Imperial Masquerade

The Legend of Princess Der Ling

Grant Hayter-Menzies
With a foreword by Pamela Kyle Crossley

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1
"The marriage, I believe, was a *love* affair . . ."

In 1885, when the future Princess Der Ling was born, the Chinese empire was like a once-priceless blue and white vase — repeatedly fractured and repaired, it now tottered, as on an unsteady curio shelf, on the verge of radical reform. The Guangxu Emperor, aged fourteen, had been nominal emperor of China since the age of ten. He and China were governed by his aunt the Empress Dowager Cixi, a vigorous, intelligent, shrewd and luxury-loving woman of fifty who had started as a low-ranking concubine of the Xianfeng Emperor and ended as Empress Dowager. Her love-hate relationship with the West and with Westerners had not yet born full fruit but would do so during Der Ling's girlhood, imprinting her personality — rumoured and real — on the child's eager mind.

The power and splendor of Cixi's world and that of the Qing dynasty, so fascinating to Der Ling when viewed from afar, did not bear close inspection — it was merely the rich veneer covering more than a century of political and societal disintegration. And while a part of this disappearing old world, Der Ling's family was also instrumental in its dissolution. In fact, her parents were a case study in the modern changes

creeping over Chinese society — her father, Yu Keng, was a Manchu, of the minority ruling class that had governed China since the seventeenth century; her mother, born Louisa Pierson in Shanghai, was a Chinese-American woman of mysterious antecedents. In this way and many others, theirs was a home that would serve as a model of how to live for a woman who would one day be famed, and defamed, for her own breaking of what few shards remained of the old Chinese ways.

In nineteenth-century China, a Manchu official like Yu Keng did not so blithely abrogate the rules of strictly stratified, overtly racist Qing society by marrying not just out of his proper class but out of his own ethnicity, without repercussions, even if the latter were restricted to tea-house gossip. Miscegenation in Qing China was regulated with the same vigor as the Manchu directive against Han Chinese foot binding, an ancient practice which Manchu rulers held to be abhorrent in the extreme. But Yu Keng had chosen a very different path from most of his peers, as his daughter Der Ling would do after him: he had chosen a spouse who was not paternally Chinese, but the daughter of a Boston-born American merchant based in Shanghai. In marrying Miss Pierson, who was not just what conservative Chinese termed a "foreign devil," but also that worse thing, a half-caste Chinese, Yu Keng proclaimed himself a new kind of man — the very opposite of what made a man's fortune, or protected what fortune he had, in Qing China. Yet for all his radical ways, Yu Keng enjoyed the sort of immunity that made him an object of curiosity and envy, as his daughter was to be at Cixi's court a generation later.

Ulster-born Sir Robert Hart, Inspector General of Customs in Beijing, had a word to say about Yu Keng's marriage to the pretty, petite, foreign-featured Louisa. "Mrs. Yü is the Eurasian daughter of a small American storekeeper who used to be at S'[hang]hai," he wrote to his associate Campbell in England, "and as far as *Yü* was concerned, the marriage, I believe, was a *love* affair."[1] Yu Keng's marriage had indeed broken that other stiff rule of Chinese life: he had chosen his wife for reasons of affection rather than family or property. (Unlike many upper-class Chinese males, he seems never to have taken a secondary wife or mistress.) Not that Sir Robert had not done much the same thing as Yu Keng, but marriage was never part of his plan. Prior to wedding prim

Hester Bredon, Hart had kept for years a Chinese mistress named Ayaou, by whom he had three children who, like Louisa Pierson, bore their father's surname. But Hart evidently held his position in both British and Chinese society to be far more valuable than the children of a faithful woman. All three were sent to England for education and safe distance after their mother's early death. Having assured that they were provided for, Hart never laid eyes on them again.

Perhaps Hart's own well-kept secrets, which moved him in his elderly years to expunge great tracts of his diaries, kept him on the *qui vive* for the sort of hearsay that made him write of Yu Keng: "The Yü Keng family are not thought well of anywhere, but the old man himself has powerful backing — I don't know why."[2] As Hart's comment indicates, Yu Keng was not immune to the calumny that sifted through Beijing like dust from the Gobi Desert, and it may have been his own vaguely unsettled origins that formed the source of this. In *Kow Tow*, her memoir of her early childhood, Der Ling describes her father as a Manchu noble, a high-ranking bannerman of the prestigious Manchu Plain White Banner corps — one of only three corps, with the Plain and Bordered Yellow, which answered to the emperor himself as his personal property. She goes on to claim for herself, through him, descent from the Aisin-Gioro, the Manchu clan which burst into northern China in 1644 and founded China's last dynasty. She was even to one day sign a copy of one of her books with the imperial-sounding moniker "Der Ling of the Manchu Dynasty," an absurdity not likely to register suspicion on the part of the royalty-mad American public which gave her most of her renown.

Der Ling records a girlhood discussion she had with her father, when Yu Keng pointed out to her that though he was a Manchu "Lord" by birth, the statesman Li Hongzhang, as a mere conferred marquis, a Chinese and scion of petty provincial gentry, was much more powerful. (If this is a sample of the kind of thing Yu Keng regularly told his daughter, it is no wonder she developed the habit of self-aggrandizement which was to cost her so dearly in the future.) "My rank is hereditary," Der Ling was told, "and I do not use it to advance myself. I am a Manchu. He is Chinese, and his title is bestowed upon him . . ." Yu Keng and Li differed in another important way, too: both were avid for reform, but Li was much more of a nationalist than he. "I am more like a foreigner,"

admitted Yu Keng, echoing what would become his daughter's proud motto in later years.[3]

Even as Der Ling was more "foreigner" than she ever publicly admitted, her father was less "Manchu" than stated in all her published writings, and his claim to any sort of title scarcely more durable than her own. A record from the *Chronological Tables of the Newly Established Offices of the Qing Period*, listing all bannermen of high rank, places Yu Keng not in the Manchu but in the *Chinese Martial* Plain White Banner.[4] The distinction is no less significant for being a matter of terminology rather than ethnicity: from the beginning, the term "Manchu" was always more an administrative designation than a racial one — or, more properly, a designation of caste. There were Manchus who were of Jurchen or Mongolian ancestry, whose roaming ancestors had settled in the area northeast of Beijing, which came to be called Manchuria, and who came south with the conquering armies in 1644. But there were also Chinese subjects woven of a variety of ethnic threads — provincial officials and military operatives of the failing Ming government, exiled scholars, colonists, adventurers — who had lived in northern China for generations. Many of these people joined the Manchus on their journey southward or after their triumph, and though they came under the term *hanjun* (which Dartmouth College historian Pamela Kyle Crossley translates as "Chinese-martial"), as opposed to non-banner Chinese, called *hanren*, they in time were considered and considered themselves bannermen on a par with the Manchu banners.[5]

There is nothing untruthful *per se* in Der Ling declaring herself Manchu: all Manchus were *qiren* or bannermen by affiliation; and *hanjun* were held to as strict a code of non-exogamy as Manchus and Mongolians, making them part of the same exclusive group. But banner membership was hereditary, and Yu Keng was a member of the Chinese Martial Plain White Banner. "The 'Han-chun' were a separate cultural group," says Crossley, "that has got mangled in our modern terminology of race and ethnicity." A member of the "Chinese banners" need not necessarily be Chinese, and "nobody would willingly identify himself as a 'Chinese bannerman' in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries," Crossley continues. The stigma that still attached to *hanjun* as Han who "treacherously" served the Manchus still obtained in Yu Keng's lifetime

and in the wrong company could prove dangerous to life and limb. "Since they could only choose between 'Manchu' (meaning bannerman) and 'Chinese' (meaning civilian), Manchu was in fact the more accurate." For Der Ling to attempt to explain all this to foreigners was expecting too much even of the self-styled ambassadress of all things Chinese — it is possible that Yu Keng had as many Manchu ancestors as anyone with the legal right to call himself Manchu. And as Crossley also points out, it likely served Der Ling, her sister and family to play to the foreign romanticization of the Manchus. More suspicious is Yu Keng's claim that he was descended from the Aisin-Gioro, the Manchu clan from which came the Qing, the last imperial dynasty of China. His daughter is our informant on this, and to give her the benefit of the doubt it is possible that Der Ling, who was only twenty when her father died in 1905, misheard or misunderstood his account of the family history, which may have been as full of exaggeration as her own memories of her past would be. (Her erroneous belief that Chinese titles were hereditary was probably a result of her European education.) Perhaps the descent was genuine and came by way of a distant Aisin-Gioro ancestress. Marriages did take place between high-ranking Aisin-Gioro and *hanjun*. It is possible that after the family's Beijing house burnt during the Boxer Uprising in 1900, Der Ling was functioning only on memories of what she had glimpsed among some old papers — genealogies leading to greatness being something that would interest her.[6]

Yu Keng's name and rank pose a greater mystery. Der Ling describes his surname as "Yü," but the character "yu" used in Yu Keng's name is not the one normally found in a Chinese surname. Maybe it was a rare usage or a Chinese transliteration of an adopted Manchu name. The name could also be, as Der Ling seems to suggest, Yu Keng's surname and personal name — the practice was to retain both surname and personal name when the latter contained one syllable. But assuming that "Yu Keng" was just the double-barreled form commonly used among Manchus, combining two given names without the clan name, still does not tie up the loose ends.

Further confusing matters, Der Ling claims for her father the title of "duke" (*kong*), a hereditary rank for which *hanjun* bannermen like Yu Keng were not eligible. (Nor is there any evidence on record that Yu Keng

was granted such a title.) According to another family tradition relayed by Der Ling's niece, this title was connected to the province (or prefecture) of Xuzhou, north of Nanjing, which she claims was given by descendants of Nurhachi to Yu Keng's ancestor for taking part in the 1644 invasion. But there is no conclusive proof for this story, either. In China there was no European-style hereditary nobility. Under Han or Manchu, China was more of a meritocracy than anything else, where even a peasant's bright son could take the state examinations and rise to become a power in the land. In any case, *kong* was a title inherited by the male descendants of a *beitzu*, or prince of the fourth, most junior class, who in turn was downgraded from his father's rank of *beile* or prince of the third class, who would have been a prince of the first or second class and son or grandson of a reigning Manchu emperor. Despite his daughter's best efforts to place him always cosily connected to central figures of power, and hinting at special rank and privileges he enjoyed, Der Ling leaves us with no more clarity about who Yu Keng really was than she does the details of why the Qianlong Emperor, one of the greatest of the Qing dynasty's rulers, would have given Der Ling's ancestors the gifts later listed as such among her *objets d'art* auctioned after her death. With Der Ling and, perhaps, her father, all that mattered was one's assertion of rank — never mind the evidence for it. After all, the Empress Dowager Cixi would one day tell Der Ling that because of the Manchu court clothing she had given her, she "had become Manchu once more." Perhaps it was indeed a case of clothes making the Manchu.[7]

Pamela Kyle Crossley's work on the ambivalence of Manchu and Chinese Martial identity and their interconnectedness shows how possible it was for a *hanjun* family to consider itself Manchu, even to petition to be registered as Manchu, once the designation gained in political weight and a certain glamor in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Der Ling's emphasis on her Manchu roots in the years after the 1911 revolution (during which many Manchus were killed because of their origins) was clearly a reflection of this glamor, perhaps even a flirtation with the sort of danger she confessed she found exciting. Whoever or whatever he was, where the details can be confirmed one thing is clear: there was something different about Der Ling's father, whether as private citizen or as Qing official, a difference Yu Keng seems

to have exploited whenever possible. From the beginning, when he fought alongside and was befriended by the progressive Yixin, Prince Gong, half-brother of the Xianfeng Emperor, in the Second Opium War of 1860, Yu Keng allied himself with important Westward-leaning personages, with Viceroy Li Hongzhang forming the most influential jewel in this crown of alliances. He was probably educated in one of the banner schools (and likely picked up English and baptism from missionaries), which though founded to ensure that all upper-rank bannermen had at least the rudiments of the Manchu language, came by Yu Keng's time to serve as a forcing shed for future members of the Chinese foreign diplomatic corps. Yu Keng's obvious, possibly deliberate courting of Westernizers and Westerners and the controversy that accompanied them and such overtures in China became not an object of concern or shame to his daughter, but a desideratum to aspire to. If anything, it was her "Manchu" father and not her half-American mother whom Der Ling sought most to emulate.[8]

None of Der Ling's books includes a portrait of this man she considered the most important influence on her life. Other than a photograph of a courtly Chinese official who may or may not be Yu Keng, taken by Charles Chusseau-Flaviens, the globe-trotting French photographer who took many pictures of Der Ling, her sister, her brothers and legation staff, in which the elegantly robed middle-aged sitter poses comfortably at a desk in what appears to be the Chinese legation in Paris, we have only Der Ling's words to go by. "My father was a big man," she wrote, "with shoulders broad enough to bear the burdens of many who needed his help," as well as to carry the six-year-old Der Ling on occasion, "one arm encircling Father's head, dragging his cap askew," that cap on which she remembered the ruby button of a mandarin of the first class gleaming. He had a good sense of humor, "always given to belittling even the biggest trouble." He wore a beard "and an uneven moustache, below a strong nose flanked by piercing, wise eyes."[9]

From Der Ling's earliest childhood till her young womanhood, Yu Keng and his wisdom permeate nearly every page. Her memoir *Kow Tow*

opens in summer 1891, with her father described first among the family seated at the breakfast table (enjoying a foreign-style morning meal). Der Ling amusedly focuses on his forbearance of her chatter, a trait which was to protect her, while her father was alive, from the criticism drawn by her "unfeminine," "un-Chinese" energy and initiative. Der Ling also establishes from the start just how novel her father was for his insistence that she and her sister Rong Ling apply themselves to all the same studies that their two older brothers were engaged in, even to sharing the same tutor. According to the Book of Rites [*Li ji*], after the age of five boys and girls, even brothers and sisters, were never to "sit together or share a meal" — one of many Confucian rules broken in Yu Keng's household. Clearly, Yu Keng would have scoffed at the Ming era dictum: "Woman without talent is indeed a virtue."[10]

Der Ling claims that as a small child she had been literally exposed to a whole new world outside China, about which few Chinese adults could say they knew much more than hearsay, when the family had spent time in France. This would have been before Yu Keng was posted to the Yangzi River town of Shashi to become inspector of the *likin* tax system, some time in the early 1890s. Why Yu Keng would have been sent to France is not explained, either by Der Ling or the known history of Chinese diplomacy in Europe; he is not, for example, listed among Chinese diplomatic staff in any *Almanachs de Gotha* prior to his appointment to the Chinese Legation in Paris in 1900. Der Ling did learn French, however, whether through living in France, from her mother, or from one of the missionary teachers the children had. Again we see Yu Keng's effort to set his children outside the pale of ordinary Chinese childhood expectations, not to mention ordinary Chinese childhood experience. It was an uneasy situation for all concerned, but per Der Ling Yu Keng was a remarkably tolerant and understanding Chinese father. Where Der Ling recalls her mother as a "stickler for the proper 'form'" (a character-trait often noted in Eurasians, who among both Asians and Westerners were held as being outside polite society), she constantly reports how Yu Keng would amusedly intercede for his eldest daughter, even when she was at her brattiest — which, according to Der Ling (and which we have no trouble imagining), was often.

Yu Keng also provided for her and her siblings beautiful surroundings in which to grow up, perhaps a part of that sense of aristocratic

entitlement, that striving for the finer things of life, inherited by his daughter. In provincial Shashi, where the streets were "inexcusably rough, almost impassable . . .", remembered Der Ling, Yu Keng's family lived in relative splendor. Their house boasted a walled garden swaying with willow trees, stocked with statuary of animals natural and mythological, a rockery studded with "scholar's stones," on which Confucian aphorisms were carved in the style of various famous calligraphers, and intricately paved paths meandering beside a pond full of goldfish, on which a little boat always floated.

The worst punishment Yu Keng ever imposed on her, Der Ling remembered, after she had quarreled with her strict nanny Hung-fang, or refused to pay attention to her uninspiring tutor of Chinese classics (whose name, when translated into English, came out frighteningly as "skin them alive"), was to banish her to this garden. She usually used the opportunity get into even more trouble, climbing trees just at the moment when silk-robed dignitaries arrived to confer with Yu Keng, or tumbling into the shallow pond and being fished out by her laughing father. Even when she once shattered what she remembered being a priceless Song dynasty fishbowl during an argument with Hung-fang, Der Ling was not whipped — the very least any other child could expect under the circumstances. Instead, she was taken on her father's knee and patiently given an explanation of why the bowl was priceless, why what is priceless deserves to be honored and protected whatever the mood of the moment. Having seen the destruction caused by the Taiping Rebellion and the Opium Wars, Yu Keng knew well of what he spoke. It was advice which Der Ling would increasingly come to treasure, and which would one day to help her understand some of the more puzzling traits of the Empress Dowager Cixi.

"There had been a bond of love between father and daughter that both knew," Der Ling wrote later, "something as deep as parental love mingled with that different kind of love which the American word 'pal' evokes in the minds of folk who are pals, and have them." Yu Keng was, Der Ling recalled, "kindness and understanding personified." This kindness and understanding was directed not just to his daughter but to everyone, Der Ling insists. This and what we may assume was a powerful charm and an ability to stick close to those in power would stand Yu Keng in

good stead when, in later years, denunciations from the radical right surrounding the Empress Dowager rained down on his head, and Cixi consistently refused to give credit to charges filed against such a loyal official. Yu Keng, after all, had named his favorite child with the character for "virtue." This would be a quality which Der Ling would struggle to live up to in years to come.[11]

The West-leaning atmosphere of Yu Keng's household extended to allowing a good deal more permissiveness to the children than was usually the case during the late nineteenth century. As a result, Yu Keng's offspring must have been a handful. Sir Robert Hart met them in 1899, just before Yu Keng was posted to France, when the girls were approaching their teens and the boys were well into them, and described them as "a noisy family of English-speaking children."[12] By Der Ling's own account, she and her siblings even tried their father's patience during official receptions, hiding behind the carved teakwood screens in the Shashi *yamen*'s audience hall and giggling at the often histrionic personal characteristics of waiting provincial magistrates, much the way English children in pinafores and sailor suits might have done toward the native sari-wrapped and turbaned guests arriving at some hill-station in Raj India.

What Der Ling loved most about hiding behind the screens was the chance it gave her of seeing her father in official kit. A handsome man no matter what he wore, according to Der Ling, Yu Keng's natural dignity was enhanced by the ceremonial splendors of formal Chinese court clothes. Yu Keng would enter the hall where his guest sat awaiting him, wearing a long red gown, over which he wore a plum-colored coat, its "horse-hoof" cuffs covering his hands, its breast emblazoned with the *buzi* or breast badge of official rank. As Der Ling remembered it, Yu Keng's badge featured a stork embroidered in gold and silver (designating him a first-class civil official). His black satin boots were stuffed into blue silk trousers, his necklace of 108 amber mandarin beads, emulating the Lamaist Buddhist rosary, swung from his neck, and on his head he wore his peacock-plumed hat with its bright ruby button. This ensemble, Der

Ling remembered, made her father look "even larger, broader shouldered, more dignified and commanding than he really was." It was an early sign of Der Ling's most deeply held trait: her love for the lovely outward appurtenances of old China, which was as strong as her distaste for its less attractive realities.[13]

She encountered one of these realities very young, and her reaction to it as a little girl was no different from what it would be in her early twenties, when she would have to face down the Empress Dowager instead of a meddling household servant. Though under ten and still playing with her dolls — foreign-made ones that caused her slave girl Hung-fang to snort in disgust — Der Ling found herself one afternoon being considered for possible wifehood.

Per memoirs left by Chinese and Westerners alike, it would appear servants in old China comprised a sort of subterranean government. Old amahs, ancient cooks or menservants, who had been with a family through two or three generations, tending successive waves of children and wives, emptying chamber pots and brewing health tonics, would sometimes take it upon themselves to effect all sorts of events more properly the preserve of the family itself. Marriage and descendants being of utmost significance in Confucian society — for who would sweep the master's grave if there were no descendants, and might a servant not be blamed and pursued by an angry master's hungry ghost for not having taken the initiative when it arose? — old family retainers might take that initiative in plotting alliances between their master's children and those of the respectable family on the other side of the garden wall. This might achieve positive results that the family itself might not have been able to obtain, and might equally achieve results that the most comic of Beijing opera plots could not do justice to.

In Der Ling's case, when her amah was sounded out by the servants of a neighboring magistrate as a possible future wife for the magistrate's little son, the old woman hissed a refusal. Her master, Yu Keng, was a mandarin of the first rank, a far cry from the magistrate's petty status. "The child of your master will not do!" she cackled. Perhaps having expected this response, the little boy's amah, a Han Chinese tottering on bound feet, had ammunition up her sleeve. As if Der Ling were not standing a few feet away, the amah turned the tables, acerbically adding

up all the reasons why Yu Keng's daughter would not be a fitting mate for her honorable master's son. Not only was the girl's father an alien Manchu (pronounced, remembered Der Ling, as if she were saying the word "devil"), and not of the good Chinese family of her master the magistrate, but she had also heard that Der Ling and her siblings were being brought up to learn "foreign devil" ways. "She doesn't act like a Chinese girl at all," scoffed the amah. "She is forward, laughs immoderately, even at her guests." And the worst of it? "She has big feet!" (Manchu girls never had their feet bound.)

To the young Der Ling, all of this was more amusing than frightening, because she already knew that her father had other plans for her than those that could be expected by the typical Chinese girl. "While he was intensely patriotic," wrote Yu Keng's daughter, "he did not believe in arranged marriages, in which the love of the two individuals most concerned was not considered." Sir Robert Hart had, after all, described Yu Keng's own marriage to Louisa as a well-known "love-match"; his especial notice of the fact shows how uncommon it was in Chinese society. "And he believed that women should be educated," Der Ling recalled, "at least his girl-children." This was very different from the beliefs held by conservative Chinese males, and went far toward helping Der Ling believe that she did indeed have a destiny before her that was completely different from that of most other Chinese girls.[14]

Legacy

Der Ling would not see the unfolding of one of the United States' least appetizing wartime acts — the forced internment of thousands of Japanese Americans, most from the West Coast, in camps located inland — as well as one of its greatest: the landings on the Normandy coast which came to be known as D-Day, signaling the beginning of the end for Adolf Hitler.

Nor would she have to watch her homeland endure greater sufferings than when she was alive. China faced harder times than ever. At the time of Der Ling's death in late 1944, Chinese were calling the past twelve months their "disaster year," only because there was no worse adjective to use to describe it. "China entered 1945 an exhausted nation," writes Harry Hussey. The Burma campaign had cost the nation dearly, with little to show for it, while weakening defenses to such degree that the Japanese were able to make sallies into fresh territories, including Henan, formerly known as the "rice bowl of China."[1]

American support continued, and it is likely that Der Ling's move to the San Francisco Bay area in 1942 was as much motivated by a desire to ally herself with the steadying structure of academic life as her ongoing Chinese relief work. Her death certificate lists her last occupation as

teacher of Chinese at the University of California-Berkeley, but no record exists of Der Ling having ever been part of the regular faculty. It is possible she was a lecturer in languages or Chinese history, a tenuous position which would account for no trace of her work at the university. A more likely scenario, however, is that Der Ling worked on the U.C. Berkeley campus for the displaced California College. Founded in 1910 in Beijing, the California College served English-speaking clientele, among them missionaries as well as members of the business and diplomatic communities. In 1930, missionary William B. Pettus incorporated the institution as the California College in China Foundation, its primary goal being to educate Americans in all things Chinese, including language, history, customs and politics — a desideratum of Der Ling's life from the start of her writing career. With the Japanese invasion of China and the outbreak of the Second World War, Pettus ironically moved the College *to* California, settling it into temporary quarters on the campus of U.C. Berkeley. While a search of the Pettus Papers, now at Claremont College, unearthed no mention of Der Ling, the same reason may apply as that which may explain why there is no trace of her at U.C. Berkeley: as a lecturer, it is not likely her presence at California College would become part of the long-term record. If nothing else, her work for California College would clarify why she was on the campus of U.C. Berkeley; the temporary nature of the work itself would also account for why she and T.C. rented rooms at the Hotel Carlton, a hostel for students, faculty and guests of the University at Telegraph and Durant, for two years, rather than selling their Los Angeles properties and taking a house in the Bay Area.[2]

After 1942, Der Ling no longer appears in the *Los Angeles Times*, the paper that had featured her regularly, whether in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, for the past thirteen years. It was as if, through the Sino-Japanese War and the world war that followed, she had found her voice as teacher, spokesperson and defender of the tortured country of her birth and upbringing — as if she, after almost twenty years of living as an American, with her modern house and modern ways, had rediscovered herself as Chinese.

Following Der Ling's death, T.C. moved back to Los Angeles, where he lived until 1953, offering pieces of Der Ling's imperial collection for

sale. The glass negatives for Der Ling's brother's photographs of Cixi and life at court, for example, were sold to a private collector, who then sold them to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. When he died, at the Veterans Administration hospital in Los Angeles, T.C.s' last will shows he did well enough for a "soldier of fortune," bequeathing thousands of dollars in property and cash to friends and a sister; but the many disinherited heirs listed in the codicil seem to point to an old man embittered rather than mellowed by the years. The Chinese antiques described as being stored in two Southern California warehouses were auctioned off by the Citizens National Bank and a few pieces have been traced to museums and private collections across the United States.[3]

Der Ling's books had been popular since her first published work in 1911, but by her death she was forgotten. Even without the controversy surrounding some of her claims, including the troubling business of her title, as a historian and biographer Der Ling's appeal was always limited to the unusual and the anecdotal rather than the broadening and the abstract. Her recollections of life at court do focus, as duly criticized, on small daily details to the exclusion of the bigger picture of imperial high politics, of which she only claims to have become aware to a moderate degree yet for the pageant of which she had an enviable front row seat. But most damning to her reputation was the questioning of her veracity, which began early and continues to this day.

Der Ling's subjective, dramatically enhanced style of writing biography, along with her books' popularity (especially in America), instantly relegated her to the dust-bin in the minds of men like J. O. P. Bland and Sir Reginald Johnston, who held themselves as "China experts" and saw anecdotal memoirs such as Der Ling's the flimsy product of gossip from the women's quarters. The pervading sense that Der Ling's recollections were more fantasy than fact was only assisted by her use of illustrations rather than photographs, even for her memoirs, as well as by the mixing of these recollections with her melodramatic re-tellings of Chinese fairy tales and ghost stories. Much worse, her use of the title she believed Cixi had bequeathed to her in 1905 was to further place her in disrepute in China, even as it enhanced her reputation once she came to America. But popular acclaim did not equal being seen as she wished to be seen, a witness to historical events and friend of historical personages.

Der Ling had an unforgettable charm, as many of her friends remembered. "As a lady of quality in the true sense of the word," wrote actor James Zee-min Lee, "Princess Der Ling was democratic, philanthropic, altruistic and a charming personality."[4] But a part of that charm was a desperate need to be at the epicenter of everything exciting, glamorous and important, along with which went an equally powerful need to please. Her writings and their deterioration from plausible eyewitness accounts to sensationalist "insider information" describe something that was happening to the woman as well as to the writer. While sophisticated, Der Ling was also gullible. She may have seen things at court which her Western-oriented mind read as one thing when in fact they were quite another. As scholar Zhu Jiajing has pointed out, Der Ling and her sister both committed inaccuracies in their memoirs of Cixi's court. They were teenagers when they first went to court, impressionable young women when they left (Rong Ling having stayed till the Empress Dowager's death in 1908); they were inclined to please the old lady because she liked their father and was kind to them, if fascination with things foreign — the girls' main draw for Cixi — ranks as kindness. One thing Der Ling never points out, though bright enough to have done so, is that while she and her sister were awed by the strange glamor of Cixi's court, the old lady herself was equally awed by the girls' strange French shoes and hats, their ability to speak foreign languages and play foreign instruments, the different way in which they moved and reacted to her, so at variance with the Chinese surrounding her up to the girls' arrival on the scene.

At heart Cixi was a foreigner, too, but if Der Ling thought so she never noted it. *Two Years in the Forbidden City* comes as close to how one would like to see Der Ling interpret her weird new world, at once the court life she loved to be a part of but as foreign to her as if she were a Westerner thrown into an alien culture. But like the spoiled and somewhat supercilious adolescent she never really stopped being, she loses herself in a welter of details about jade pendants and pearls and lapdogs and patterns on china, and in perorations on how beloved Cixi was to her and vice versa, rarely approaching the heart of her and Cixi's shared dilemma: defining their identities against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world.

When she embarked on *Old Buddha*, published in 1928 as a tell-all biography of the Empress Dowager, Der Ling was moving in a different milieu from when her first book appeared. She was living in the late 1920s' United States, dizzily dancing the Charleston on the decks of a doomed ocean liner. If Der Ling's first book, appearing after the disintegration of the Manchu dynasty, glitters with the torn glamor of ruined Eastern kingdoms, her second takes even more advantage of a fascination with lost empires and disenfranchised princes brought to birth by the First World War and the fall of European thrones. This was a time when princes and countesses, real and imagined, were seen on the streets and in the cafés of New York, Paris, Berlin and Istanbul, waiting tables, driving cabs, walking the lapdogs of the nouveaux riches. This was also the age during which the long degradation of Puyi, the last emperor of China, unfolded miserably, allowing Der Ling to follow him in her books and articles like a dogged reporter, describing her first sight of him in diapers at the imperial court and lamenting his tragic end as a puppet of the Japanese. A culture of displaced celebrity, rife as weeds in pre- and post-Depression American society, launched this self-promoting Asian woman with the tissue-thin title (and an unacknowledged American grandfather) on a flood of public fascination with throneless royalty and exotic pretenders. Not only were princesses like herself fawned over, they were rarely authenticated and their recollections of once glorious pasts were actively promoted. The Jazz Age had died out, but the Age of the Impostor lived on. It cannot be argued successfully that Der Ling did not take advantage of its longevity.

The novelistic tone of *Old Buddha*, suspect today, was acceptable in 1928, as apparently was Der Ling's irresistible need to tease her readers with an omniscience which claimed to reveal the truth about Cixi at last and at the same time carelessly recounted some of the worst of the gossip about her — her alleged murders of Cian, her son Tongzhi, the Guangxu Emperor. At least this book included genuine photographs, again those taken by Xunling. When a prequel to *Two Years* appeared, an account of Der Ling's childhood and life up to the death of her father in 1905 which she called, oddly, *Kow Tow*, an illustrator was hired to create images throughout the book, none of which reassures the reader that what he is reading is 100 percent true. And the book's cover, embossed in gold with

an Asiatic stereotype — a cross-legged male with pigtail, sparse mustache and beard, sharp fingernails on fingers spread in a gesture like a hawker in a bazaar — does not inspire a sense that Der Ling valued her Chinese heritage as much as that elusive Europeanness which was part education, part put on, and part wishful thinking.

Taking her view of herself as cosmopolitan to what is perhaps its natural goal, yet doing so via the fantasy world of pseudonyms and innuendo, Der Ling brought out another book, in 1932, *Jades and Dragons*, which I have called her *memoir à clef*. Having left Beijing and the gossiping denizens of the diplomatic quarter, Der Ling evidently felt she could let fly at them with both barrels, skewering the pidgin English of hotel clerks and merchants and the comical genteel-poverty of ruined Manchu aristocrats, not forgetting to send up unfaithful foreign wives and their philandering foreign husbands, with much wit and much malice. *Jades and Dragons* is a pointed effort blunted by pseudonyms, which leave an uncomfortable aftertaste: Has Der Ling used phoney names the better to shoot at her prey from convenient cover, or used them the better to fool her American readers into believing she had any real prey to shoot at? Even with this growing instability in Der Ling's literary output, *Jades and Dragons* does give tantalizing glimpses of the real Der Ling, the hardened, worldly, well-traveled ex-court lady who has seen it all, has nothing to fear, and nothing to hide — or rather, no compunction about hiding some things and revealing others. The Omar Khayyam quote she chose for the frontispiece, topped by an illustration of Thai shadow puppets, says much about her life at the time: "We are no other than a moving row / Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go . . ."

While democratic and philanthropic, Der Ling was also mesmerized by the trappings of courts and the rulers who formed their mysterious center, which overwhelmed and subjugated her inborn democratic credo. Thanks to her brief foray into the last days of a once-great court, Der Ling had, or thought she had, material to keep her busy for the next thirty years. But her crop came up thinner and thinner with each book, to the point where by her fourth, fifth and sixth books, loose collections of memoir-essays and short stories called, respectively, *Lotos Petals, Imperial Incense*, and *Golden Phoenix*, she fell back on such non-Chinese recollections as her meetings with Sarah Bernhardt and her lessons with

Isadora Duncan in Paris, or stories she wanted her readers to believe were based on ancient Chinese legends — Der Ling as a Manchu Scheherazade. Some of the chapters in these collections had originally been published in article form in the monthly women's magazines that were helping worried housewives through the Depression, much as movie spectacles churned out by Hollywood were doing for the same reason.

It is in *Imperial Incense* that Der Ling recounts a story of taking a train trip with Cixi, in which she traveled with the Empress Dowager to Tianjin and then on to the old royal palace at Mukden, that Chinese scholar Zhu Jiajing has called into question, since it figures nowhere in the Empress Dowager's surviving court itineraries. Indeed, Der Ling herself makes no mention in *Two Years in the Forbidden City* of this trip or another with which she must have been involved, that Cixi made to the Western Tombs in April 1903, only a month after Der Ling, her sister and her mother came to court. Her detailed description of Cixi's imperial train carriage, with its throne and its shelves for jades and porcelains, could as easily come from going with other curious Beijingers to see the car, as it was on public display after the 1911 revolution. It is possible that this whole trip was constructed as elaborate wish-fulfillment, because it culminates in a scene that could only have been written by Der Ling after the death of her own son, Thaddeus Raymond, who succumbed to pneumonia at age twenty in New York City in April 1933.[5] *Imperial Incense*, which appeared shortly after his death, is dedicated to his memory. Surely this circumstance colored Der Ling's memories, if such they are, of Cixi weeping as she played with toys of the long dead Tongzhi Emperor, who had died close to the same age as Thaddeus Raymond, toys now stored in the dusty sheds of Mukden, as Der Ling's own imperial antiques would one day collect dust in a Los Angeles warehouse.

The Der Ling of this book is far more pensive than the one writing of court experiences of almost a quarter century earlier — the book ends with Cixi listening to court musicians in a garden as Der Ling recites poetry to her. "Silence, soothing and tranquil, settled over the Summer Palace," runs the last sentence of the book, "as the lengthening shadows deepened into night." To underscore that she truly hailed from a lost world, for a frontispiece for *Imperial Incense* her brother's

photograph of her and Cixi, taken on a snowy Peony Hill, was rendered by the fine American artist Bertha Lum into a kind of poignant cartoon sketch. A cartoon eunuch shields the women from cartoon snow with a cartoon umbrella that looks about to tip over. Der Ling looks far more stereotypically Chinese than she did or was, and Cixi recalls a pert little girl given her mother's gown to dress up in. The genius of the painting is that this is how Der Ling saw the old lady who, at the same time, she could also imagine poisoning her way to power.

It is in Der Ling's final book, *Son of Heaven*, put forth as a biography of the Guangxu Emperor, that she reached her nadir as a historian even as she showed marked improvement as a fiction stylist. "During my years at Court as a Lady-in-waiting to the Empress Dowager," Der Ling writes in the preface to this book, published in 1935, "it was my privilege to know Kwang Hsu well and get from him at first hand much of his unhappy story and many of his advanced ideas of government." She goes on to write that she hopes that in this biography she will have cleared up any "misconceptions the world has had of this ill-fated emperor of the Manchus . . . a truly great man," yet she writes not a biography but a novel, filled with all the trembling shadows of film noir. Worst of all, in expanding on this last tiny piece of her now distant past, Der Ling traduces the very woman she claimed to have loved by blaming her for the Guangxu Emperor's death, details of which she was in no better position to know than anyone else outside the court circle. Ironically, her image of the Empress Dowager as a two-faced murdering harridan was to join similar Grand Guignol depictions in film and print for the next several decades (from Hollywood's *55 Days in Peking* in 1963 to *The Last Emperor* over thirty years later), and make it difficult, if not impossible, to rehabilitate Cixi as woman or ruler.

When all is said and done, what makes Der Ling a unique voice and personality is not so much who she knew or what she did (or who she thought she was, which differed from year to year), but the self that we glimpse through her accounts of others. The self that could move among the greats of China like one of their own, yet always keep her active, questioning Western-trained mind awake and aware; who, though dressed in the sedate silk robes of an imperial lady-in-waiting could demonstrate the waltz in the red-pillared halls of palaces which had never known

other than the slow ceremonial of coronations and official audiences. The self who, when tiring of Cixi's overbearing personality and her court's overbearing etiquette, could escape with Rong Ling to a nearby hill and sing European opera arias, as if they were back in Paris, strolling along statued pathways beneath white lace parasols. The self who could look past the glamor and the grandeur, as well as the myth and legend, of the Empress Dowager Cixi, and see an ordinary woman who was in most of the ways that matter no different from other women, because she had a heart that could love as well as hate, and that quality which only two men (Sir Robert Hart and the artist Hubert Vos) ever saw in her but which many of the women who came to like her admired most: an abiding love for beauty. Beauty was Der Ling's passion, too, although unlike the dowager, who had had to learn to face reality, the ideal was all Der Ling wanted to, or could, see.

Most of all, Der Ling had the keen ability, often seen in those who move on the margins of society, to stand outside herself, to freely turn and look back at what she saw, and see that self for what it was: a woman of contradictions, of passions and prejudices, of unresolved identity — a woman who, despite the training toward freedom of such teachers as Isadora Duncan and her own father, remained unfinished and incomplete, whose love for the country of her birth, like Cixi's love for her Summer Palace, blinded her to the expenditures required to maintain the fantasy. In a very real sense, Der Ling was lost to the China that most intrigued and inspired her the moment she found more temporal, immediate happiness in European gowns, dancing in sheer Isadoran sheaths before men she did not know, driving her own car and turning Chinese tradition on its head with gleeful abandon.

Der Ling's whole life became a stage for a dance of opposites which she never reconciled — curiously enough, not so much the opposites of East and West, in Kipling's imagery, but of the conservative minds of the old century versus the progressive ones of the new. China and America caused reactions in Der Ling which were, in effect, reflections of reflections. In China, Der Ling could not resist dancing the Charleston and bobbing her hair, leading American tourists through the old palaces and marrying an American; in America, the one country where she could get away with it, she dressed in her court gowns, ludicrously signed

herself "Der Ling of the Manchu Dynasty," and lectured like an ordained expert on the Byzantine ways and wiles of the Empress Dowager Cixi and imperial China. Somewhere between the Jazz Age flapper and the jade-fringed court lady was a woman who spent her life searching for who she really was. In negotiating her balancing act, Der Ling lost her equilibrium. She knew that the China of painted scrolls and bell-hung temples and the China of starving peasants, oppressed women and vicious government were not the same thing, but she, too, was drawn to the dream of China that kept the Empress Dowager Cixi tightly gripping the reins of government long after any sensible ruler would have dropped them. Again and again Der Ling returned to that dream, through all eight of her books, until by the last one, she had conflated her experiences to the point where it is impossible to tell what happened on the ground and what only happened in the pleasantly cloudy spaces where imagination and wishful thinking do their best (and worst) work. The world became for her, in the end, a mirror image, in which she watched all those around her, and herself, enacting actions and reflections of actions, never sure which was real, and never clear whether it really mattered very much in the end whether or not they were.

Mirrors, in fact, play a major role in the most penetrating self-analysis Der Ling ever committed to paper — a moment in her perception of herself that may be likened to the Empress Dowager's first fascinated yet perplexed glimpse of her photographed image. In the final chapter of *Jades and Dragons*, Der Ling seats herself in her favorite corner of her favorite Beijing hostelry, the Hotel des Wagons-Lits' mirrored dining room, and watches the arrival of the guests she has invited, all of whom she has skewered throughout the foregoing chapters — except for one.

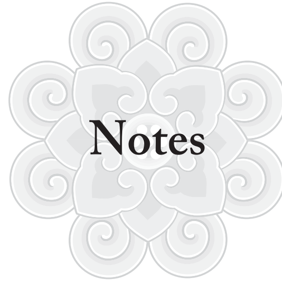
As the guests file in, a woman at Der Ling's table turns to her and babbles questions about each person in the childish form of English with which Westerners in Asia often addressed "the natives." Did Der Ling know many people in Beijing? Der Ling asides to her reader that there were probably a few ricksha coolies whom she had yet to meet, but tells the woman she knows no one. She abases herself to no avail because the foreign lady does not listen but begins to recite her own litany of vicious Beijing gossip, singling out one woman for particular venom. This woman was one the foreign lady had never met — in fact, there she was now,

sitting across the room, recognizable from her cerise-colored gown and her sleek black hair, which considering her age everyone knew must be dyed. So proud! the woman sneered. Sits all alone! No wonder — she was rumored to be the worst gossip in gossipy Beijing.

"I must admit," writes Der Ling, after the foreign lady leaves her, clucking at the woman in the red dress, "I was interested in this mysterious character to whom the stranger referred," and with great reluctance got up to leave, only to find that the woman in the cerise gown was also departing the dining room. Their eyes met as they drew together side by side. Der Ling was about to speak to her when she disappeared, "right into the wall, where the mirror merged with the woodwork."

"Now let me see," Der Ling says, "have I overlooked anyone?" None, she suggests but does not say, except herself.[6]

The End



Notes

Preface

1 In his book on Chinese history, art and customs, *Chinese Potpourri* (1950), Der Ling's close friend James Zee-min Lee writes: "During the war in 1943, Der Ling gave Mandarin lectures at the Berkeley University, California, when one morning while crossing the campus to attend class she was fatally struck down by a hit-and-run-truck" (p. 328). This is the only account to state just what Der Ling was doing the morning of the accident and to describe her work at U.C. Berkeley. A stage and film actor who had played opposite everyone from Greta Garbo to Paul Muni, Lee had starred in one of Der Ling's own English-language plays, *Saving the Throne*, produced (she says) in Shanghai's Carlton Theatre. Lee's book features photographs of Der Ling and the Empress Dowager which Der Ling has inscribed, in English, to the author; one inscription refers to him as "my brother," hinting at the closeness of the friendship. The *Time Magazine* obituary quote derives from the issue of December 4, 1944.

2 Los Angeles County records, last will and testament of Thaddeus Cohu White, March 17, 1952 (codicil February 19, 1953) and death certificate, State of California; Alameda County records, coroner's inquest for Elizabeth Antoinette White (No. 822), November 28, 1944, and death certificate, State of California.

3 Han Suyin, *A Many-Splendored Thing*, p. 99.

Chapter 1

1 Sir Robert Hart, edited by John King Fairbank, Katherine Frost Bruner and Elizabeth MacLeod Matheson, *I. G. in Peking*, letters 1143 and 1252.
2 Ibid., letter 1252.
3 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 222–223.
4 Pamela Kyle Crossley/author correspondence, 2002–03.
5 Mark Elliott, *Manchu Way*, p. 75; Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, p. 90.
6 Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, p. 91 and pp. 120–122; and Crossley/author correspondence, December 11–12, 2002.
7 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, p. 105, and p. 28, where she describes her brother Xunling as heir to his father's ducal title; Mark Elliott, *Manchu Way*, p. 334; Lydia Dan, "The Unknown Photographer," *History of Photography*, 1982; Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 158; Tony Scotland, *The Empty Throne*, pp. 60–61, and Zhu Jiajing's *Historical Inaccuracies in the Books by Der Ling and Rong Ling* (1982), in which he declares that Yu Keng's title of "Lord" (*guoje*), as described by Der Ling, was neither inherited by nor bequeathed upon him, and that he was not a member of the imperial clan (*guizu*). Zhu probably only read Der Ling's memoirs in Chinese translation, in which Chinese equivalents for some of the terms she used (like "Lord") were rendered into terms that do not always match the original English.
8 Mark Elliott, *Manchu Way*, p. 65 and p. 352; Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, p. 87; and Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*. *Hanjun* participated in the examination system along with Manchu and Mongol bannermen, under a quota called *hezi hao* or "allied category": *Orphan Warriors*, pp. 89–90.
9 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 23.
10 Ibid., p. 1.
11 Ibid., p. 8.
12 Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. in Peking*, letter 1143.
13 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 34–35. Der Ling describes her father as wearing the ruby button, but as he was still a third-grade official (out of nine possible grades), his button should have been sapphire, not ruby. In addition, the animal on his rank badge would have been a peacock, not the first-class stork. As will be addressed in a later note, Der Ling was apparently not as familiar with the various symbols of Chinese official rank as she presents herself to be.
14 Ibid., p. 88.

Chapter 2

1 Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. in Peking,* letters 800 and 814; Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese*, p. 523. It is surely a factor in the Hubei uprisings that the province was second only to the large coastal province of Guangdong for its large number of Western missions (a total of fifteen in the 1898 map provided in Mrs. Archibald Little's *Intimate China*, p. 207).
2 Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. in Peking*, letters referred to above. Judging by his visual and auditory troubles, it is possible that Yu Keng was suffering from type 2 diabetes. *Vide infra*.
3 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 61–79.

Chapter 3

1 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, p. 189.
2 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 88–95. Though Headland's *Court Life in China* says that Manchu daughters had to be registered at age fourteen to fifteen, Crossley says that such registration was not necessary for either Manchus or Mongolians, and we must remember that *hanjun* were not required to register their daughters for palace service.
3 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 93.
4 Mrs. Archibald Little, *Intimate China*, p. 192.
5 See Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World 1852–1912* (hereafter *Meiji*), pp. 474–483.
6 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 111.
7 Mrs. Archibald Little, *Intimate China*, pp. 318–319.
8 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 115–118.
9 Ellen LaMotte, *Peking Dust*, pp. 15–20.
10 Lin Yutang, *Imperial Peking*, pp. 28–29.
11 Lao She, *Beneath the Red Banner*, p. 105.
12 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 123–124.

Chapter 4

1 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 127–128.
2 Marina Warner, *The Dragon Empress*, p. 71.
3 Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese*, p. 382.
4 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 137.
5 Ibid., p. 141.
6 Edward Thomas Williams, *China Yesterday and Today*, p. 317.

7 Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese*, p. 247.
8 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 141–142.

Chapter 5

1 Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways*, p. 5.
2 Ibid., p. 17.
3 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 145–146.
4 Ibid., pp. 146–147.
5 Ibid., p. 157.
6 Ibid., pp. 151–153.
7 Ibid., pp. 158–159.
8 Ibid., pp. 163–165.
9 Yu Keng evidently also understood French, though Der Ling paradoxically records his disavowal of it when asked about it by the Guangxu Emperor during a visit to court years later. See Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 241.
10 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 181–182.
11 Ibid., pp. 185–187.
12 Ibid., pp. 199–200.

Chapter 6

1 Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto, *Two Ways*, pp. 58–59.
2 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 201.
3 Ibid., pp. 203–204.
4 Donald Keene, *Meiji*, p. 551.
5 Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto, *Two Ways*, p. 63.
6 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 208–209.
7 See Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son*.
8 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 39.
9 Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, pp. 51–65.
10 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 108.
11 Wu Yung, translated by Ida Pruitt, *The Flight of an Empress*, p. 194.
12 Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 470–471.
13 *Eminent Chinese* states that Li refused to go ashore during his stop in Japan — he had crossed from Vancouver, British Columbia.
14 Agreeing with Wu Yung, to whom Li described this coffin, see Wu Yung, *The Flight of an Empress*, p. 189 and *Eminent Chinese*, p. 470.
15 Li could be very strict with his servants. Li's American secretary William Pethick once told American artist Cecile Payen of witnessing Li fall by

accident as one of his valets helped him through a narrow door. According to Pethick, Li looked up from the floor at the cringing servant and said, "I will throw you into boiling lard when we get home." Cecile E. Payen, *The Century Magazine*, January 1901, Vol. LXI, No. 3, pp. 453–468.

16 Sterling Seagrave, *Soong Dynasty*, pp. 68–85.
17 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 230.
18 Ibid., pp. 314–315.
19 Luke S. K. Kwong, *A Mosaic of the Hundred Days,* p. 207.

Chapter 7

1 Sue Fawn Chung, "The Image of the Empress Dowager Cixi," in Paul A. Cohen and John E. Schrecker (eds.), *Reform in Nineteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1976), pp. 101–110.
2 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 21.
3 Mrs. Archibald Little, *Intimate China*, pp. 411–412.
4 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 234.
5 Ibid., p. 205 *ff*. Also see Sue Fawn Chung, "The Image of the Empress Dowager," *supra.*
6 Béguin and Morel, *The Forbidden City*, p. 89.
7 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 5.
8 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, p. 241.
9 Ibid., p. 242.
10 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 258–259. Der Ling translates "ermaozi" as "secondary hairy ones," but the more figurative meaning of this term, per Stephen Wadley, refers to the way hair changes color with age (in other words, black going to gray or white). "So *èrmáozi* are people who are no longer fully Chinese — 'salt and pepper' Chinese." Wadley, private correspondence, January 2004.

Chapter 8

1 The apartment house at 4, Avenue Hoche now houses the Union française des Industries Petrolières, including a number of other petroleum trade associations.
2 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 266–267.
3 Ibid., p. 266.
4 A Roman Catholic, Ching-Ch'ang had served as Minister to France from 1895 to June 17, 1899. He should have returned to China immediately

after Yu Keng began his tour of duty, but remained in Paris and then in Switzerland for another couple of years, understandably fearful of returning to Beijing during and after the Boxer Uprising for two obvious reasons: his religion and the fact that one of his staff was related to Shoufu, a proscribed member of Kang Youwei's circle. See Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. in Peking,* letters 1237, 1242 and 1243.

5 Vincent Cronin, *Paris on the Eve 1900–1914*, pp. 14–15.

6 Ibid.; and Nigel Gosling, *The Adventurous World of Paris 1900–1914.*

7 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 277–279.

8 Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, pp. 228–229.

9 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, pp. 238–239.

10 Seagrave concludes in his biography of Cixi that the real begetter of the use of the Boxer groups as a "secret irregular force" came from the conservative military commander, General Li Peng-heng; again, like Tuan, Li was probably as interested in diverting Boxer wrath from the Manchu dynasty as he was in scouring China of foreigners.

11 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 123–124.

12 B. L. Putnam Weale [Bertram Lenox-Simpson], *Indiscreet Letters from Peking*, p. 19.

13 George Lynch, *The War of the Civilisations*, p. 106.

14 Ibid., pp. 106–107.

15 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 289–290.

16 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 340.

17 Ibid., p. 343.

Chapter 9

1 Cecil E. Payen, *Century Magazine*, January 1901, p. 457.

2 Ibid., p. 455.

3 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 291–292.

4 *New York Times,* December 2, 1900.

5 Lao She, *Beneath the Red Banner*, p. 171.

6 Cecil E. Payen, *Century Magazine*, January 1901, p. 468; and Wu Yung, *The Flight of an Empress.*

7 Wu Yung, *The Flight of an Empress*, p. 72.

Chapter 10

1 Peter Kurth, *Isadora*, pp. 70–78.

2 Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *China: The Long Lived Empire*, p. 5. A pioneer

woman journalist born in America, Scidmore is credited with having introduced cherry trees to Washington, D.C.

3 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 239.
4 Nigel Gosling, *The Adventurous World of Paris 1900–1914*, p. 75.
5 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 234.
6 Ibid., pp. 236–237.
7 Ibid., pp. 241–242.
8 Ibid., pp. 243–244.
9 Ibid., pp. 249–250.

Chapter 11

1 Nigel Gosling, *The Adventurous World of Paris 1900–1914*, pp. 13–14.
2 Cornelia Otis Skinner, *Madame Sarah*, pp. 110–111.
3 Ibid., p. 269.
4 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 173.
5 Ibid., pp. 177–178.
6 Bernhardt's affectionate, motherly regard for Der Ling is all the more intriguing when we compare it with her quite opposite feelings for the exquisite Japanese actress Madame Sadayakko, who had played the Comédie Française during the Paris Expo to packed audiences and was often called the "Japanese Bernhardt." "*Atroce! Abominable!*" Bernhardt is recorded as having snapped to a friend who had asked her for her opinion of Sadayakko and her fellow actors. The same friend remembered her describing the Japanese troupe as "A pack of monkeys!" Even more intriguing is the rumor, reported by Sadayakko's biographer Lesley Downer, that Bernhardt sat incognito in the Comédie Française to watch the ex-geisha perform. See Lesley Downer, *Madame Sadayakko*, p. 176.

Chapter 12

1 Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. in Peking,* p. 1303.
2 Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *China: The Long Lived Empire,* pp. 133–134. Writing of the period just before the "Hundred Days" of summer 1898, Scidmore says: "Only one Manchu noblewoman of the court circle has been educated in a foreign country in foreign ways, and has permitted her daughters to be taught on the same lines, and orders were given this Manchu family to devise and take charge of the changed ceremonies of the Empress Dowager's court. Before that family could reach Peking, the crash came; reaction reacted; the coup d'état fell; the reformers fled for their lives." This

reference can only be to Louisa and her daughters. Also see Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. in Peking,* pp. 1328–1329.

3 Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. in Peking,* p. 1335; Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 302; and *New York Times*, March 30, 1903.

4 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 415: the painter Hubert Vos was escorted into the Empress Dowager Cixi's presence by Zaizhen in 1905 and found that he could not communicate with the prince because he spoke only Chinese.

5 In 1899, Sir Robert Hart was describing Yu Keng as having vision and hearing problems, which he does not attribute to age. To have such age-related problems, Yu Keng would have had to be much older than Der Ling tells us. On the other hand, the symptoms he developed seem to accord more with a gradually deteriorating case of type 2 diabetes, which left untreated can cause both blindness and loss of hearing, and may have developed as Yu Keng increasingly ate a Western rather than Asian diet. (Type 2 is especially prevalent among Asians who have immigrated to the United States.) Identified in medieval times as an illness, diabetes was never properly treated until insulin was discovered in 1921. The disease could be one of the reasons why Yu Keng was so adamant that he be treated by his foreign doctors in Shanghai after his return to China in 1903. I thank Dr. Dennis Cunniff for his advice in this medical guesswork.

6 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 71. Like her sister Rong Ling, whose nickname was Nellie, Der Ling also had a nickname — Venie — which was used with close friends. She very rarely inscribed her books with this name.

Chapter 13

1 Aisin-Gioro Puyi, translated by W. J. F. Jenner, *From Emperor to Citizen*, p. 210.

2 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 4–5.

3 Ibid., pp. 7–8.

4 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady,* p. 549, note on "The Yu Keng family."

5 Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han*, p. 272.

6 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 8.

7 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 251; Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China*, pp. 40–42; Derling, *Kow Tow*, p. 98.

8 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 54–55.

9 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 12.

Chapter 14

1 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 12. Rong Ling claims in her memoirs that Louisa and her daughters received a "crash course" in court etiquette at the home of Prince Qing.

2 Jonathan D. Spence, *Gate of Heavenly Peace*, pp. 9–11.

3 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 13.

4 Numerology played a powerful role throughout Chinese culture and art, with certain numbers assigned more auspicious powers than others.

5 Der Ling says fourth rank, but this rank called for lapis lazuli buttons, not crystal. She also gets her father's button wrong, sometimes giving him the second-rank coral instead of first-rank ruby; in fact, Yu Keng seems not to have risen higher than the third rank, which would permit him to wear the sapphire button.

6 Beijing Summer Palace Administration Office, *Summer Palace*, pp. 25–28; Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp, 14–15.

7 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 124.

8 Mary M. Anderson, *Hidden Power*, p. 21 and pp. 307–311.

9 Isaac Taylor Headland and Dr. Headland, *Court Life in China*, p. 102, for description of Louisa; and for Der Ling's observations, see *Two Years*, p. 15. On a visit to the Summer Palace, Lady Townley seems to have seen Der Ling and Rong Ling in their velvet gowns, but gives details too insufficient to date exactly when the sighting took place. We may assume it occurred prior to Cixi's order that Louisa and her daughters be given Manchu court clothing to wear. "I was present when for the first time public opinion forced [Cixi] to permit two of her Ladies-in-Waiting to appear before her in European dress . . . They were dressed alike in crimson broché velvet, with European shoes on their tiny feet. They looked most awkward as they curtsied in place of kotowing. The Empress was cold at first, but curiosity overcoming her annoyance and no foreigner besides myself being present, she gradually softened towards them. Before very long she was seated on a divan between them trying on a Parisian shoe on the Imperial foot." Cixi did try on Der Ling's French shoes on Der Ling's first visit to court, but the latter mentions no foreign woman being present, and it is likely Lady Townley was present for another trying-on session. Cixi seems to have also been curious to touch and examine Lady Townley's clothing, per the latter's account. See *The Indiscretions of Lady Susan*.

10 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 125.

11 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 16–17.

12 Ibid., p. 17 and p. 159.

13 Isaac Taylor Headland and Dr. Headland, *Court Life in China*, p. 202 and Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 18.
14 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 18–19.
15 Sir Robert Hart, *I. G. In Peking*, p. 1304 and p. 1311.
16 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 20 and p. 138.
17 Ibid., p. 20.
18 Isaac Taylor Headland and Dr. Headland, *Court Life in China*, p. 166.
19 Wu Yung, *The Flight of an Empress,* p. 203.
20 Der Ling, *Son of Heaven*, p. vii and "Pu-Yi, the Puppet of Japan," *The Saturday Evening Post*, April 30, 1932, p. 70.
21 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 24–25.
22 Ibid., pp. 42–43.
23 Ibid., p. 28.
24 Ibid., pp. 27–28.
25 Ibid., p. 35. See Han Suyin, *The Crippled Tree*, p. 165, where the author describes food sent with her father on a trip to Europe.
26 Cixi was very fond of pork, particularly enjoying the rind cut into strips and fried into a dish called "Tingling Bells." Wu Yung confirms Der Ling's account of this with his similar descriptions of Cixi's eating habits on the road to Xian. See Wu Yung, *The Flight of an Empress*.
27 Der Ling's description in *Two Years* of where she, her mother and sister were lodged at the Summer Palace refers to a two-story building located to the right of where Cixi slept, and a courtyard away from the Hall of Jade Billows, where the Guangxu Emperor lived, beyond which was another courtyard containing a residence for Guangxu's wife, Longyu. The Hall of Happiness in Longevity is described by Der Ling as the Empress Dowager's primary residence, which it was, containing not only sitting rooms but a bedroom. However, the only building located to its right was the Porch of Nourished Clouds (*Paiyundian*), which according to Arlington and Lewisohn, was "used as a residence by Court ladies" (see *In Search of Old Peking,* p. 287). Because Der Ling describes being able to open a lake-facing window and look out at the lake under the dawning light of morning, it is hard to see how she could do this from the Porch of Nourished Clouds; whereas there is more logic to obtaining this view from a pavilion to the west of the Lodge of Propriety in Weeding.

Chapter 15

1 The Yuanmingyuan was first begun in 1709 by the Kangxi Emperor, itself built on the ruins of a Ming prince's garden; see Marina Warner, *The Dragon Empress*, p. 73.

2 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, pp. 132–133.
3 The banner system as a whole, as sent up hilariously by novelist Lao She, was one in which bannermen were virtually forced into lives of unemployed, unemployable dole-drawers, and was a system that was easily taken advantage of. Lao She describes cripples unable to serve in the army, who hired his fit young cousin to pass all the equestrian tests required to enter military service and then assume the rank he had won for them and the emoluments that came with that rank, or widows who drew the pensions of several different dead bannermen relatives, all draining the imperial war chest with far greater rapacity than any spending project Cixi could create. See Lao She, *Beneath the Red Banner*.
4 Philip W. Sergeant, *The Great Empress Dowager of China*, p. 123.
5 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 181.
6 Juliet Bredon, *Peking*, p. 302.
7 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 48–54.

Chapter 16

1 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 95.
2 Ibid., pp. 57–58.
3 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, p. 233.
4 Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark, *Stone of Heaven*, p. 28. It should be noted that the authors have confused Der Ling with a Princess Yu of the imperial family, p. 219.
5 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, pp. 261–264.
6 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, p. 67.
7 Ibid., p. 68.
8 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 114.
9 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 68–69; Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 92.

Chapter 17

1 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 75.
2 Ibid., pp. 77–78.
3 Ibid., p. 260 and p. 78.
4 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, pp. 200–201; Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 279–282.
5 Beijing Summer Palace Administration Office, *Summer Palace*, pp. 100–101.
6 L. C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, p. 287, for confirmation of the clay village in miniature.

7 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 82.
8 Ibid., pp. 83–84.
9 Ibid.
10 Su Hua Ling Chen, *Ancient Melodies*, p. 174.
11 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 87.

Chapter 18

1 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 95–100; Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China*, p. 228.
2 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 95–108.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.; Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 251. See "Empress Dowager Cixi: Her Art of Living," English section.
13 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 176.
14 Isaac Taylor Headland and Dr. Headland, *Court Life in China*, pp. 118–128; see also Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *China: The Long Lived Empire.*
15 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 104–108.
16 Ibid.

Chapter 19

1 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 112–113.
2 Ibid., pp. 110–111.
3 Ibid., pp. 116–119.
4 Frank Ching, *Ancestors*, p. 348.
5 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 126–128. Cixi's fascination with Buddhist monastic structure seems to have influenced to a certain degree her choice of Der Ling for her favorite; in most monasteries, the monk whose job it was to welcome guests had under him a "young, quick-witted" monk called *zhaoke* whose job it was to entertain the guests face to face and make them comfortable in their strange surroundings. This, rather than the role of "first lady-in-waiting" that

Der Ling assumed for herself in retrospect, was much more aligned with what Der Ling actually did for the dowager at court. See Nan Huai-Chin, *Basic Buddhism: Exploring Buddhism and Zen*, p. 184.

6 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 129.
7 L. C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, p. 243.
8 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 132.
9 Juliet Bredon, *Peking*, pp. 80–82.
10 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 134.
11 Isaac Taylor Headland and Dr. Headland, *Court Life in China*, pp. 105–106. Dr. Headland does not name Louisa and her daughters specifically, but the descriptions of them are accurate, and the incident seems to have happened at the time Cixi returned to the Forbidden City, Der Ling's first time there.
12 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 137–138.

Chapter 20

1 *The Indiscretions of Lady Susan*, pp. 86–98.
2 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, pp. 407–409.
3 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 140–141. In his critique of Der Ling's *Son of Heaven*, Zhu Jiajing claims the author was incorrect to describe a party at one of the imperial palaces with such mats stretched over the courtyards, insisting this was not a practice of members of the imperial house. Zhu's criticism is in direct contradiction to Katherine Carl's recollection of just such matting being used to cover a courtyard for the Guangxu Emperor's birthday party at the Summer Palace, see Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 60. Zhu also claims that Cixi never took a train ride except when she returned from Xian in 1902, which is not true; she also took a train when she went to visit the Western Tombs in spring 1903.
4 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 143–144.
5 Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People*, p. 157.
6 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 192.
7 Ibid., p. 157.

Chapter 21

1 Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China*, pp. 247–248.
2 Ibid.
3 Froncek, Thomas, *The Horizon Book of the Arts of China*, p. 204.
4 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. xix.

5 Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China*, pp. 247–248.
6 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 195.
7 Ibid., p. 194.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., p. 198.
10 Ibid., p. 200. Interestingly, this aspect of Der Ling's relationship with Cixi was delineated perfectly, and with some humor, in Li Hanxiang's 1976 film, *The Last Tempest*. Li has Cixi comment to Li Lianying, when the actress playing Der Ling assents quickly to fulfill the old lady's request: "This kid will do anything I ask."
11 Ibid., pp. 203–204.
12 Ibid., pp. 204–205.
13 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, pp. 409–410.
14 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 206–208.
15 Ibid., p. 210. The next to last reference to this portrait that I can find occurs in an April 20, 1937 article in the *Los Angeles Times*: "A year ago, the Princess went to Peking and brought back with her twenty-five packing cases of belongings . . . [including] a painting of the former court lady herself, as a girl of 18 in Paris." The painting was included in the catalog for the 1953 auction of Der Ling's objets d'art, but its whereabouts now are unknown.
16 Der Ling, *Jades and Dragons*, p. 189.
17 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 210.
18 No author contemporary with the events except for Katherine Carl has ever given young Xunling proper attribution for these photographs; only with Lydia Dan's 1982 unpublished article, "The Unknown Photographer," and her 1984 published letter in *History of Photography* (Vol. 8, Number 4, October–December 1984, p. 345), and then Sterling and Peggy Seagrave's *Dragon Lady*, published in 1992, was Xunling given his due. Ironically, even Der Ling deriders like Edmund Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland used Xunling's photographs without attribution. The dowager had in fact been photographed before Xunling came to court: one of the foreign ladies standing on the city wall, watching Cixi's return from Xian in April 1902, snapped a photo of the short, silk-clad dowager waving toward the camera with her handkerchief, a smile on her face. Whether Cixi knew she was being photographed, given her total inexperience of cameras at the time, is debatable. See Béguin and Morel, *The Forbidden City*, p. 88.
19 The photographs of the Meiji Emperor and Empress Haruko were made in 1872 by Raimund Baron von Stillfried-Rattonitz. Interestingly, the oldest existing daguerreotype in Japan depicts Shimazu Nariakira (1809–58), daimyo of the Satsuma clan, who sat for a camera in September 1857.

The photograph of King Rama IV (Mongkut) of Siam and wife Queen Debsirindra, from 1856, can be found at the Smithsonian Institution, Department of Anthropology, cat. #E4003, NAAI #1735. The photographs of King Louis-Philippe and Queen Amélie are kept in the Archives Nationales de Paris. The photograph of Queen Victoria and Princess Victoria (not the future King Edward VII, as noted in the caption) can be seen on www.btinternet.com/~sbishop100/vic23.jpg. The image of young Duleep Singh can be seen on www.duleepsingh.com/gallery.asp. I thank Oliver Rost, François Velde, Chris Pitt Lewis and Richard Lichten for pointing me to these examples.

20 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 218–219, and Lydia Dan, "The Unknown Photographer," unpublished article, 1982. In the film *The Last Tempest* (*vide supra*) Der Ling has a cameo role, anachronistically in 1898, in which she is shown not just as Cixi's translator and favorite — dressed in trailing evening gowns and white gloves and shooing foreign ladies off the dowager's thrones — but also as court photographer, a role she never served. According to Lydia Dan, when Rong Ling was leaving her Beijing house in 1931, she was apprised by a servant of a couple of crates of Xunling's glass negatives; and whether because the boxes were too heavy to move easily, or because she shared the family's alleged disdain for Xunling's "lack of ambition" and belief that this lack signaled "stupidity," she ordered him to throw the crates away. The servant disobeyed the order and, Dan believed, sold the negatives to a Mr. Yamamoto, who owned a photo studio in the city. Yamamoto then made prints from these negatives, though he did not claim them as his own work. Dr. Shiou-yun Fang (University of Edinburgh thesis, 2005) believes Yamamoto gave the two cases of negatives to Der Ling or T.C. — it is just as possible they purchased them from him. Soon after 1931, cheaply produced prints of Xunling's famous photos of the Empress Dowager and her court began to appear in little cloth-bound booklets, one of which is in the author's possession.

21 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 222–223.

Chapter 22

1 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 266.

2 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 4.

3 Ibid., p. 6.

4 Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China*, p. 270.

5 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 230.

6 Ibid., pp. 230–231 and *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 6.

7 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 10.
8 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 232 and *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 11.
9 Ibid., p. 31 and pp. 27–28.
10 Ibid., p. 115.
11 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, pp. 182–185; Rumer Godden, *The Butterfly Lions*, p. 16 *ff*.
12 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, pp. 53–56.
13 Ibid., p. 161.
14 Ibid., p. 194.
15 V. R. Burkhardt, *Chinese Creeds and Customs*, p. 32.
16 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, pp. 315—316 and *Two Years*, p. 248.
17 See Tsao Hsueh-chin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Vol. II, Chapter 64.
18 In 1999, Liu Qi, a "director of chronicles" of the City of Changzhi, Shanxi province, published a book in Chinese titled *Cracking the Mystery of Cixi's Youth*. According to this research, based on interviews with farmers from the area, and "38 pieces of evidence" in all, Liu Qi claims that Cixi was actually born the daughter of a farmer named Wang, who sold her at age four to another farmer, by name Song, who then sold her as servant to the bannerman Huizheng of the Yehonala clan. The young girl's beauty and intelligence impressed the family to such degree they adopted her as a Manchu and had, so the story goes, no qualms about presenting her in the imperial concubine roundup as one of their own rather than as a child of Han farmers — something that would have been considered a criminal act, as only Manchu and Mongolian girls were eligible to be not only chosen as concubines and wives but even presented for such choosing. While intriguing, the story needs much more rigorous investigation in and out of China before taking its place alongside facts on the life of the Empress Dowager.
19 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, pp. 61–62.
20 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 250–253.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.

Chapter 23

1 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, p. 204.
2 Wu Yung, *The Flight of an Empress*, p. 141.
3 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, pp. 250–251.
4 Ibid., pp. 236–239. According to the catalog for the Palace Museum exhibit, "Empress Dowager Cixi: Her Art of Living," Cixi used her face massager to blend in a powder made up by court doctors from sixteen herbs, which

was devised to help remove the freckles to which she was disposed. Called *yurongsan*, this mixture was a favorite of Cixi's which she used every day.

5 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 144.

6 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, pp. 205–206.

7 Ibid., pp. 210–211.

8 See the early picture in *With the Empress Dowager of China*, compared with the one taken in the winter of 1903 on Peony Hill with Der Ling, her sister and mother; see Der Ling, *Two Years*. The dowager is noticeably more aged and tired in appearance.

9 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 96.

10 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 263–267.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., pp. 315–316.

13 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 161 and pp. 371–373; Juliet Bredon, *Peking*, p. 135; and Fei Shi, *Guide to Peking*, photo of "The 'Foreign Palaces' " at the Forbidden City.

14 Ibid; Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 196.

15 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 284–285.

16 Der Ling's informal butterfly robe was donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City by Mr. and Mrs. George Miller in 1970. It is composed of silk and silk wrapped with gold on a satin ground and measures 58 inches from sleeve end to sleeve end and 82 inches in height.

17 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 286–287.

18 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, pp. 196–198; a photograph of Cixi standing in front of the richly decorated Hall That Dispels the Clouds, with Der Ling, Rong Ling, Louisa and court ladies, seems to date from this birthday celebration; see Der Ling, *Two Years*.

19 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, pp. 198–199.

20 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 300–301.

21 L. C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, p. 100.

22 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 301–302.

23 In his *The Flight of an Empress* [1936], p. 68, magistrate Wu Yung, who greeted Cixi on her flight to Xian and served her in exile, notes that Li Lianying was last in the line of carts streaming out of Beijing, placing the chief eunuch in a unique position for impromptu escape.

22 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 313–314.

25 Ibid., p. 318 and Pierre Loti, *Last Days of Peking*, pp. 106–107.

26 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 320–321.

27 Ibid., pp. 321–322.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

Chapter 24

1 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 549.
2 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, pp. 94–97.
3 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 421.
4 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 290.
5 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 332.
6 Ibid., pp. 323–324.
7 Ibid., p. 325.
8 Ibid., pp. 325–327.
9 Der Ling, *Imperial Incense*, pp. 264–265.
10 Edmund O. Clubb, *Twentieth Century China*, pp. 32–33.
11 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, p. 302.
12 Ibid., pp. 287—289 and *Two Years*, p. 346
13 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 346.
14 This photograph can be seen in Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, after p. 304.
15 Katherine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, pp. 297–299; Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 347–348.
16 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 347–348.
17 Katherine Carl, *With The Empress Dowager of China*, p. 235.
18 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 355.

Chapter 25

1 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 350–351.
2 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 316–317.
3 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 375.
4 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 318.
5 Der Ling, *Two Years*, p. 375.
6 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, pp. 319–320.
7 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 375–376.
8 Ibid., p. 378; Wu Yung remembered Cui being "fierce" and "haughty;" see *The Flight of an Empress,* p. 70. According to one legend of the murder of the Pearl Concubine, Cui was one of the eunuchs who pushed her into the Forbidden City well traditionally pointed out as the site of her death. The entire story has been discredited in modern times, not least because the well traditionally supposed to be the site of the Pearl Concubine's death is too small to admit an adult body. In addition, Na Genzheng, great grandnephew of Cixi and currently an official at the New Summer Palace, claimed in

an interview from August 2004 that his grandfather, son of the Empress Dowager's younger brother, witnessed the Pearl Concubine's suicide, and deplored the way the Empress Dowager had been "framed" for this and other alleged acts. See Richard Spencer article, www.royalarchive.com, August 4, 2004.

9 See Zhu Jiajing, *Historial Inaccuracies in the Books by Der Ling and Rong Ling*. Rong Ling used her title — Princess Shou Shan — in her 1930 book, written in English and published in Beijing, on the love affair between the Qianlong Emperor and his Muslim concubine, Xiangfei, the so-called "Fragrant Concubine" (*vide supra*). The book was dedicated to a "Princess Tsai Tao, in memory of happy days at the imperial court." I have not found a princess so-named among the daughters of princes of the Qing imperial house, but there was a Prince Zaitao, fifth son of Prince Chun, whose wife Rong Ling may have been referring to. She did not use her title in her memoirs of the court published in 1957. Der Ling's title was possibly, like her sister's, also tagged to some feature of the Summer Palace. The author owns an embroidered panel designed by Rong Ling and signed "Shou Shan."

10 Der Ling, *Two Years*, pp. 378–380.

11 Stella Dong, *Shanghai 1842–1949*, p. 73.

12 *Britannica World Language Dictionary*, 1960.

13 Enid Saunders Candlin, *Breach in the Wall*, pp. 41–42.

14 As of 2003, this record, placing White with the Battery "A" Light Artillery, derives from White's gravestone in Los Angeles National Cemetery, and has not yet been verified by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs.

15 Lo Hui-men (ed.), *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison*, p. 524.

16 Der Ling, *Kow Tow*, p. 321.

Chapter 26

1 Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han*, p. 187.

2 Ibid., pp. 173–210; also for quote from British missionary J. C. Keyte.

3 Sterling Seagrave, *Soong Dynasty*, p. 181.

4 Ibid., pp. 202–203.

5 Harry Hussey, *My Pleasures and Palaces*, p. 264.

Chapter 27

1 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 412.

Chapter 28

1 Given the fact that Vos served on the jury at the International Exposition in St. Louis, where Katherine's portrait of Cixi was exhibited, he may well have wondered whether a better likeness could not be taken of this almost legendary woman, and felt he was the man for the task. As can be seen from the results, he was not mistaken.
2 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, pp. 414–417.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 428.
5 Ibid., pp. 434–435.
6 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, pp. 312–313. In her *Saturday Evening Post* article on Puyi, Der Ling states categorically that "Even Kwang-su's death was tragic, as he was poisoned." See *Saturday Evening Post*, April 30, 1932, p. 70.
7 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 436.
8 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, pp. 328–330.
9 Isaac Taylor Headland and Dr. Headland, *Court Life in China*, pp. 343–347.
10 Ibid.
11 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, p. 335; Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese*, p. 299.
12 Philip W. Sergeant, *The Great Empress Dowager of China*, pp. 306–308.
13 Daniele Varè, *The Last Empress*, pp. 283–284; this description is based on the so-called diary of Li Lianying, which never existed except in Edmund Backhouse's head. Varè is the source for the Bennet quote from the *London Illustrated News*.
14 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, pp. 334–335.

Chapter 29

1 Lydia Dan, "The Unknown Photographer," unpublished article, 1982; see 1930 Census for New York City, Manhattan, Assembly District 10, Wentworth Hotel. I am indebted to Kathie Klein for sharing information and photos of the *Fu Lu Sho* game with me.
2 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 440; Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *China: The Long Lived Empire*, pp. 127–142.
3 Ibid., p. 445. J. O. P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse, *China Under the Empress Dowager* [hereafter *CUED*] was reissued in January 2004 by Trubner and Co. of London, without notes indicating its many errors and/or deliberate falsehoods, thereby helping perpetuate the usual crude and evil image of the dowager.

4 *CUED*, pp. 477–478.
5 1929 Chautauqua lecture brochure.
6 Lady Dorothea Hosie, *A Portrait of a Chinese Lady*, p. 267.
7 Yi-tsi Feuerwerker, "Women as Writers in the 1920's and 1930's," in *Women in Chinese Society*, pp. 149.
8 Ibid., p. 158.
9 Han Suyin confuses Rong Ling and Der Ling by describing Rong Ling as having "written a book on the Empress [Dowager], a book which had been sold in England and America," see Han Suyin, *The Crippled Tree*, p. 401.
10 Han Suyin, *The Crippled Tree*, pp. 403–406. Madame Dan had another, warmer side, according to Hilda Hale's memoir *Indomitably Yours*. Mrs. Hale, whose husband ran the Cook's Tours office in Beijing, knew Rong Ling and visited her palace; Rong Ling also attended the Hales' wedding in Kobe, Japan. Mrs. Hale writes of how Rong Ling took in starving ex-palace eunuchs — artisans, musicians, servants — after the dynasty's fall in 1912, defraying expenses by offering their needlework and tickets to special musical and dance performances to select foreign tourists. She occasionally danced herself, and told Mrs. Hale she could not survive without her daily opium pipe. (Source: *Indomitably Yours*, and a handwritten note about "Princess Shou Shan" [Madame Dan] from Mrs. Hilda Hale, in the author's possession.)

Chapter 30

1 Fei Shi, *Guide to Peking*, p. 23 and advertisement page I.
2 Ellen LaMotte, *Peking Dust*, pp. 13–14.
3 Ibid., pp. 14–15.
4 "Our Escape from Peking with Our Treasures for the University of Oregon Museum," excerpts from letters written in November 1924 by Gertrude Bass Warner, see http://libweb.uoregon.edu/speccoll/photo/warner/escape.html.
5 From author correspondence with Luke S. K. Kwong, professor of history, University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, October 31, 2002.
6 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, pp. xi–xiv.
7 Der Ling, *Jades and Dragons*, pp. 223–224.
8 *Los Angeles Times* article, "Men in U.S. Best Lovers," March 21, 1930.
9 Der Ling, *Jades and Dragons*, pp. 243–244.
10 *Los Angeles Times* article, "Chinese Women 'Go Hollywood' Princess Finds," July 22, 1929.
11 Ibid., p. 247.
12 Kate Buss, *Studies in the Chinese Drama*, p. 46.
13 Ibid., pp. 48–49.

14 Der Ling, *Jades and Dragons*, p. 249.
15 Letter in private hands.

Chapter 31

1 *Los Angeles Times* article, “”Chinese Here Fete Princess,” February 9, 1928; correspondence with Gretchen Mittwer (2003); and *New York Times* obituary for Thaddeus Raymond White, April 5, 1933.
2 *Los Angeles Times* article of February 9, 1928 mentions that a scale model of the proposed Forbidden City replica was displayed at the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. In the inaugural issue of *Fortune* magazine (February 1930), a tongue-in-cheek article on the private lives of island-owning Americans relates a story according to which Der Ling and T.C. leased the miniscule Mexican island of Golondrina off the southern California coast in 1927 and staffed it with a female court of retainers and dancing girls, supervised by a palace guard of ex-Marines who in turn were commanded by T.C. When not dressing up in Manchu court garb, Der Ling and her ladies were doing the Charleston. The *Fortune* article shows the sort of exaggerations and elaborate falsehoods that surrounded Der Ling in America, and which still get reprinted in such books as Thurston Clarke’s *Searching for Paradise* (2001), where the story is rehashed without comment.
3 Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America*, p. 26.
4 Ibid., p. 51.
5 Ibid., p. 83.
6 Ibid., p. 141.
7 *Los Angeles Times*, “Chinese Princess on Way Here to Make Home,” May 27, 1929; *New York Times* obituary for Thaddeus Raymond White, April 5, 1933.
8 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 9.
9 Ibid., p. 20 and p. 71.
10 Ibid., pp. 10–11. A *New York Times* society column item from July 1931 mentions that Der Ling and Thaddeus were dinner guests at the Park Avenue apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Law, along with the Earl and Countess of Gosford and a Prince Demidoff. Perhaps this was the occasion in question.

Chapter 32

1 Der Ling, *Jades and Dragons*, p. 82. The woman whom Der Ling mentions in this passage from *Jades and Dragons*, who referred to her as “a so-called Princess,” also asked her to review a manuscript “begun after a residence in Peking of exactly two weeks.” This sounds very like Ellen LaMotte’s *Peking*

Dust, which does refer to Der Ling, not mentioned by name, as a "so-called princess," and does reflect the author's impressions after a short stay in the city.

2 Ibid.

3 Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Hermit of Peking*, p. 17.

4 Ibid., p. 34.

5 J. O. P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse, *China Under the Empress Dowager*, pp. 251–252.

6 Der Ling, *Jades and Dragons*, pp. 82–83.

7 Ibid., pp. 83–84. Also see Mrs. Archibald Little, *Intimate China*, p. 370.

8 Der Ling, *Jades and Dragons*, p. 84.

9 J. O. P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse, *China Under the Empress Dowager*, p. 98; Seagrave/author correspondence, September 19, 2003. A search of Bland's diaries from the years 1900–10 (located in the Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto) showed no mention of Der Ling.

10 Sterling Seagrave and Peggy Seagrave, *Dragon Lady*, p. 449.

11 See Bland papers in the Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, letters of J. O. P. Bland and Sir Reginald Johnston, April 20 and 24, 1935; Trevor-Roper/author correspondence, October 21, 2002.

12 Der Ling, *Old Buddha*, p. 300. Also see Der Ling's recollections of first meeting the infant Puyi and his mother at the Summer Palace. *The Saturday Evening Post*, "Pu-Yi, the Puppet of Japan," April 30, 1932, p. 70.

13 *The Saturday Evening Post*, "Pu-Yi, the Puppet of Japan," April 30, 1932, pp. 13–77. It is possible that Der Ling's involvement in the Mukden antiques sale may have brought T.C. into the project as partner or manager, and given rise to the story editor Lo Hui-men heard (referred to on p. 524, *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison*, Vols. I and II; see Chapter XXVII *supra*) that T.C. was involved in illegal sales of Mukden palace treasures.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 See Bland papers in the Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, letters of J. O. P. Bland and Sir Reginald Johnston, April 20 and 24, 1935; Trevor-Roper/author correspondence October 21, 2002.

17 Ibid.

18 Daniele Varè, *The Last Empress*, pp. viii–ix.

Chapter 33

1 Aisin-Gioro Puyi, translated by W. J. F. Jenner, *From Emperor to Citizen*, p. 194.

2 Ibid., p. 195.
3 Ibid., p. 212.
4 Brian Power, *Puppet Emperor*, p. 157.
5 Philip Van Rensselaer, *Million Dollar Baby*, pp. 9–10 and 17–19.
6 See David C. Heymann, *Poor Little Rich Girl* and Philip Van Rensselaer, *Million Dollar Baby.*
7 Philip Van Rensselaer, *Million Dollar Baby*, p. 114 and *New York Times*, January 20, 1934.
8 Philip Van Rensselaer, *Million Dollar Baby*, p. 114.
9 David C. Heymann, *Poor Little Rich Girl*, pp. 98–99.
10 Ibid., pp. 109–110.
11 *Los Angeles Times,* "Noted Princess from China to be Prudence Guest," March 13, 1935.
12 David C. Heymann, *Poor Little Rich Girl*, pp. 115–121.
13 *Los Angeles Times,* "Court Life Described by Chinese Princess," May 29, 1935.
14 *Los Angeles Times,* "China Calls to Princess," August 19, 1935.
15 *Los Angeles Times,*"Chinese Author Goes to Peping," September 3, 1935 and "Princess Der Ling Will Return from China," November 14, 1935.

Chapter 34

1 Edmund O. Clubb, *Twentieth Century China*, p. 218.
2 Harry Hussey, *My Pleasures and Palaces*, pp. 321–337.
3 Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America*, pp. 218–221.
4 "History of Old Chinatown Los Angeles," reprinted from *The Los Angeles Chinatown 50th Year Guidebook* (June 1988), available at http://oldchinatownla.com/history.html.
5 Der Ling, *Lotos Petals*, p. 98.
6 *Los Angeles Times,* " 'Rice Bowl' Party to Aid Chinese," June 14, 1938.
7 *Los Angeles Times,* obituary for Der Ling, November 23, 1944.
8 *Los Angeles Times,* "Der Ling Antiques to be Displayed," August 1, 1941; and *The Chinese Art Collection of the late Princess Der Ling*, presented by Thaddeus C. White (catalog), post-1944.

Legacy

1 Harry Hussey, *My Pleasures and Palaces*, pp. 356–357.
2 I am indebted to Sterling Seagrave for information about Pettus and the California College; information on Pettus can be found via Claremont College's Web site.

3 The thirty negatives were sold to Ernst von Harringa of Los Angeles (1899–1961), whose widow later made the negatives' existence known to *Arts of Asia* magazine, which published two previously unknown images of Cixi. One of them shows not only one of the few shots of the dowager smiling, but also of usually dour Chief Eunuch Li Lianying smirking in an engagingly natural way. *Arts of Asia* Magazine, September–October 1979 (p. 122). Most of these negatives were eventually sold to the Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, where they remain today. Thaddeus White's 1952 will indicates that the "bulk of my estate . . . consists of a collection of Chinese art objects which are stored in the warehouses of Bekins Van and Storage Company, Beverly Hills, California, and the All-American Van and Storage Company, of Hollywood, California . . ." His executor, Citizens National Bank of Los Angeles, was directed in the event of White's death to "sell and dispose of the said property of my estate only at such time when, in the opinion of the said Executor, a sale of my property, or any portion thereof, can be made to the advantage of the estate and with as little sacrifice as possible."

4 James Zee-min Lee, *Chinese Potpourri*, p. 328.

5 Thaddeus Raymond was interred at the White family plot in Sag Harbor, New York. (*New York Times* obituary, published April 6, 1933). It is possible that Der Ling's account of the Mukden trip is actually a conflation, for reasons we do not know, of the trip to the Western Tombs. Even Zhu Jiajing, who declared that the Mukden trip never occurred, could not find anything unprovable in the rest of Der Ling's narrative. (He is also incorrect to state that Cixi never made another train trip after her return from Xian in 1902.) See his *Historical Inaccuracies in the Books by Der Ling and Rong Ling*, supra. Lady Townley claims she was allowed by the dowager to take the imperial train back to Beijing from the southern city of Paoting Fu, where Lady Townley and her husband Sir Walter visited her on her way back from the Western Tombs in spring 1903. See *The Indiscretions of Lady Susan*, p. 96.

6 *Jades and Dragons*, pp. 280–287.

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