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## Review Articles

A China Career In Detail:  
*Robert Hart's Letters to J. D. Campbell*

Luke S. K. Kwong

*The I. G. in Peking* in two volumes tells an extraordinary tale in nineteenth-century Sino-foreign intercourse.<sup>1</sup> The hero to emerge from this tale was an Irishman named Robert Hart, whose lifelong career as inspector-general of the Chinese Maritime Customs easily established him as the best known and most powerful foreigner in late imperial China. For over forty years he held together the Customs Service through changes and growth, managed it like a tight ship, and subsequently turned it into "one of the administrative marvels of the world."<sup>2</sup> Aspects of this tale have already been told by such informed writers as H. B. Morse and S. F. Wright, both formerly of the Service.<sup>3</sup> But for an immediate sense of Hart's life and work in gradual progress, one can do no better than go direct to the collection of his letters to James Duncan Campbell, his confidant and official and personal representative in London.<sup>4</sup> Covering a time span of four decades and totaling over fourteen hundred items in all, the Hart despatches are valuable not only as a record of Hart's personal thoughts and movements, but also as a source of information on numerous contemporary developments (notably, diplomatic)<sup>5</sup> in China. With the recent publication by Harvard's Belknap Press of these despatches, the researcher can now have access to this primary material without having to travel to the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, England, where the holograph letters are deposited. Also, he ought

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<sup>1</sup> *The I. G. in Peking*, ed. John K. Fairbank, Katherine F. Brunner and Elizabeth M. Matheson, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975, 2 Vols. Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent citations refer to this source and only the date of the letter cited and the page number for the citation will be given.

<sup>2</sup> See S. F. Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs*, Belfast: Wm. Mullan & Son Ltd., 1950, Preface, xiii.

<sup>3</sup> H. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910-18, 3 vols. For Wright's volume, see note 2.

<sup>4</sup> For the life and career of Campbell, see Robert R. Campbell, *James Duncan Campbell*, Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1970.

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note Morse's original projection for his own classic work (note 3). He wrote, "In undertaking this work my idea was to make my central figures Sir Robert Hart and the great Customs Service which he had organised, and, with them as the connecting thread, to work out the history of China's international relations." (II, Prefactory Note, vi) That the "figures" mentioned could be assigned such central importance in China's foreign relations is supported by Wright's *Hart and the Chinese Customs*, which, its title notwithstanding, amounts to a competent study of late-Ch'ing China's international relations.

to be grateful for being spared the agonizing drudgery of having to decipher Hart's almost esoteric hand-writing.<sup>6</sup>

The Harvard publication opens with several essays, one being an interesting account of the history of the letters. Two other essays stand out for special note. One is the "Foreword" by John K. Fairbank, the senior co-editor of the volumes, whose appraisal here of the place of the Customs Service in modern Chinese history has the cumulative wisdom of a long interest which began over forty years ago when he first published his studies of the foreign inspectorate of customs instituted at Shanghai in the mid-1850s.<sup>7</sup> The other is the lengthy "Introduction" by L. K. Little, the last foreign inspector-general of the Chinese Maritime Customs, who resigned in 1950 after the Nationalist Government had moved to Taiwan. In commenting on his predecessor and on the career of the administration which he knew well, he writes with sympathy and sensitivity of a unique kind. Together, both documents form a valuable guide not only to the printed letters that follow, but to the history of the Chinese Maritime Customs, as well.

To enhance the use of the volumes for research purposes, a glossary and an 83-page Index are provided. Also remarkable are the editors' notes following most letters. While some of these may be too general to be useful for the specialist, the majority serves to clarify the contents of the despatches: Obscure persons are identified; cryptic references elucidated, and background information for events provided. Moreover, Hart's apparent penchant for Latin expressions is brought under control with renditions in plain English. Finally, cross-references are used where it seems appropriate to keep an allusion within a larger pertinent context.

The high quality of this publication is marred, however, by the occasional misprint. For instance, near the end of letter 119 (Feb. 10, 1875, p. 187), it reads in part, "when will be be out." The first of the repeated words is evidently a misprint for "he." Also, in another (Dec. 8, 1889, p. 774) it is stated, "The de Mendion-Tcheng squabble is delicious, the latter gentlemen is a bright fellow . . ." For "gentlemen," read "gentleman." Further instances may be cited. The surname "drew" in note 2 following letter 1167 (p. 1227) should be capitalized. A closing bracket is missing from the opening sentence in paragraph six of letter 1219 (p. 1286). A glance through the glossary shows that the Chinese characters given there for *pao* in Li Feng-pao (p. 1539), for *yün* in Pao-yün (p. 1539) and for *Shih* in Yüan Shih-k'ai (p. 1541) are erroneous. Also, the last character in the expression *feng-ch'i jih-hsin* has been omitted. Yet, in view of the overall excellence of the production of the present

<sup>6</sup> Based on my own experience in January, 1975. For Hart's references to his own hand-writing, see June 15, 1980, p. 796; Feb. 7, 1904, p. 1397 and Dec. 11, 1904, p. 1442.

<sup>7</sup> See the bibliographical entries under his name in his *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, 1953; Paperback edition by Stanford University Press, 1969, p. 539. Part V of this work (pp. 371-461) also deals with the creation of the foreign inspectorate at Shanghai.

volumes, the kind of errors sampled above must be considered as minor and negligible.

That *The I. G. in Peking* makes an important addition to the source materials for late-Ch'ing research is beyond dispute. But it should also be noted that these volumes by no means represent the first publication ever of Hart's letters to Campbell. Between the late 1950s and early 1960s, a series of Chinese works, compiled from the Chinese Maritime Customs archives, was published in Peking under the general title, *Ti-kuo chu-i yü Chung-kuo hai-kuan* (Imperialism and the Chinese Maritime Customs; hereafter cited as *TCCH*), with each devoted to a major episode in late-Ch'ing China diplomacy, in which Hart and the Customs personnel somehow became involved.<sup>8</sup> The archives evidently included one of the two typescript copies of the Hart letters. (The other had been in Little's possession until the late 1960s when it was turned over to the editors for the preparation of the Harvard volumes.) Therefore, excerpts from some of the letters had already been published, in Chinese translation, some twenty years prior to the appearance of *The I. G. in Peking*.

A comparison of the contents of the Harvard volumes and the *TCCH* reveals two interesting points. First, in so far as the collection of Hart's letters to Campbell for the given period, 1867-1907, is concerned, the former is not as complete as it may seem. In one of the *TCCH* volumes there is printed a letter, dated June 12, 1886, which Hart sent off to Campbell from Shanghai while on his way to Hong Kong to serve as a Chinese government representative on the Opium Commission.<sup>9</sup> This despatch is nowhere to be found in *The I. G. in Peking*. Second, even with the publication of the Harvard volumes, the *TCCH* series is still useful for the Hart and the Customs research. The reason for this is that apart from Hart's letters, the *TCCH* also includes material from other archival collections not readily available, such as Campbell's letters to Hart and the telegraphic messages that they sent to one another over the years. Thus, for certain given events in late-Ch'ing China's foreign relations, as well as for Hart's involvement in them, the *TCCH* seems to provide a more

<sup>8</sup> I have only seen a Hong Kong reprint of seven of the volumes (nos. 4-10) in the series. They are: *Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü Chung-fa chan-cheng* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and the Sino-French war), 1957;

*Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü Mien-Tsang wen-t'i* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and the Burmese-Tibetan question), 1958;

*Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü Chung-P'u Li-ssu-pen ts'ao-yüeh* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and the Lisbon Protocol between China and Portugal), 1959;

*Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü Chung-Jih chan-cheng* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and the Sino-Japanese war), 1958;

*Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü Ying-Te hsi chieh-k'uan* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and the second Anglo-German Loan), 1959;

*Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü I-ho-t'uan yün-tung* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and the Boxer movement), 1959; and

*Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü Keng-tzu-p'ei-k'uan* (The Chinese Maritime Customs and the Boxer Indemnity), 1962.

<sup>9</sup> See *Chung-kuo hai-kuan yü Mien-Tsang wen-t'i*, pp. 75-76.

balanced perspective than that which is based solely on Hart's own observations recorded in his despatches.

These remarks, however, must not be taken to mean that the Harvard publication is of secondary value or importance. Indeed, making available for the first time the Hart letters in their entirety and in their English original is in itself a unique contribution which enables an appreciation of Hart not in truncated images that excerpted materials sometimes project, but in a fuller context formed of his varying moods and concerns over an extended period of time. The remainder of this essay will briefly survey some of these moods and concerns in an effort to achieve an understanding of Hart's long China career.

Why Hart as a young man had chosen to come to the Orient is a question that cannot be answered on the basis of the letters, which did not begin until a decade after he had been in China and several years in the saddle of the inspectorate of customs. What comes through in his letters instead was his periodic effort at soul-searching about the purpose of his continued sojourn and work among the Chinese. The need for this introspective exercise was real and constant enough. He knew only too well that both in and out of the Customs Service there were "anti-Customs" and "anti-Hart" forces,<sup>10</sup> working to undermine his position and the inspectorate's efficiency. As he bitterly observed, "amongst Chinese officials, Legation people, Consular folk, Customs' employees and merchants there are not wanting those who 'put a spoke in my wheel' whenever they get the opportunity."<sup>11</sup> Jealousy or any number of misgivings harbored by Chinese and non-Chinese alike against a well-run Customs administration, or simply against foreigners in Chinese employ, was no doubt at work. In the face of this manifold resentment and hostility, Hart's sense of isolation had deepened and his burden of self-reliance grown with the years. His long separation from his wife and family (1882-1906) could hardly have helped improve matters. "Loneliness is the background of my existence," he sighed.<sup>12</sup> When low in spirit, he was close to deciding to quit China for good, along with all the ingratitude and mental hardship that had come in return for his labor.

Signs of this disillusionment had begun to emerge as early as the 1870s when he complained to Campbell of his "getting awfully tired of China."<sup>13</sup> The Peking environment with all its physical, social and political peculiarities was no less a cause of his irritation and disappointment: "The longer I stay here the more I wish I had never seen the place!"<sup>14</sup> He was to reiterate the same complaints over again. Yet, he had stayed on, and kept postponing his plan for a long leave of absence from China, or simply, to resign.

10. Expressions used in June 11, 1881, p. 375.

11. Aug. 8, 1881, p. 381.

12. Nov. 26, 1882, p. 433. Cf. Jan. 13, 1889, p. 732 and Aug. 9, 1896, p. 1078.

13. June 30, 1875, p. 196.

14. Apr. 15, 1888, p. 699.

What held him back as the thought of quitting China crossed his mind was, perhaps, his calm disposition and ability to “take things quietly”—personal traits which he feared might eventually harden into an “exaggerated indifference,”<sup>15</sup> with effects detrimental to his capability of handling his intricate position. The defence mechanisms had worked, nonetheless, and he could write with resignation, “It’s very heart-breaking at times, but the sun will shine to-morrow, and the earth keeps its place in the heavens.”<sup>16</sup> And, so, life goes on, as it did for him, in China, for a good deal longer.

Surely, there must be a more positive side to his job that compensated for its unattractive aspects. After all, the inspector-general of the Maritime Customs was a post well-paid. Moreover, with the approval of the Ch’ing government, Hart enjoyed an almost autocratic control over the entire administration. As the latter expanded in organization and scope of duties, his power expanded, too. Reward for his work also came in the form of international recognition. He was genuinely delighted to report in 1882, “One thing is daily more apparent, and that is, that, all round here, by China and China’s neighbours, our Service is very highly appreciated.”<sup>17</sup> There is no question that the inspectorate under Hart had successfully eradicated many old ills that had plagued China’s coastal trade under the Co-hong and the early treaty system. The Ch’ing court was pleased, naturally, by the climbing figures of revenue collected through it. So was the honest foreign merchant who sought trade with China on a legitimate footing which the Service seemed to safeguard. Customs work apart, Hart further impressed the Ch’ing court with his able execution of additional assignments, such as diplomatic negotiations and arranging for China’s participation in international exhibitions. Gradually, to those in and out of China who were familiar with indigenous conditions, Hart came to symbolize a stabilizing force in China’s foreign trade and diplomacy. Despite his own disclaimer, “there is no ‘necessary’ man,”<sup>18</sup> in the two areas concerned, he was the generally acknowledged “necessary man.”<sup>19</sup> If his description in 1874 of a “young man who wants to make a career—anywhere,”<sup>20</sup> in conjunction with the search for a T’ung-wen kuan professor of astronomy, may be taken to reflect his outlook on first sailing out to China in the 1850s, he certainly had made a career in China, and made it “big,” by any contemporary standard.

Aside from obvious incentives such as pay, power and fame, Hart was inspired by an idealism. To him, the ancient and prostrate Chinese empire, with all its unworked potential for improvement and greatness in the modern world, presented a

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15. Dec. 17, 1882, p. 437.

16. June 17, 1883, p. 471. Cf. Dec. 24, 1900, p. 1255.

17. Oct. 30, 1882, p. 429.

18. Nov. 7, 1882, p. 430.

19. Sept. 9, 1888, p. 719; Aug. 18, 1889, p. 758; Apr. 16, 1893, p. 927; and Dec. 4, 1904, pp. 1439-40.

20. Feb. 24, 1874, p. 148.

tremendous challenge, to which he felt himself irresistably drawn. He wanted to help. As he declared in an oft-cited statement, "I liked China so long as I was sanguine of being a useful man in it."<sup>21</sup> More explicitly, "I want to make China strong."<sup>22</sup> There were indeed a great many "progressive" things that he liked to see China adopt and would be gratified if he himself could help bring this about. The prospect, as well as the challenge, was there. It was this hopeful projection into the future that had sustained his faith in China and in his own purpose, even as the actual circumstances looked all but promising.

Hart's concern for the uplifting of China in the name of "conscience and humanity"<sup>23</sup> was symptomatic of what have been called "boyhood ideals" fostered by a nineteenth-century European outlook.<sup>24</sup> That it was a noble duty to care for the inferior races beyond the pale of Western civilization; to enact, as it were, the role of a "dragon-slayer," who heroically delivered a suffering people from the monstrocities plagueing them. Hart's sympathy with China basically followed this tradition. Yet, he lacked the haughty arrogance that often distinguished self-styled rescuers. While he deplored many practices of the Chinese officialdom, he nevertheless thought of the Chinese as an "industrious, law-abiding, civilised and contented" people.<sup>25</sup> Though in a position of power enjoyed by no other foreigner in China, he was sober enough not to exaggerate his own sense of importance but to understand and accept his place within the Chinese scheme of things. Firm in his belief that China should be induced, not bullied, into doing what from a Western point of view was good,<sup>26</sup> he would work for slow change rather than quick results. Repeatedly, he stressed that the function of the Customs personnel was principally "to act with and assist, and not to ignore or displace Chinese authority."<sup>27</sup> He did not mind so much his staff mingling in China's affairs, so long as their activities produced results "likely to be useful to China."<sup>28</sup>

Hart's intentions have long been a topic of some impassioned Chinese discussion. In the view of some contemporary scholar-officials, who were concerned about China's fiscal and administrative integrity, he was a dangerously ambitious and greedy man.<sup>29</sup> Later, the Chinese nationalist and Marxist writers have portrayed him as a tool of Western, in particular, British imperialist aggression in China.<sup>30</sup> Charges like this all seem to have some basis in fact, for they point to the curious phenomenon of a foreigner controlling a Chinese revenue establishment.

21. Oct. 4, 1870, p. 59.

22. Oct. 16, 1881, p. 389.

23. Sept. 21, 1884, p. 567.

24. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd edition, Meridian Books; New York, The World Publishing Company, 1958, pp. 130ff.

25. June 2, 1883, p. 467. Cf. Apr. 29, 1900, p. 1226.

26. Apr. 26, 1873, pp. 118-21.

27. Dec. 23, 1873, p. 141; see, also, July 18, 1874, p. 173.

28. Sept. 15, 1882, p. 422; Cf. Jan. 10, 1897, p. 1099; and Feb. 21, 1897, p. 1107.

To some extent, Hart had anticipated the attack. He was aware that China-for-the-Chinese kind of nationalistic feelings was bound to challenge the foreign inspectorate and that the latter could not and should not last forever. Yet to the end of his career, he had made little effort to placate those feelings, insisting that the inspectorate as it was would for the present best serve China's and "general" interests. Furthermore, however faithfully he had served the Ch'ing court, there can be no illusion as to where his loyalty instinctively lay. As he categorically pronounced, "Naturally I'm very *British*."<sup>31</sup> He would no doubt like to see British interests flourish in China and Britain retain the lead over other powers in dealing with the Chinese government. It was understandable, therefore, that he became concerned about Li Hung-chang's preference for German Krupp guns to those made in Britain.<sup>32</sup>

All this, however, is insufficient as proof of the Chinese charges. Despite his pro-British inclinations, Hart was enough of a professional to know where to separate his official duties from his personal commitments. As inspector-general of the Chinese Maritime Customs, he worked hard to look after China's trade interests that were protected by the treaties. It was therefore a constant source of dismay to him that some of his fellow Britons were unabashedly bent on taking advantage of China. Once referring to a dispute involving a British-owned hulk, Hart observed that the "pretensions of the English Legation are enormous, and there is a [legal] principle at stake, and a [Chinese] right to be maintained; so that we must fight this out tooth and nail."<sup>33</sup> His stance on the matter so infuriated the British Minister, Thomas F. Wade, that the latter reportedly swore "by the living God that he'd be damned if he'd stand it."<sup>34</sup> The confrontation escalated into a "split" between the two, in the wake of which Hart felt "young, and bright," having "got beyond caring whether the Legations are pleased or displeased."<sup>35</sup> Incidents like this bespoke Hart's conscientious effort to keep the inspectorate above the influence of the foreign merchant and diplomatic communities in China.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, in order to dispell any undue alarm on the part of other powers at Britain's apparent predominance in Chinese customs affairs, Hart recruited the Customs

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Hsüeh Fu-ch'eng, *Yung-an ch'üan-chi* (The complete works of Hsüeh Fu-ch'eng), Taiwan reprint, "Wen-pien" (Essays), 2:31a-32a; also, Ch'en Ch'ih, *Yung-shu* (Practical suggestions), preface dated 1896, 1898 edition; Taiwan reprint, 1970, pp. 293-96.

<sup>30</sup> The series cited in note 8 reflects this line of appraisal. For a recent discussion in the same tradition, see *Chung-kuo chin-tai-shih ch'ang-shih* (Basic knowledge in modern Chinese history), Peking, Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien ch'u-pan she, 1979, pp. 120-22.

<sup>31</sup> June 17, 1883, p. 471.

<sup>32</sup> Jan. 28, 1881, p. 359.

<sup>33</sup> Apr. 11, 1877, pp. 240-41.

<sup>34</sup> Feb. 8, 1877, p. 237.

<sup>35</sup> Aug. 5, 1877, p. 247.

<sup>36</sup> See another case reported in Sept. 6, 1896, p. 1082.

<sup>37</sup> At one point, Hart's immediate staff in Peking consisted of nationals from eight different countries. See Oct. 31, 1897, p. 1142. Cf. Hart's remarks in Dec. 10, 1899, p. 1210.

personnel in such a way as to reflect an international profile.<sup>37</sup> Finally, Hart's connection with the Western or British imperialist offences in China has yet to be established. The "unequal treaty" system had been formed and was there to stay, with or without Hart. It is true that towards the end of the century, the Maritime Customs collections were made security for China's foreign loans, thus exposing China's finances to outside interference. But it was hardly Hart's fault that the Ch'ing court had to borrow. The inspectorate was responsible only to the extent that the revenues collected through it became one of China's few reliable sources of income, acceptable as loan guarantee. Until it can be demonstrated that Hart had sacrificed China's interest to appease the foreign aggressors, his image as an unreconstructed imperialist will have to be substantially revised.

Unlike the Chinese detractors, some foreign writers have chosen to emphasize the value of Hart's services to China and especially, the great rapport that existed between him and his Ch'ing superiors. "Our own Hart" (*Wo-men ti Ho-te*), an expression attributed to Prince Kung, is thought to reflect the genuine affection with which renowned Chinese statesmen had treated Hart.<sup>38</sup> This portrayal of the relationship, however, does not seem congruous with Hart's own recorded impressions. Again, he had his complaints. While his one-man control of the Service incurred responsibilities that became highly trying at times,<sup>39</sup> he had no assurance of support from his superiors in the Tsungli Yamen. As late as December, 1883, he grieved that the inspectorate in Chinese opinion was really an "excrescence" and that "Chinese support [for it] can only be asked for and got when China thinks it necessary to give it."<sup>40</sup> Even as his advice was often sought and his brains "picked"<sup>41</sup> by the Yamen ministers, who just as frequently saw fit to engage him in various extra-customs assignments, it does not necessarily imply that he had gained their complete confidence. The set pattern appears to have been: When the imperial government found itself in a desperate situation, the Yamen ministers would go to Hart, urging him to devise relief measures. At the same time, other possible solutions were explored, often without his knowledge. In the end, the court would "dovetail" his advice into whatever program it decided to implement.<sup>42</sup> Once the crisis was over, the ministers would refrain from treating further with him on the subject. Hart had hoped that he would be a useful man in China. Almost as a parody fulfillment of that hope, he was used by the Chinese government, in a manner less genial than he had liked.

Yamen officials, on the other hand, had learned by experience that it was

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, H. B. Morse, II, 140, note 9; also, Little, "Introduction," p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> Jan. 8, 1882, p. 400; also, Dec. 29, 1889, p. 777.

<sup>40</sup> Dec. 5, 1883, p. 504.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Nov. 3, 1895, p. 1039; also, Oct. 10, 1897, p. 1140.

<sup>42</sup> Dec. 8, 1895, p. 1044. For Hart's other comments on the Yamen officials' attitudes towards his advice, see Mar. 9, 1890, p. 784; June 19, 1891, p. 848; and Oct. 17, 1897, p. 1141.



convenient to have a reliable foreigner assist them in dealing with other foreigners. In this, Hart's services constituted an essential part of the very limited Ch'ing capability to cope with the foreign presence in China. Whether there was genuine affection or sense of camaraderie intended in the expression, "our own Hart," is perhaps difficult to determine. But it seems certain that when Kung and his colleagues referred to Hart as such, they expressed their appreciation of him as a "trouble-shooter," whose resourcefulness had proved reliable in times of need. Unlike Hart who entertained high hopes for his work in China, the Ch'ing officials only saw the immediate, pragmatic value of his services. Yet the conceptions of both sides had enough in common to permit of a vaguely defined notion of Hart's "usefulness," and it was this notion that secured the working relationship between them for over four decades.

What was the institutional significance of this relationship? The question calls attention to the special status of the foreign inspectorate in the context of the Ch'ing system of government. Until towards the end of Hart's China career, in the 1900s, when imperial reforms began to take general effect, the inspectorate had remained outside the traditional Ch'ing administration. It was placed under the Tsungli Yamen, which was itself a special structure without any full-time or set number of presiding officials of its own. The "irregular" character of the inspectorate is further indicated by its Chinese designation as *hsin-kuan* (new customs), or *yang-kuan* (foreign-related customs), as distinct from *ch'ang-kuan* (regular or native customs). Another exceptional feature is, of course, the inspector-general's one-man responsibility for the Service. This was permitted, whereas any similar concentration of fiscal and administrative powers in a Chinese (Ch'ing) official would be dreaded by both court and official concerned.

As for its remuneration, the inspectorate was, again, treated on a different basis. It received a liberal annual grant which was definitely not the same kind of "modest-living allowance" (*yang-lien*) that Chinese officials received. It was awarded largely as a pecuniary inducement. When Hart in 1867 applied for an increase of the grant by 360,000 taels, the Tsungli Yamen suggested that the application would be duly considered at such a time as the Service again demonstrated its efficiency by yielding an annual customs collection of over ten million taels.<sup>43</sup> The Yamen's argument was flawed in that the trade situation which was beyond the Service's control but which directly affected the volume of revenues collected, was left out of consideration altogether. The promise was made without reference to the Service's real need but was given to encourage the attainment of some desired goal.

In short, the inspectorate had been treated as if it were an irregular appendage to the imperial structure. Little affected by the stereotyped procedures and practices

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43. See *Ch'ou-pan i-wu shih-mo* (A complete account of the management of barbarian affairs), for the T'ung-chih period, Taiwan reprint, 48:7b-10b.

of the Chinese bureaucracy, it evolved into an organizational and administrative pattern of its own. Its special status had implications for late-Ch'ing China's preparedness to face the Sino-foreign confrontation. To the extent that the Maritime Customs had functioned effectively as an auxiliary administration, the Chinese bureaucracy was saved from full exposure to the new trade relations that were forced on China by the treaty powers. To the conservative Ch'ing court, the inspectorate was therefore an expedient arrangement, not unlike a *cordon sanitaire*, that helped contain and neutralize the effects of these relations. That the inspectorate had for a half century or so been maintained structurally and administratively distinct from the regular bureaucracy, seems to indicate this Ch'ing design. Did the inspectorate, then, illustrate what has been called "synarchy," or, a "joint Sino-foreign administration" in late-Ch'ing China?<sup>44</sup> Its "irregular" character noted above, as well as its failure to achieve integration with the Chinese imperial administration, is suggestive of a negative answer. What it did illustrate was the bifurcated or dichotomized perspective that was prominent in a contemporary Chinese outlook on Sino-foreign intercourse.

On the other hand, the variety of "odd jobs" outside proper customs duties that the inspectorate was called upon to perform had facilitated China's gradual adjustment to a new mode of international life. But the work thus done had effects that were not entirely salutary. For the better Hart and his staff served China in his respect, the longer they made it possible for the Ch'ing government to count on their continued services and to slacken in training its own qualified personnel in foreign affairs. But it was precisely this pattern of dependence that defeated Hart's purpose. Despite his expectations, the foreign inspectorate failed to become an effective agent in transforming China into a progressive, modern nation.

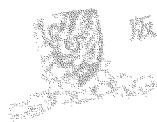
A balanced appraisal of Hart's place in modern Chinese history must divest itself of the sentimentalist and nationalist biases. Whether as an object of praise or of condemnation, his historical profile has been overdrawn. Hart once likened himself to a commonplace man, "lucky enough . . . to settle on when young" and made remarkable only by his elevated position.<sup>45</sup> If this unflattering self-portrayal is justified, *The I. G. in Peking* recounts an extraordinary tale of how truly great achievements can come of the dedication of a commonplace man.

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<sup>44</sup> For the notion of "synarchy," see John K. Fairbank, "Synarchy under the Treaties," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. J. K. Fairbank, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, pp. 204-31; also, his "The Early Treaty System in the Chinese World Order," in *The Chinese World Order*, ed. J. K. Fairbank, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 257-275; and "The Creation of The Treaty System," in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 10, ed. J. K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 213-63; especially, pp. 259-63.

<sup>45</sup> Feb. 24, 1895, p. 1010.



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## 書 評 論 文

### 一個外人在華事業的紀錄

#### 《赫德致金登幹的書信》

(中文摘要)



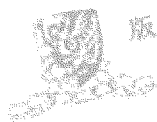
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鄭兆江

中國海關創設於咸豐末年，在晚清時期，卓然確立為一行政效率甚高的機關，譽者有稱之為世界行政制度的一項偉大建樹。這昭著的成就，實有賴第二任總稅務司英人赫德的悉心籌措和領導。有關赫德的事業和生平，前人已有專著論述。本文旨在評介一九七五年哈佛大學出版社編印的赫德致其駐倫敦代辦金登幹的書信二冊，並就書信提供的資料揭示赫德在華服務期間的心態，進而衡估海關組織在清季政府行政中所佔的地位。

本文主要論點有三。第一、該書信集在排印方面雖未能盡善盡美，但仍不失為一本質素極高的書，而所刊載的書信尤為研治近代中外關係史的重要原始資料。

第二、赫德原想為改革中國傳統制度出力，可是受客觀環境阻限，始終無法實現其理想。他既非舉足輕重的清廷要員，亦非一般所謂帝國主義侵畧者。在日趨頻繁的中外交涉中，他站在中國的一面，發揮過緩衝的作用。然而，他卻未能誘導清廷積極求取他所企望的西方式進步和富強。

第三、從規制、組織和待遇幾方面來看，赫德掌管下的海關祇是清政府常規部門外的一個特設機關。但是，清廷卻樂於利用這個特設機關及其所雇用的外人來處理一些中外關係的事務，大概希望能收事半功倍之效，同時亦似乎希望減輕本身對這些事務的直接牽涉。



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