, to put a man on the moon, 'were initially viewed by outsiders almost with bemusement [...] That bemusement has now given way to alarm in many quarters as China strengthens[...] , asserting its power in ways completely unknown to living memory.'

The Opium War was at heart, a war over trade. As we watch, two centuries later, another trade war with China unfolding around us, it is worth reviewing the story of that earlier war, and the consequences of questionable moral choices.

***Peter Hagan** (peter.james.hagan@gmail.com) is the founder of HuArts, a cultural consultancy. His company helps improve international brand communication and brand image. Hagan is also an art curator and a critic of contemporary Chinese art, and has published over fifty interviews with young Chinese artists. He is an editor at the Shanghai Literary Review, and is the nonfiction book club convener for the Royal Asiatic Society.*

BOOK REVIEW

Remembering Shanghai - A memoir of socialites, scholars and scoundrels

BY ISABEL SUN CHAO AND CLAIRE CHAO

(PUBLISHED BY PLUM BROOK, HONOLULU, 2017)

REVIEWED BY DUNCAN HEWITT

WRITING A MEMOIR can sometimes seem self-serving, especially if the writer is not a household name – and the main title of this work may not inspire confidence that it has anything very original to add. Yet Isabel Sun Chao's tale of her family history and her upbringing in a wealthy Shanghai family in the 1930s and 40s – co-written with her daughter Claire – is an unexpected gem. A charmingly written – though sometimes tragic – story of a complex and illustrious family, it illuminates many aspects of life in Shanghai and China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and even fills in some details previously absent from English-language histories of Shanghai in that much mythologised era.

And though the book's subtitle, '*A memoir of socialites, scholars and scoundrels*', implies the kind of kaleidoscope that might be expected in any memoir of 1930s' Shanghai, what gives the work greater depth is the honesty with which the authors depict members of their own family as falling into all of these categories, scoundrels included. From the book's opening scene, in which Isabel Sun Chao returns to Shanghai from Hong Kong for the first time in some six decades at the age of almost 80, it is clear that she is determined to confront her past, and to draw conclusions from it. The detailed background research carried out by her daughter, and the family's wide-ranging connections in Shanghai society at the time, add to the book's resonance.

Isabel Sun (Sun Shuying) was born in 1931, to a wealthy family whose way of life epitomised the changes taking place in Shanghai at the time. She grew up in a 'Chinese architect's rendition of a Spanish villa' on Yuyuan Road in the west of the city, and attended nearby Christian schools – the McTyeire School on Edinburgh (now Jiangsu) Road, and later St Mary's Hall, where, like another famous alumna, Zhang Ailing (Eileen Chang), she developed a love of telling stories (and a loathing of mathematics). Her father, Sun Bosheng, who had inherited a family

fortune and established the bookshop and cultural district on the city's Fuzhou Road, harked back to the past, however – wearing a traditional scholar's gown, and spending much of his time poring over his collection of classical works of Chinese art. His own mother, a devout Buddhist who lived with them, presided over the family in austere fashion, insisting on strict rules at meal times, dressing Sun's older sister Virginia and brother Shufen in humble clothes, and schooling them in religious rites to improve the family's karma.

The author's beloved mother "Muma", on the other hand, was very much a part of 'modern Shanghai', a fashionable socialite with a 'love of beauty and glamour, who spent much of her time shopping, dining or playing *mahjong* with her lady friends, and whose outgoing character and modern thinking led to clashes with her husband – and ultimately, to the break up of their marriage.

Behind Isabel's father's sober lifestyle lay a history of family scandal, involving his own father and uncle – two of the "scoundrels" of the book's title. They were the seventh and fourth sons, respectively of the family's patriarch, Sun Zhutang, who had risen from peasant roots in Zhejiang, via an apprenticeship as a servant boy, to pass the imperial exams. As a young civil servant in the 1860s Sun was propelled into the struggle against the Taiping rebellion. His contribution to the military campaign led the Empress Dowager Cixi to promote him, eventually to ministerial status, as the Qing dynasty sought to modernise. When he retired in the 1880s, Sun built a grand family home in Changshu, Jiangsu province – and also invested in building residential property for the area's growing urban middle class. He expanded his business to Shanghai, buying land and constructing many buildings on and around Fuzhou Road – the city's 'number 4 road' – near the Bund, and later becoming a successful banker and ship-owner.

Despite his success, Sun's fourth and seventh sons were to disappoint him; sent to Shanghai to manage the family fortune in the 1890s, they spent much of their time dissipating their inheritance on gambling and consorting with prostitutes. Having amassed huge debts, they forged a letter from their father, and succeeding in absconding with much of the wealth he had deposited in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank on the Bund. Despite being grudgingly accepted back into the family some years later, "Number Seven", the author's grandfather, appears to have made little effort to endear himself to her grandmother, the daughter of a prominent general. Against her wishes, he brought

three concubines into the family home, and consorted with an ‘untold number of mistresses in brothels and teahouses’.

The status of women is, not surprisingly, a significant thread in *Remembering Shanghai*. It highlights the traditional powerlessness of women in Chinese families, and society in general, but also provides a snapshot of the moment in Chinese history when women’s status began to change, if only very gradually: the author’s grandmother had shown signs of rebellion in childhood, insisting that her family unbound her feet at the age of ten. Although her feet ‘remained deformed and pained her all her life,’ she could at least ‘walk more or less unrestrictedly’. And while she had an arranged marriage at the age of 14, not seeing her husband’s face until he lifted her veil on their wedding night, and initially had little choice but to accept his philandering, she later asserted her independence: as soon as their son (Isabel’s father) came of age and inherited some of the family fortune, she left her husband and moved with her son to Shanghai. She did later allow her estranged husband to move temporarily into the family’s Shanghai home after he was kidnapped (see below) – but nevertheless studiously ignored him at communal meals. Later, in what the authors interpret as a gesture of female solidarity, she also allowed one of her husband’s ex-concubines, who had become addicted to opium and lost all her wealth, to live with the family for the rest of her life.

Isabel’s own mother also had to put up with womanising by her otherwise austere husband. But eventually, possibly after falling in love with another man, she rebelled, demanding a divorce, and moving out of the family home to a modern apartment building when Isabel was just eight years old. It was a bold move at the time – not least because a mother had ‘virtually no rights’ over her children if she divorced; the official settlement allowed her to see them three times a month – though Isabel would often visit her after school.

Still, Isabel and her three sisters received an upbringing that few Chinese girls could have dreamed of just a few decades earlier – with a bilingual education and a family chauffeur to take them on shopping and leisure trips. At 18, after finally passing her high school maths, Isabel began studying at Shanghai’s St John’s University. Evenings were spent at jazz bars like the Airline Club, where the Filipino house band even wrote a song about her, to lyrics composed by one of her admirers. Another male friend took her riding on his Harley-Davidson, bequeathing a photograph of Isabel, in leather jacket and

shades, astride the bike – just one of the many striking family pictures which, remarkably, survived to adorn this book.

Yet despite the many opportunities it provided, Isabel's childhood contained undertones of the brutality beneath the city's surface glamour that was famously depicted by Empire of the Sun author J.G. Ballard, who was born in Shanghai just a year earlier. In 1938, her grandfather was kidnapped from the Huizhong Hotel he owned on Hankou Road; he was only freed two months later after her father appealed to the city's leading gangsters and paid a huge ransom. And though, as Sun puts it, the bamboo fence around the family garden 'filtered out' many of the 'unsettling changes gripping China in the 1930s,' (she does not recall the notorious assassination of puppet government foreign minister Chen Lu, who lived two doors away, in early 1939), she saw the 'cruelty of the city' for herself at the age of 11: while on a tram journey, she and Virginia witnessed a brutal execution by the side of the road. And though the family managed to keep their home throughout the Japanese occupation – when many wealthy people's homes seized for military use – Isabel did come face to face with a Japanese officer who demanded to inspect their house; however he was apparently won over after she sang him a song in Japanese, and confiscated their neighbour's home instead.

Shortages of food and other necessities were also a constant problem through the war years. And while much returned to normal after the Japanese surrender in 1945, it was, of course, not to last. Isabel's first term at university coincided with the final surrender of the Nationalist government; a few months later, her father, without telling her, decided to send her to join her mother, who was now living in Hong Kong. Isabel left Shanghai by train in early 1950, thinking she was going on a three-week holiday – and did not return to the city again until she was almost 80.

She succeeded in building herself a new life, marrying another St John's alumnus, Raymond Chao, raising three children and working for many decades for the US Information Service in Hong Kong. Yet she could only watch, aghast, as her father's worst fears for the future were borne out. Her sister Virginia – the "best dressed student at St John's", and one of China's first air hostesses – had married George Kiang, a senior manager at the Shanghai Telephone Company. After the revolution, he was initially kept on by the new Communist authorities to train staff. Soon, however, he was sacked and denounced; the couple were forced to

give up their home, and moved back into the Sun family house. Kiang died months later, a broken man, of a heart attack at the age of just 33.

For the other family members who remained in China, life also became tough. Her urbane younger brother Shufen, a law graduate, was first assigned to teach politics in a middle school, then sent to the countryside to do manual labour, before being detained, tortured and beaten in the Cultural Revolution for refusing to chant Maoist slogans. His story had a relatively positive ending – after the Cultural Revolution he returned to teaching, and later wrote a series of books on ‘old Shanghai’, riding a wave of nostalgia to become a successful and respected author.

Shufen never wrote about his own suffering, however – like many people, he may have simply wanted to forget. Yet the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution is all too clear in Isabel’s blunt account: their younger sister Shuquan, a high school teacher in Beijing, sent her son away to stay with her in-laws; the boy later ‘watched in horror as Red Guards beat his elderly grandparents to death.’ A favourite primary school classmate of Isabel’s, who had grown up to become a professor of art and literature, was left ‘drowning in a pool of his own blood’ by teenage Red Guards.

But it is the fate of Isabel’s own father, Diedie, that casts the longest shadow over the story. During the Cultural Revolution the last few servants were forced to leave the family home, and 20 strangers moved in. One of them, a seven-year old boy, found a hidden letter in which Diedie talked about his old life. The boy gave it to the Red Guards, who searched the house and found hidden artworks. The elderly man was detained by police for several months, before being sent home and ordered to sweep the lane every day. Soon he died of a stroke; Isabel and Virginia, living outside China, were unable to attend his funeral.

Isabel Sun does not, however, shirk the fact that the extremes of the situation pushed family members into some morally questionable choices: her sister Virginia never forgave their father for ordering her to leave the family home after her husband’s heart attack, fearing that ‘his son in law’s untimely death might [...] attract unwanted attention to the household’. Shuquan, meanwhile, turned away when she saw a fellow teacher being tormented by Red Guards in Tiananmen Square, for fear that she would meet the same fate.

Yet despite all this, the tone of Sun’s memoir is philosophical: when Claire discovers that a painting by the Qing master Wang Hui,

seized from her father's collection during the Cultural Revolution, has been sold at auction for almost \$4 million, Isabel seeks to 'banish resentment', adding 'either you have it or you don't, and we don't.' Later she muses: 'Perhaps pain and loss are the necessary consequences of a nation's progress; that's why I've let go of my family's material assets.' Claire adds that 'even the agents of our family's adversity were victims themselves,' and takes satisfaction in the fact that, while 'China's cruel history broke our family', at least her grandfather's cherished art works 'are treasured once again.'

The story is illustrated not just with photographs but also with drawings by a Hong Kong artist, and the narrative is punctuated by short interludes in which the authors explain aspects of Chinese and Shanghainese culture, from *qipaos* to Chinese characters, family relationships to *mahjong*, all clearly designed to make it accessible to the non-specialist reader. For Shanghai aficionados there is much to cherish too, with an array of colourful minor characters and subplots, from a chance encounter with movie star Butterfly Wu in a boutique at the Cathay Hotel, to the sad story of the beautiful "escort" who married Diedie's godson. There is also the dramatic tale of the decades-long feud between Isabel's godfather, Lu Xiaojia, the son of the military governor of Zhejiang, and Shanghai crime boss Huang Jinrong, which began when Lu heckled Huang's mistress, a singer, during a Peking opera performance.

Sun also provides a rare description of life at St Mary's Hall – attended not only by Eileen Chang but many other influential Shanghai women; this is timely, since some of that long-forgotten school's buildings have recently returned to centre stage, having been renovated during construction of a shopping mall on the school's former site near Zhongshan Park. Sun's accounts of her attempts to avoid getting up for breakfast, and how she unwittingly offended her maths teacher, bring the school vividly to life, as does her entertaining description of her American history and English teacher, Deaconess Evelyn Ashworth, whose nun's headgear 'resembled a giant wonton'.

Such observation is typical of a thoughtfully written story, which is accessibly and touchingly told – and represents a valuable addition to the canon of accounts of life in Shanghai in its sometimes glamorous, often brutal formative decades.

Duncan Hewitt's biography appears elsewhere in this volume.

BOOK REVIEW

AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley and the New World Order

BY KAI-FU LEE

(PUBLISHED BY HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT 2018)

REVIEWED BY JAMES MCGREGOR

THE TITLE OF Kai-Fu Lee's latest book *AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley and the New World Order* is pithy, but it doesn't do justice to the range of information and depth of the insights he has pulled together. This is a very comprehensive, consequential and readable book. His elegant narratives explore technological, economic, political and human transitions that crisscross between China and the US, and finally blend together to cast light on the future of our labour markets and social systems.

The core thread is the development of artificial intelligence, and how China has significant advantages to lead the industry, now that it has gone from the 'age of discovery,' which depended upon inventors and elite thinkers, to the 'age of implementation,' which depends on data, computing power and speed of execution.

His career history has provided him with a profound understanding of the global technology industry. Kai-Fu Lee moved to the United States from Taiwan to attend high school in the early seventies, and stayed to complete his education in the new field of computer studies. He received his PhD in computer science from Carnegie Mellon University in 1988, working on topics such as machine learning and pattern recognition. His doctoral dissertation covered the first large-vocabulary, speaker-independent, continuous speech recognition system, Sphinx. He joined Apple Computer in 1990, and in 1998 moved to Beijing, where he worked with Microsoft to establish the Microsoft Research (MSR) division in China, which came to be regarded as one of the best computer research labs in the world. He then worked for Google China, before moving on to venture capital projects focusing on Chinese start-ups in internet businesses and cloud computing. He is a micro blogger with more than 50 million followers on Sina Weibo.

In *AI Superpowers*, Kai-Fu flips from technology to humanity by recounting his personal journey from boy-wonder scientist to globally heralded technologist, entrepreneur and investor. He describes how

he blindly raced through life bent on an “iron man” lifestyle and a maniacal focus on accumulating online followers, instead of relishing friendships and appreciating loved ones. That is, until the diagnosis of stage IV lymphoma. Coming face-to face with his mortality brings him the “wisdom of cancer”, shocking him into a quest to examine the damage that our technology is doing to human beings and their livelihoods.

In recent years, AI has been the hottest topic in technology, although top-of-mind and little understood by multinational bosses. It is considered by many to be in the same game-changing neighbourhood as electricity and the internet. Kai-Fu does an excellent job detailing the development of AI and what he terms ‘the four waves of AI’ without losing the reader in “neural networks” and “deep learning” wonkiness.

He also walks the reader through the larger landscape of Chinese business today, focusing on the development of China’s behemoth internet companies and the effectiveness of the country’s legions of hungry and tireless entrepreneurs. In his view, they have gone from ‘copycats’ to ‘gladiators’ in order to survive ‘the most cutthroat competitive environment on the planet.’

He explains that China’s advantage in AI development goes beyond the competitive edge provided by escaping the much tighter data privacy restrictions that exist in Europe and the US. The business models of Chinese tech companies enable the real-time chronicling of people’s lives, compared to the likes of Google and Facebook, which are limited to recording their users’ online activities through their likes, searches, photos, videos, and posts. Chinese online data tracks physical lives as well as online lives to create a very comprehensive, all-encompassing picture of Chinese individuals and their behaviour, emotions, psychology and even ideology. The country’s ubiquitous mobile apps and payment systems such as Taobao, T-Mall, JD.com, Alipay, WeChat, Meituan, DiDi, Mobike, and Ofo harvest the intimate details of where Chinese people go, when they do things, who they associate with, what they buy, what they eat, who they communicate with, what they talk about, what they think about, and even when and how well they sleep.

Western policymakers and business leaders who focus on the limits of China’s system should pay attention to Kai-Fu’s non-ideological exposition of what he describes as China’s ‘highly inefficient and

extraordinarily effective' system of 'mass entrepreneurship and mass innovation' that is fuelled with gushers of cash and empowered by bureaucrats throughout the country. These bureaucrats are under Party pressure to out-incubate each other and forced into a relentless cycle of development and production. His belief is that this unique Chinese cocktail of control and chaos is being stirred together with the country's "kill-or-be-killed" private sector business culture, which will provide China with significant advantages over the US in developing the coming waves of artificial intelligence applications.

It is likely that reviewers will focus on Kai-Fu's controversial prediction that within 15 years AI will have the technical ability to eliminate 40% to 50% of jobs in the US. This prediction is alarming, but it is important to point out the "technical ability" qualifier. He doesn't predict catastrophe. In fact, an exploration of mitigating strategies seems to be his overriding purpose for writing the book.

He lays out 'A Blueprint for Human Coexistence with AI' that explores such concepts as universal basic income, guaranteed minimum income and job sharing. He says that society needs to 'reconstruct our economies and rewrite our social contracts' to reward socially beneficial activities the same way we do economically productive activities. To fund this transformation, he calls for extracting heavy taxes from the companies and individuals who get ridiculously rich as the winners in the AI race.

Kai-Fu finishes by saying that he is proud of his accomplishments as an AI researcher and scientist. But he also regrets that his priorities have been misplaced. 'Instead of seeking to outperform the human brain,' he laments, 'I should have sought to understand the human heart.' This is the lesson he hopes to share with this book: humans can thrive in the age of AI, but only by harnessing compassion and creativity.

I hope the tech tycoons of China and the Silicon Valley pay attention to Kai-Fu's message.

*James McGregor is Greater China Chairman for APCO Worldwide, and author of two highly-regarded books: **No Ancient Wisdom, No Followers: The Challenges of Chinese Authoritarian Capitalism;** and **One Billion Customers: Lessons from the Front Lines of Doing Business in China.** As a journalist, McGregor covered Congress for Knight-Ridder during the Reagan administration, and was bureau chief*

in Taipei and Beijing for The Wall Street Journal. Switching to business, he was CEO of Dow Jones in China and later founded a China-focused research and advisory firm for hedge funds. McGregor also served as chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, National Committee on US-China Relations, Global Council of the Asia Society and is on the board of the US-China Education Trust. He has lived in China for 30 years and now splits his time between Shanghai and Beijing.