

# China Connections

## Foreigners in Treaty Port China

"I found the Chinese in Shanghai to be a very jolly people, much like colored folks at home. To tell the truth, I was more afraid of going into the world famous Cathay Hotel than I was of going into any public place in the Chinese quarters. Colored people are not welcomed at the Cathay. But beyond the gates of the International Settlement, color was no barrier. I could go anywhere", Langston Hughes (1902-1967) writes in his autobiography about his visit to Shanghai in 1934.<sup>1</sup> During its Treaty Port era (1843-1943), Shanghai transformed from a trading town of 270,000 residents to a world-renowned metropolis of over 5 million people, attracting fortune-hunters like businessmen, writers, musicians, architects, and refugees from all over the world.

Lena Scheen

THE ARTICLES IN THIS SECTION introduce us to some of these foreigners, such as the African-American Jazz pianist Teddy Weatherford (1903-1945), who Langston Hughes met during his visit: "a big, genial, dark man, something of a clown, Teddy could walk into almost any public place in the Orient and folks would break into applause". In his article, Andrew Field shows how Jazz musicians like Weatherford would have an everlasting impact on the formation of new music genres in the Asia-Pacific region. Likewise, Robert Bickers describes, in his article on the amateur photographer Jack Ephgrave (1914-1979), how the work of the Artists' Department at Capital Lithographers of the British American Tobacco in Shanghai, which Ephgrave headed, deeply influenced China's modern visual culture. Moreover, the articles focus on the importance of the study of material culture to a better understanding of the roles these foreigners played in their new homeland. For this reason, this section highlights the important work of various archival projects, such as the University of Bristol's 'Historical Photographs of China' and the Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA) whose unique collection not only includes written materials, but also art works, trophies, medals, and photographs. It is the objects, songs, diaries, and pictures these foreigners left behind that provide us with a glimpse of the city through the eyes of its outsiders.

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### Reference

- Hughes, L. 1993 (first published in 1964) *I Wonder as I Wander*, The Collected Works of Langston Hughes Series #14. New York: Hill & Wang.



Postcard from the Cathay Hotel and advertisement for the Canidrome Ballroom; both from Lethbridge, H.J. 1934. *All About Shanghai: A Standard Guidebook*.



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### Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai

The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai serves as the hub within the NYU Global Network University system to promote the study of Asian interactions and comparisons, both historical and contemporary. The overall objective of the Center is to provide global societies with information on the contexts for the reemerging connections between the various parts of Asia through research and teaching. Collaborating with institutions across the world, the Center seeks to play a bridging role between existing Asian studies knowledge silos. It will take the lead in drawing connections and comparisons between the existing fields of Asian studies, and stimulating new ways of understanding Asia in a globalized world.

### Asia Research Center at Fudan University

Founded in March 2002, the Asia Research Center at Fudan University (ARC-FDU) is one of the achievements of the cooperation of Fudan and the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS). Through the years, the center is making all the efforts to promote Asian Studies, including hosting conferences and supporting research projects. ARC-FDU keeps close connections with the ARCs in mainland China and many institutes abroad.

## Asian jazz diasporas: performing jazz in Pacific port cities, 1920-1945

Andrew Field

WHAT CAN THE SPREAD in Asia of the American popular music known as jazz, during its early period of the 1920s-40s, tell us about the dynamics of western colonialism and imperialism in this world region? How does the historian reconstruct and analyze the flow of jazz music as it spread into this part of the world? Who were the musicians who played key roles in spreading jazz in Asia and what were their trajectories? In what sorts of venues was jazz performed and who constituted the audiences for live jazz performances during this era? Finally, what was the overall impact of the jazz diaspora into Asia during this period, and is it really true that these jazz musicians laid the groundwork for the nativization of American popular music and the formation of modern pop music cultures in Asian countries?

While this paper cannot answer all of these questions in exhaustive detail, it constitutes a first attempt by the author to tackle a few and offer some initial answers. Many scholars and popular writers, including this author, have produced comprehensive book-length studies of the initial rise and spread of jazz in specific cities and countries, including Bombay, Shanghai, the Philippines, and Japan. Others have written articles about jazz and

popular music in South and Southeast Asian countries and cities, particularly India, yet until now the vectors and networks by which jazz spread around Asia as a whole have remained somewhat mysterious.

One key observation is that the spread of jazz throughout Asia was carried out mainly through the vehicle of passenger liners that cruised along networks of port cities. The passenger liner was the ideal vehicle for jazz, since it brought the musicians themselves to far flung ports throughout the Asia Pacific. These musicians were sometimes given jobs on the liners entertaining passengers, and they could disembark at any port and explore and sometimes even settle in port cities where they might also find an audience for their music. In this sense, the spread of jazz in this world region is best understood through the oceanic networks of trade, commerce and culture that emerged through the forces of western colonialism and imperialism, but which were far more deeply embedded in the history of oceanic trading networks in Asia. Similarly, jazz was a modern western invention, and yet as it spread across the globe, it took on the trappings of local musical cultures, which often played a mediating role in bringing jazz to 'native' peoples in these countries and cities.



'The Plantation Quartet of Crickett Smith' - Teddy Weatherford, Rudy Jackson, and Roy Butler. © Naresh Fernandes, *Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age*, Roli Books, 2012.

Throughout this period, certain cities served as fundamental nodes in the distribution of jazz throughout Asia. Among those cities were Shanghai, Tokyo, Manila, and Bombay. These cities boasted the largest concentration of spaces that regularly hosted jazz performances, keeping in mind that most if not all performances during that period were accompanied by partnered dancing. Playing key roles among these spaces were international hotels, which invariably featured ballrooms, as well as dedicated jazz cabarets and nightclubs for dancing. Shanghai



# The Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA)

Steve Upton



THIS IS AN INTRODUCTION to the Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA), in Concord, New Hampshire, USA, an unusual collection of materials regarding foreigners in late Qing and Republican China. USFA is a private non-institutional archive curated by, and located in the home of R. Stevenson 'Steve' Upton. Upton is presently participating with Professor Wang Min (Institute of History, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) in developing a worldwide network of people (not limited to those who hold academic positions) who each have a serious interest in one or more aspects of the history of foreigners in late Qing and/or Republican China (especially at Shanghai, Tianjin, and/or other treaty ports, major cities, or leased territories). Anyone interested in joining this network should contact either Upton or Professor Wang, and should provide information about his/her background and pertinent interests. Anyone who lived as a foreigner in pre-1950 China is especially encouraged to join the network. One special benefit for members of the network is that they receive preference in obtaining access to USFA.

A high percentage of the materials at USFA is not known to be available in any other archive. Most of the materials are from the period 1790s until 1950s and pertain to foreigners in China or to Sino-Foreign interaction generally. Most of the materials at USFA can be described as photographs, letters, documents, other ephemera, works of art, trophies, medals, and other non-paper objects. In addition, USFA has some extremely rare or unique books and periodicals, as well as more

1: The front of a postcard regarding the 1 August 1908 Swiss National Day celebration at Hankow (part of Wuhan).  
 2: Badge for the British celebration at Tianjin of the 1937 coronation of King George VI.  
 3: A luggage label from the Majestic Hotel, Shanghai.  
 4: A luggage label from the Station Hotel, Shanhaiguan.  
 5: A bottle cap from Crystal Ltd., Tianjin, a bottler of aerated water.  
 6: A wall plaque which was displayed at St. Giles British School, Qingdao, and which shows an emblem of that school.  
 Images courtesy of Upton Sino-Foreign Archive.

common publications. Most of the non-photographic materials include written information which is wholly or partly in a non-Chinese language. Some of the items at USFA formerly belonged to notable people, including Sun Yat-sen, Li Hongzhang, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek.

USFA has unusually important collections on certain topics. It has the world's largest and most diverse collection on schools in pre-1950 China that were primarily for foreign students, and also has some notable materials regarding some of the schools in pre-1950 China that were primarily for Chinese students. USFA has one of the largest collections on U.S. military forces in China, other than the collections at the U.S. National Archives and at the official archives of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The archive also has unique and important materials regarding other foreign military forces of pre-1950 China. USFA has special collections regarding Jewish communities in China during the first half of the 20th century, and regarding people of Russian Empire/USSR background in pre-1950 China. Some of USFA's collections regarding pre-1950 Shanghai, such as the one on clubs and recreation and the one regarding hotels, are probably the most important that one can find outside Shanghai. USFA has one of the largest diversified collections of materials regarding Masonic organizations in pre-1950 China. USFA's collection regarding pre-1950 Tianjin is among the most significant that can be found outside Tianjin. The archive has rare and unique materials regarding the Chinese Maritime Customs, Chinese Salt Administration, and Imperial

Chinese Navy. USFA also has special materials regarding foreign organizations whose activities in pre-1950 China included intelligence/espionage work, such as the Office of Strategic Services, the Sino-American Cooperative Organization, and the Counter-Intelligence Corps.

Many of the materials at USFA have not yet been listed in catalogs, but have been organized into files and boxes on specific places and topics. Many of the catalogs which thus far have been prepared pertain to pre-1950 Shanghai. Examples include (a) Shanghai Clubs & Recreation, (b) Shanghai Hotels & Apartment Buildings, (c) Shanghai Public Utilities, (d) Shanghai Restaurants, Cafes, Bars, Cabarets, Night Clubs, Dance Halls, etc., and (e) Shanghai Cinemas, Theatres, Movies, Plays, Opera, Dance, Concerts, etc.

Scholars are welcome to make inquiries regarding whether USFA has any materials about a particular person, entity, or event. Anyone with a serious interest in obtaining an invitation can contact Upton at [rsu77@alum.dartmouth.edu](mailto:rsu77@alum.dartmouth.edu), and provide a fairly detailed description of his/her background and any particular reasons for his/her interest in visiting USFA. A number of the past visitors to USFA have been professors from major Chinese universities. Because the place where USFA is located is primarily a home, and because of limitations to Upton's availability, usually not more than five or six invitations are issued per year to individuals who have not previously visited USFA.

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arguably had the highest concentration of such spaces for jazz musicians in Asia between the 1920s and 1940s and was the primary node for the spread of jazz in Asia. Other port cities also served as important nodes for the concentration and distribution of jazz performers throughout Asian port cities. In addition to bringing American jazz artists, arguably the most influential and important of all, to Asia, these establishments also nurtured 'native' jazz movements, even if the musicians themselves were sometimes trained in other countries (as in the case of Japanese musicians learning jazz in Shanghai).

Even so, jazz was being performed in a much larger number of cities and countries throughout Asia. In China, jazz bands could be found in Beijing, Qingdao, Weihai, Tianjin, and other treaty port towns. Hong Kong also boasted its own lively jazz scene. In Japan, cities such as Osaka, Kobe, and Yokohama had jazz clubs. In India, Calcutta and Delhi both featured jazz, as did Goa. Jazz could also be heard in clubs and hotels in other Southeast Asian countries. Kuala Lumpur and Penang in present-day Malaysia had jazz bands, as did Batavia and Surabaya in what is now Indonesia.

Wherever there was a steady presence of westerners (i.e., Europeans or Americans), there was an appetite for jazz, which meant that nearly every trading port and capital city in Asia featured at least one hotel with a ballroom and jazz band. Yet because jazz music and its associated dances spread so rapidly and became popularized so quickly, native elites also learned the

dances and became fans of jazz, and in many cases, natives (and in some cases Eurasian or Anglo-Indian musicians) took up the jazz idiom and invested it with local musical cultures and meanings. Because of its tendency to be re-shaped by local cultures, jazz thus plays an ambiguous role as both a prop for western colonial imperialism and as a mode of resistance to colonial authority and power. The fact that jazz was first and foremost an African American cultural form further complicated the dynamics of jazz as a product of western colonialism and imperialism in Asia.

In order to flesh out the story of how jazz spread into Asia and what this transmission meant to Asian societies and cultures, it is essential to follow the threads of the stories of those who contributed to that spread. Probably the most important carriers of jazz into Asia, as mentioned above, were African American jazz musicians, who began to arrive in Asian port cities in the 1920s along with the growing craze for jazz music. Some of them were hired directly from the United States, while others came to Asia via Paris. Most of them made their way first to Shanghai, though by the 1930s Bombay became a popular destination as well. While there were some influential white musicians, including both American and Russian jazz artists, the African Americans were by far the most sought after and exerted the greatest influence on local jazz scenes including both fans and musicians. Yet it is important to also acknowledge the vital role that Filipino jazz musicians played in carrying jazz across the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

The single most important figure in the history of the spread of jazz in Asia during this period was unarguably Teddy Weatherford, an African American stride pianist. Between his arrival in Shanghai in 1926 and his death in Calcutta in 1945, Weatherford contributed more than any other jazz musician to the popularization of this form of music in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to playing for many years in the best clubs of Shanghai, he also traveled to many other cities in Asia and performed in hotels and clubs, before settling in India for much of WWII (although he continued to travel then as well). Weatherford was also responsible for recruiting Buck Clayton and his Harlem Gentlemen from the USA to China, which was undoubtedly the best jazz band to perform in Shanghai during the 1930s. Weatherford educated many 'native' musicians in Japan and India as well as (presumably) other countries. Though his story is still fairly obscure, we can trace its outlines, focusing on his travels around Asia via the passenger liners using period newspapers and personal archives left by other musicians such as Buck Clayton and Roy G. Butler.

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