

Of Fox Spirits and Hobgoblins: In Search of Paul French's Peking (a critique of *Midnight in Peking: How the Murder of a Young Englishwoman Haunted the Last Days of Old China*. NY: Penguin, 2011.)

As an epigraph for his book, Paul French quotes Conrad: "The belief in a supernatural force of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness." A few pages later, he introduces us to Chinese fox spirits, which, he tells us, "Having lured their chosen victims, they simply love them to death." The book's pages are adorned with the Chinese characters 狐狸精 (hú li jīng, fox spirit), which are used as dividers between sub-chapters.

When Edward Werner buries the remains of his murdered daughter in the Peking British Cemetery, the author comments (p. 134 in the U.S. edition), "If Werner had raised his head and looked to the west, he would have seen the Fox Tower (i.e., the haunt of the fox spirits) looming not a quarter of a mile away." By this point, a reader attuned to French's methods may be tempted to ask: if Werner had looked up, could he actually have seen the Fox Tower? To answer this question, we need to know where the British Cemetery was. According to Lewis Arlington & William Lewisohn's 1935 *In Search of Old Peking* (p. 249), it was about ¼ mile north of the Xibian Gate, outside the western wall of the Tartar City. We confirm this with a 1926 British War Office map of Peking and Vicinity. This would have put it about five miles from the Fox Tower, with the view blocked by the city wall. So even if Werner, disregarding French's suggestion, had looked east and not west, he would not have been able to see the Fox Tower. Interjecting the fox spirits at this point in the story required shifting the cemetery five miles.

If the cemetery could be moved so casually, then what else, we may wonder, has been done to the geography and history of Peking (and Tientsin), in service to the fox spirits or other strange gods? The following is a preliminary attempt to answer this question.

On p. 4 (lower), French tells us that "...the Legation Quarter..." was "just two acres in size,..."

It was about one half square mile, according to the 1924 Japanese Government Railways *Guide to China*, p. 46, i.e., some 320 acres.¹

p. 5 (lower): "... Chiang (Kaishek)... had moved the seat of government to Nanking, some seven hundred miles south. From there he launched the Northern Expedition,..."

The Northern Expedition was launched from Canton. Nanking was one of its targets.² Chiang made Nanking his capital in 1928, after completion of the Northern Expedition.

p. 7 (top): In the Peking Legation Quarter, "there was a French post office, and the great buildings of the Yokohama Specie Bank, the Banque de l'Indochine, the Russo-Asiatic Bank, and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank."

¹ The 1919 edition of the *Directory & Chronicle for China*, p. 540, gives the same figure.

² See, e.g., Brian Catchpole, *A Map History of Modern China* (London: Heinemann, 1976) p. 44.

The French, and the other foreign post offices in Peking, had all closed by January 1, 1923, in accordance with the agreement reached at the Washington Conference.³ This was 14 years before the events that are the subject of this book. In 1914, there had been Japanese, French, German and Russian post offices in Peking.⁴ The German office was closed after China declared war on Germany in 1917.

The Russo-Asiatic Bank liquidated in 1926.⁵ The building was still there in 1937.

p. 7 (upper) “Residents of European-style apartment buildings went shopping at Kierulff’s general store,..”

Kierulff’s closed c.1916, before China entered the Great War and subsequently confiscated German property and interned German nationals.⁶ Arlington & Lewisohn (p. 10) refer to the store in the past tense.

On p. 8 (bottom), French tells us that in the British Peking Club “... there were two-month-old copies of the *Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* on offer.” However, on p. 84 (upper), he comments “But if Werner preferred not to retire to the club for rounds of whisky sodas, reheated gossip and a fortnight-old copy of the *Times*,..” So we wonder, how long did it take for a London newspaper to reach Peking?

According to the 1924 *Guide to China* (p. ii), London to Shanghai via the Trans-Siberian required 14 days; via Suez on the fastest steamers, about 41 days, and about a week less if crossing Europe by train to a Mediterranean port. These times were virtually unchanged since 1915.⁷ Thus the time was long past when Peking or Shanghai residents read two-month old London newspapers.

pp. 23-24: “But mainly he (Werner) worked from home, at his house at 1 Armour Factory Alley, in the shadow of the Fox Tower, from which it was separated only by an old canal and its population of noisy ducks. Once part of China’s Grand Canal, it was now too silted up to allow the grain barges to transit, and had become a fetid rubbish dump.”

The Grand Canal ended at Tianjin, some 86 miles away, according to all accounts. It connected with the Bei He (North River) there; and the Bei He connected to the

³ Japanese Government Railways, *Guide to China* (Tokyo: 1924), p. xxvi

⁴ Imperial Japanese Government Railways, *Official Guide to Eastern Asia* (Tokyo: 1915) Vol. IV, p. 39. The *Guide* appears to be mistaken in mentioning British and U.S. post offices.

⁵ King, Frank H.H., et al., *History of the Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation*, III: 104 (Cambridge U.P.: 1988)

⁶ We find no entry for Kierulff’s in the *Directory & Chronicle for China* for 1917, 1918, 1919 or 1920. However, they are still listed in the 1916 edition of the *North-China Desk Hong List*. After the Armistice, we read in the *North-China Herald* of Nov. 23, 1918 (p. 451), of “the sacking of the few remaining German shops in Legation Quarter,” but no mention of Kierulff’s.

⁷ Imperial Japanese Government Railways, *Official Guide to Eastern Asia*, Vol. IV *China* (Tokyo, 1915) p. ii.

Tongzhou Canal at Tongzhou, some eight miles east of Peking.⁸ The channel from Tongzhou was also called the Dong He (East River).⁹

The canal ended at the city moat outside the Dongbian Gate. It was “formerly the route by which the tribute rice was brought to Peking. For this reason the ground between the moat and the east wall as far as the Ch’i Hua Mèn (or Qihua Gate, the next gate north of the Dongbian Gate) was lined with sheds where the rice was unloaded and stored, prior to removal to granaries inside the city.”¹⁰

Thus the little dry ditch which passed near Werner’s house was not part of the Grand Canal, nor part of the grain transport route, and appears to have been far too narrow to allow grain barges to pass. Moreover, there was no opening in the city wall at that point that would have allowed a grain barge to pass through. Arlington & Lewisohn tell us (p. 159) that “the ditch is what remains of the once famous P’ao Tzū Ho¹¹ (Bubbling River) which was dug out in the Mongol Dynasty. Officially it was known as the Hui T’ung Ho (Favorable Communications River) and has its source at the Jade Fountain, to the north of the city. On its banks which were planted with willows several famous temples were situated, and it was a favorite spot for boating parties and picnics.”

p. 29 (upper) “Since the 1870s it (Tianjin, Tientsin) had been a treaty port,.. There were four major concessions, British, French, Italian and Japanese.

Tientsin was opened in 1860 by the Treaty of Peking of that year, and immediately garrisoned by Great Britain. By 1937, there were only four concessions (which French identifies), and four ex-concessions (German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Belgian), which had been reclaimed by or retroceded to the Chinese government.

p. 53 (upper middle) “The city (Tientsin) was better connected than it had been too, with tramp-steamer links along the China coast and a branch line of the Peking-Hankow railway.”

Tientsin was the major port for north China, serving Peking in particular, and nationally was second only to Shanghai.¹² It had enjoyed regular steamship service from Shanghai since 1867. By the 1910s there was regular service to other Chinese ports as well as Korea and Japan.¹³

Tientsin’s rail service in no sense could be called a branch of the Peking-Hankow Line. The Peking-Mukden Railway – which ran through Tientsin – and the Peking-Hankow Railway were separate operations, served by separate stations in Peking. Tientsin, as the transport and communications hub of north China, enjoyed rail and telegraph service

⁸ *Guide to China*, pp. 53, 299.

⁹ Arlington & Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, p. 227

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ In pinyin, Paozihe; 泡子河

¹² On Tientsin’s economic position, see, e.g., *The Far Eastern Review*, 1919 Feb., pp. 149-154.

¹³ K.C. Liu, *Anglo-American Steamship Rivalry in China, 1862-1874* (Harvard U.P., 1962) pp. 68, 78-9; *Official Guide to Eastern Asia*, IV, pp. 27-28; *Guide to China*, pp. 28-30, 39

before Peking. Rail service from Tientsin to Peking began in 1897, the same year construction on the Peking-Hankow line began. Tientsin was also the starting point of the Tientsin-Pukow Railway, which ran south to the Yangtze River opposite Nanking.¹⁴

The author is so badly misinformed here that the question arises, where does he get his information? We know of no source that could have provided him with a basis for the above statements about Tientsin. We therefore raise the question, with a view to what follows, did he simply make it up, without giving too much thought to consistency?

p. 58 (middle): "Lying in a narrow strip between the Legation Quarter and the Tartar City, the Badlands was a network of twisting *hutong* devoted to sin and vice.

"It had been known until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 as the Glacis... Since then the Glacis had been developed, and the polo fields swallowed up. Yet it retained its no-man's-land feel, neither completely Chinese nor completely foreign, although technically it was under the jurisdiction of the Peking police."

To test this statement, one has to look no further than the endpaper map in this book. This map, a highly pictorialized and somewhat whimsical outline map for tourists, was produced in 1936 – only a year before the principal events in French's book - by Frank Dorn, a career U.S. Army officer who was stationed in Peking in 1934-38, first in language school and then as Assistant Military Attaché at the U.S. Legation.¹⁵ (The book does not credit Dorn for the map.) Although many details of Peking geography are omitted from this map, it does show the polo field.¹⁶ The glacis is also there, although not identified.

In December 1949, when Peking came under siege by the People's Liberation Army, the glacis was converted to an emergency airfield, from which we can only infer that the glacis was still there.¹⁷

p. 59 (upper): "By the 1930s part of the old Mongol market had also been absorbed into the district, which was now commonly known as the Badlands."

Where was the Mongol Market? According to Arlington & Lewiston (pp. 18-19), "Southwest (of the old pre-1900 British Legation), where the tennis courts are to-day, and on part of the adjoining ex-Russian Barracks, was an open space, called the Mongol Market..." It can be found in *In Search of Old Peking*, on the 1900 map following p. 4. This would have put it on the (post-1900) glacis on the western side of the Legation Quarter, over 3/4 mile from the district that French identifies as the Badlands, which was on the east side.

¹⁴ *Guide to China*, pp. 3, 28, 92-93, 131-2

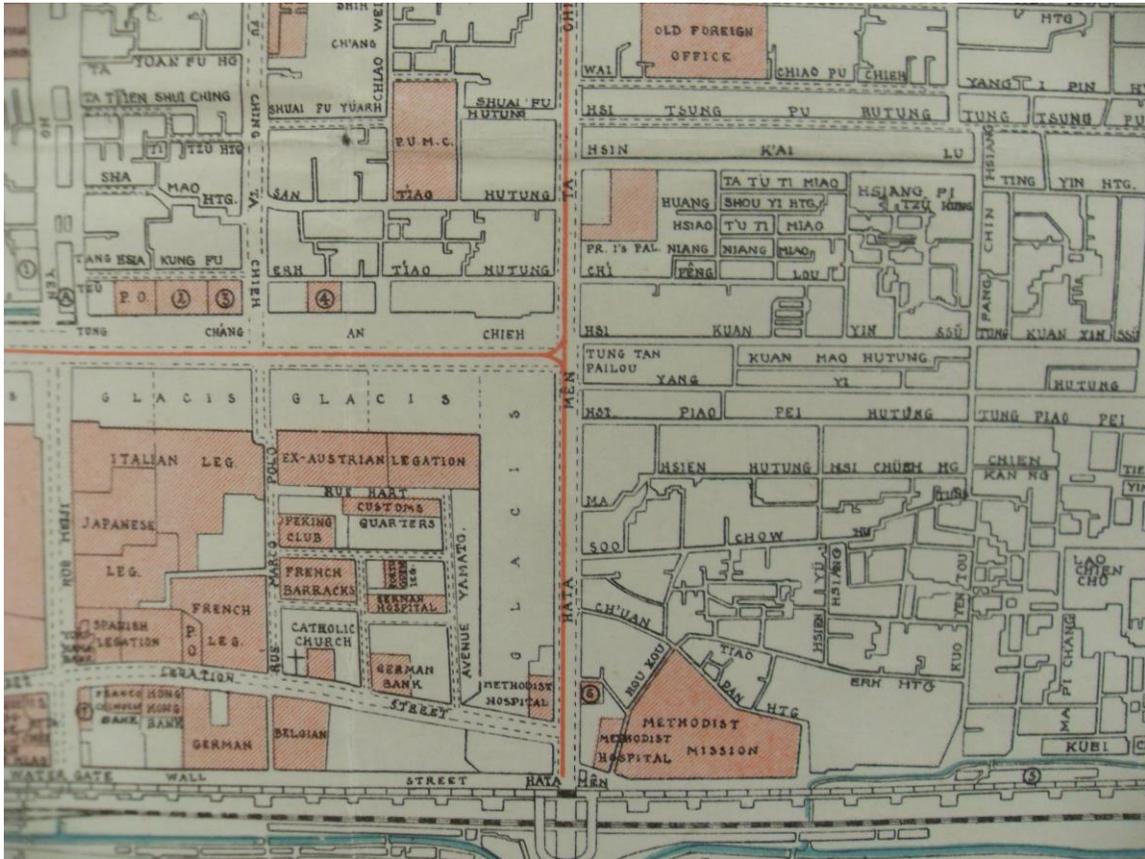
¹⁵ See the introduction to the Dorn Papers at the Hoover Institution, at: http://findingaids.stanford.edu/xtf/view?docId=ead/hoover/reg_182.xml;query=;brand=default. Dorn retired a Brigadier General, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

¹⁶ The map of the Legation Quarter in 1935, in Arlington & Lewisohn after p. 4, shows the glacis and the polo ground still there. A 1939 map of Peking printed by Poplar Island Press, to accompany a new printing of Arlington & Lewisohn, shows the glacis intact.

¹⁷ Derk Bodde, *Peking Diary* (Schuman: 1950, and reprints), pp. 73, 79, 80.

p. 59 (lower) - “The Badlands’ northern border was Soochow Hutong... The heart of the Badlands was Chuanpan¹⁸ hutong, a winding street of jerry-built structures..”

Again, we are obliged to the author for providing us with the Dorn map, which tells us that Soochow Hutong was a shopping street.



Section of map produced in 1939 by Poplar Island Press (a German firm in Peking) to accompany the reprinting of Arlington & Lewisohn’s *In Search of Old Peking*. This map has more detail than the map that accompanied the 1935 printing.

p. 60 (upper): “About halfway along its length Chuanpan Hutong formed a junction with Hougou Hutong, which ran down to the Tartar Wall. The wall formed a natural southern border of the Badlands, extending all the way to the Tartar City and the Fox Tower. On Hougou Hutong, street sellers sold opium, heroin, along with the works to inject it, and cheaply printed pornography of pubescent Chinese and White Russian Carole Lombard look-alikes. The only piece of goodness in the area was the church of the China Inland Mission.”

We again refer to the map that accompanies Arlington & Lewisohn. More than half the length of Chuanpan hutong (on the south side), and virtually the entire length of Hougou

¹⁸ Chuanban in *pinyin*; 船板胡同

hutong (on the east side), is taken up by the wall of the vast Methodist Mission and hospital compound. The compound included a boys school, a girls school, a women's and children's hospital, residences, and, until 1918, the campus of Peking University.¹⁹

The Methodist Mission, which had been on the site since 1869, was burned to the ground during the Boxer War in 1900. Some 70 missionaries, their families, 120-odd students in the girls' school and some 700 Chinese Methodists took refuge in the Legations.²⁰ Afterwards, the mission had the opportunity to acquire land, and grew to some 25 acres, including a separate tract of three acres on the west side of Hougou hutong.²¹

Although it may well be that the wall segregated the mission compound from its neighborhood, and consequently the mission did not much influence the character of the neighborhood outside the wall, the matter would seem to require discussion.²² We also note that, at some points, the mission compound wall appears to have been set back from the street, and between street and wall there were shops, not represented on our map.²³ French, however, does not acknowledge the mission compound's existence.

The mission also acquired some 28 acres, mostly scattered parcels and small lots, in the Kui-jia-chang neighborhood, east of the mission compound, where Edward Werner lived. (Werner's landlord was the Methodist Mission.²⁴) In 1918, the Methodist Peking

¹⁹ This institution is not to be confused with National Peking University or Peking Government University, i.e., the modern Beijing University. The Methodist Peking University, after merging with other mission institutions, changed its Chinese name to Yenching University in 1919, while continuing to use the name Peking University in its English communications until 1926. Dwight W. Edwards, *Yenching University* (New York: United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, 1959), p. 99.

²⁰ Juliet Bredon, *Peking* (rev. 1922), p. 490 for the date of the Methodist Mission. Richard O'Connor, *The Spirit Soldiers* (NY: Putnam, 1973), p. 113, or Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion* (NY: Walker 2000), pp. 83-84 for the flight to the Legation Quarter. The endpaper map in the hardcover edition of Preston indicates the dimensions of the Methodist Mission compound in 1900.

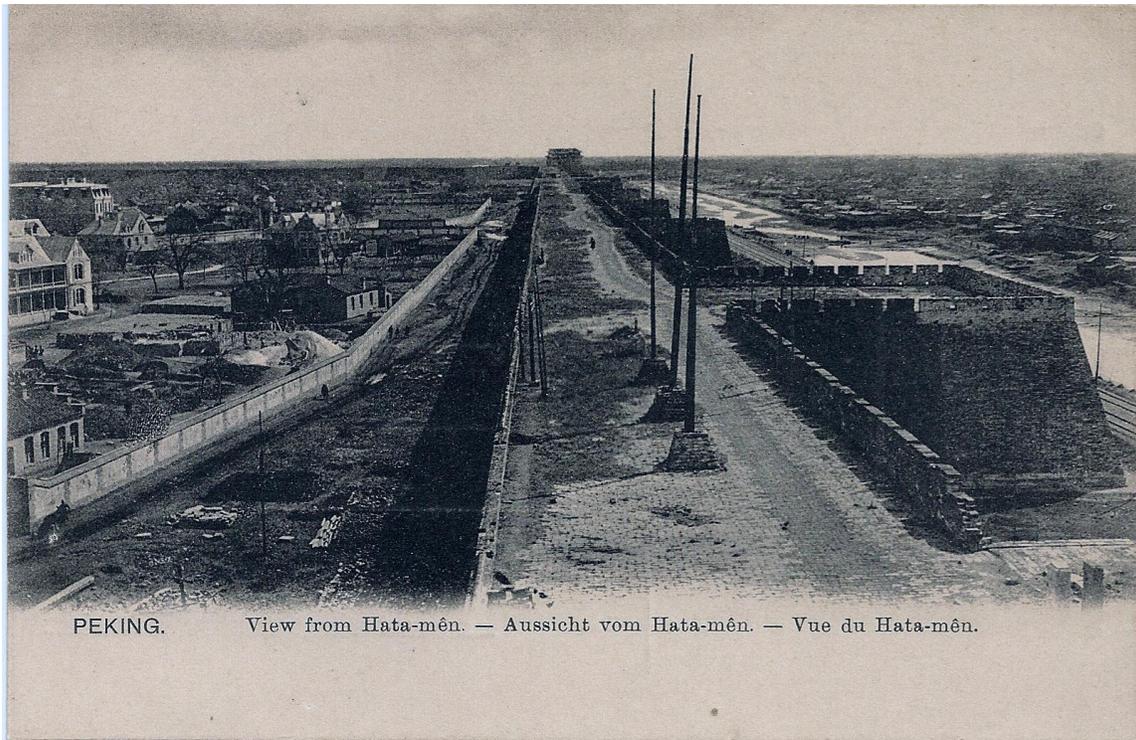
²¹ Edwards, p. 43

²² Edwards, p. 86, refers to the "ten-foot blank wall of the Methodist compound"

²³ Edward Werner, in his letter to the Ambassador of 1938/10/5 (F 1510/1510/10), at the bottom of p. 10 refers to the Fu Sheng Restaurant "opposite No. 28 Ch'uan-pan Hut'ung." On p. 15 of the same letter (lower half), Werner states that he was able to form an idea of the layout of No. 28 "by going on to the roof of the Chinese grocery store just opposite." It is perhaps suggestive that Nos. 27, 28 and 29 were all on one side of the street, while it is unclear whether the buildings on the opposite side were assigned numbers, indicating their makeshift structure and status. Anyone who has lived in China has witnessed instances of entrepreneurs setting up shop on public space, and then building on it, if not prevented. A more definite answer to this question would require access to city directories from the period, and perhaps the municipal archives.

²⁴ In a letter of June 3, 1941, Arthur Braddan Coole, the Chairman of the Mission's Property Committee, who was charged with disposing of the property so that the Mission could get out of the real estate business and focus on saving souls, wrote to Frank Cartwright at the Board of Foreign Missions in New York, "One of our tenants was an ex British Consul-General from Foochow (E.T.C. Werner) who tried to tell me that we couldn't make him move and we had a little conversation about law right then and there and that settled the case. He thought that missionaries were a dumb lot and that he could scare us out by telling us that he had been a British Consul-General and knew the law and that we couldn't sell the property as long as he wanted to rent it from us. I told the old boy that I had just finished a year of law and was up on the latest cases and asked him to name the cases he based his decisions on because talk was cheap without quoting precedents. He curled up and went home, we sold the property, and he moved out." Coole file, Missionary Files, United Methodist Church Archives and History Center.

University, already embarked on its transformation into Yenching University, and needing more space than the compound afforded, moved into this neighborhood, which became the Kuei-jia-chang campus.²⁵



PEKING. View from Hata-mên. — Aussicht vom Hata-mên. — Vue du Hata-mên.

Illus. 1. Peking. View from Hata-mên, c.1910. Card by Graphische Gessellschaft, Berlin. At left, the Methodist Mission compound. The road that runs along the city wall was referred to by Werner as the Wall Road.²⁶ In the distance, we can make out where Chuanpan hutong runs along the east side of the mission compound wall, ending at the Wall Road.

A report in the *Peiping Chronicle* of the discovery of the body states that it was found “halfway between the Hata Men and the German Cemetery in the gully running alongside the City Wall in the East City.” The gully cannot be made out in this picture, but the description would place the body not far east of the mouth of Chuanpan hutong, roughly 500 meters from the viewer.

Outside the wall, we can make out the rails of the Peking-Mukden Railway. Oddly, the book does not tell us on which side of the wall the body was found.

²⁵ Edwards, pp. 38, 105, 114. The school remained there until 1926, when it moved outside the city walls to the Haidian site, where in 1952 it was absorbed by Beijing University. After moving, the school resold the land to the Methodist Mission. About this neighborhood, Bredon, *op. cit.*, writing in 1922, comments, “The (Legation) Quarter, however, is already far too small to provide house room for all the foreigners in the capital... Consequently the district between the Hata Mên and the East Wall, being conveniently central, is fast becoming an unofficial foreign settlement.” (p. 49)

²⁶ In the *Peiping Chronicle*, we sometimes see it referred to as Wall Street.

p. 82 (lower middle): “Armour Factory Alley ran west into Soochow Hutong, which then continued to the Badlands, and through to the edge of the Legation Quarter.”

Armour Factory Alley (Kuei-jia-chang hutong) does not run into Soochow Hutong on any map that we can find.

p. 116 (bottom): “Still, the Shantung bouncers on the door of number 27 (Chuanpan Hutong) knew better than to get in Han’s way; this was his patch. Han ran a classic roust – gramophone off, lights on, everyone told to stay in their seats, several larger constables on the door to prevent anyone leaving. There was no back exit, just a high wall topped with broken glass that separated the lowlife of the Badlands from the high life of the Legation Quarter.”

The question of where the author might have found his description of the police raid we leave to the reader’s imagination. Although *Midnight in Peking* lacks a map (other than the endpaper map discussed above), the author kindly provides one in his 2012 sequel, *Badlands*. This map, although wildly distorted and mostly fictitious, nevertheless shows No. 27 Chuanpan hutong about a quarter mile east of the Legation Quarter, with the building’s rear facing east. The author apparently found the challenge of creating a map consistent with his descriptions an impossible one, or not worth the bother.

p. 115 (upper middle): “On the west side of Chuanpan Hutong were the bars and brothels, and on the east side cheap Chinese eateries and late-night cafes.”

The author’s own map, in his 2012 sequel, *Badlands*, does not support this description.

p. 124 (lower middle): “The very symbol of British power in Tientsin, the hall (Gordon Hall) was built out of the dark grey stone of the former ancient city wall, which had been pulled down by British troops.

Gordon Hall was completed in 1890, while the Tientsin city wall was not pulled down until 1901, after the defeat of the Boxers.²⁷

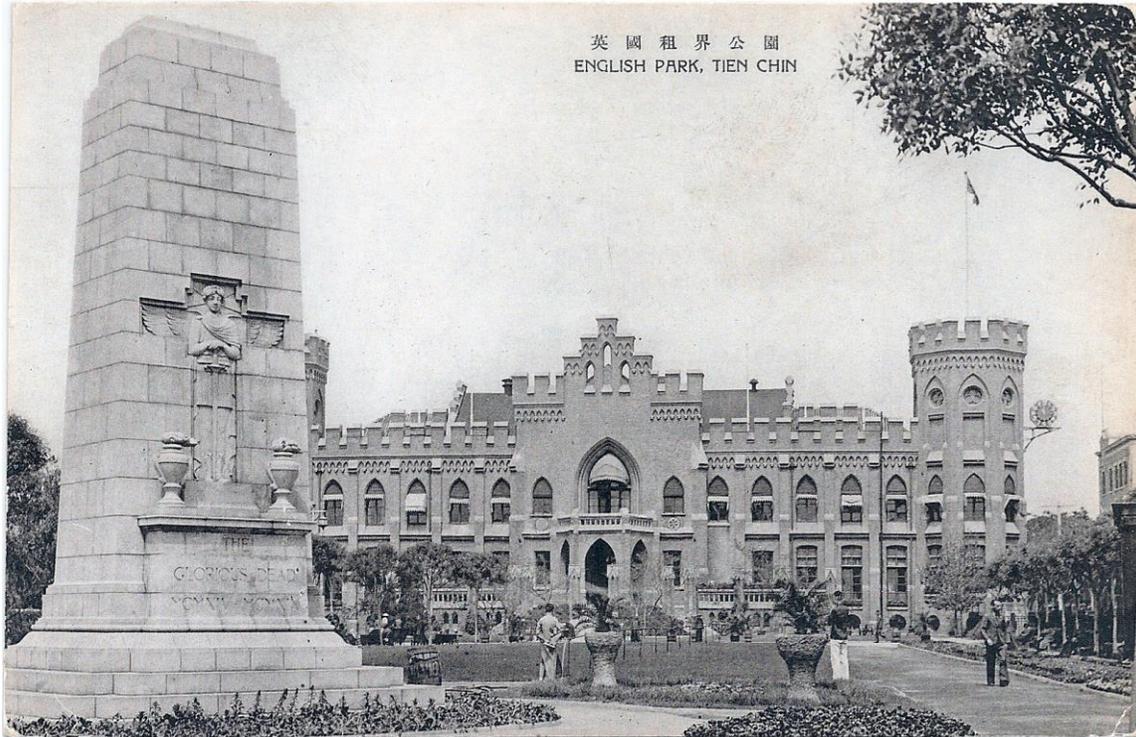
p. 125 (upper): “The hall (Gordon Hall in Tientsin) was in a position of prominence on the British Bund, close to the Tientsin Club and the Astor House Hotel, and directly across from the perfectly laid out Victoria Park,.. Facing the hall from the opposite bank of the Hai River was the old Russian Concession.”

Gordon Hall, according to all accounts, was not on the British Bund, nor was it opposite Victoria Park. The Bund (i.e., the waterfront) was a block away, while Gordon Hall was directly adjacent to the park. From Victoria Road, one entered a gated driveway, with the park on the left and the hall on the right.²⁸

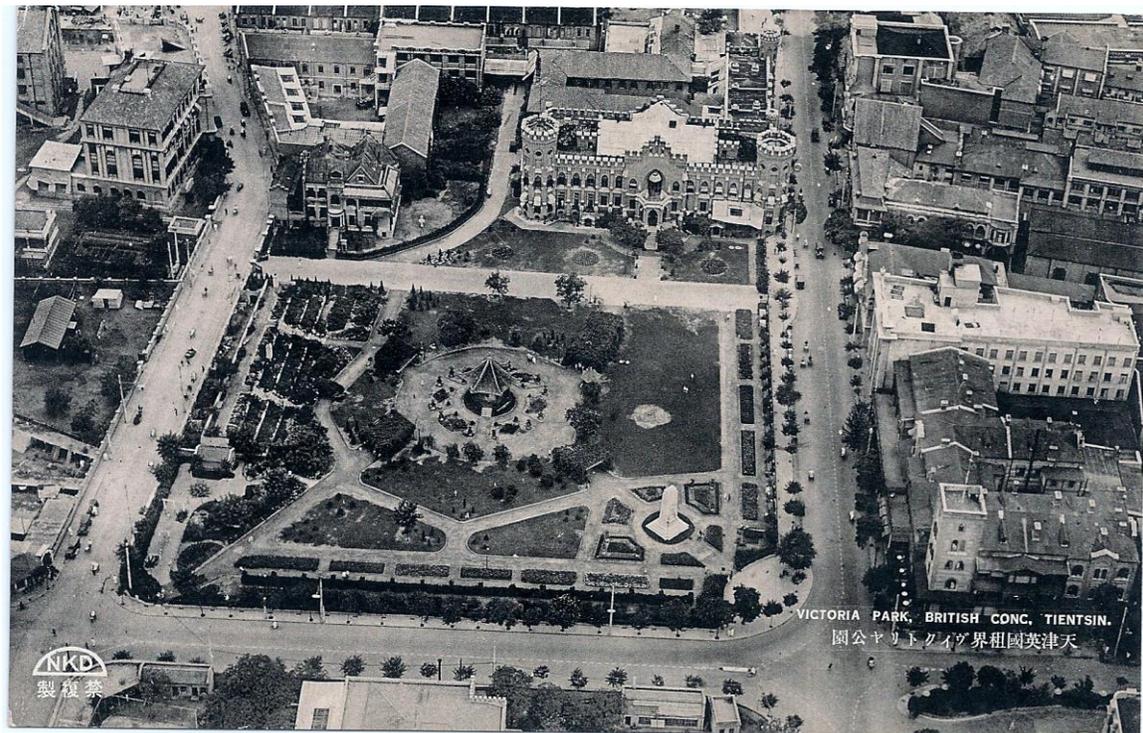
²⁷ O.D. Rasmussen, *Tientsin: an Illustrated Outline History* (Tientsin: 1925) pp.63-64; 226-7

²⁸ See, e.g., the *Map of Tientsin* published by the Peiyang Press, revised annually. Or, better yet, see a c.1930 aerial photograph reproduced on postcard by the Japanese Tientsin printer Nikkodo (reproduced below).

Pamela Werner would have passed by the park and Gordon Hall whenever she went by the principal route from the Tientsin Grammar School to Tientsin's East Station.



Illus. 2. Gordon Hall, the seat of the Tientsin British Concession. Card by Hinode Shoko, Fukushima Street, Japanese Concession, Tientsin, c.1935. At left, the 1925 War Memorial, at the entrance to Victoria Park.



Illus. 3. Aerial view of Victoria Park and Gordon Hall, c.1935. Card by Nikkodo, a Japanese shop in Tientsin. In the center, Victoria Park, with the 1925 War Memorial at lower right. To the right, Victoria Road, the main street of the concession. Across the street from the War Memorial, the Tientsin Astor House, with corner tower. South of the park, Meadows Road, and, across the street, the Kailan Mining Administration. At top center, Gordon Hall. Left of the park, Taku (Dagu) Road. Across Victoria Road from Gordon Hall, and slightly further up the street, we see the high, sloping roof of the *Peking & Tientsin Times*. The Hai-ho flows by a block to the viewer's right. After 1949, Gordon Hall became the seat of the Tianjin Municipal Government. It suffered severe damage in the earthquake of 1976, and was demolished a few years later.

p. 135 (top) “The cemeteries of Peking, both Chinese and foreign, were all outside the city wall,.. following rules laid down in imperial times, which prevented burials within central Peking.”

We find two foreign cemeteries within the city walls.²⁹ The German cemetery was only a five-minute walk south from Werner's residence on Kuei-jia-chang, tucked between the wall and the Paozihe, while the French cemetery can be found near the northwest corner of the Imperial City, north of the Bei-tang (North Church).

p. 135 (middle): “... the Boxers had dug up the graves of the foreign dead, some of whom had laid there since the British Cemetery opened in 1861.”

The British Cemetery dated from the early 1870s. The remains of the British envoys who were killed in captivity in 1860 were first buried in the Russian Cemetery, and later moved.³⁰

p. 158 (bottom): “He (Edgar Snow) also wanted Chiang to stop his Red-baiting, a policy that went back to 1927 and the slaughter in Shanghai of the Communists and others on the left. Chiang had been cleaning house, beheading troublesome union leaders along with Communist agents, and at least three thousand were left dead on the streets. The International Settlement, Frenchtown and Chinese Shanghai had run with blood for days while the foreign powers sat back and watched. A disgusted Edgar Snow reported on it.”

Snow arrived in Shanghai from the U.S. in July 1928, thus he would not have reported on events in Shanghai in 1927.³¹

p. 167 (top); also p. 241 (bottom): “Peking Central Railway Station”

There was no station called Peking Central Railway Station. The two main stations were the Peking-Mukden Railway Station and the P'ing-Han (Beiping-Hankow) Railway

²⁹ See the map that accompanies Arlington & Lewisohn for the German and French cemeteries.

³⁰ Arlington & Lewisohn, pp. 249, 237-8.

³¹ See, e.g, the University of Missouri Archives guide to the Snow Papers, at http://www.umkc.edu/University_Archives/INVTRY/EPS/EPS-INTRO.HTM

Station.³² The two stations faced each other across a plaza in front of the Ch'ien-men (Qianmen, Front Gate). They were also called the East and West Stations, respectively.³³ The East Station, with its corner tower, was far more distinctive architecturally, and thus the other station has left little imprint on our memories. Curiously, the book's illustrations include a reproduction of an old postcard showing the East Station, clearly identified as such in English. The book nevertheless identifies it as the Central Station, without explanation. (The Dorn map shows both stations.)

Peking's Forgotten West Station.



Illus. 4. “View of Seiyomon, Peking.” Card by Matsumura of Tokyo. Seiyomon is a Japanese reading of Zhengyangmen. In the center, we see the top of the East Station. Directly in front of it, from this angle, is the nondescript West Station, i.e., the Peking Station of the Peking-Hankow Line. At left, the West Station platform. The text on the card mentions only the East Station.

³² See, e.g., the map which accompanies *In Search of Old Peking*. Peking/Beijing was Beiping in 1927-37 and 1945-49, thus Arlington & Lewisohn refer to the P'ing-Han, rather than the Ching-Han Railway.

³³ E.g., in the 1924 *Guide to China*. Ellen LaMotte, in her 1919 memoir *Peking Dust*, tells us (p. 65), “There are two railway stations in Peking, usually spoken of as “the station” and “the other station.” The Peking-Mukden Station was the former. Bredon, *op. cit.*, p. 22, comments, “The proximity of the hideous railway stations somewhat spoils the effect of the Ch'ien Mên tower.” They were also referred to as the Zhengyangmen Station and the Qianmen Station. On these names, see Arlington & Lewisohn, p. 211.



Illus. 5. Another view of Peking West Station, here identified as Tch'aming Station. Card by Collection Liou-Seu, c.1915. The origin of the name "Tch'aming" is obscure. However, noting the irregular romanization on other cards by this publisher, we suspect that "Tch'aming" is a garbled form of Ch'ien-men.

Illus. 6. "Peking Luhan Railway Station." Card by "NC," a Japanese publisher in Tientsin. The Peking-Hankow Line was originally called the Lu-Han Line, an abbreviation of Lu-gou-chiao – Hankow, because, when construction began in 1897, the terminus was at Lu-gou-chiao, a small walled town about eight miles southwest of Peking. The rails were run into the city only after the defeat of the Boxers in 1900. Card used in 1910. The building at right, which was replaced at an early date, appears to be the freight entrance.

p. 199 (upper): "As long as the British refused to cooperate (with the Japanese) in Tientsin, Werner was no longer welcome on *rue Meu*."

Although the street outside the Japanese Legation was called the Rue Meiji, we suspect that French did not invent this. There were many maps of Peking and other Chinese cities produced by Japanese and Chinese publishers, for which the data was copied from Western maps by clerks who did not read English or other Western scripts, resulting in numerous typos. Thus an 'i' and a 'j' were squeezed together to form a 'u', while the final 'i' was dropped, and "Meiji" became "Meu." Here the author may have actually done some research.

The errors identified and documented here can only be regarded as the low-hanging fruit. About half can be found merely by flipping through the index of *In Search of Old Peking*, the first work anyone who wished to check the author's facts would turn to.

Most of these errors cannot be attributed to some unreliable source that the author stumbled across by accident, and innocently trusted.³⁴ He could only have made them up himself. It follows then, that it would not be quite correct to say that the author is a careless researcher. The best that can be said is that he is utterly indifferent to matters of factual accuracy, and consistency.

We looked very hard for evidence that there was a district in Peking called the Badlands. Eventually, we found a reference in one of Edward Werner's letters.³⁵ In his letter of 1939/7/31 to Ambassador Clark Kerr (F 9120/1510/10), on p. 5 Werner writes, "Yet Prentice, Jack, Knauf, Cappuzzo, etc., are well-known as frequenters of this and other brothels of the Peking badlands,..." "Badlands" is lower case here, and from this one instance of usage, we can make no inference about the extent of the area that the term might have applied to, nor how widely the term was used.

Looking through six months of the *Peiping Chronicle* (1937 Jan-June), we find no mention of a Badlands district. However, in a report on the murder, we find a possibly revealing phrase: "The district where the crime was committed (actually, where the body was discovered) is not far from the Chuan Pan Hutong red light quarter and drug addicts have been known to lurk there."³⁶ If there was a "Badlands" district, then it would be precisely in such a context that we would expect to find the term used.

If there was such a district, it could not have been where the author locates it. The glaxis was not covered up. Soochow hutong was a shopping street, according to Frank Dorn in 1936. The extent to which the character of Chuanpan hutong and Hougou hutong were defined by the Methodist Mission compound remains undetermined, but at least at the gates we would expect a heavy traffic in missionaries, students, converts, medical workers and patients. The "Badlands" appears to be a fantasy, part of the author's attempt to create a *noir* atmosphere, and a false history and geography.³⁷

It follows that to attempt to render judgment on the author's detective work without thoroughly reviewing all of his sources would be futile, because literally nothing that the author says can be believed without verification.

³⁴ Although some of them can. Michael J. Moser's *Foreigners Within the Gates; the Legations at Peking* (2nd ed. Chicago: Serindia, 2006), which does not cite its sources, shows a photo (p. 148) of the East Station, identified as the Central Station. Nevertheless, the map on p. 163 of this book shows East and West Stations, but no Central Station.

³⁵ Werner's reports of his investigation are now available online at www.pamelawernermurderpeking.com

³⁶ *Peiping Chronicle*, 1937 Jan 10, p 12

³⁷ Perhaps the author is confusing Peking with Shanghai? He showed himself equally unfamiliar with Shanghai geography and history in his previous book, *The Old Shanghai: A-Z* (Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

How, then, should we characterise this book? It is not a work of non-fiction, although the publisher represents it as such, supplying a Library of Congress catalog number and classification. If the term “historical fiction” supposes an author’s deep knowledge of a past time and place, whether put in service to an invented story or an imagined reconstruction, then the book does not meet this standard. Perhaps we could call it an historical fantasy masquerading as a work of nonfiction. Perhaps it is a prank. Perhaps the author aspires to be a latter-day Sir Edmund Backhouse.³⁸

The little bit of biographical data available online tells us that the author has worked in marketing, so perhaps this book is best viewed as an exercise in marketing. The author has determined that his targeted readers want vampires (or a Chinese equivalent), orgies, murder and nudist colonies, covered with a thin veneer of historical research, sweetened with a generous dollop of saccharine, and dignified with a quote from Conrad, and he has endeavored to meet the demand. His publishers skillfully trolled book review websites and identified reviewers who they judged might be favorably predisposed to the book, and supplied them with copies. Considered as a marketing exercise, it cannot be denied that the book has been a success. And who can argue with success?

Apparently, modern China would be insufferably dull without the fox spirits.

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³⁸ On Backhouse, see Hugh Trevor-Roper’s 1977 *The Hermit of Peking*.