

Peking: A Social Survey

Mary Lee Jones Lawrence



Kao (Gao) Family, 高家一家



Sidney Gamble and his Smith Corona, 1917

The sun beats down. The day is hot. The coolie laborers struggle to haul the travelers and their luggage down the dusty tracks, across the countryside. All in all, fifteen chair-coolies make up the small caravan as they traverse the countryside. Up in front, I sit, perched in a bamboo shoulder chair, a sun-proof canopy over my head, my typewriter perched on my lap. The clickity-clack of the keys hums in the background as we travel. My wide-brim hat is pulled down to the top of my sunglasses as I look out at the countryside surrounding us. My typing pauses as I become engrossed in the scenery, "Stop, stop!" I yell as we pass by a view of the mountains that is particularly stunning. Moving the typewriter off of my lap, I go around to my luggage to retrieve my camera. My fellow passengers get out to stretch, fanning themselves as they wait for me to finish taking photographs. I painstakingly shift angles in order to get the lighting just right.

I first traveled to China in 1908 as a young man of eighteen with my parents. After graduating from Princeton in 1912, I worked in California and attended graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley. In addition to studying

labor and industrial economics, I worked for the California State Commission on Immigration and Housing.

It was with this background that I then returned to China, arriving in China in May of 1916. I traveled across the country, photographing ordinary citizens and capturing their lives before arriving in Peking in the spring of 1918, joining the international staff of the Young Men's Christian Association and becoming a member of the Princeton University Center in China. It was at the behest of John Stewart Burgess that I then started to compile a social survey of Peking, the likes of which had never been undertaken in a Chinese city. Working under the auspices of the Peking Chinese Young Men's Christian Association and the Princeton University Center in China, fieldwork started in September 1918 and concluded in December 1919. This study has given me a great love for the Chinese and the firm belief that if given time and friendly help they will be able to work out the many social problems they are now facing. Knowledge of the problems that are being faced and the present reality is necessary in order to solve make progress.



Bound Feet, 三寸金莲

One of the more disturbing social practices, still pervasive in China despite its being outlawed in 1912, is foot binding. Many families still have their daughter's feet bound in secret, despite a law in 1915 where inspectors can issue fines for the practice. However, foot binding in order to make girls' feet into lotus feet is regarded as the best way to marry a rich man and therefore both girls born into the upper classes and those seeking to gain entrance into the upper echelons of society are generally subject to this practice. Tiny feet and the lilting, mincing walk that results from the practice are seen as beautiful and a status symbol.

When visiting with Wang Lifan's family, she shared how she avoids the inspector. When he comes, Lifan takes shoes with a bundle of rags stuffed in the toes, removes her little slippers and places her feet in the much larger shoes. When the inspector enters, she shows him her feet encased in the bulky shoes, thereby avoiding being fined.

At ten years old, Lifen's feet have only been bound for three years. Although tormented by a persistent ache in her feet, Lifen regards her tiny feet with pride. When I ask her if I may take a photograph of her feet, she bends and slowly starts to unwrap the bandages that encase them. As she unwraps, the smell from her feet increases. Once the last bit of the long bandages used to wrap her feet drops away, her mother picks up the linens to wash them. Two buckets are brought out and Lifen washes her feet in the bucket of water, then, soaks her feet in the mixture of herbs and animal blood, wrinkling her nose at the stench. Her mother comes over, picking up her feet and kneading the broken bones to soften them. Lifen grits her teeth to avoid crying out. Tears well up in her eyes from the pain. Clean linens are obtained and Lifen's mother begins to rebind her feet. Her broken toes are folded back under her foot and then her mother wraps the bindings around and around, tighter and tighter.



Opium burning, Throwing in Opium, 焚烧鸦片,将鸦片扔进火里

“The opium pipe is like a gun, wherewith you wound yourself.
How many heroes are stretched dying upon their pillows!”
Hung Hsiu-ch’uan

The sickly sweet scent of opium is redolent on the breeze. Lin Tianming wipes the sweat that is dripping down from underneath the brim of his hat. The heat from the flames warms the air around the fire pit. He turns to the pile of opium to throw on the flames, scooping up more, then turning and dumping it. Smoke billows out and the flames flare up, greedy for more fuel. The black-market for the drug thrives in Peking. The opium provides capital for poor farmers, coolies, officials and smugglers. However, in recent years, the zealous moral outrage of the government has overcome the voices of those who depend on opium for their livelihood. These specially built furnaces can be found all over, a reminder of the government’s fight against the drug trade. Opium is an evil drug, destroying those who consume it. Over the past ten years, China has struggled to rid itself of this vestige of imperial rule. The proclamation of the gradual prohibition of opium has caused great strife among

those who rely on it as their most profitable crop. Lin Tianming goes to and from the furnace, destroying more and more opium, the livelihood of some opium dealer going up in smoke as he works. The opium dealer whose opium was confiscated was caged and paraded through the streets as an example to all those who might would seek to profit from the opium trade. The fervor that has gripped the country has been highly effective in suppressing the trade, but at the cost of pushing many citizens further into poverty. Little to no compensation is given for those whose crops have been eradicated; property is destroyed and land confiscated with no thought for the impact on the citizens.



Prison, Prisoner at Gate, 老式监狱 站在門边的囚犯

The men stare sullenly at the camera. Light streams across their faces as they stand in the courtyard where they have been walking for exercise. Wooden cages surround the courtyard, erected off the ground, to house the prisoners. The chill of fall in the air means that the windows of the cells are no longer kept open. Instead, a special vent in the ceiling ensures that air circulates inside each cellblock. Chains bind the prisoners' ankles together and rattle as they shift their positions leaning against the wall by the gate. The majority of the men residing in this reformed prison are burglars. Of the 122 residents of the prison, only 39 have been convicted. The other 83, like Gao Wenzhang, are awaiting trial. Wenzhang has been imprisoned for almost a year now. Before that, he was held in an older prison in the city. There, the stench of unwashed bodies cramped together was overwhelming. He and twenty

other men were kept in a cell 15 x 20 feet. It was dark, crowded and unsanitary. This prison is a palace in comparison.

A bell rings and the prisoners shuffle inside to eat their morning meal of millet, Indian corn and salt vegetables. After eating his food, Gao Wenzhang shuffles with a few others to the prison lecture room. Here he learns about Confucius, Lao Tze, Mohammed, Christ and John Howard. These religious and moral lectures are given daily. After this, Wenzhang heads back to his cell. As a result of his dedication to reforming, he is privileged enough to have a few books that he can read and his own writing utensils with which to take notes and write letters to his family.



Women outside Methodist Church, 美国卫理公会教堂外的妇女

The women congregate outside of the church, as is their custom every Sunday after the service. They talk animatedly about the sermon and gossip about how everyone is getting along. As this is a social survey from the Christian viewpoint, it would not be complete without some comment on the state of religion in this great city. The city of Peking has long been an important religious center; ancient shrines and temples stand alongside modern churches and chapels. The old faiths have for the most part lost their hold on the intellectuals of China and the history of this city and religion make it the natural place for intensive missionary effort. Of all of the Peking churches, the Methodists have the largest enrollment by far. Christianity is introducing new social and moral ideals into Chinese society, a higher place for women being chief among its teachings. The missionaries and churches have pioneered in modern education from kindergarten to university. Through their efforts, hospitals have been established and medical colleges opened. And these are just a few examples of how the church has been able to help Peking,

and even China more broadly, confront the problems it is facing. Talking to these young women, they desire the general social principles of Christianity, but opine that they need definite methods and processes in order to apply these new principles and realize these new ideals.



Beggar Woman, 女乞丐和她的婴儿

The soup kitchen has just opened for the morning. The beggars line up outside, standing in the shelter of the mud wall to protect themselves from the north wind and make the most of the sunshine. One and all carry bowls, buckets and tin cans to hold the hot porridge that will warm their stomachs and appease their hunger, at least for a little while. Officially, no begging is now allowed in Peking. Those that do beseech alms are careful to stop their importuning whenever they come near a policeman. Previously, beggars not only levied toll on special occasions, but also collected daily contributions from stores. The storekeepers decided that it was better to give them alms whenever they came around to save annoyance and loss of face by having the beggars stand around outside and constantly beseeching alms.

While inside the city walls begging is limited, just outside a great collection of beggars can be found. One man stands in line at the soup kitchen, braving the winter winds with only a bit of sacking for clothing. Another stands with a padded quilt around his shoulders, but in trousers that are tattered rags. The beggar woman behind them though is perhaps the most striking of all. She stands, babe swaddled across her chest, bamboo walking stick in her hand, wrapped in rags and with her free hand holds out a bowl. The baby starts to let out a plaintive wail. She hushes it and shifts her weight back and forth, bouncing the child to sooth it. It used to be that in times of poor harvest and need the government would forgo all or part of the grain that it usually received as taxes. However, the revolution has disrupted the economy and more and more poor flood the city each day. The line finally starts moving into the soup kitchen, where workers ladle out a dipperful of hot porridge for all who enter. The woman shuffles forward, the babe across her chest making her movements awkward.



Two Kindergarten Girls, 两个幼儿园的小女孩

The door slams, a young girl runs pell-mell down the stairs. She halts at the bottom to wait for her sister, hot on her heels. The two girls look inquisitively at my camera, twisting their handkerchiefs in their hands at the bottom of the steps. Dressed in their pants and jackets, with their sunhats on, they are ready to head off to kindergarten. Their young minds will be shaped, their education developing them mentally, morally and physically. Education is of great important to promote the bodily and spiritual development of school children. Training of the body, training in knowledge, and training of the emotions and will are given simultaneously and with equal emphasis so that the children may develop symmetrically.

The whole education system of Peking has been built up in a few years, partly under the influence of Christian missionaries and churches. The chief defect of the school system is the lack of development of educational opportunities for girls. Schools for girls number but thirty-eight—five of a higher grade, thirty-two of

primary grade and one kindergarten. The total number of students estimated by the Minister of Education is 55,000 of which only 7,000 are women and girls.

Compounding this issue, the constant state of political disturbance and lack of sufficient national revenue make rapid process in education difficult.



Devil Dance at Lama Temple, March 1 1919, Dignitary in Yellow Robe, 雍和宫, 1919
年3月1日打鬼舞, 着黄袍高级僧侣

The drums thud and the cymbals crash as the men twirl and stomp in the center of the circle. The Lama Temple, or Yung Ho Kung, is an impressive location. Chief of all of the Lama temples in Peking, it houses hundreds of priests and acolytes. The peaked roof is elaborately decorated with swirling patterns and covered with yellow tiles. Fabulous frescoes cover the walls and magnificent decorative arches abound. Amongst its ornate splendor, white wisps of smoke twine upward on the breeze, images of prayers twining to Heaven to reach the ears of the gods. The incense burners flame with burning incense sticks, filling the air with a mystical fragrance. The prayer wheels, etched with written prayers, at the edges of the courtyard slowly spin as hands push them around and around. A throng of lama dignitaries mills about in the courtyard wearing gorgeous old style costumes. While

some wear weird and grotesque masks and perform the dances themselves, others snap whips to keep back the crowds of spectators. The energy of the crowd rises as chanting fills the air as the lamas escort a skeleton-like figure symbolizing the devil onto the stage. The devil is carried to the south gate and thrown atop the fire there, the flames greedily devouring the figure, the smoke from the fire swirling up and mingling with the smoke of the incense. The chanting continues as the lamas recite Buddhist scriptures to drive out any evil spirits that may have invaded the temple compound during the year. The drums and symbols reach a crescendo, the dancers move to keep up with the beat. The chanting continues, praying for the temple to have peace and prosperity in the coming year.



Miss Li, Health Clinic, 诊所的李小姐

Miss Li's hair is pulled tightly back into a bun at the nape of her neck. The wisps brush the collar of her white gown. Her black stockings cover her legs and her feet are shod in sensible black shoes. The crowd of children surrounds her, looking up at her with wide-open eyes, taking in everything that she does. Their faces are covered with grime from a long day of school and running around in the streets. Her glasses have slipped down the bridge of her nose; she juggles the papers in her hands to push them back up with a free hand. A nurse by training, Miss Li attended a nurses' training school maintained by the China Medical Board before coming to work at the health clinic. As she passes out the pamphlets in her hand, the students look down at them and start to read.

An attempt is being made in order to educate the people regarding the dangers of the fly, vaccinations and the necessity of cleanliness in the home as the

warm weather comes. In order to facilitate this effort, lectures are being given across town and pamphlets have been prepared on these subjects by the China Medical Missionary Association. As part of the lectures, sets of vividly painted pictures were prepared, illustrating the messages so that neither illiteracy nor language is a barrier. The children surrounding Miss Li had in fact just been vaccinated at the clinic. The spring weather brings with it a rise in the risk of typhoid and cholera, but the number of cases has been greatly reduced by the expansion of public health services. With the influx of missionaries, Peking now has the doctors, nurses and workers in the city that can teach citizens about personal hygiene, individual prophylaxis against communicable diseases and community sanitation.



June 28 Students & President Prostitute Signs, 6月28日,学生和总统,青楼门口的挂牌

外右二区石头胡同28号,云兰阁小班,小班为一等妓院。

Night approaches and as dusk falls, this part of Peking becomes immeasurably busier. One building stands unassumingly on the street, second from the right by the Second District stone alley. It has no windows or porches facing the street and its stone façade has no distinguishable features. But as the day turns to night, wooden tablets are carried outside with names painted on them and hung around the door, draped in blue silk with pink silk rosettes. The entrance becomes lit by electrical lanterns and the name and class of the house. This first-class brothel draws a steady amount of traffic off the street. The girls are recruited quite young and most girls of the house are between sixteen and eighteen years old. Many of girls also sing at the small theaters in the district, using the theater as a means of advertising for the brothel. Others are called in to act as hostesses in the tea houses

when business men or officials give parties.

Although the life of an inmate of a first class brothel might be one full of excitement, the faces of the girls are marked by the nervous strain and tension of their profession. However, the police department has established a rescue home for prostitutes known as the Door of Hope. Girls from sixteen to twenty-five years of age are either rescued from houses of ill fame, if they were forced into prostitution or badly treated by their manager, or have voluntarily left their former occupation in order to come to the home. Both industrial and educational work is given to the girls. They receive six hours of schooling a day in Chinese, moral teachings, arithmetic, art, cooking, drawing, calisthenics and music. Should they desire to leave the home, the women can leave if relatives assume support of them or they marry. To facilitate the latter, photographs of the women of the home are posted so that passerby might see and, if they find a woman who they are attracted to, inquire within as to whether or not the women would be amenable to marriage.

Bibliography

Peking, a social survey conducted under the auspices of the Princeton University Center in China and the Peking Young Men's Christian Association by Gamble, Sidney D. (Sidney David), 1890-1968; Burgess, John Stewart, 1883-1949; Princeton University Center in China; Young Men's Christian Associations. Peking

Introduction by Jonathan D. Spence, Yale University, 1988. Originally published in *Sidney Gamble's China, 1917 to 1932: Photographs of the Land and Its People*. Edited by Nancy L. Johnson and Leonard Sherp. (Washington, D.C.: Alvin Rosenbaum Projects Inc., 1988)

"Sidney D. Gamble." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_D._Gamble>

"Sidney D. Gamble Photographs." *Duke Digital Collections*. Duke University, n.d. Web.
<<http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/gamble/about/>>
<<http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/gamble/timeline/1917-1919/>>

"Foot Binding." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foot_binding>

"Painful Memories for China's Footbinding Survivors." *NPR*. NPR, n.d. Web.
<<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=8966942>>

Brady, Tara. "Meet the Last of China's Women to Have Her Feet Bound: 102-year-old Subjected to Ancient Custom Had Her Toes Broken When She Was Just Two-years-old." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 23 Sept. 2013. Web.
<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2429992/Han-Qiaoni-102-woman-bound-feet-toes-broken-just-2.html>>

Spence, Jonathan (1975), "Opium Smoking in Ch'ing China", in Wakeman, Frederic, eds., *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 143–173 reprinted in Spence, Jonathan D. (1992).

"Opium." *Streets of Shanghai* /. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<http://streetsofshanghai.pbworks.com/w/page/18638691/Opium>>

"History of Opium in China." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_opium_in_China#Domestication_and_suppression_in_the_last_decades_of_the_Qing_dynasty>

"China's War on Opium: Burning \$12,000,000 Worth at Shanghai." *THE INTERACTIVE WAR NEWS*. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<http://www.illustratedfirstworldwar.com/item/chinas-war-on-opium-burning-12-000-000-worth-at-shanghai-iln0-1919-0322-0006-001/>>

Windle, J. (2013). 'Harms Caused by China's 1906-17 Opium Suppression Intervention'. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 24(5): 498-505.

"Devil Dance." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil_Dance>

"Yonghe Temple." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yonghe_Temple>

"Beating the Ghost Ceremony Held at Yonghegong Lama Temple." *YouTube*. YouTube, n.d. Web.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x-fp_87l_M>

"The Lama Temple - Beijing China." *YouTube*. YouTube, n.d. Web.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWVQV14JXfY>>

Li, Yao. "Lamas Dance with the 'devil' at Beijing Temple." *City of Beijing*. China Daily, 12 Mar. 2013. Web.
<http://www.cityofbeijing.gov.cn/2013-03/12/content_16300840.htm>

"Lama Temple - Lonely Planet." *Lonely Planet*. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/china/beijing/sights/religious/lama-temple>>