A research guide to China-Coast newspapers, 1822-1911

A RESEARCH GUIDE TO CHINA-COAST NEWSPAPERS, 1822-1911

by

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and

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FOREWORD

This guide opens an unexpected door. The "China Coast" and the "treaty ports" that flourished on it formed in their day the cultural frontier between the Chinese empire and the outside world. Much of their record is in the literature described in this volume, produced by that transplanted Western institution, the newspaper. Most of these newspapers were in English, but Macao, first and last, had twenty in Portuguese.

This is a complex subject. During the course of the century whole newspaper families grew up, genealogically affiliated--the China Mail group of Hong Kong included eleven different titles, and there were eight in the North-China Herald group of Shanghai. Rival publications, the outport press, American, French, German, Russian and Japanese journals added diversity. The vicissitudes of journalistic enterprise were compounded by treaty-port feuds and politics.

The resulting bibliographic complexity has required historical study, both of publications and of personnel. For much of this we are indebted to the detailed studies of Mr. Clark, whose M.A. dissertation at the University of London in 1961 dealt with the development of China-coast newspapers to 1881. Meanwhile Mr. King (now an associate professor of economics at the University of Kansas) has pursued a parallel interest for many years, and to him we are indebted for the final putting together of this joint volume, which also includes bibliographical data from the many additional sources and contributors credited in the Acknowledgments. As a result of this happy combination, the main section below, in its historical accounts of the various newspapers and the relations and policies of their publishers and editors, indicates something of the origin of those treaty-port feelings that burned so brightly in their day. The fifty pages of biographies, list of holdings, glossary, and various other lists and indices further enhance the utility of this research tool.

John K. Fairbank

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May 1965

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We wish now to acknowledge the essential contributions of the many other students of modern Chinese history who co-operated in this venture. J.M. Braga has provided material on his own valuable collection of Portuguese-language newspapers as well as supplementary information on Hong Kong journalism. T.R. Liu provided valuable research on Hong Kong. Lucien Bianco contributed the notes on the French-language newspapers. S.T. Leong undertook bibliographical research on Russian-language material. Chuzo Ichiko in Japan and Wolfgang Seuberlich in Germany undertook the tedious but important task of collecting precise information on library holdings. G. Raymond Nunn circularized libraries in the United States.

Many assisted the project with contributions and advice: N.P. Avtonomoff, Masataka Banno, Tieh-chun Chen, Jean Chesneaux, J.L. Cranmer-Byng, Robert L. Kirkpatrick, Karl Lo, Motoi Hiramatsu, T.G.N. Pearce, and Paul Rogers. Access to the Jardine Matheson archives was granted by Alan Reid and Matheson and Co. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions also made available their archives. We gratefully acknowledge the patient assistance given to us by the librarians with whom we consulted. Several also found themselves engaged in coordinating work or gave valuable bibliographical advice, including Paul J. McNiff, Geoffrey Bonsall, Edwin Beal, Jr., and the late Júlio Gonçalves.

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Catherine E. King edited and typed several versions of the manuscript. Bertha Ezell typed the final copy for photo-offset, while Lien-sheng Yang and Yeh-chien Wang supplied the calligraphy on the cover and in the text respectively. Elizabeth M. Matheson made key editorial recommendations, and Anne T. Harby undertook the final editing of the guide.

Frank H.H. King
Editor

Lawrence, Kansas
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I

THE CHARACTER AND USE OF CHINA-COAST NEWSPAPERS

This research guide is designed primarily to facilitate the use of Western-language newspapers published in China, including Hong Kong and Macao, during the late Ch'ing period. It contains information on several related topics, including those newspapers published in London concerned with news of China, and certain Chinese-language sheets published as an integral part of or in close connection with the Western-language newspapers. There is also an appendix listing Japanese-language newspapers published in China during the period through 1911. The guide consequently excludes consideration of purely missionary, official, and, with the exceptions noted above, Chinese-language publications. It also excludes price currents and shipping lists except to the extent that they either contained some news items or played a role in the development of China-coast newspapers. Certain borderline publications have been included.

The complex nature of Sino-Western relationships is well known. Current research is concerned with the diversity of opinion within the foreign communities relative to China policy, missionaries, local treaty-port government, internal Chinese political developments, and economic prospects. Not surprisingly contemporaries gave expression to this diversity in the many and various newspapers and periodicals published on the China coast and elsewhere. Indeed, the index to this study lists some 200 newspaper titles. Yet a random sampling of recent studies of the late Ch'ing period reveals that, with the exception perhaps of the North-China Herald (5.1) and the China Mail (3.4.1), these newspapers have been little used.

The reasons for this failure to utilize an obvious primary source are quite straightforward. First, newspapers are costly to store and difficult to catalogue; locating the several newspapers is in itself a major problem. Secondly, their very diversity minimizes their immediate usefulness. Before a newspaper can be used as a source, the student must know something about its contributors, editors, and publishers; he must be

able to assess its political and other bias and generalize as to its policy. The very variety of China-coast newspapers has made this task appear impractical, and the student has in consequence fallen back upon the two most readily available newspapers, the North-China Herald and the China Mail, whose life span covers almost our entire period.

By attempting to provide at least tentative answers to those questions which are a necessary preliminary to scholarly investigation, we hope to encourage both the use of the newspapers as a research tool and research into the history of China-coast journalism itself. Basic to this guide, therefore, is the comprehensive, alphabetically-arranged list of newspaper titles. This is immediately preceded by a chronological index permitting the student to determine the newspapers published in any year between 1822 and 1911. The guide also includes an introductory essay on the development of China-coast journalism; annotations which consider each title for which information is at all available and group those having editorial or ownership connection or which subsequently amalgamate; a biographical section dealing with editors and publishers; a list of extant copies by newspaper and library; and a bibliography which suggests sources for further research. Those reading Chinese-language texts may come across the Chinese title of a Western-language newspaper, and as these are not always direct translations, a glossary is provided. Few would recognize Te-ch'en pao 德臣報 as the China Mail, for example, even if they were aware of Dixson's early editorship.

The basic sources consulted in the preparation of this guide are, of course, the newspapers themselves, supplemented primarily by other writings of China-coast journalists. The Jardine Matheson archives proved invaluable. Secondary sources, however well-regarded for other purposes, have proved highly inaccurate in detail. The lists of library holdings are based, wherever possible, upon personal examination not only of card catalogues but also of the actual volumes. Records of newspaper holdings are particularly susceptible to error, and a visit to the stacks was usually rewarding, often surprising. The Chinese titles were obtained from histories of Chinese journalism, from company directories, and from the newspapers themselves.

We have stated the problems of effective use of China-coast newspapers as involving their identification, the location of extant copies, and assessment of their policies and reliability. A research guide cannot give definitive answers to these questions, but it can contribute by stating the problems and by taking first steps toward their solution. Indeed, the location problem may be soon resolved through a microfilming project sponsored by the University of Kansas.

Of the many titles listed in the index, which are most suitable as research tools? Obviously the answer depends upon the nature of the research project, but certain generalizations should prove useful. First, the value of a newspaper in a particular study is not to be measured by its ability to survive in the competitive China-coast scene. The Hongkong Register (3.3.2), for example, failed because the publisher, then in poor health, was unable to find a suitable successor; the China Mail survived periods of severe editorial criticism because of the sound financial base of the parent company.

Secondly, certain newspapers were known to be preeminent in their field. The Friend of China (3.1.2), for example, had a wider coverage of the developing Taiping rebellion than its contemporaries; the North China Herald was the official publisher of certain consular notices. For projects dealing with particular areas or particular national interests, the problem is simpler. The task of reading all newspaper sources outside the centers of Shanghai and Hong Kong or in languages other than English is not an overwhelming one, especially since extant copies of "outport" newspapers are limited in number.

Thirdly, some of the titles listed in the index are merely those of separate editions rather than independent newspapers. Grouping of titles in this guide has facilitated identification of such editions, but there is still a choice to be made.

The China-coast newspapers had their origins in foreign communities whose potential local subscribers numbered, at most, a few hundred. From the beginning, therefore, publishers attempted to meet the requirements of at least two audiences--the local residents and the home country. At first one edition served both markets, but quickly the custom of special

supplements evolved. For local residents an extra advertising sheet might appear, or a shipping list on a separate sheet inserted in or distributed with the weekly paper; for Europe a local news supplement might be added. Certain newspapers evolved the practice of giving their supplements different titles and then the task becomes considerably easier. For example, Andrew Dixson of Hong Kong's China Mail began circulation of Dixson's Hongkong Recorder (3.4.4) gratis in 1850, its income being derived solely from advertising. Holdings of this supplement have been located and are listed separately. The Hong Kong Times (3.7.3) had a local news supplement sufficiently separate to warrant individual mention in bibliographies and library catalogues, although it was included gratis with the overland edition.

These supplements proved only a temporary answer to the problem of different markets. As the size of the total market grew, newspapers could afford more than one edition, and the "overland edition" was born. The weekly newspapers had from the first been mailed to Europe, but the overland edition was published specifically to be sent via the Red Sea and Marseilles, then overland to England. The frequency and timing of publication coincided with the sailing of the mail ships. About 1860, the advertising supplements with their column of news developed into daily editions of the newspaper. For a time, therefore, one company might be publishing a daily, a weekly, and an overland edition. Subsequently the weekly might be eliminated with the principal title going in some cases to the daily and in others to the overland edition. The coming of the telegraph and other new developments in journalistic practices changed the requirements of all markets, and the overland edition became in some cases nothing more than a weekly mail edition containing reprints of the daily edition without the advertising pages.

Unfortunately, beyond this general pattern there was little uniformity. Selection of the right edition must be based on knowledge of the particular newspaper. For some the problem can be circumvented by consulting, for example, the London and China Telegraph (8.1.1-2), which was based on a cross-section of all China-coast newspapers and contained reprints of articles from outport publications no longer available.

Actual assessment of reliability and policy remains the most important and the most difficult of the student's tasks, however. China-coast newspapers,

especially during the first fifty years, were essentially personal. After identifying editor and publisher at the particular time in question and resolving the question as to who was the dominant force, the student can concentrate his attention on that dominant personality. An examination of the editorials, of comments by other newspapers, and of other writings by editor or publisher will very quickly reveal the attitudes and prejudices involved.

There still remains the question of reliability, which is an issue at two levels. First, most newspapers made general claims--they were the voice of a community, of some section of a community, or, sometimes, of the whole British or American nation. These claims cannot be accepted uncritically. Charges and counter-charges of influence and interest were commonplace. Most editors asserted complete editorial independence; yet there is often evidence to the contrary. Many editors claimed to speak for all those of their own nation; there is much to contradict this. We have made some preliminary judgments on these matters below. On the second level, the student is concerned with the accuracy of particular news articles. On this subject no generalization can be made. The information must be checked against other contemporary sources where at all possible. Opinions, of course, can be discounted given the known bias of a particular writer, but facts were as elusive then as they are today.

More specific comments on these and closely related topics are made in the following two sections.

Problems in the Interpretation of China-Coast Newspapers

John K. Fairbank has warned the translators of Ch'ing documents that they must have both an understanding of the background and way of thinking of the authors and the ability to adapt the literal translation into something meaningful in today's idiom. This task is not limited to translators; indeed, interpreters of nineteenth-century English-language material may have the more difficult task since they must overcome their apparent familiarity with the language!

We can change "trembling and prostrate your slave hears the Imperial pleasure" to "your instructions received," but are we similarly justified

or even permitted to translate the China-coast Englishman's "the semi-civilized Chinese" to "the Chinese, a people not yet conversant with the application of steam to transport"? Yet this is precisely what most writers meant by the term. Certainly a brief description of the characteristic problems and attitudes of the early journalists appears essential.

a. Language

"The Chinese--a people characterized by a marvelous degree of imbecility, avarice, conceit, and obstinacy..." is a description in good nineteenth-century style which would appear clear enough. There is ample historical evidence that many British supported James Matheson's view.

"The Chinaman is the best of society. He is always courteous and suave in his manners; shrewd and 'piquant' in his remarks, cheerful in his disposition," wrote the Shanghai Recorder (5.3.1) in 1867. This opinion, too, found support in the foreign community. We cannot conclude, therefore, that the attitude of British journalists to the Chinese was one of unrestrained contempt based on ignorance. Indeed, their attitude requires interpretation if the language of the newspaper is not to obscure the information it contains.

The unrestrained comments both pro and con are typical not only of the newspapers' judgments of the Chinese but also of all others they had occasion to notice. A Hong Kong governor, Sir George Bonham, was described in the relatively mild China Mail as a "humbug," "...not of the vain, good-natured, obliging class...but a cold, selfish, uncharitable, evasive, blustering, addle-pated humbug, who never did or expected a disinterested action, or enforced a policy even when persuaded it was right, if he also felt persuaded it would require to be defended." Nothing more severe was said of the Chinese officials, so often the target of criticism. In 1865, writing on another favorite target, Hong Kong's Daily Press (3.5.2) described Americans as "servile, impotent, selfish, and sneaking."

To dwell upon such quotations from China-coast newspapers would be to distort the relative severity of the criticisms. The editors wrote in the idiom of their time; they made harsh judgments, but these require

some translation if we are not to be side-tracked by the apparently grotesque phrases, by the unfamiliarity of the tone.

b. Opinions on the Chinese

Criticism of the Chinese was a continuous and detailed newspaper activity, and cannot be dismissed solely by revising the language. The problem is to place the criticism in perspective. First, such criticism must not be understood as necessarily the result of ignorance. Many editors were also Sinologues, all newspapers had on their staff or in their pay men capable of translating from the Chinese, and some--e.g. William Tarrant of the Friend of China--made good use of Chinese informants. Secondly, Western attitudes to the Chinese were based upon two traditions: the Protestant belief that those living without the Word of God were bound to a life of evil--and missionary contributions were designed to illustrate and support this conclusion; and the merchant support of free trade principles and the still surviving philosophical belief in the infallibility of man's reason, a reason which had reformed the governments of enlightened Europe, created the United States, and, if permitted free scope, would reform China. This latter tradition was supplemented by the new identity of progress with material innovations, especially steam, and the Chinese failure to adopt these was frequently cited as evidence of the backwardness of the people as a whole or the tyranny, corruption, or other vice of their government. Some few may find the conviction of the nineteenth-century foreigner refreshing; others, more familiar with the conversations at tea parties for foreign students, will be embarrassed. Neither reaction should be permitted to obscure the relevance of the information being presented.

c. Personalities

One key problem in the full use of the newspapers is, then, the severity of the language used in criticism. A second problem is closely related. The small size of the foreign communities, even in such a great city as Shanghai, tended to cause constructive comment on issues to degenerate into criticisms of personalities. The Canton Register (2.1.2)

disapproved of Captain Elliot's 1837 actions on substantial grounds but could not refrain from a personal attack: "...the reader will learn how early Captain Elliot betrayed his lust for the exercise of unconstitutional power over his countrymen."

Personalities played an essential role in Hong Kong, especially until the middle 1860's; the more relevant details have been included in our biographies of William Tarrant and Y.J. Murrow. So bitter indeed did these controversies become that they clouded judgments; thus, knowledge of the rivalries and personal relationships of editors and publishers is important to interpretation of their news items and editorials.

d. The Newspaper Staff

The China-coast newspaper, especially in the period before 1880, was usually directed by an editor of limited experience supported by an inadequate staff, dependent upon a narrow range of news sources. Indeed, until the 1860's newspapers were principally one-man affairs. By the end of the century the larger newspapers might have an editor, sub-editor, and possibly one to three local reporters, with correspondents in Europe and the outports, supplemented by Reuters' telegrams, translations from the Chinese, and some exchange with newspapers in other Western languages. The Shanghai Mercury (5.7.10), North-China Daily News (5.1.8), China Mail, South China Morning Post (3.9), Der Ostasiatische Lloyd (6.8.1) and L'Echo de Chine (6.7.1) were, for example, such newspapers, in scope and content comparable to their contemporaries elsewhere. The early newspapers require, however, some general description. Details are added subsequently in the guide.

Between 1866 and 1868 the Hongkong Daily Press was edited by Alfred Percy Sinnett, former editor of India's Pioneer. In 1873 William Curtis left his inherited Brighton Gazette to edit and publish the Hong Kong Times, Daily Advertiser and Shipping Gazette (3.7.3). These men may well have been the first editors in China with any significant journalistic experience. The Canton editors were former merchants or missionaries; the background of the Hong Kong editors, with the exception of Andrew Shortrede and his successors, was principally mercantile, although William Tarrant of the Friend of China