



# Historical photographs of China:

## *the collections*

Robert Bickers

The current programme of work grew out of a Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation and Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project on the 'History of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service'. A large number of descendants or relatives of former members of the Service contacted the research team via its website, and they often had photographs and documents which they were willing to share with the project team. Moreover, as the Customs project researchers explored collections relating to the Service archived in Britain it was also realised that some of these included photographs that were not easily accessible to scholars. A similar pattern had accompanied earlier research on the Shanghai Municipal Police, and it became apparent that large numbers of potential highly interesting historical photographs, relating to many different facets of the foreign experience in China, were in private hands in the United Kingdom. The 'Historical Photographs of China' project aims to locate, digitise and disseminate this virtual resource to the scholarly community, and to the wider public. Starting with photographs relating to the Maritime Customs, and related subjects, the team began processing material in early 2006. The photographs in the 'Historical Photographs of China' collection mostly come from the sources outlined below. Currently 3,000 images are publicly available on the project website (<http://chp.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/>), with others coming on stream in 2008-09. Those photographs relating to Shanghai are also accessible via the 'Virtual Shanghai'

project pages at <http://virtualshanghai.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/>, as the project is working together with the team at Lyon led by Christian Henriot.

The project was accorded Academy Research Project status by the British Academy in 2007. The team hopes to secure additional funding, and welcomes additional suggestions of material, or interest in collaboration. There is clearly more out there that we are already aware of than we can work on. The website will continue to grow, and a travelling exhibition is showing at The Museum of East Asian Art, Bath, from 3 January-13 April 2008, and at Durham University's Oriental Museum from 25 April to 30 August 2008. An introduction to the project and its collections has also been published, with reproductions of 32 images across the wide range of collections now digitised, including William Armstrong's smiling 'peasants' and his Shanghai street-scenes, as well as Fu Bingchang's smart young women and his seemingly lighthearted Guangzhou revolutionaries.

**William Armstrong collection:** c.500 photographs taken between 1897 and 1927, in four albums, belonging to William Armstrong, a Scottish member of the Shanghai International Settlement's Municipal Police force. Many appear to have been taken by him, but some were probably purchased or otherwise acquired through work channels. *Owned privately.*

**Banister family collection:** c.900 photographs, 1890s to early 1920s, by various photographers. The Reverend William

Banister (1855-1928) served with the Church Missionary Society in Fujian province and Hong Kong, and was created first (Anglican) Bishop of Kwangsi and Hunan in 1909. His son, T. Roger Banister, served in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (1913-46). *Owned privately.*

**Carrall family collection:** c.300 photographs in two albums, put together by the daughters of James Wilcocks Carrall (Imperial Maritime Customs Service, served 1868-1902). The pictures date from approximately 1896 to 1903, when the Carralls lived in Chefoo; many were apparently taken by Muriel Fawcus Carrall. Now transferred to Queen's University Belfast Library, Special Collections.

**Cottrell collection:** 130 photographs, 1925-51, belonging to a family of Methodist missionaries working in Yunnan province. Many were taken by Fred or Marjorie Cottrell. *Owned privately.*

**Crowley collection:** scrap book, containing ephemera and 25 photographs, all relating to the accidental death and subsequent funeral of Sub Inspector John Crowley, a British member of the Shanghai Municipal Police (served 1919-27), 1927-8. *Owned privately.*

**Fu Bingchang collection:** c.2,500 photographs (loose and in albums) and negatives, many taken by Fu Bingchang, 1920s to 1950s. A graduate of Hong Kong University, Fu was subsequently involved in revolutionary politics in Canton, serving, in amongst other posts, as Superintendent of Customs

and Commissioner for Foreign Affairs at Canton 1922-6, as Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. (1943-9), and as Vice President of the Judicial Yuan in Taiwan 1956-1965. *Owned privately.*

**Hedgeland collection:** c.600 photographs, 1898 to 1927, in three albums, documenting the career of R. F. C. Hedgeland (Chinese Maritime Customs, served 1899-1930). Many of the photos were taken by Hedgeland and others assembled by him. *SOAS Library, Archives, PP MS 82.*

**Oswald collection:** five albums and some loose prints of this tea-trading Foochow family's photographs, 1880s to 1930s. These include early 'instantaneous' snapshot photography, as well as some fine professionally produced photos. The photographs are part of a wider collection of papers relating to the family and their business which is awaiting cataloguing at SOAS Archives.

**Palmer collection:** 150 photos from China in two albums. William A. L. Palmer served in the Shanghai Municipal Police (1913-16), and subsequently worked for the Asiatic Petroleum Company in China. The photographs date from the 1920s. *Owned privately.*

**Peck collection:** 137 mostly early 20th century photos, taken or acquired by Harold Evans Peck, Shanghai Municipal Police (1908-36) and collected in one album. Family portraits, work-related photographs, executions, and images of political and military events are juxtaposed in this striking collection. *Owned privately.*

**Phipps collection:** four albums created by Ann Phipps, a niece of the diplomat Sir Miles Lampson (1st Baron Killern), containing photos, documents, and ephemera - souvenirs of long visits to Beijing in 1928-9 and 1932-3 when she lived at the Legation with her uncle, who was serving as British Minister to China. *Owned privately.*

**G. W. Swire collection:** a remarkable collection of celluloid negatives in over 30 annotated albums, including c.1,800 images of China. The photographs were taken by G. Warren Swire between 1907 and the 1940s. Although based in London, Swire, Chairman of the firm John Swire & Sons from 1929-46, made regular visits to China. His photographs record the infrastructure of the firm in China, its offices, warehouses, housing and shipping, as well as the built environments it worked in - bunds, harbours, settlements and concessions. Although clearly developed as a functional visual *aide-memoire* (the firm was closely managed from London), Swire was a talented amateur, as the photographs demonstrate. These negatives will be transferred to SOAS in 2008.

**Wilkinson collection:** an album of family snaps from the 1930s and two albums of scenic photographs, probably purchased by Edward Edelson Wilkinson, who worked for the Asiatic Petroleum Company. *Owned privately.*

### Photograph details

Fig.1, An unknown woman, c.1930s. Fu Bingchang: Fu Bingchang collection (fu-n602)

Fig.2, A rural woman, Taihu region west of Shanghai, c.1923-25. W. Armstrong: Armstrong collection (ar03-009)

Figs.3-4, A page from one of William Armstrong's albums, women and girls, Taihu region west of Shanghai, c.1923-25. W. Armstrong: Armstrong collection (ar03-p60)

Fig.5, Aftermath of the storming of the North Chekiang (Zhejiang) Road barrier, Shanghai, by deserting White Russian mercenaries seeking asylum in the International Settlement as the National Revolutionary Army takes the city, c.22 March 1927. Unknown photographer: Armstrong collection (ar04-171)

Figs.6-7, A page from one of William Armstrong's

albums, women and girls, Taihu region west of Shanghai, c.1923-25. W. Armstrong: Armstrong collection (ar03-p55)

Fig.8, Portrait of an unknown woman, c.1920s. Fu Bingchang: Fu Bingchang collection (fu-n029)

Fig.9, Mikhail Borodin, Zhang Taili, and Wang Jingwei, c.1925-26. Fu Bingchang: Fu Bingchang collection (fu-n155)

Fig.10, Chinese staff at the Customs House, Tianjin (Tientsin), 1905. Unknown photographer: Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he01-158)

Fig.11, The makeshift 'club house' at Nanning golf links, Guangxi province, c.1919. Unknown photographer: Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he03-200)

Fig.12, Customs Fourth Assistants R. F. C. Hedgeland (left) and P. P. M. Krèmer (right) in Nanking (Nanjing), c.1899-1903. Unknown photographer:

Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he01-085)

Fig.13, Taking tea with the British Consul, Hoihow (Haikou), Hainan, 1898. Unknown photographer: Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he01-046)

Fig.14, The Nanking (Nanjing) Customs boatmen, 1900. Unknown photographer: Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he-08)

Fig.15, Public burning of seized opium attended by Customs employees and Chinese officials, Nanning, Guangxi province, 1919. Unknown photographer: Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he03-073)

Fig.16, Advertisement for the latest version of the "Brownie" in 1934. The promotion text promises satisfaction for both adults and infants. After Keda zazhi, [Kodak magazine], February, 1934, back cover.

Fig.17, The Assistant's House, Lappa Customs Station, Macao in 1906. Framed photographs on the wall

include images of the empress dowager. Unknown photographer: Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he-511)

Fig.18, The empress dowager Ci Xi with the Guangxu empress (right) and other royal women, photographed by Xunling. After Xu Qixian et al., eds., Gugong zhen-cang renwu zhaopian huicui [Exquisite Figure - Pictures from the Palace Museum] (Beijing, 1994): 39

Fig.19, Min Chin with a camera, Northern Hot springs, 12 Feb 1940, Fu Bingchang: Fu Bingchang collection (fu01-025)

Fig.20, A page from one of William Armstrong's albums, women and girls, Taihu region west of Shanghai, c.1923-25. W. Armstrong: Armstrong collection (ar03-p57)

Fig.21, Palace eunuchs, undated. After Lin Jing, ed., Wan Qing taijian gongnü lüeying [Impressions of late Qing eunuchs and palace women] (Beijing, 2002): 6

Fig.22, The Qixian Tobacco Agency's processing plant at Quwo (Shanxi province), ca. 1920. Two photography studios had done business in Qixian since perhaps as early as 1902 at the same time that several members of the elite acquired their own equipment. After Cao Yu, ed., Qixian laozaopian (Taiyuan, 2004), 51.

Fig. 23, Customs staff outside the Customs House, Nanning, Guangxi province, c.1920. Hedgeland is sitting front centre. Unknown photographer: Hedgeland collection, SOAS (he01-260)