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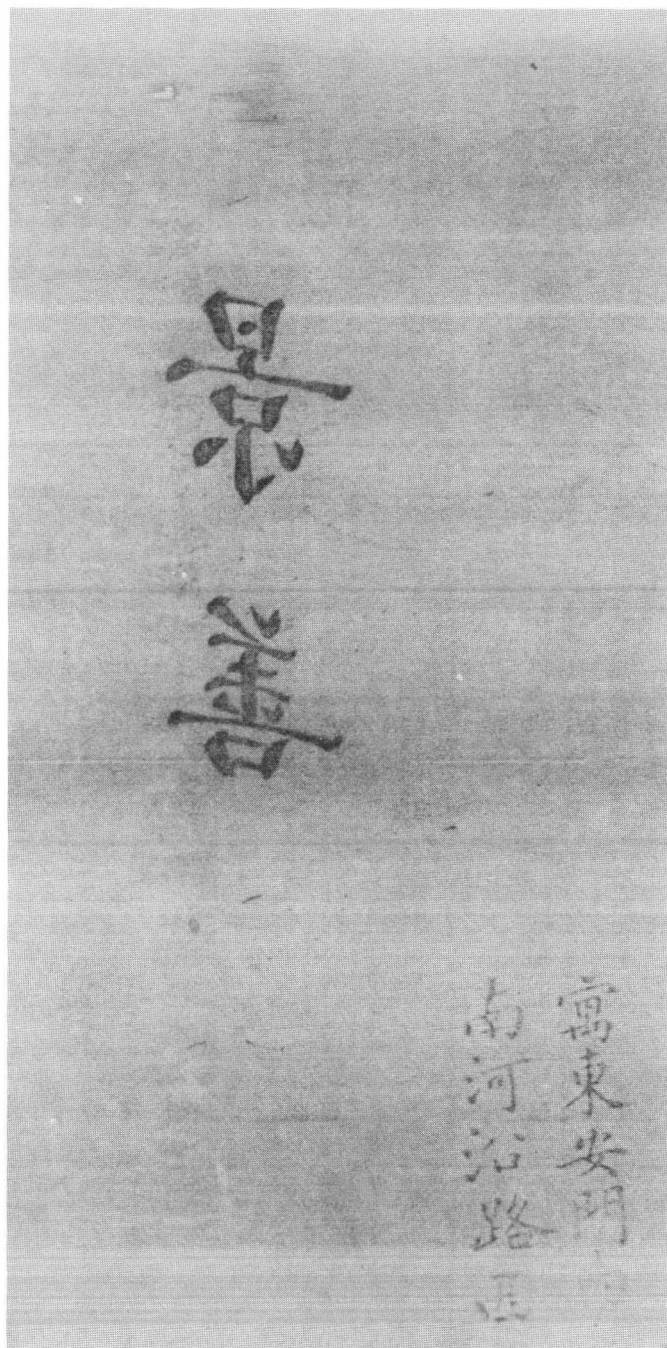
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- Cover illustration    *'Rokuro'* [Lathel], by Tachibana Minkō 橘岷江, in  
                              *Saiga shokunin burui* 彩畫職人部類  
                              [Illustrations of different types of craftsmen], Edo, 1770

**Figure 1**

*The reverse side of Ching-shan's visiting-card (original size), showing his address in the lower right-hand corner: "Residence, west side of Nan-bo-yen, inside Tung-an men" (given to the writer by Liu Ts'un-yan, Professor Emeritus of the Australian National University, from the collection of his father, Liu Tsung-ch'uan)*



## THE CHING-SHAN DIARY: A CLUE TO ITS FORGERY

史 Lo Hui-min

This is a revised version of a paper for a conference commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Boxer Uprising held in Tsinan, Shantung province, in October 1990. It deals with the unresolved controversy surrounding the so-called *Ching-shan Diary* 景善日記, one of the best-known documents in modern Chinese history. In spite of evidence marshalled against its authenticity, the Diary continues to exercise a wide and undeserved influence, and remains an enigma for many scholars. This paper introduces a clue from Ching-shan's records which, it is hoped, will prove the Diary's forgery beyond doubt, thereby helping to lay to rest this long-drawn-out controversy. Material published here for the first time, along with related questions and larger issues, will be dealt with more fully in a forthcoming book, *The Quest for the Ghost of Ching-shan*, in which assistance received from various individuals and institutions will be acknowledged.

Ching-shan 景善(景山) was a Manchu of the Magiya (Sinicized as Ma-chia 馬佳) clan from the district of Sui-fen 綏芬, where his great-great-great-great-grandfather, Tung-shan 董山(東三), enlisted in the Plain White Banner Corps 正白旗 on the establishment of the Banner system in the early seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> For the services rendered by this ancestor, who was made a captain, or *tso-ling* 佐領, the family enjoyed certain privileges associated with the hereditary post, which, however, yielded diminishing returns with time.<sup>2</sup> Although Ching-shan's great-grandfather, P'u-lien 普璉, managed to gain employment as a government official, becoming in due course the *chih-fu* 知府 (equivalent, in this case, to a present-day mayor) of Yunnanfu, the capital of the province of that name, Ching-shan's father, Sung-ling 嵩靈(嵩甯), was the first in the seven generations of his branch of the family to enter the dynasty's ruling hierarchy through the so-called *cheng-t'u* 正途 ('proper channel'): he succeeded in passing the provincial examination in 1819, and became a county magistrate 知縣 in Honan province, with which post he ended his official career.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Magiya clan derived its name from its place of origin in the part of north-eastern Manchuria which after 1858 became a Sino-Russian border region. The district in which Sui-fen is situated, traversed from 1896 by the Russian railway to Vladivostok, (euphemistically known as the Chinese Eastern Railway), was a point of concentration of Magiya clan settlement. The Plain White Banner corps, in which Ching-shan's seventh-generation ancestor enlisted, formed the vanguard of the invading Manchu forces which captured Peking on 6 June 1644, commanded by Dorgon 多爾袞 (1612–50, the fourteenth son of Nurhachi), who, as Regent during the minority of his nephew Fu-lin (the Emperor Shun-chih), ruled the conquered country with his policy of assimilation, adhered to with little change by subsequent rulers, a policy which led to the obliteration of the Manchus as a separate people with an distinctive culture even before the dynasty's overthrow in 1911. Ching-shan's own family well illustrates this process, one in which, in the words of the member for Lyme Regis, Gibson Bowes, in a British House of Commons debate at the time of the Boxer Uprising: "Twenty-one times has China been invaded, and twenty-one times has China absorbed the invader, and the invader has become Chinese." (Hansard, 4th series, vol. 85, col.423.)

<sup>2</sup> It is not known whether Tung-shan lived long enough to take part in the invasion of China, as his son, Ching-shan's sixth- /OVER

/generation ancestor, Fu-k'e 富喀, who inherited the *tso-ling* post, would most probably have done. *Tso-ling* was both an official title and an administrative unit within a banner corps, sometimes described as equivalent, for all practical purposes, to a Chinese *hsien* or county, except that it was mobile. Some Manchu banner corps grew in time to embrace as many as eighty *tso-ling*. Certain aspects of this arrangement were retained long after the old Manchu structure had been absorbed into the traditional Chinese administrative system. The hereditary *tso-ling* post to which Tung-shan was appointed passed, after his son Fu-k'e, down a different branch of the family from Ching-shan's.

<sup>3</sup> For the careers of Ching-shan's great-grandfather, P'u-lien, and father, Sung-ling, see *Chin-shen-lu*; and also Sung-ling's provincial examination record for 1819. (For the precise whereabouts of such records, see Lo Hui-min's forthcoming book on Ming and Ch'ing examination results.)

<sup>4</sup> Ching-shan's birth date is discussed in the Appendix at the end of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Provincial examinations were resumed in 1645, a year after the new dynasty was established in Peking. With very few exceptions, the normally triennial provincial examinations held in the capital started invariably on the 6th day of the 8th moon, and those of 1819 and 1859 were no exception.

<sup>6</sup> The classification of results in the normally triennial metropolitan examination was not dissimilar to that of Oxford and Cambridge—though most Chinese candidates would have disagreed with Evelyn Waugh's Cousin Jasper, that "... either a first or a fourth. There is no value in anything between. Time spent on a good second is time thrown away." Unlike Oxbridge, however, the number of first Class Honours in the traditional Chinese system was limited to three, while Second and Third Class Honours were awarded in pre-determined proportion and number, as was the total number of degrees awarded in any given year. The Metropolitan examination consisted of four separate stages: the *hui-shih* was only the first stage, to select the desired number of candidates for that year, normally between 300 and 400 out of some 6–8,000 provincial graduates. The remaining three stages, *fu-shih*, *tien-shih* and *ch'ao-k'ao*, were held, since before Ching-shan's time, in different halls within the Palace precinct.

Born in the fourth year of the Emperor Tao-kuang (on 3 December 1824), sixteen years before the Opium War, Ching-shan was brought up to follow his father's official path; but he was to do very much better.<sup>4</sup> It was he who brought the family fortunes to a pinnacle before they crashed as a result of the Boxer Uprising. In 1859, a few months before the Anglo-French expeditionary forces sacked the Summer Palace 圓明園 outside Peking, Ching-shan passed the provincial examination held in the capital 順天鄉試, forty years to the very day after his father had done so.<sup>5</sup> Coming 32nd in the list of 243 successful candidates, he showed himself to be well above the average as a scholar. Four years after that achievement, in 1863, he asserted a further claim to high office in the Empire by gaining in the metropolitan examination the *chin-shih* 進士 degree, the highest in the system. Ranked 122nd out of the 200 successful candidates in the *hui-shih* 會試 (primary round), Ching-shan improved his position in the *fu-shih* 覆試 (revision test), gaining the 22nd place in the Second Class list, and ended up in the *tien-shih* 殿試, or Palace examination, to lead the Third Class Honours list of 119; he made a further advance on being promoted to the Second Class in the *ch'ao-k'ao* 朝考 (Court examination), and was chosen as one of fifty-six scholars to spend two years of further study in the much honoured imperial academy for the élite—the Han-lin yuan 翰林院.<sup>6</sup>

Upon being released from his Han-lin internship in 1865, Ching-shan was thrown into the bureaucratic machine. Unlike his father who, as noted earlier, ended his working life in provincial government at county level, Ching-shan was to spend the remainder of his life in the capital and its immediate environs, with the exception of two brief stints—at Chengtu in 1879 and at Nan-ch'ang in 1888 in his capacity as chief examiner 正考官 for the provincial examinations of Szechwan and Kiangsi provinces respectively.<sup>7</sup>

Starting off as a junior secretary, or *chu-shih* 主事, in the Board of Finance 戶部 with a rank (6A in the bureaucratic nine-tier hierarchy) one degree above that which his father had attained (7A) at the end of his magisterial career, Ching-shan moved steadily upwards over the next eighteen years through various boards and departments until 1883, when he was appointed one of the two Manchu vice-presidents 滿侍郎 of the Board of Works 工部 with the rank of 2A—the same as a viceroy 總督 and half a degree above that of a provincial governor 巡撫. There, however, his official progress came to a halt, and for the next eleven years he merely moved sideways from one vice-ministerial post to another across four of the six Boards of the central government—those of War 兵部 and Punishments 刑部 being the two exceptions. Although only very few officials ever reached the level Ching-shan did, the arrest in his progress is nevertheless quite noticeable. In 1894, soon after being one of the high metropolitan officials singled out for honours on the anniversary of the Empress-Dowager's sixtieth birthday,<sup>8</sup> he was summarily dismissed from the vice-presidency of the Board of Rites 禮部 and ordered to retire. The

official reason given for his removal was his "indifferent ability" 才具平庸.<sup>9</sup>

In a system of government in which neither corruption nor incompetence was necessarily a disability so long as patronage played an effective role, the circumstances of, and pretext for, Ching-shan's dismissal smacks of political intrigue. Indeed, although he was censured more than once during his career—notably in 1883 for failing, when joint chief examiner in the Revision test for the selection of teachers in Chinese for the Imperial Clan School 官學, to detect the impersonation of a candidate, and in the following year, while serving as vice-president of the Board of Finance—neither censure, however justified according to the bureaucratic code, was unusual or in any way reflected badly on his competence or integrity.<sup>10</sup> Yet it must be admitted that as a member of the ruling Manchu élite, who enjoyed advantages in the scheme of advancement in government relative to the Han Chinese, Ching-shan's halt at vice-ministerial level for over a decade has led some to take literally the official reasons given for his dismissal.<sup>11</sup>

Nothing particular is known of his achievements, either as a scholar or as an official or indeed as anything else, though this may simply be due to our ignorance, considering that it has taken over eighty years for researchers to dig out even basic data of the kind to permit the above paragraphs to be written with any confidence.<sup>12</sup> Yet the fact remains that we know little about the man beyond the mere skeleton of information afforded by his formal curriculum vitae, which, while allowing some assessment of him, gives no glimpse of his personality and hardly makes exciting reading.<sup>13</sup> References to Ching-shan in the records of his colleagues are invariably so bland that one hears a name but does not see a person, a name which would, in all probability, have lain undisturbed in archival obscurity but for the appearance in 1910, some sixteen years after his dismissal and ten years after his death, of a diary said to have been kept by him during the

/The *fu-shih*, or revision test (introduced in 1712 and held from 1801 in Pao-ho tien), was followed by the *tien-shih*, or Palace examination, which determined the class of honours and order of merit. The final examination was the *ch'ao-k'ao*, at which stage the Han-lin scholars 庶吉士 were selected. Those chosen had to pass another examination on their release after two years; the best were kept on there until a suitable metropolitan or provincial post became available, while the rest were distributed by lots to the various ministries at the rank of *chu-shih* (6A) and to posts in the provinces. Ching-shan, though he did fairly well, was one of those not retained in the Han-lin yuan.

<sup>7</sup> The duration of the provincial examination was normally a month, or slightly longer. The official travelling time allowed from Peking to Chengtu, the capital of Szechwan province, was 80 days (or 160 days both ways) and to Nan-ch'ang, the capital of Kiangsi province, 60 days (or 120 days both ways). Ching-shan's total absence on these two trips therefore amounted to about one year. The examiners would normally arrive just before the examination was due to begin and leave as soon as the revision test was over. On the two occasions when Ching-shan was chief examiner, he had as his assistant examiner two men, both of whom would play a well-known role during the Boxer Uprising. Hsü Ching-ch'eng 許景澄 (1845–1900), his deputy for the 1879 Szechwan provincial examination, figured prominently in the *Ching-shan Diary*. A *chin-shih* of 1868 and, like Ching-shan, a Han-lin scholar, Hsü was for many years minister in Paris, Berlin, Vienna and St Petersburg, and in 1900 was a minister of the Tsung-li yamen (the Chinese foreign office) and a vice-president of the Board of Civil Service 吏部. He memorialized strongly against the violation of international practice and the undiplomatic treatment of foreign envoys, arousing the ire of the war party led by the Empress-Dowager, and was summarily executed, together with his co-signatory, Yuan Ch'ang 袁昶, on 28 July 1900. Though the execution was a great public event in the capital, the *Diary*, who sometimes recorded the events of those days by the hour, not only has the name of the supervisor of the execution wrong, but even the date of the event. A photograph of /over

Figure 2

A portrait of Hsu Ching-ch'eng taken from his posthumous collected works, Hsu Wen-su kung i-shu





/Hsu is reproduced in figure 2. Chu Tsu-mou 朱祖謀 (1857–1921), Ching-shan's deputy in the Kiangsi provincial examination of 1888, was a *chin-shih* of 1883 and also a Han-lin scholar. As a sub-chancellor of the Grand Secretariat (*nei-ko hsueh-shih* 內閣學士), he was present at the Court audience called on 16 June 1900 to discuss the question of war against the foreign powers, and his outspoken condemnation of the war party provoked the Empress-Dowager's rage, but he managed to escape any worse punishment than a fierce rebuke. The nostalgic Diarist mentions the stormy Court meeting but not Chu by name, nor, curiously, his past association with the two men, with each of whom he had spent some six months in daily intimate proximity. See figure 3 for a sample of Chu's calligraphy.

<sup>8</sup> *Veritable records of the T'e-tsung reign*, Book 332, p. 4a (1/1/24th year, or 6 February 1894).

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, Book 333, p. 9a, (24/1/24th year, or 1 March 1894).

<sup>10</sup> For both incidents see the "Ching-shan" file in the archives of the Bureau of National History, Taipei; also Ch'eng Ming-chou 程明洲, "Suo-wei Ching-shan jih-chi che" [The so-called Ching-shan Diary, or "The case of the Ching-shan Diary"], *Yen-ching hsueh-pao* 27 (1940): 141–69. Cheng's article is the most valuable contribution in the whole Ching-shan controversy. Though in every case an independent search has been made to verify, amplify and correct his findings from archival and other sources, some of which were not available to him, the present writer acknowledges a general debt for his valuable leads.

<sup>11</sup> Ch'eng Ming-chou, for instance, did not question the reason given for Ching-shan's dismissal.

<sup>12</sup> Backhouse's description of Ching-shan as being "especially distinguished as a scholar in Sung philosophy," the kind of coolly daring and calculated throw-away remark that became his trademark and with which he made his reputation as a scholar, is quite unfounded.

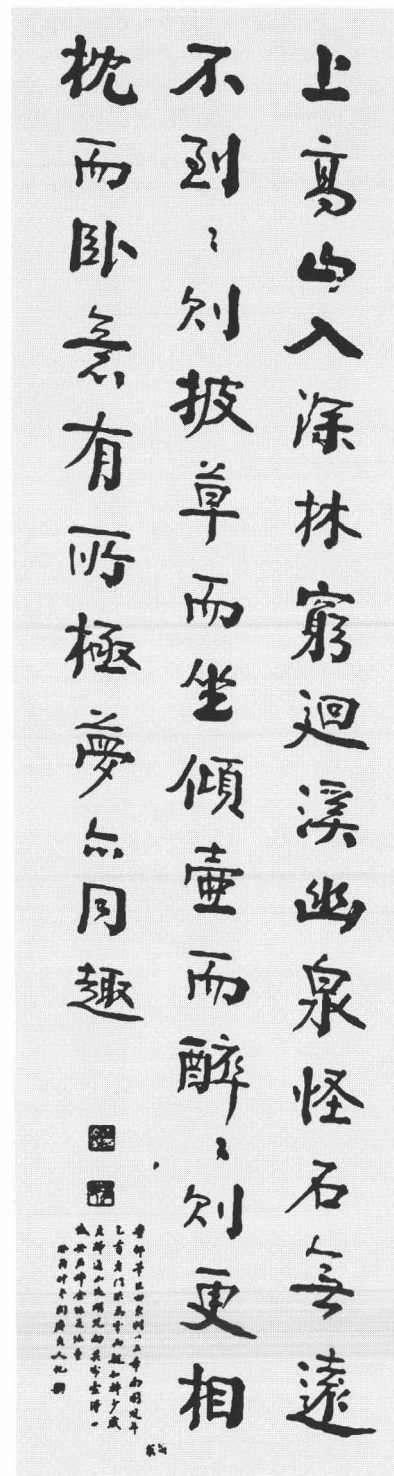
<sup>13</sup> For details of Ching-shan's career see *The quest*.

<sup>14</sup> Published by William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1910.

months of upheaval in the Chinese capital in 1900, reproduced in a book entitled *China Under the Empress Dowager* under the joint authorship of J. O. P. Bland and E. T. Backhouse.<sup>14</sup> Instead of the official despatches, sensational, journalistic fabrications and fanciful tales that burgeoned in the aftermath of upheaval, the world

Figure 3

*A rare specimen of the calligraphy of Chu Tsu-mou (a gift to the writer from his elder brother, Lok Bok-sim), with an enlargement of the inscription in the bottom left-hand corner*



was now presented for the first time with a personal account in vivid detail of the goings-on in the Forbidden City's inner chambers blamed for what *The Times'* Peking correspondent and the foremost foreign observer of the Chinese scene at the time, G.E. Morrison, described as "summer madness"—the Boxer Uprising. That the world should have come to know about the diary not in the Chinese original but in an English translation—a fact which might well have aroused suspicion—seemed to make its revelation if anything all the more sensational. Almost overnight, Ching-shan became a household name in a cosmopolitan circle wider than he himself could ever have dared to dream.

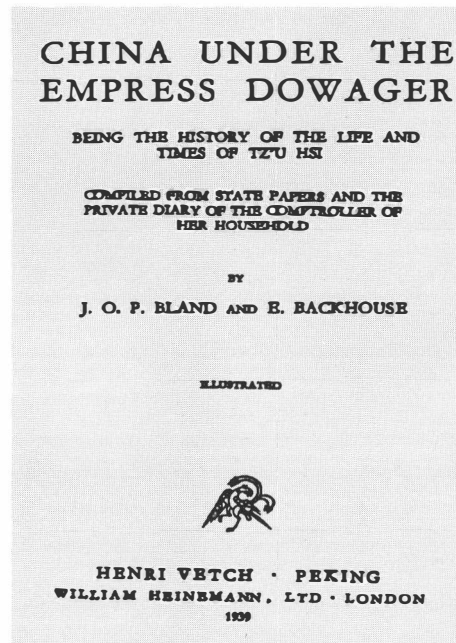
## II

Few books on China have aroused such universal interest as this, esoteric though its topic may have been. Its instant success took even the authors by surprise. No sooner was it launched than foreign publishers vied with one another for translation rights, while imitators sought to emulate the coup. As late as 1939, nearly thirty years after its first appearance and in greatly changed historical circumstances, an enterprising publisher still thought it a good business proposition to bring out a new edition.<sup>15</sup>

"No library of works on China," said one critic, "can be regarded as complete without this most valuable and informing book."<sup>16</sup> And true enough, it soon became an essential addition to the shelves even of fusty libraries in small, out-of-the-way towns in the English-speaking world, and a prescribed text as well as a work of reference for university students. The book also became the proud possession of the reading rooms of many an ocean-going liner, including slow boats to and from China. So familiar did it become, even to those previously without the slightest interest in China or Chinese history, that 'Empress-Dowager' came eventually to signify for many one person, the Empress-Dowager Tz'u-hsi, and 'China' China under the Empress-Dowager. The key to this knowledge and understanding was Chapter 17 of the book, the *Ching-shan Diary*.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Vetch, Peking, 1939.

<sup>16</sup> *Hongkong Daily Express*, February 1911. (The day of the month is missing on the cutting available to the writer.)



**Figure 4**

*Title-page of the 1939 (Peking) edition, identical to that of the 1910 edition except for the publisher's name and colophon*

## III

<sup>17</sup> *Graphic*, 22 October 1910.

<sup>18</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1910.

<sup>19</sup> From an unnamed journal (Bland Papers, Thomas Fisher Library, University of Toronto).

<sup>20</sup> *Truth*, 9 November 1910.

<sup>21</sup> *Public Ledger* (New York), 13 November 1910.

<sup>22</sup> *Rangoon Gazette*, 22 March 1911.

<sup>23</sup> *Weekend*, 3 November 1910.

<sup>24</sup> *Shanghai Mercury*, 12 November 1910.

<sup>25</sup> *North China Daily News*, 5 January 1911.

<sup>26</sup> *Outlook*, 22 October 1910.

<sup>27</sup> *Shanghai Mercury*, 29 January 1911.

<sup>28</sup> *Review of Reviews*, November 1910.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 7 October 1910.

<sup>30</sup> *Public Ledger*, 13 November 1910.

The popular press led the way in ensuring the book's success: newspapers and journals in which China had hitherto found no place now rushed into print to hail its appearance. Critics everywhere, not to be outshone by their peers, showered it with extravagant expressions of appreciation, as if no praise were high enough. In a seemingly unending crescendo, readers from Glasgow to Dunedin, from Toronto to Johannesburg, were told that this was "an indispensable guide through the bewildering maze of Chinese politics";<sup>17</sup> that it was "the most informing book on Chinese affairs that has appeared within a decade";<sup>18</sup> that it "throws more light upon the internal history of Peking than all the books written about China during the last quarter of a century";<sup>19</sup> that "it is the most interesting, instructive and amazing book upon the Celestial Empire that has appeared, at least in our generation";<sup>20</sup> that it was "without question one of the most important contributions to contemporary historical literature which has been made in our time";<sup>21</sup> that "there is no Eastern country that is more interesting than China and there is no country about which better books have been written";<sup>22</sup> that "as history it will rank as a standard work";<sup>23</sup> that "it is one of very few English books on China which is unquestionably entitled to be called a classic: a model history of the most momentous period of China's existence";<sup>24</sup> that it was "the most striking work that has yet been written on China";<sup>25</sup> that it was "far in advance of anything previously written on the subject, something of perhaps even greater significance than will for some little time be generally apparent."<sup>26</sup> And so it went on, each reviewer striving to have the last word.

What gave the book such universal appeal, all agreed, was the *Ching-shan Diary*, whose style some found reminiscent of Samuel Pepys, while others compared the Diarist's fate to that of King Lear. Various descriptions of the *pièce de résistance*, "the gem," "the most illuminous," "impressive" and "dramatic feature" of the book, "the *Ching-shan Diary*," said the reviewer in the *Shanghai Mercury*,

is worth its weight in brilliants. Once immersed in its illuminating revelations the reader loses his own insight, or to speak more correctly, his own foreign obliquity of vision respecting things native, to gain that of a high-placed Manchu official, the Pepys of Peking.<sup>27</sup>

"Here we have the true inner mind of the best of the Chinese, and, what is no less important, we have a faithful record of the stirring events of the year of the Boxer revolts,"<sup>28</sup> said another reviewer. "It affords a panorama of Chinese Court life in its most poignant moments, such as without doubt has never before been offered to European judgement."<sup>29</sup> In fact, as a New York critic confided to his readers, the Diary "was never meant for publication, therefore is all the more invaluable, for it throws a flood of light on the situation in the Forbidden City."<sup>30</sup> "Had the writer known the use to which his manuscript was

to be put," a writer in Shanghai confirmed, "he would probably rather have cut off his hand than penned it." For the Diary recorded "such things as a man tells only to his soul, such as he writes only in the privacy of his own chamber, and probably in the stillness of the night after the deeds are done." In short, the Diary was an "apocalypse, one of those rare volumes in which truths never intended for the vulgar eye are displayed in the full light of noon-day. And "alike to native and foreigner it will prove a mine from which to dig jewels of self-revelation, nuggets of state secrecy, and endless jems of general enlightenment heretofore entirely unattainable";<sup>31</sup> and the "unique material" that it contained "has made the pages of this book what the rooms of the National Gallery are to the lovers of pictures."<sup>32</sup>

The pictures the Diary displayed, however, evoked different things for different people. To someone in Shanghai it was "at once a storehouse and a key: a storehouse of hitherto unknown facts, a key to all that was known. By its aid much that was before paradoxical is now plain: the incomprehensive becomes easy to understand; the nebulous takes a definite form";<sup>33</sup> a key, a writer from New York averred, that "opens the door to a hidden page of China's history."<sup>34</sup> Yet to someone else in Hong Kong, the image it evoked was that of a torch and a broom. "It throws light on many dark places in recent history, while at the same time clearing away mountains of rubbish which error, ignorance and credulity had built up around the strange and absorbing character of the most eminent of Manchu Dowagers."<sup>35</sup>

Thus lit and swept, "the gulf which divides East from West" became immediately obvious.<sup>36</sup> This was best illustrated by the chief character of the Diary, the Empress-Dowager herself, "the amazing woman who united the brains of Napoleon and the passions of Messalina,"<sup>37</sup> a "ruthless despot, a great ruler, but great from an oriental point of view, a view [which] admits greatness even when it is allied with cruelty, savagery and lust,"<sup>38</sup> regarded by her subjects as an angel of benevolence, whose "chief fault was a foolish tenderness of heart," and who, though she "would have been hanged in London, is canonised in Peking."<sup>39</sup> As further proof of this cultural divide was the fact that "simulation and dissimulation are as universal in China as the everyday conventional courtesies of bowing or handshaking are in Europe."<sup>40</sup>

The good fortune that such a diary had been saved by its discoverer "in the nick of time from being burned" was a fact stressed by most reviewers.<sup>41</sup> For the Diary confirmed the worst that everyone had always known or suspected about the Chinese, and conjured up afresh in the mind's eye all the "strangeness," "childishness," "romance" and "unreality" that characterized the people. Thus commented the *Daily Chronicle*:

<sup>31</sup> *Shanghai Mercury*, 29 November 1910.

<sup>32</sup> From unnamed journal in Bland Papers (see n.18 above).

<sup>33</sup> *Shanghai Mercury*, 29 November 1910.

<sup>34</sup> *Public Ledger*, 13 November 1910.

<sup>35</sup> *China Mail*, 18 November 1910.

<sup>36</sup> *Review of Reviews*, November 1910.

<sup>37</sup> *Globe*, 12 October 1910.

<sup>38</sup> *Sunday Times*, 30 October 1910.

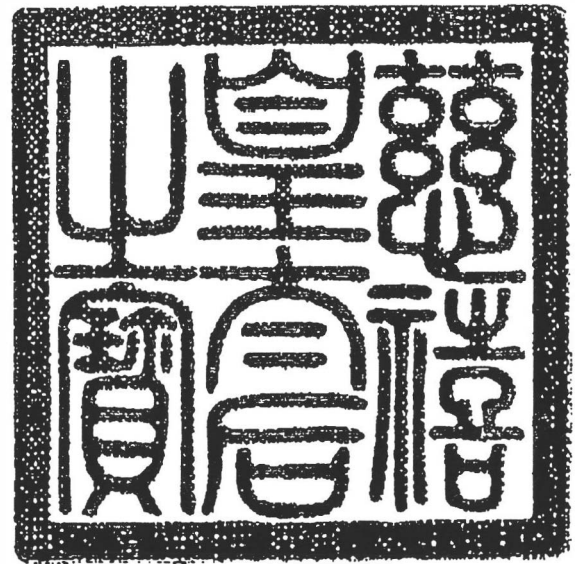
<sup>39</sup> *Review of Reviews*, November 1910.

<sup>40</sup> *Truth*, 9 November 1910.

<sup>41</sup> *Sheffield Telegraph*, 11 November 1910 and *Guardian*, 3 February 1911, for instance.

**Figure 5**

*A seal of the Empress-Dowager, Tz'u-hsi, reproduced on the cover of China under the Empress-Dowager*



<sup>42</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 3 October 1910.

<sup>43</sup> *Truth*, 9 November 1910.

<sup>44</sup> *Sheffield Telegraph*, 11 November 1910.

<sup>45</sup> *Oriental Affairs*, October 1939.

<sup>46</sup> *Nation* (USA), 2 March 1911.

This sober record of events surpasses in interest the wildest fancies of romantic writers. It brings home to the Western mind with vivid effect the strangeness of China, its utter unlikeness to anything else in the world, its civilization petrified by conservatism, the initiative of its people withering under the clammy touch of the dead hand of the past, its governing classes honeycombed with corruption, the masses patient and enduring but ever and anon flaring up in wild rebellion, the stoical indifference of rich and poor to suffering and to death, and the immense aversion to all classes of foreigners as barbarians without the gate.<sup>42</sup>

"Childishness" was indeed very much a characteristic of the Chinese: the Empress-Dowager, "was a child, and a spoiled child amongst children, the superior of her childish subjects only and chiefly in deception and masterfulness." Of this there was no better illustration than the despatches sent by China to the Powers during the uprising, which were "almost inconceivably puerile, and it is the very puerility of Chinese diplomacy which puzzles Western Talleyrands."<sup>43</sup>

The Diary thus demonstrated that "once more fact has been proved to be stranger than fiction" and that "what had happened [in China] surpasses the fantasies of the Occidental mind."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, "no book on China in the English language breathes the romance and mysticism of China of the last days of the Manchus to anything like [this] degree";<sup>45</sup> and a reviewer in the American *Nation* observed with apparent gratification:

It used to be said that Chinese history was too dull to be studied by any but specialists or Germans, and that Germans had not discovered it yet. The authors of this volume have shown that it may be made to compare in romantic interest with the history of any nation, and that the Chinese themselves are masters of graphic description.<sup>46</sup>

The masterly graphic description in the *Ching-shan Diary* certainly had a telling effect: many a reviewer was quite mesmerized by it. With what now reads with an almost sarcastic undertone the writer for the British *Nation* across the Atlantic mused over "The Kingdom of Words":

To the next satirist of his kind who is minded to paint an accurate portrait of mankind in an unfamiliar dress we are tempted to bequeath a hint. There is no need to scale the suspended island of Laputa or drift with Saint Maël in a magical barque of stone to the country of the Penguins. Let the satirist take his passage in a Peninsular and Orient boat and disembark at Shanghai. A man with a shrewd pen might tell such a tale of human extravagances that boys would mistake it for a romance, and read it as they read *Gulliver's Travels*.

Because, he went on,

This Chinese world of literate folly and learned childishness, of polite brutality and philosophic barbarism, was anything like it ever conceived by the atrabilious humorist? At every turn one laughs and wonders, and gasps with astonishment, until as one turns the page, one happens to glance at the mirror, and there discerns dimly a shadowy queue descending from one's cranium, and the hint of a yellow jacket covering one's tweeds.

"The Tale" as told by the *Ching-shan Diary*, he continued,

is unutterably and uniquely Chinese. Conceive the Boxers with their fantastic rites, their invulnerability, their confidence, worthy of a Shakespearian hero, that they could meet and overthrow the four corners of the world in arms. But how came it that the astute old lady in a spasm of rage declared the siege. The note was a mere fabrication. How perfectly Chinese, how deplorably Oriental, how worthy of a decadent court, how inconceivably remote in its obliquity and cunning! But glance for a moment at the mirror. Is not that, perhaps, something a little like a queue? *De te fabula narratur*. It is the story of Bismarck's forged despatch of Elms.

"China," he concluded,

is the land of the written word. It is ruled by essays. It lives on paper. Elsewhere things happen. In China they are written. We experience events. They only write history. And because this is the central fact regarding China, the book which will render China must be a book of documents. We have never had the good luck to come across any book which ended by presenting the strange life of a distant people so vividly. A Chinese emperor discourses on current events as fluently and almost as often as a daily leader-writer.<sup>47</sup>

It may be worth mentioning, in view of the rather uncertain tone of the last quotation, that throughout the veritable mountain of euphoric pages which it inspired, the Diary's authenticity, with a somehow premonitory irony, was stressed by one writer after another. Notwithstanding the warning of the *Spectator* which, while hailing the Diary as "a quite invaluable document," pointed out "the absurdity of taking Chinese decrees, official reports, and diplomatic utterances as representing the truth, or even the approximate truth,"<sup>48</sup> the *Japan Weekly Mail* asserted that "the accuracy of the facts related is placed beyond all peradventure," since the book "consists of official documents—rescripts, memorials, diary, valedictory decrees, protests and others, all of unquestionable authenticity."<sup>49</sup> This view, typical of that held by many critics, was supported by the *New York Times*, which maintained with the same curious logic: "that the work is authoritative is indicated by the fact that it was compiled from state papers and from the private diary of the Comptroller of the Empress' household. Probably no such collection of Chinese documents has ever before been given to the world or one that better reflects the realities of Chinese official life."<sup>50</sup>

A work such as this could never have been produced by the Chinese themselves, the *Sydney Morning Herald* told its readers, "in spite of the mass of material that exists and can be got at, as these authors have got at [it], because unfortunately China represents the suppression of fact and the apotheosis of officialdom";<sup>51</sup> therefore "it has remained for the hated foreigners"<sup>52</sup> to bring "dextrously" to the reading public "the luminous diary of His Excellency Ching-shan"<sup>53</sup> which introduced a "personal note into a record of public events, 'endowing the book with both charm and verisimilitude,' so that 'the dry deserts of official history are made to blossom like the rose.'"<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Nation* (U.K.), 22 October 1910.

<sup>48</sup> *Spectator*, 22 October 1910.

<sup>49</sup> *Japan Weekly Mail*, 3 December 1910.

<sup>50</sup> *New York Times*, 16 November 1910.

<sup>51</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1910.

<sup>52</sup> *Public Ledger*, 13 November 1910.

<sup>53</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 10 November 1910.

<sup>54</sup> *Morning Post*, 17 October 1910.

## IV

<sup>55</sup> Vol. 42 (Shanghai 1911), p.242.

<sup>56</sup> 13 October 1910.

<sup>57</sup> Some readers may be interested in the exchange between the two friends, which is given here at the risk of boring others: "[Chirol] wants me to review the Empress," Bland wrote in his diary on 7 October 1910. "Queer business." "Spent all morning and most of the afternoon doing the review of our book for *The Times* and got it off to Chirol at 5 p.m.," he noted the following day. "It will pass as his work, and I shall get nothing for it, except the satisfaction of reviewing my own work in *The Times*, not an ordinary thing to do." "Here you are," he wrote to Chirol on 8 October 1910, enclosing the review. "It has taken me the whole blooming day but I think ought to do with a few additions and amendments from your pen. I could only bring myself to do it justice by thinking steadily of Backhouse and his lion's share of the job. I suppose, under the circumstances, and being anonymous, this is perforce a labour of love? But I tell you, honest Injun, that I didn't feel a bit loving in doing it." To this Chirol replied in a letter dated 8 a.m., 10 October: "I am, I confess, rather sorry and surprised that your help should have been given me so grudgingly and reluctantly, as your covering letter indicates. Though in view of the importance of the book I quite realised that *The Times* ought, for its own credit, to have a very early review of it, it was your own very natural anxiety for it and my appreciation of the excellent work you have done for us for many years without any perhaps very adequate return that induced me to make a special effort to comply with your wishes—an effort which, with all the assistance you have given me, nevertheless, made an extremely inconvenient call on my time, when I am hard pushed to it to get my own book under way, in addition to the more than customary press of work at the office. I quite admit, however, that all this is no reason why you should forego remuneration. I therefore enclose my cheque for £5 for the help you have given me." "Found a letter from Chirol," Bland noted in his diary that same day, "expressing sorrow that I should want to be paid for the review of the Empress,

Among the avalanche of exultant notices, of which the above quotations constitute only a fraction, two stand out as worthy of special mention because of the audience they addressed, their authors, and the journals in which they appeared. The first was a review in the *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*,<sup>55</sup> the organ of the Old China Hands, by William Leveson, at the time secretary of the Municipal Council of the International Settlement in Shanghai; that same position had been held until 1906 by J. O. P. Bland, who had lent his influence in securing Leveson's appointment and who remained a good friend of Leveson, addressing him as 'Lavatino' and being addressed by him as 'Blanco'. Hailing the book as "the first essay in the English language towards writing the history of modern China on modern lines [which] has successfully triumphed over the great difficulty that has marred writing on China in the past—the inextricable confusion into which a Western ear is plunged by Chinese proper names," this "great work," as Leveson described it, had "supplied much that was lacking" in works hitherto published on China. He singled out that "feature of the book which go[es] to make up its unquestionable attraction for a far wider circle of readers than a study of Chinese subject-matter usually secures—the diary of his aged Excellency Ching-shan during 1900, [a] priceless find [which] of itself constitutes a piquant and truth-breathing piece of evidence in the tales of that eventful year." To this the journal's editor added a note, congratulating the discoverer of the diary for his "fine performance" and for his "discrimination in the choice of the document and the ability of the translation," a mark of his "taste and scholarship." The journal held to its signal approval of the book in spite of all the incriminating evidence which had by then accumulated against the Diary's authenticity, and was a lone voice which continued to sing its praises when a new edition came out in 1939. Old China Hands were never wrong.

The second review was that which appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, entitled "Mysteries in the Forbidden City."<sup>56</sup> Describing the Diary as "a document more illuminating than perhaps any that has ever come out of China," the review became a peg for its author to hang out and air afresh long-held views on China and the Chinese; lengthy extracts from the Diary were freely quoted as corroborative evidence to support what he had to say. Unlike other reviewers, this writer was completely at home with the material in the book, as might be expected of the Foreign Editor of *The Times*, Valentine Chirol, whom everyone took the author to be. Writing in his unpublished 'memoirs' shortly before his death some thirty-three years later, Backhouse singled this review out from the multitude available in his defence of the circumstances of the diary's discovery and of its authenticity, pointing to Chirol's unquestionable authority in matters Chinese. It has come to light, however, that the review was written not by Chirol but by the book's co-author, Bland, who was obliged to take upon himself the task, which he



described as “queer business,” when Chirol declined to do it at the last minute. Bland, pleased with his handiwork, rather begrudged having to labour for love, and this led to some awkwardness between the two.<sup>57</sup> The friendship survived well enough, however, for both to maintain their silence about the real authorship of the review, and the suspicion of neither Backhouse nor the editor of the *Supplement* was aroused; nor, apparently, was that of Morrison, the first to question the authenticity of the Diary and normally astute in such matters.

## V

Whatever the qualities appealing to its wide circle of readership, it was the *Ching-shan Diary's* “piquant” and “truth-breathing” nature, singled out by the above two reviews, that attracted its more serious readers and converted some of them into students of Chinese history. Among these was a school boy who was to become one of the most distinguished interpreters of modern China—Charles Patrick Fitzgerald, later the Foundation Professor of Far Eastern History at the Australian National University. Writing in 1935, a few months before the Ching-shan bubble burst upon the Sinological scene, to thank Bland for his favourable review of his first book, *The Son of Heaven*, Fitzgerald confessed:

You are the real author [of *The Son of Heaven*]. To explain this I must tell you that my whole interest in China dates from reading your *China Under the Empress Dowager* and *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* when I was 14 years old. From that time I determined to make Chinese matters my life interest and it was always my hope that one day I might be able to write a pale successor

/so sat down and returned his cheque with a suitable soft answer: ‘I don’t know what I wrote you on Saturday, in the hurry of catching that express post, but I must have expressed myself jolly badly if I gave you the impression that I would not gladly do anything and everything to help you at all times. If I was in any way reluctant to do that review work, it was for the reason which I think I expressed (probably badly), that it is mighty difficult to praise one’s own work, and that, had it not been for the thought of Backhouse, I could not have done it. That’s all. As to remuneration, I am not greedy, as I think you know, but you told me yourself, not very long ago, not to be quixotic about taking payment for work done and I didn’t know if you would perhaps charge the paper with the review in some way, —but if you think that I would let you pay me for doing anything, you wrong me and I am very sorry. Of course it’s all my fault, and, to make the only atonement that occurs to me as appropriate I should like very much if you would let me do the proof-reading for you in your book, the rough first reading that would save you coolie-pidgin. Will you?’ To this, Chirol replied the following day: ‘I dare say you wrote hastily, and we will take it that I did so too and cry quits. No, the paper—especially under the present regime—never remunerates me for any extra work put upon me. Many thanks for your offer to act as a proof-reader. I won’t pledge myself *not* to take you at your word when I get to page-proofs stage.’ “*The Times* gave first place in the *Literary Supplement* to the Empress—the review that I wrote myself with a few additions of Chirol,” Bland recorded in his diary on 13 October. “Such is high journalism.”

3  
 Your "China Under  
 the Empress Dowager"  
 & "Annals & Memoirs  
 of the Court of Peking"  
 —when I was 14  
 years old. From that  
 time I determined  
 to make Chinese  
 matters my life interest  
 & it was always  
 my hope that one  
 day I might be able  
 to write a pale  
 successor to those  
 fascinating books.

4  
 I am afraid I  
 have borrowed many  
 of your ideas in  
 matters of arrange-  
 ment & treatment,  
 because for years  
 past your books  
 have been the  
 standard which I  
 set out to reach  
 —though I do not  
 imagine that I have  
 attained it.  
 I am very happy  
 to learn that you  
 found "Son of Heaven"

Figure 6

Pages 3 and 4 of a seven-page letter from C.P. Fitzgerald to J.O.P. Bland, dated 25 April 1935, demonstrating a hand, so familiar to all his friends, that has remained unchanged for the past sixty or more years



<sup>58</sup> C.P. Fitzgerald to J.O.P. Bland, from "Monks Park, Cowsley Wood, Wadhurst, Sussex, April 25th '35." His book, published in 1933 by Cambridge University Press was entitled *Son of Heaven, a biography of Li Shih-min, founder of the T'ang dynasty*.

to those fascinating books. I am afraid I have borrowed many of your ideas in matters of arrangement and treatment, because for years past your books have been the standard which I set out to reach—though I do not imagine that I have attained it.<sup>58</sup>

## VI

<sup>59</sup> The translation, entitled "The diary of His Excellency Ching-shan," was published in *Acta Orientalia* 3 (1924): i–viii, 1–85; Chinese text 1–48.

<sup>60</sup> The notice, which appeared in the journal's bibliographical section, vol. 23 (1924), was in English and unsigned, and may or may not have been written by either or both editors, who were normally responsible for such notices.

<sup>61</sup> Professor A.F.P. Hulswé, Duyvendak's successor at the Sinological Institute in Leyden, mentioned in a letter to the writer how the Diary was used as a text when he was a student there. This was confirmed by Professor P. van der Loon of Oxford, also a pupil of Duyvendak. By the time Professor K.M. Schipper, of l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, went to Leyden, however, this was no longer the case.

<sup>62</sup> This remark was made by Lewisohn in his article, "Ching-shan's Diary remains a literary fiction," *Monumenta Serica* 5 (1940): 419–27. For references to this and the following two notes, see also the article by Ch'eng Ming-chou.

<sup>63</sup> *Chung-kuo chin-tai-shih* [Modern Chinese History] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935).

<sup>64</sup> *Chung-kuo chin-pai-nien li-shih tzu-liao shu-p'ien* [Sources on modern Chinese history] (Shanghai: Chung-hua Shu-chu, 1933).

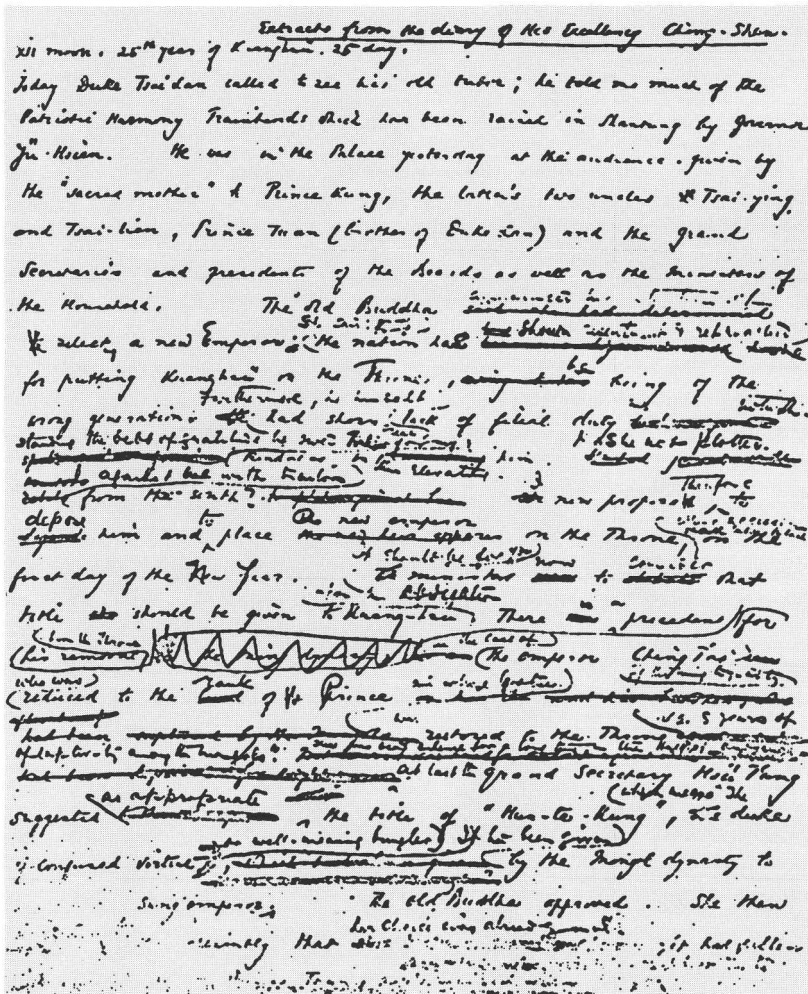
The popular appeal of the book did not in the least detract from its value in the eyes of scholars in the field of Chinese studies. As with non-specialists, it was the *Ching-shan Diary* that attracted the attention of Sinologues, owing, no doubt, to its "truth-breathing" nature. So high was the value he placed on the Diary that J. J. L. Duyvendak, then back in Leyden with a lectureship at his *alma mater* after having carried out some on-the-spot investigation on it during his six-year stay in Peking as interpreter to the Dutch legation, thought it worth the effort to render the Chinese 'original'—deposited in the British Museum—into a new English version with full scholarly annotation.<sup>59</sup> When this was published by *Acta Orientalia* in 1924, *T'oung Pao*, under the editorship of Henri Cordier and Paul Pelliot, both leading China-scholars of their time, though it had declined, on the grounds of the Diary's questionable authenticity, to publish Duyvendak's translation when it was offered to the journal, praised this "record by a retired Manchu official of high rank of the events in Peking during the turbulent Boxer days," containing, as it did, "much first-hand information concerning the attitude of the Court," and commended the Diary to its readers as "an important contribution to our knowledge of modern Chinese history."<sup>60</sup>

This being the considered opinion of the journal under such serious and reputable savants, it is hardly surprising that the *Ching-shan Diary* should have continued to enjoy credibility with both Chinese and Western scholars. Nor is it surprising that it should have been used as a historical text by Duyvendak and others for their students, thereby gaining for the document an influence matched by few historical sources.<sup>61</sup> H.B. Morse, who relied heavily on the Diary as a primary source for the Boxer Uprising in his once-standard work, the three-volume *International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, was not alone in showing what a later critic described as "a spurious lack of critical faculty."<sup>62</sup> Many respected Chinese historians, who should have been more wary, displayed a similar lack of that faculty regarding the authenticity and value of the document. Professor Ch'en Kung-lu 陳恭祿 relied on the Diary for the Boxer episode in his *History of Modern China*,<sup>63</sup> while Tso Shun-sheng 左舜生 used it as a pointer towards an understanding of the events of 1900 in his well-known and often quoted documentary collection.<sup>64</sup>

Prominence continued to be given to the Diary in serious scholarly compilations and treatises on the Boxer Uprising and modern Chinese history long after apparently strong evidence had been put forward pointing to its forgery. Following William Lewisohn's opening challenge to its authenticity in *Monumenta Serica* in 1936,<sup>65</sup> Duyvendak, who had been responsible for the document's early scholarly sanction and respectability, came out the following year in *T'oung Pao*, of which he had by then become joint editor, to question its reliability, producing incriminating evidence which invited, but did not receive, any convincing refutation.<sup>66</sup> As a result, he went so far as to publish in *Acta Orientalia* in 1938 a curt and uncompromising statement to the effect that following "a renewed investigation, largely with the aid of Chinese material" that had not been available to him in 1924, he must "regrettably" inform his readers that the *Ching-shan Diary*,

<sup>65</sup> "Some critical notes on the so-called 'Diary of His Excellency Ching Shan'," *Monumenta Serica* 2 (1936-37): 191-202. This was followed in 1940 by the article referred to in n.62 above.

<sup>66</sup> "Ching-Shan's diary: a mystification," *T'oung Pao* 33 (1937): 268-94.



### Figure 7

*The first entry of the Ching-shan Diary in Backhouse's manuscript 'translation' with Bland's preliminary editing*

<sup>67</sup> "Note on the diary of His Excellency Ching-shan," *Acta Orientalia* 16 (1938): 221.

<sup>68</sup> Ch'eng's article (cited in n.10 above), which was also responsible for nn.60–65 above. The value of this article was recognized by Duyvendak, who advertised it in *T'oung Pao* 36 (1940–42): 85–6, in a notice entitled "Once more: the so-called diary of Ching-shan." Mao I-heng's 毛以亨 slur on Ch'eng and other critics of the Diary in his article "Suo-wei Ching-shan jih-chi—p'i-p'ing chih p'i-p'ing" [The so-called Ching-shan Diary: a critique of the criticism], *Ta-lu ts'achih* 29, no.12, is petty and uncalled for.

<sup>69</sup> Lo Chia-lun 羅家倫, in his introduction to Kuo T'ing-i's 郭廷以 *Chin-tai Chung-kuo-shih* [A history of modern China], 2 vols (Changsha: Commercial Press, 1940–41).

<sup>70</sup> *Chung-kuo chin-tai-shih ts'an-k'ao tzu-liao* [Reference sources on modern Chinese history] (Shanghai & Chungking: Tu-shu Ch'u-p'an-she, 1947), vol. 1. 'Yang Teng' 楊鄧, given as the compiler of this collection, is an amalgam of two party historians, Yang Sung 楊松 and Teng Li-ch'ün 鄧力羣. This was a reprint of the work originally published in a Communist-controlled area.

<sup>71</sup> *Chung-kuo chin-tai-shih tzu-liao hsüan-chi* [A selection of sources on modern Chinese history] (Peking: San-lien Shu-tien, 1954). This is an enlarged and revised version of the work by Yang and Teng cited in n.70. The editor, Jung Meng-yuan, a member of the Academy of Social Sciences and of the editorial board of the compilation in the following note (n.72), though he managed to present the purported original Chinese diary (an improvement over the collection his book superceded), he was equally unconvincing about the Diary's historical value and the justification for its inclusion in the compilation.

<sup>72</sup> The *Ching-shan Diary* figured fourth after Lenin in the first of the work's four volumes, while Ch'eng Ming-chou's article was briefly touched on in the bibliographical notes on p.557 of vol. 4.

<sup>73</sup> The article by Chang Chi-ch'ien 張寄謙 and three others entitled "I-ho-t'uan tsai Pei-ching te chan-t'ou" [The I-ho-t'uan's struggle in Peking] was published in *I-ho-t'uan yun-tung liu-shih chou-nien chi-lien lun-wen-chi* [Collected essays commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Boxer movement], pp.111–29).

a translation of which he had "presented to the world" through the same journal fourteen years earlier, was "not authentic but a very ingenious mystification," that "the Diary is not a diary at all," and that "the MS has been composed with intention to deceive."<sup>67</sup> This was followed by the most damgingsalvo of all from a Chinese scholar, Ch'eng Ming-chou of Yenching University, Peking. With philological and historical skills and evidence which neither Duyvendak nor Lewisohn had mustered, Ch'eng virtually demolished what little credibility remained of the Diary.<sup>68</sup>

Yet even after this exorcism, the ghost of Ching-shan was long allowed to run amok through the ranks of historians of modern China. A prominent Nationalist politician and vice-chancellor of a leading university, after examining the Diary manuscript in the British Museum, put his scholarly credibility on the line by proclaiming that it was "unquestionably genuine,"<sup>69</sup> while on the other side of the political fence, Ching-shan was made to share the place of honour with Lenin in a documentary compilation of modern Chinese historical sources by two Communist historians who did not even bother to trace the purported original Chinese text, presenting instead a version retranslated from the English 'translation' as given in Bland's and Backhouse's book, in which Ching-shan was made to write in an idiom and style quite different from the dog-classical Chinese of the 'original'.<sup>70</sup> The Diary appeared again in a rehashed collection by Jung Meng-yuan 榮孟源, yet another Party historian, who, though aware of the debate on the authenticity of the Diary, justified its inclusion on the grounds of its historical value—since its description of the Ch'ing government's internal conflict and its use of the Boxers came from a contemporary hand—without concerning himself over the validity of such a claim if the document was in fact a fake.<sup>71</sup>

What is more surprising, however, is the Diary's inclusion in what remains one of the most authoritative collections of sources on the Boxer Uprising, published in 1951 in the People's Republic of China by the Historical Association of China (Chung-kuo shih-hsueh hui). The editors of this four-volume collection, entitled *I-ho-t'uan*, were all established historians of high repute and leaders of their profession in the country. Although a brief reference was made to Ch'eng Ming-chou's article in the bibliographical notes at the end of the fourth volume, compiled under the name of the collection's executive editor, Professor Chien Po-chan 翦伯贊, then a member of the Academia Sinica and head of the History Department at the newly-amalgated Peking University, it was only made in passing and without giving the opinion of the editors on the issue, with the result that scholars continued to be misled by the Diary, which was so prominently placed.<sup>72</sup> It was no wonder that, in a volume of essays published in 1961 to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Boxer Uprising, the Diary was invoked to illustrate 'real events' in the Chinese capital in 1900.<sup>73</sup> This was matched two years later by a Taiwan specialist on the Boxer movement, who actually resorted to the Diary for support in his argument about the reliability of a contemporaneous source.<sup>74</sup>

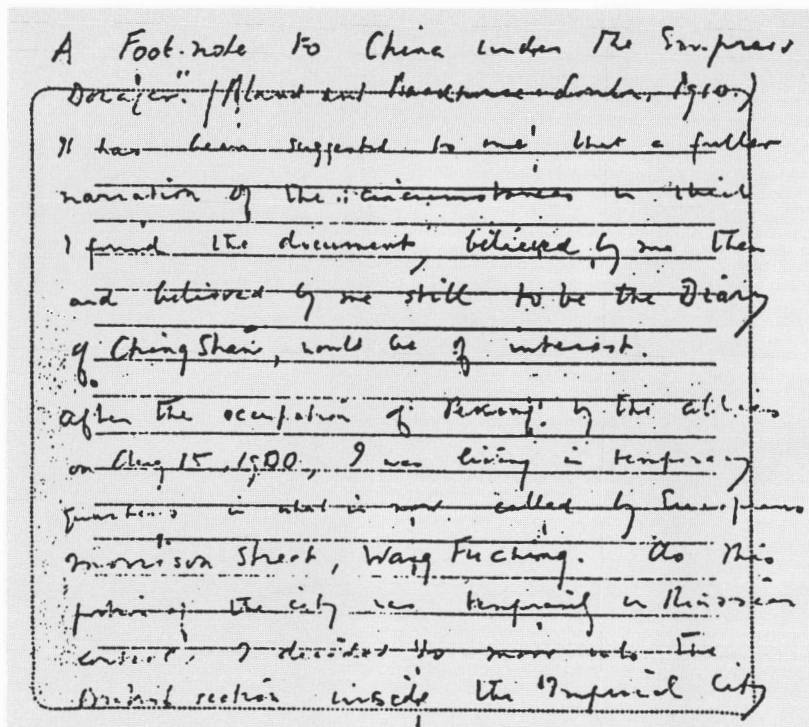
Inept as some of the above may seem, it was not altogether so unexpected, considering the opinion expressed by such an authority as Professor Cheng T'ien-t'ing 鄭天挺 as late as 1981. In that year, the then president of the Historical Association of China told the present writer, in reply to his enquiry when in Wuhan, that in view of the details it depicted and the atmosphere it evoked, the Diary could not but be genuine.<sup>75</sup> A view such as this, as noted earlier, was not new. Coming as it did from someone of his eminence, author, among other works on Ch'ing history, of a scholarly article on the origins of the Imperial Household—the Nei-wu fu 內務府—it was definitely disconcerting, if challenging.<sup>76</sup> His was the kind of reasoning that has undoubtedly been partly responsible for the ambivalent attitude of many Chinese scholars towards the Diary, and unwittingly encouraged the perpetrator of the forgery and his accomplices to persist in their endeavour of deceit. The worst example of this was undoubtedly the "Publisher's Note" introducing the 1939 edition of *China Under the Empress Dowager*, which was written by the British journalist, Sheldon Ridge, based on material supplied by Backhouse.<sup>77</sup> As with all hired hacks, skill in carrying out his brief rather than personal integrity was the issue, and Ridge's concoction was, as a result, a shining example of travesty of the truth that did Backhouse proud.

<sup>74</sup> See Appendix 2 in Tai Hsuan-chih, *I-ho-t'uan yen-chiu* [Studies of the I-ho-t'uan] (Taipei: China Committee for Publication Aid and Prize Awards, 1964).

<sup>75</sup> The interview took place during a conference commemorating the 70th anniversary of the 1911 revolution held in Wuhan, October 1981.

<sup>76</sup> The article, entitled "Ch'ing-tai pao-yi chih-tu yü huan-kuan" [The bond-servant system and eunuchs in the Ch'ing dynasty], is to be found in a collection mainly on Manchu history, *Tan-wei-chi* (Peking: Chung-hua Shu-chu, 1980), pp.88–109.

<sup>77</sup> pp.xi–xx, Henri Vetch edition (Peking, 1939).



**Figure 8**

The first sheet of Backhouse's draft "Footnote to China Under the Empress-Dowager," on which the "Publisher's Note" by Sheldon Ridge prefacing the 1939 Peking edition was based

## VII

<sup>78</sup> See the articles cited in nn.11, 62–68.

<sup>79</sup> "Backhouse whom I went to see in the evening . . . blushed badly when he spoke of Ching Shan's diary." (Morrison Diary, 21 March 1911.)

<sup>80</sup> Letter, Morrison to Bland, 28 December 1910.

<sup>81</sup> E.T. Backhouse and J.O.P. Bland, *Annals and memoirs of the court of Peking* (London: Heinemann, 1914), p.492.

<sup>82</sup> *National Review*, 11 February 1911.

Here is no place to analyse or speculate on the reasons why the Diary remained an enigma for so many scholars. Anyone who has followed this controversy closely must, however, be struck by the remarkable fact that, powerful though the evidence marshalled by Ch'eng Ming-chou, Duyvendak and Lewisohn was, all three critics—particularly (and surprisingly) Ch'eng Ming-chou—nevertheless tacitly accepted many statements of basic importance given in the Diary and by its 'discoverer', such as Ching-shan's family details, his official position, the manner of his death, and his eldest son's role in his demise.<sup>78</sup> This provided Backhouse and his accomplices with ammunition—damp though still effective—to respond, as the "Publisher's Note" of 1939 sought to do.

An even more striking feature of this whole controversy is the incomprehensible absence of questioning about the 'Diarist' and the Diary's discoverer. No visible attempt was made by the Diary's three main critics to take up the lead given by *The Times'* correspondent, G.E. Morrison, and the Chinese scholar, Ku Hung-ming 辜鴻銘, of whose views they must have been aware, and find out more about those two central figures.

The voices of Morrison and Ku Hung-ming were significant not because they were among the first to question the Diary's authenticity, but because they addressed, as no one else did, the role of those directly involved in the Diary. Morrison was not only responsible for introducing Backhouse to his first jobs—the only real jobs he ever had in China—but also, on more than one occasion, helped to extricate Backhouse from the kind of entanglement into which he habitually worked himself throughout his life, and knew Backhouse as few in China at that time did. He dismissed the Diary as a fake as soon as it appeared.<sup>79</sup> Although he spoke only in private (if not exactly in a whisper), his voice, carried by his authority, grew so loud that he felt it necessary, for various reasons, to disown it.<sup>80</sup> Ku Hung-ming had no such scruples; what he saw as the truth he felt compelled to bring out into the open, and this he did in his usual forthright manner. Some three years before the appearance of *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking*, in which the two authors, on the authority they had gained through their first successful joint venture, and as if to mock their admirers for their gullibility, asserted that "history, as Froude has said, is no object matter for science. Had he examined some of the material from which Chinese history is usually compiled, he might have expressed the same idea in more forcible terms,"<sup>81</sup> the Edinburgh-educated Chinese spoke out. Evoking Matthew Arnold's stricture on Alexander Kinglake's work, in which he described history as "a huge Mississippi of falsehood," Ku described *China Under the Empress Dowager* as "a foam-bell on the breast of that Mississippi of falsehood."<sup>82</sup>

Ku's voice was drowned in the tidal wave of eulogies, but the echo of Morrison's refusal to be stilled by his denial. Although Backhouse remained undeterred by this and persisted with his usual pursuits, he never again achieved the same success as the *Ching-shan Diary* had brought him, and he blamed Morrison's indiscretion for all his woes. While continuing to feign friendship towards Morrison and accepting all assistance from him, he started behind Morrison's back a campaign of calumny which, though ignored by his contemporaries in China, including his collaborator J.O.P. Bland (by then no longer a friend of Morrison), seems surprisingly to have succeeded in misleading a vigilant historian of Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper's calibre and, in turn, his readers.<sup>83</sup> So bitterly did Backhouse feel about Morrison over his exposure, that shortly before his death Backhouse broke off in the middle of his pornographic tales, masquerading as 'memoirs', to curse his erstwhile benefactor (whose death had occurred some twenty-three years earlier) as his greatest enemy, who, "festered in his shroud," was "now howling in the deathless flames of Hell."

### VIII

Notwithstanding the distorted portrait he drew of Morrison, Trevor-Roper has helped to fill certain gaps in our knowledge of the Diary's 'discoverer' through his reconstruction of *A Hidden Life* in which he revealed some aspects of *The Hermit of Peking* that was Backhouse, even though he contributed nothing new towards resolving the Diary controversy, except by inference.<sup>84</sup> Ching-shan, on the other hand, remained little known except for what the Diarist and Backhouse, its discoverer, told of him, and for a few vignettes of doubtful veracity Reginald Johnston, tutor to the last Chinese Emperor, culled from his courtier friends who claimed Ching-shan's personal acquaintance.<sup>85</sup> The scarcity of factual information about such a public and well-publicized figure as the 'author' of this famous Diary can only be explained by the fact that those in the best position to tell something of him either thought it unnecessary or were unwilling to do so. The attitude of the Manchu scholar-official, Chin-liang 金梁, is a case in point: instead of turning to the ready sources which surrounded him while he was working on Ch'ing biographies, he decided somewhat illogically that since the Diary was, as he believed, a fake, Ching-shan did not merit an independent entry in what was subsequently published as the *Ch'ing-shih-kao* [Draft History of the Ch'ing Dynasty]—as if to blame Ching-shan for the forgery—and the opportunity was thus lost of learning something of the real man.<sup>86</sup> Professor Cheng T'ien-t'ing (with due respect to this distinguished deceased scholar) could not possibly have gone into the Diary in any detail, or he would, with his expertise and all the tools at his disposal, have at once called its bluff. What is really puzzling is that nothing was done by Ch'eng Ming-chou and his teacher and mentor,

<sup>83</sup> Morrison's relations with Bland and Backhouse and Backhouse's campaign against him following the exposure of the *Ching-shan Diary* will be dealt with in detail in *The quest*.

<sup>84</sup> No-one since Lewisohn, Duyvendak and Ch'eng Ming-chou has made any contribution towards resolving the controversy. The article, entitled "Ching-shan jih-chi shih Backhouse wei-tsao ti" [The Ching-shan Diary was fabricated by Backhouse], by Professor Ting Ming-nan 丁名楠 of the Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and President of the Boxer Movement Research Association, seemed to me, so far as his reference to Trevor-Roper's work was concerned, to be based on inference. See *Chin-tai-shih yen-chiu* [Research on modern history] 4 (1983): 202–11.

<sup>85</sup> See a review of Duyvendak's translation of the *Ching-shan Diary* by Reginald Irving (Reginald Johnston), *Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 10 (Peking, 1926): 950–9.

<sup>86</sup> *Ssu-ch'ao yi-wen* [Miscellany from the four reigns] (1936).

<sup>87</sup> Information supplied by Professor Wang Chung-han 王鍾翰 of Yenching University, a distinguished Ch'ing scholar and a former pupil of Teng Chih-ch'eng, in a conversation in Peking in the company of the late Professor Ch'en Ch'ing-hua 陳憲華 of the History Department of Peking University in 1981. Ch'eng Ming-chou did make an effort to identify Ching-shan's sons mentioned in the Diary, but misled by the Diary he was following the wrong scent, and his effort proved fruitless. The views on the Diary controversy of M. Vetch, whom the writer interviewed at length in Hong Kong, are dealt with in *The quest*.

Professor Teng Chih-ch'eng 鄧之誠 of Yenching University, the eminent historian, to verify the Diary's references to Ching-shan himself and his immediate family, which was surely a fundamental task. After all, it was Teng to whom Henri Vetch, the publisher of the 1939 edition, first turned for a defence of the Diary, which eventually evolved into the "Publisher's Note" by Sheldon Ridge; and it was at his suggestion and with his assistance that Ch'eng Ming-chou wrote his otherwise learned article, which went into great detail, including the calligraphic school that Ching-shan followed.<sup>87</sup>

## IX

The foregoing summary of the controversy and some of the questions at issue will, it is hoped, justify the introduction here of a piece of evidence from Ching-shan's own record, previously overlooked by scholars, to test the veracity of statements (confined in this instance to those concerning personal details of Ching-shan, his father and his sons) made by Backhouse and the Diarist. To do this, we shall first quote the relevant passages from the "Note" by Backhouse,

as rewritten by Bland, introducing the Diary (for a facsimile reproduction of part of Backhouse's draft, see Figure 9); the Diary entry for 31 December 1899 and the Diary entry for 1 June 1900 (both given in two translations—(a) by Backhouse and Bland and (b) by Duyvendak—which may be read in conjunction with facsimile reproductions of the parallel passages from the 'original' Chinese MS in the British [Museum] Library [Figures 10 and 11]).

### 1 "Note" by Backhouse:

Ching Shan, a Manchu of the Plain Yellow Banner Corps, was born in 1823. In 1863 he became a Metropolitan Graduate and Hanlin Compiler, especially distinguished as a scholar in Sung philosophy. In the following year he was appointed a Junior Secretary of the Imperial Household (Nei wu fu), rising to Senior Secretary in 1869 and Comptroller in 1879. His father, Kuang Shun (廣順), had held the post of Comptroller-General under the Emperor Tao-Kuang, with whom he was for years on terms of intimacy; he was a kinsman of the Empress-Dowager's family and in close touch with all the leading Manchu nobles.

Figure 9

Backhouse's draft notes introducing the Ching-shan Diary before its reworking by Bland, as printed in the book

Ching-shan 鄭之誠. Plain yellow banner. born 1823  
Hanlin compiler - distinguished scholar in Sung philosophy.  
metropolitan graduate 1863. imperial household secretary  
1864 - senior secretary imperial household 1869. deputy comptroller 1879.  
Vice pres. Board of Works 83. vice pres. Board of Revenue  
84. Board of Civil Office 87. - Comptroller 89. Dep.  
deputy general. Ordered Blue Banner - Retired 1894  
Kinsman to Empress Dowager's family.  
Tutor to Prince Tuan, Duke of Lu and other sons of  
Prince Tuan. son of Kuang Shun, senior comptroller  
general of imperial household and friend of emp. Tse Kiang  
his family committed suicide on Aug. 15, 1900; wife,  
senior concubine, son's wife - after foreign troops' entry  
and flight of dowager empress. His eldest son faked his  
own a well of his own courtyard and pretended he had  
committed suicide. Said son was executed by  
foreign troops for harboring boars.  
Diary was picked up in his home by one of our friends  
along with a lot of books and scrolls, all in his father's  
collection - just in time to save them being burned by  
foreign troops as a high official of the palace.  
In that rescue, to Palace gossip.



2a Diary entry (31/12/1899) – Bland and Backhouse version:

- 1st Day of 26th Year of Kuang Hsü (31st January, 1900).

To-day I am 78 years of age and my children mock me for being deaf. They are bad sons and will never rise so high as their father has done. When I was their age, between 20 and 30, the Emperor Tao Kuang had already praised my scholarship and presented me with a complimentary scroll bearing a quotation from the writings of the philosopher Chu [朱熹].

2b Diary entry (3/12/1899) – Duyvendak version:

Today [this year] I am seventy-eight years of age and my children mock me, because I am hard of hearing. They are truly bad sons and just good for nothing. fifty years ago, when I was the Director [郎中] in the department of the Imperial Household, I had the honour of being praised by His late Majesty Hsian Tsung (Tao Kuang) and of receiving a poem of the philosopher Chu, written by the Emperor himself, together with an abundance of other imperial presents.

3a Diary entry (1/6/1900) – Bland and Backhouse version:

- 5th Moon, 5th Day : The Dragon Festival  
(1st June, 1900)

. . . My father was Comptroller-General of the Imperial Household [總管內務府大臣], and it was his lot on one occasion to experience her [the Empress-Dowager Tz'u-hsi's] anger. This was in the sixth year of T'ung-chih (1868), when she learned that the chief eunuch, "Hsiao An'rh" [小安兒, (安德海)總管] had been decapitated in Shantung by the orders of the Co-Regent, the late "Empress Dowager of the East" [東太后 慈安]. She accused the Comptroller of the Household of being leagued together in treachery against her . . .

3b Diary entry (1/6/1900)

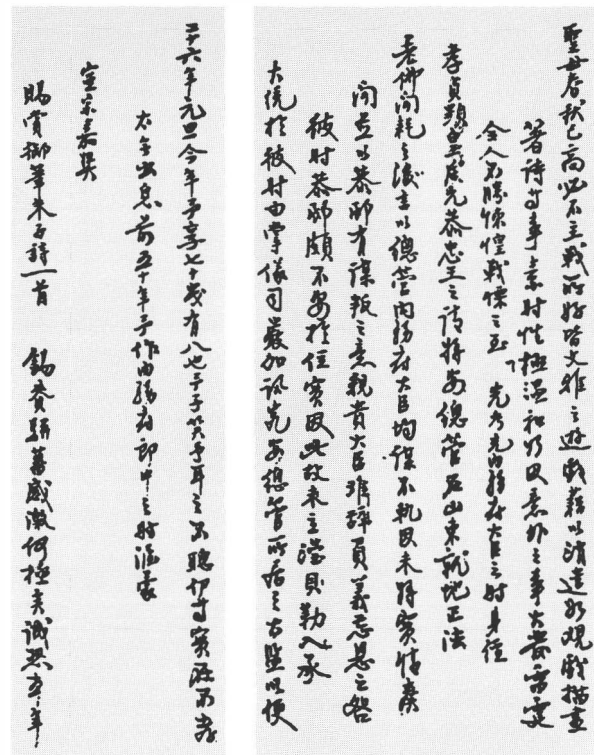
– Duyvendak version:

When my father was comptroller-general of the Imperial Household, he personally had the following experience: Prince Kung [恭親王 (I-hsin奕訢)], who had obtained the late Empress Hsiao Chen's [孝欽] sanction, had the major-domo An [安總管太監] executed in Shantung, and when the Old Buddha heard the tidings, she accused the comptrollers-general of the Household of scheming against her, because they had not reported to her the true state of affairs.

4 Finally, the Diarist's mentions throughout the Diary of his second son as En-ming 恩銘 and his third son as En-lin 恩麟.

Figures 10 & 11

Diary entries from the manuscript deposited in the British (Museum) Library for 1st day, 26th year of Kuang-hsü (31 December 1899) (left), and 5th day, 5th moon, 26th year of Kuang-hsü (1 June 1900) (right)



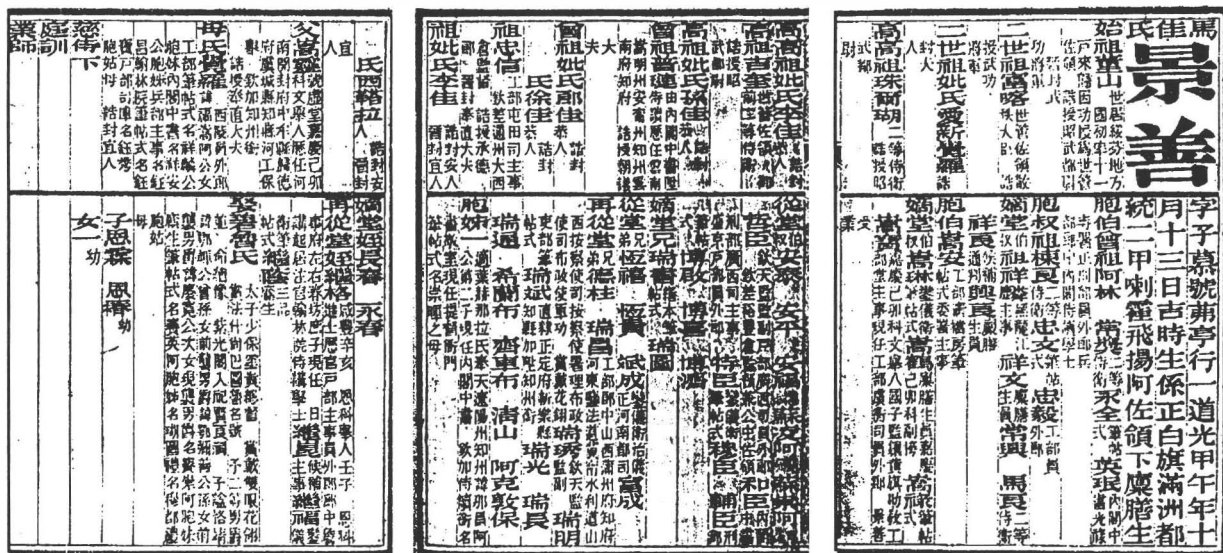


## X

The following (Figure 12) is a facsimile reproduction of the first three pages of Ching-shan's curriculum vitae accompanying the papers and results of his 1863 metropolitan examination. Apart from the issues raised in the appendix at the end of this paper, the veracity of all the relevant entries in this c.v. has been checked against, and confirmed by, all available sources, both official and private, including, among others, the archive of the Imperial Household in Peking and of the Bureau of National History in Taipei, and by the c.v. accompanying the 1888 provincial examination result of En-lin 恩霖, Ching-shan's eldest son (of which two pages are reproduced in Figure 13). As to the family tree, it has been corroborated by the genealogical records of the Magiya clan, one of the few Manchu clans to have published such a detailed record. (For extracts from the Magiya clan records, see Figure 14.)

Figure 12

The first three pages of Ching-shan's curriculum vitae accompanying the results of the 1863 metropolitan examination



## XI

<sup>88</sup> Passages in italics are based on published and archival material (of which details will be given in *The Quest*) other than Ching-shan's and En-lin's c.v.s.

If we compare the statements in Backhouse's "Note" and Diary entries with the relevant entries in the real Ching-shan's 1863 c.v., we will find the following:<sup>88</sup>

- 1 Ching-shan's father was named Sung-ling, not 'Kuang Shun' 廣順, as Backhouse claims in his "Note."
- There was indeed a Kuang-shun in the Imperial Household who worked through the ranks of that organization to become a comptroller-general in September 1879, retiring through illness in January 1885. He could not, therefore, apart from anything else, have been the

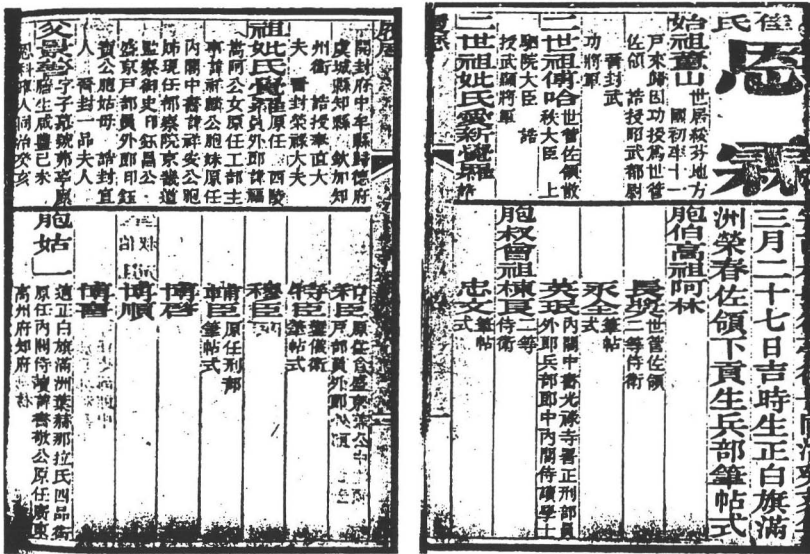


Figure 13

The first and fourth pages of En-lin's curriculum vitae accompanying the results of the 1888 provincial examination held in Peking

comptroller-general referred to in Diary extract 3, which relates an incident of the 8th year of T'ung-chih (1869), wrongly put by Backhouse (and the Diarist) as the 6th year of T'ung-chih (1867).

- 2 Ching-shan's father was never a comptroller-general in the Imperial Household, as Diary extract 3 claims.
  - Ching-shan's father, Sung-ling, was not among the comptrollers-general in the Imperial Household during a period (1821-1908) covering four reigns, from Tao-kuang through Hsien-feng and T'ung-chih to Kuang-hsü.
  - Sung-ling, who passed the provincial examination in Peking in 1819 at the age of thirty-three, coming 201st out of 240 graduates, had a very short official career. The highest position he attained was that with which he ended his official career—a county magistrate in Honan province with the rank of 7A in the nine-tier hierarchy.
- 3 i Ching-shan was never, as Backhouse claimed in his "Note," a junior secretary (presumably *chu-shih* – 6A) in 1864 in the Imperial Household.
  - In 1864 Ching-shan was still in the Han-lin yuan, and on his release the following year was appointed a *chu-shih* in the Board of Finance.
- ii Nor was he a senior secretary (presumably *yuan-wai-lang* 員外郎 – 5B) in 1869 in the Imperial Household.
  - In 1869 Ching-shan became a *yuan-wai-lang* (partly through purchasing the position) in the Board of Finance.
- iii Nor was he a comptroller ("deputy comptroller" in Backhouse's manuscript) (presumably *lang-chung* [5A]) in 1879.



- Ching-shan had eight sons, of whom at least five survived him. The Diary mentions only the three eldest and the younger ones not at all, though it would have been they who were mostly at home at the time. His eldest son was originally called En-lin 恩霖 (see En-lin's c.v. for the 1888 provincial examination, Figure 13), a homophone in different characters of the name the Diarist gives his third son (恩麟). 'En-lin' 恩霖 was changed to 'En-chu' 恩樹 in the government gazette in 1892, the year he was appointed one of the four secretaries (堂主事) of the presidents and vice-presidents of the Board of War. This change was most probably due to the fact that one of the supervisory officials for his 1888 provincial examination, a censor and his superior, also went by the same name written with the very same two characters. By the time of the Boxer outbreak, En-lin 恩霖 (now En-chu 恩樹) had risen to become one of the most senior staff members (掌印郎中) in the Board of War, a fact of which the Diarist father did not seem to be aware. Whether a father would refer to his son not by the name he had had since birth but by a recently adopted one must remain uncertain; the reason why the forger of the Diary had the name of the first son (partially) right but the other two wrong is a matter of some significance and will be dealt with in The Quest.

Figure 15

An incomplete table of Ching-shan's male descendants as recorded in 1863, 1888 and 1900

15th	16th (1863)	16th (1880)	17th	16th (1900)
景善	1 恩霖	1 恩霖	耆升 耆豐 耆元	1 恩霖 (恩樹) (兵部郎中)
	2 恩椿 (幼)	2 恩椿?		2 恩椿 (刑部筆帖式)
		3 恩彬?		3 恩彬 (戶部員外郎)
		4 恩存 (幼)		4 (恩存)
				5?
				6?
				7 恩沐
				8 恩淮

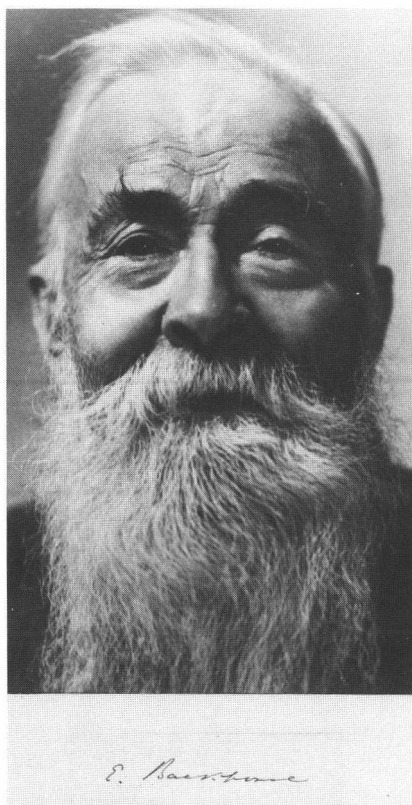
## XII

<sup>89</sup> The most striking example of this is undoubtedly Backhouse's description of Ching-shan as being of the Plain Yellow Banner 正黃旗, when the stele recording the successful candidates at the metropolitan examination of 1863, which had been standing in a courtyard of the K'ung Miao since long before Backhouse reached Peking—and indeed, it is still there—clearly states that Ching-shan was of the Plain White Banner. This glaring error remained uncorrected even after the Chinese translators of the book had amended it; nor do any of the Diary's critics seem to have paid attention to this mistake, or if they did, to have thought it significant.

**Figure 17**

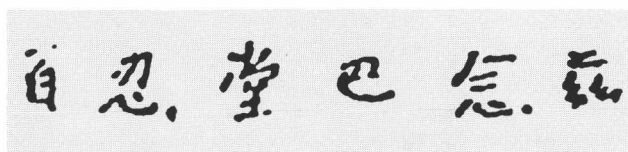
*Backhouse's adopted Chinese name in his own hand, together with the name of his studio, Pai-jen t'ang – 'Hall of a Hundred Forbearances'. This latter was derived from a tale told of a certain Chang Kung-yi of the Kao-tsung reign (AD 650-683) in the T'ang dynasty, who, on being asked by the emperor the secret that had enabled his family to live together in harmony for nine unbroken generations, picked up his brush by way of reply and wrote the word 'jen' 忍 one hundred times, moving the emperor to tears (see Chiu-T'ang-shu, book 188). Long before the exposure of his various shady dealings, Backhouse had been in the habit of posing as much misunderstood and wronged with 'jen' as his only defence, thereby winning no small amount of sympathy*

The above findings need no elaboration, nor need their significance be emphasized except to say that they point to the only possible conclusion—that the *Ching-shan Diary* is irrefutably a forgery, and, as far as the above family references are concerned, a careless and flimsy one at that.<sup>89</sup>



**Figure 16**

*A photograph of Backhouse taken in Peking at the time he was writing his 'memoirs', in which he made a last attempt to defend the authenticity of the Ching-shan Diary, shortly before his death (8 January 1944)*



## APPENDIX

A curriculum vitae was required of every candidate sitting for all examinations, from the local county level upwards. This had to include, *inter alia*, the candidate's birth-name and other names (*tsu*, *hao* etc.); his date of birth, place of origin, qualifications, and the names, qualifications and professions of forbears from at least the three preceding generations. The amount of detail given varied greatly with each candidate; some traced their ancestry back twenty generations or more and their relatives sideways many removes. As each candidate progressed through the host of such examinations, from county and provincial to metropolitan—a process which could take anything from fifteen to forty years or more—his c.v. grew in the bulk of its corroborative detail.

The accuracy of the information provided in these curricula vitae was considered to be of the greatest importance, and was strictly supervised. Though this scrutiny was not applied uniformly strictly throughout the whole period or across the whole country, enforced compliance with the regulations was always maintained. Candidates at county level, for example, were at one time arranged in groups of five to provide a mutual guarantee of the accuracy of every entry of each member, with the whole group punishable for any inaccuracy in any one of them. Punishment, including death, was meted out according to the gravity of the error.

But in spite of this, inaccuracies (often unintentional or slips of the pen) did occur, and there was the additional possibility of misprints when these curricula vitae were published.

Just to take the two c.v.s reproduced in part in this paper, for example, there are in them two mistakes and one apparent inconsistency:

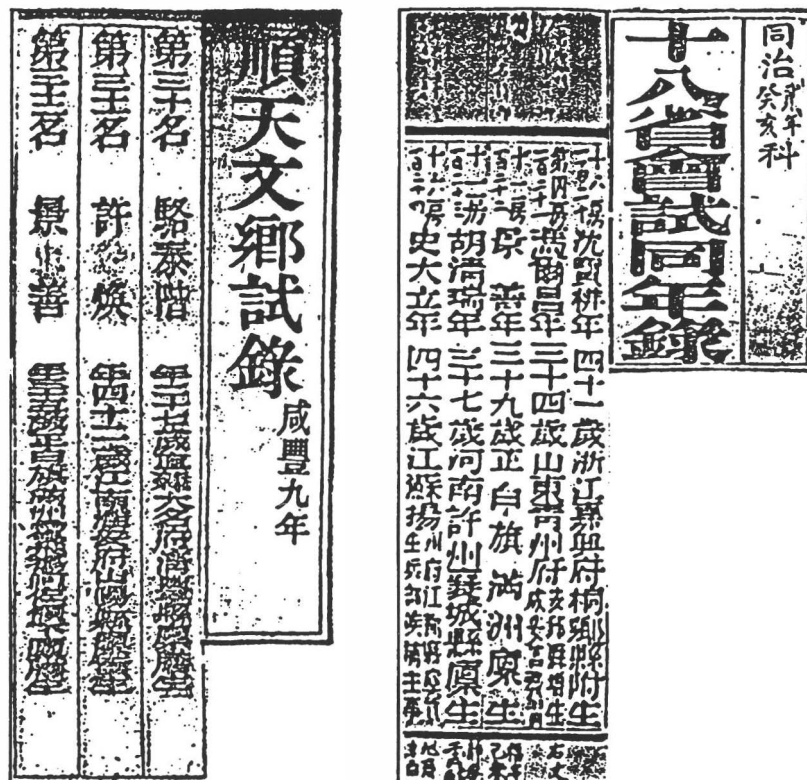
- In Ching-shan's c.v. (see Figure 12), his date of birth is given as the 13th day, 10th moon of *Chia-wu* 甲午 in the Tao-kuang reign (or 13 November 1834), whereas in the list of results for the 1863 metropolitan examination his age is given as thirty-nine in that year (see Figure 18a), which would mean he was born in the *Chia-shen* year 甲申 (i.e., on 3 December 1824). At least two versions of the 1859 provincial examination results (Figure 18a is one) confirm this latter date and suggest that *Chia-wu* was a misprint for *Chia-shen*, the year here adopted for Ching-shan's birth.

- In En-lin's c.v. (Figure 13), his date of birth is given as the 27th day, 3rd moon of Kuei-hai in the T'ung-chih reign (or 14 May 1863), at the very time, that is, when his father was sitting for the metropolitan examination. That being the case, En-lin's birth would have been too late to be included in his father's c.v., which had to be submitted some time before the examination commenced; yet on the third page of that very c.v. as reproduced here (Figure 12), not only is En-lin listed but a younger brother and sister as well. This, however, is not in actual fact a discrepancy, but merely points to the fact that this particular version of the *T'ung-nien-lu* of the 1863 metropolitan examination results (from which the c.v. of Ching-shan reproduced in Figure 12 was taken) was printed—as they commonly were—many years later, and this c.v. is an updated version in which the slip (i.e., of printing *Chia-wu* for *Chia-shen*) escaped detection.

- A genuine mistake did, however, occur in En-lin's curriculum vitae of 1888 with regard to the official positions held by one of his cousins there listed. This is mentioned here not simply to show that mistakes and misprints did occur, but also to point out that they do not affect the validity of the information drawn on for the purposes of this paper.

**Figure 18**

*Ching-shan in the list of successful candidates in the 1859 provincial examination held in Peking, showing him aged thirty-five (left), and the 1863 metropolitan examination showing him aged thirty-nine (right). The Tung-nien-lu containing the 1863 annotated list is a rare collector's item*



A word may be added about the names of Manchus written in Chinese. These had ceased, long before Ching-shan's time, to be merely a Chinese transcription of the Manchu. Rather, they were adopted, with rare exceptions, independent of whatever these Manchus may have been called in their own tongue—showing, as far as personal names were concerned, a complete Sinicization—and these names in the Chinese script are what appeared in all official documents and were used for administrative purposes. The names of Ching-shan's sons are a typical case, in which the word 'En' 恩 (a favourite with Manchus) was chosen as a generation-marker in accordance with a time-honoured Chinese custom.

It may also be mentioned that though numerically so many fewer than the Han Chinese, there were almost as many Manchus with identical Chinese renderings of their names. This was because over time, an increasing number of Manchus took up the common Chinese practice of having a two-syllable personal name while the pool of Chinese characters from which they chose to draw them was quite limited. Thus, when no clan name (or surname) or Banner affiliation was given, except in such documents as examination records, confusion and misidentification was inevitable. Backhouse, who was ignorant even of Ching-shan's Banner affiliation—a matter of basic importance, clearly did not know his clan name either; nor, it seems, was Ch'eng Ming-chou (and certainly not Duyvendak and Lewisohn) aware of the latter, or he would, instead of failing to identify Ching-shan's sons, have driven another powerful nail into the Diary's coffin.

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