Introduction

Zhenjiang is a former walled city on the south bank of what is known to the Chinese as the Chang Jiang, the Long River, or simply as The Great River, and to Westerners - the Yangzi [Yangtze]. The city lies some 40 miles downstream from Nanjing and 156 miles upstream from Shanghai, and in its prime during the Northern Song, in the eleventh century, it was one of the major ports on the River, and even though its influence and authority came to a sudden and dramatic end with its capture and destruction by the Taiping rebels in 1853 it remained the provincial capital of Jiangsu province down to the 1940s.

Zhenjiang commanded one of the two junctions of the southern or main arm of the Grand Canal with the Yangzi. The city is surrounded on one side by the Yangzi and on three other sides by hills, none at all high or steep, with the Grand Canal winding past the southern and western face of the walls to its convergence with the River at the Xiannü Temple. The city has been walled since the Yuan [13th century], and was built on the level ground between the Yangzi and the Grand Canal. Three of these numerous hills, all islands or former islands in the Yangzi, Jiao Shan, Beigu Shan and Jin Shan, are part of the city's legend. Some ten miles to the south lies a range of higher hills within which foreigners used to seek their exercise, riding and hunting.

Of all the treaty ports Zhenjiang is possibly the least remembered by the great majority of westerners, with very few nowadays even having heard of the place. Not even when it is explained that in former romanisations it has been known to foreigners as Chinkiang, Chin-kiang, Chen-chiang Fu, Chin-keang-foo, Tsing-kiang-foo, Kin-kiang, Chingkiang, Tsing-kiang and Jingkou [i.e. Gateway to the Capital - Nanjing]. It was even known by the title of Chin-shan [Jin Shan], Gold
Mountain, a former small island now joined to the mainland by alluvium, referred to by Victorian travellers as a 'pyramidal rock'. This used to stand out in the Yangzi a mile or so upstream from the city of Zhenjiang, hence their use of its name generically for the city. There is a further island, Jiao Shan 焦山 Scorched Island, an islet some mile or so downstream from the city with its own ancient temple, Dinghui Si 定慧寺 concealed within its tree-covered slopes. It too has its own memorials from the era of the Six Dynasties - two or three ancient cypress trees, whose storm-riven and almost barkless trunks were in the 1920s still held together by iron bands. According to Allom², Silver Island [Mountain], the name formerly given by foreigners to Jiao Shan, is to the westward [sic] of Zhenjiang, within sight of the Gold Island [Mountain] [see illustration]. Legend has it that Jin Shan, Gold Mountain takes its name from the time during the Tang dynasty when a certain Bei Totuo was digging into the hill and found a pot of gold; this has long been denied by Buddhists who believe that the name of the hill has a Buddhist symbolic meaning. Although the British Concession was originally laid out with intervening ground between it and the old walled city it did not taken many years for the new native city to encroach and reach the Concession boundary³. This meant that foreigners wishing to leave the Concession had to battle their way through the main street of the new native city, facing filthy and disease ridden beggars, open drains and past open spaces which were used as public conveniences, constantly patronised by squatting men.

Captain Cunynghame⁴, serving with the British force sailing up the Yangzi and about to mount an assault on Zhenjiang, arrived off the city on the 18th of July 1842. The force had been proceeding with great care as it was the first opportunity that western warships had had to penetrate as far inland up the Great River. He described his first sighting of Golden Island as 'the most beautiful little fairy isle imaginable, covered with temples, whose gilt-topped pagodas shone brilliantly in the evening sun'. A week or so later, once the city had been stormed and he was able to walk through it and wrote that "the walled portion of the town was reckoned about four miles in circumference. The suburbs, extending a long distance to the west, probably occupied an equal extent of ground. The former space was chiefly occupied by streets containing shops, with an occasional blank space of wall within which were the houses of the most wealthy inhabitants. A very large portion, however, was occupied by gardens
and pleasure-grounds, all of which showed evident signs of great neglect. The suburbs were one dense mass of habitations of two stories in height; the lower portions of which were devoted to the handicraftsmen, who employed themselves in them, or to store rooms, in which merchandise was deposited. There were numerous public buildings, most of them appearing to be of a religious character, either dedicated to Bhudda or Confucius”.

Mainly for safety reasons ships passing up and down the Yangzi tended to use the main channel which ran along the north bank of the Great River opposite Zhenjiang. Down the years spits have formed close to Zhenjiang, mainly off Ganlu Si [Consular Bluff] and Xiang Shan Bluff, whilst the Zhengrenzhou spit steadily advanced downstream from the west blocking off the approaches to the harbour. The flat sandy bottom, so the Admiralty Guide tells us, does not provide good holding ground, especially during autumn gales.

The channel of the Great River at Zhenjiang is some two miles in breadth and had long been a ferry crossing point over the Yangzi, linking Zhenjiang with the major city of Yangzhou, a short distance upstream of the northern section of the Grand Canal. The long-mooted bridge over the River has still to be built. In the early days of the opening up of China by the West the city was believed to be the furthest point upstream on the Yangzi which seagoing vessels of the heaviest burden could reach with comparative ease. When Hankou, over five hundred miles further upstream, was opened to foreign trade it soon became apparent that trade at Zhenjiang consisted of little more than being an agency for steamers using the port as a stopping point, and for the Customs House for Chinese merchants. So it was that when vessels had access to the fountainhead of trade at Hankou, together with the fact that the harbour at Zhenjiang having silted up, the importance of the port became in great measure superseded. Sadly, the dolphins which not too long ago frolicked in the Great River and were commonly seen off Zhenjiang have been fished into extinction with today’s oily pollution preventing any return, though a very occasional porpoise may still be seen.

A Victorian writer described the climate and temperature of Zhenjiang as ‘little different from that in Shanghai, whereas the varied scenery and hilly surroundings of Zhenjiang were an advantage which
Shanghai did not possess, and were undoubtedly conducive to health by promoting exercise. In winter the climate is bracing and healthy though fever and dysentery were to be dreaded in summer’.

There are a number of highlights for foreign visitors beginning, perhaps, with the former foreign concession, though nowadays more than seventy years on, it is difficult to discern. Outside the Chinese old city with its modern main roads, cobbled side streets and a stone pagoda said to be 13th century Yuan dynasty, though its present condition suggests that it has either been well restored or completely remade within the last century, there are the fourth century Jin Shan temple and pagoda; the Grand Canal; the former British Consulate; the home of Pearl Buck, as well as the sites of the storming of the town by a British brigade on 21st July 1842 during the First China War [commonly referred to as the Opium War]. There are also the remains of the lengthy trench dug by the Taiping rebels to protect the city from recapture by Imperial forces as well as the ruins left after the destruction of the city by the Taipings during the 1850s. And for those who have read a little Chinese literature or attended Chinese opera the widely-known tale of the *White Snake Lady* is also part of the story of the Jin Shan temple.

Before waxing too lyrically about its glories let us remember that Zhenjiang is the vinegar capital of China, with, if the wind is in the wrong direction, an evocative sour tang forewarning approaching visitors long before they are anywhere near to the city. The majority of Chinese when confronted with the name of the city almost to a man voice the single word ‘vinegar’ or to the connoisseur ‘brown rice vinegar’.

Zhenjiang was a treaty port with a foreign concession for sixty-eight years, from the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin in 1860 until 1928, one of the minor footholds foreigners had obtained from China in one of the ‘unequal treaties’ and the base for numerous foreign interests. There were great hopes for the place and Sir Robert Hart, the Inspector-General of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs, even anticipated that eventually it would eclipse Shanghai as a commercial centre. Despite numerous westerners passing through the place down the years only a few spent full tours of duty there. Many of the temporary visitors were the lesser employees of major western companies such as BAT and Butterfield and Swire, whose regular tours to the many small
towns and villages of the region visiting their Chinese agents, taking orders for tobacco and sugar and checking sales and receipts, used Zhenjiang as one of their bases. They were known as 'sugar and tobacco travellers'.

An extract from the Shanghai Mercury in 1887 described Zhenjiang and its surroundings in the not untypical purple prose of the newspaper hack of the day:

Few ports in China would seem to be better situated for trade than Chinkiang, a few perhaps have been more disappointing. The first glimpse of the port is eminently reassuring, as the fine bund, at the time of the year bosomed [sic] in trees, the conspicuous houses topped by the British Consulate, and the goodly array of hulks connected by handy bridges with the shore make a picture surpassed in our picturesqueness by none. The hum of traffic and the cry of coolies permeates the air; the familiar aspect of the Sikh policeman appears at the corners of the British concession; the concession roads are wide and well kept, and, what is unfortunately unusual in China, the enterprise of the foreign residents has succeeded in acquiring a system of good riding roads penetrating the country in all directions as far as from four to six miles from the central point.

At the first opening of the port it was assumed that, with the suppression of the Taiping rebellion, its unrivalled position would make it the centre of a large and increasing trade. The Inspector-General nursed it, and proclaimed it the natural rival of Shanghai, British consuls prophesied a direct trade on its own account with Europe, even the native authorities for a time seemed to have come out of their shell and lent it aid and counsel. One Taot'ai, to his honour, be it said, laying aside the prejudices of his class, re-introduced the art of silk cultivation, and the mulberry trees planted by his assistance have originated almost the industry which remains in the neighbourhood. In spite, however, of all this flourish, Chinkiang remains a comparatively poor port...the British concession is but a small spot, a few hundred yards square, and on it is concentrated the entire trade of the place, native as well as foreign.

Although Zhenjiang in reality was but a minor treaty port it was well-known to western expatriates in China during the 19th century as
one of the ports of call on the routine and customary journey up the Yangzi. It was also within easy reach from Shanghai, no more than a night’s sail, with the more adventurous and especially the sportsmen spending a short vacation there. The game varied from wild boar to pheasants and a typical excursion was described by Percival who, in April of 1887, was invited by Sir Roderick Runnimede to join him in a voyage up through the Yangzi gorges. Percival wrote that ‘it was not a scientific excursion, there were no new countries to discover, no new people to trot out before the world, no new trade routes to open up; it was simply an excursion for health and pleasure combined. In a short time we arrived at the city of Chinkiang [Zhenjiang] itself, the place never having recovered its prosperity since it was burned by the [Taiping] Rebels about 1860. Not more than four or five years earlier [i.e. 1882-3] the shooting around Zhenjiang was all that could be desired; game (principally birds) of every description was most abundant. Sportsmen made Zhenjiang their headquarters. Feathers and fur - everything, in fact, between snipe and leopard - could be found within easy distance. Each year as cultivation advances, population increases, and villages, destroyed by the rebels are gradually being rebuilt, so game is being driven farther and farther into wilder and more remote regions’. Percival went on to describe how one winter afternoon some years earlier he had joined W. De St. Croix, an old friend, stationed in Zhenjiang in the service of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs, and using Zhenjiang as a base they had sailed in the Custom’s cruiser up stream to shoot wild fowl. After several days shooting they returned and, on the following day, set off on ponies for the Wu-chow-shang [Wuzhou Shan] Hills, about ten miles south of Zhenjiang to round off the trip with three or four days among the boars and deer.

From the early 1890s and for about six years local post offices existed in eleven of the treaty ports issuing their own stamps, one of which was Zhenjiang. A contemporary comment noted that just as many of the stamps were sold to tourists and collectors as were used postally.

Zhenjiang down the centuries

Zhenjiang has been a place of great importance for a great many centuries. In the beginning, no more than a crossing point for boatmen plying their ferries across the Yangzi, it was known in much earlier times first as Dantu and then as Runzhou. Local historians
were keen to claim association with the first rulers of the Zhou, of the 12th century BC, and also with the infamous first ruler of China, Qin Shih Huangdi who, it was claimed, had used the area of Dantu as a penal settlement.

During dynastic times Zhenjiang was a walled administrative seat, an important prefecture, and one of twelve prefectural cities in Jiangsu province, in a major region known as Jiangnan [South of the River]. Zhenjiang means ‘Guard-post of the River’, a title given in 1113 during the Song dynasty, and its location, guarding the junction of the Grand Canal and the Yangzi, is such that it was a fortified post at the point where the southern arm of the Grand Canal crosses the Great River to join the northern arm, as well as being the first and ideal position to control the upstream passage of the Yangzi. The British political aim, when their soldiers captured the city in 1842, was to cut off the vital supply route, the Grand Canal, from southern China to the north in order to exert maximum pressure upon the Imperial government.

Although Zhenjiang lays claim to a number of incidents, destruction by nature and by human hand, visits by royalty, legendary happenings we shall restrain ourselves to note but a few.

Sun Ce 孫策, who was assassinated in 200 AD, conquered a wide territory down to the mouth of the Great River, to which region he gave the title Jiangdong [East of the River]. His brother, Sun Quan of Wu 孫權 succeeded to his throne, and it is to him that Zhenjiang is said to owe its existence as a city. Moreover, it was here that he came to court the beauty, Pan Furen 潘夫人, whose father Sun Quan had condemned to death. He pursued her until he was able to make her his wife. Although Nanjing was Sun’s main city Zhenjiang had reminders of his fortifications still visible during the early years of the Republic. The foundations of the fortifications that he built round his Governor’s Residence could still be traced in a line of crumbling masonry that capped the ridge of heights connecting the then existing Zhenjiang city wall northward to the monastery, Ganlu Si. Also, inside the present city stood a high solitary gateway, with a building on it known as the Old Drum Tower. The masonry foundations of the gate were alleged to date from the time of Sun Quan, and some graves outside the North gate were also said to be those of some members of his line.
War in 218 AD between two of the Three Kingdoms [San Guo], between Sun Quan of Wu and Liu Bei of Shu, led amongst other things to the capture of the city of Qingzhou. One of Liu Bei’s generals, Guan Yu, hurried south to defend the city but was ambushed, captured and decapitated by Sun Quan after he refused to change sides. Guan was later deified as is now the immensely popular deity, the Patron of Uniformed Bodies and is known as the God of Loyalty, Guan Di. Thus, the founder of Zhenjiang had the distinction of slaying the consequent Patron deity of Soldiers, Firemen and Detectives and the second most popular god on Chinese popular religion altars.

In the first years of the 6th century AD the first emperor of the Liang dynasty, Wu Di, who was renowned for his support of Buddhism and the Buddhist clergy, visited Zhenjiang. He had been visited by a divine monk in a dream who urged Wu Di to institute a great fast in order to rescue all sentient beings from the miseries of their existence. The Emperor ordered a new monastery to be built at Tse Hsin [Zexin], known today as Jin Shan to accommodate the Congress held in AD 507, and for centuries within the monastery there was a building known as the Hall of Liang Wang. This tradition is at odds with the date usually given for the founding of the monastery - AD 317.

Our next story involves a deified hero who had nothing to do with Zhenjiang in life but, for some unknown reason, his cult would appear to have become centralised along the Grand Canal and especially at Zhenjiang. He is a canonised hero of the Tang dynasty, but one of a pair whose images elsewhere appear together on popular religion temple altars. These two euhemerised heroes, Zhang Xun 張巡 and Xu Yuan, 許遠, have been seen on altars in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Beijing, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South-east Asia. These two protective deities are known individually as the Venerable King of Peaceful Pacification, Wen’an Zunwang 文安尊王 [Zhang Xun] and the Venerable King of Military Pacification, Wu’an Zunwang 武安尊王 [Xu Yuan] though they will be referred to hereafter simply as Zhang and Xu.

The most common history of the two heroes as related by a great number of temple keepers describes how Zhang and Xu, loyalists during the reign of Tang Ming Huang, opposed the rebellion led by An Lushan. They died heroically in AD 757 during the civil war defending the provincial city of Suiyang in Henan province which fell to the enemy
after a siege of 49 days. Most accounts claim that they died by their own hands rather than fall into those of the enemy.

Our interest lies in Zhang. He was born in Henan in AD 709 and died with Xu on either the 15th of the second or the 9th of the tenth lunar months in 757. Zhang was the military mandarin in Suiyang and is occasionally referred to in temple records as Zhang Suiyang. Before being posted to Suiyang he had been employed in military operations in Central Asia where his discipline was legendary. In 756 during the rebellion of An Lushan he fought many battles, was wounded on a number of occasions and performed prodigies of valour. The climax was reached by his heroic defence of the Henan provincial city of Suiyang against the rebel army commanded by An Lushan's son. Zhang refused to yield and even sacrificed his favourite concubine to no avail. The enemy broke in and as he scorned to owe allegiance to his conqueror was immediately put to death. It is said that during the siege his patriotic rage caused him to grind his teeth so that after his death it was found that all but three or four had been worn down to the very gums.

In central China the rain and crop deity, the Bodhisattva of the Whole of Heaven, Doutian Pusa or the Marshal of the Whole of Heaven, Doutian Yuanshuai, was believed to be an incarnation of Zhang who, it was said, had intervened to assist the imperial forces during the Taiping wars ca. 1855 and had been awarded the title of Zhangwei. His major local shrine is some distance outside the southern gate of Zhenjiang, a little beyond the shell of a Ming pagoda. There was also a shrine to him in the city's new main street, Ma Lu; another in a village on the road to the Bamboo Grove, and yet another in the village of Doutian Miao where the imperial battery had been located on the north shore of the Yangzi abreast of Jiao Shan. Annually, during the Fourth lunar month, Zhenjiang was crowded with country folk who came to enjoy the procession of gods being borne through the streets of the city, including the image of Doutian Pusa.

When the Tang dynasty collapsed China fell back into feudal kingdoms, one of which was the Xiu dynasty of Nantang. Under their rule the walls of Zhenjiang were repaired. Xiu Lijing succeeded his father in 946 and during his reign he annexed what today is Fujian province and added it to his dominion of Jiangxi, most of Anhui and Jiangsu, thus becoming one of the largest states in China at the time.
About two miles west of Zhenjiang railway station, on rising land, there was a temple called Xiu Wang Miao, the Temple of the Xiu Kings, dedicated to the memory of the Xiu dynasty of Nantang.

Lu Xiufu² [AD 1238 - 1279] was a native of Zhenjiang, and a statesman and military commander during the latter years of the Southern Song. He had been appointed to the Court of Imperial Family Affairs, a form of Minister of Protocol, during the reign of Song Gong Zong [ca 1276]. He is remembered as a man of integrity and a devoted Minister who, when the Mongols were on the point of capturing Hangzhou, was sent in an attempt to reach an accommodation with them. This ended in failure. The Court was persuaded by Wen Tianxiang [one of the Three Loyal Generals of the Song] that the imperial heirs should be sent to the coast of south China, to Fuzhou and later to Quanzhou to ensure their safety. The emperor and his mother were captured by the Mongols and taken to Beijing, whilst Lu followed the Court in its retreat to the south. Lu met up with Zhang Shijie [the third of the Three Loyal Generals of the Song] in Wenzhou to rally support for the imperial cause, but had to flee on south to Fuzhou where they joined the forces of Wen Tianxiang. The senior heir was enthroned in Fuzhou as the Song Jing Yan emperor. At this point, following a reorganisation, Zhang and Lu became deputies to Chen Yizhong, the Commissioner of Military Affairs and Grand Counsellor. The new emperor was forced to flee further and further south pursued by the Mongol forces until he reached the area of present day Kowloon where Lu Xiufu rejoined the force from Chaozhou. The Mongol fleet having captured Guangzhou destroyed the forces of Zhang Shijie thus driving the Song Court out to sea. A typhoon struck the fleeing Song fleet and even though the ship carrying the young emperor was sunk he was rescued but died from shock and exposure near the Leizhou peninsula in mid-1278. Lu and Zhang stood firmly against any talk of surrender and ensured that the younger heir, a boy of six, was made emperor. Zhang became the Junior Guardian whilst Lu was Grand Counsellor. The next year the Mongol forces having been reinforced compelled the last of the Song forces to attempt to escape. Lu is said to have committed suicide but the official records do not reveal how the last of the Song, the boy of seven, died. The popular version claims that Lu, the hero from Zhenjiang, leapt into the sea with the boy in his arms.

An imperial hostelry, the Danyang Guan, was founded in Zhenjiang.
in 1144, built to the west of the Bridge of a Thousand Autumns, Qianqiu Qiao, beside a small canal with landing places attached. It would seem to have been inside the present city, about where the road from the west gate crosses the canal, before you reached the City God Temple. It was restored in 1271 with a commemorative inscription composed by Liu Xiuwu, and the whole establishment was enlarged during the Ming so as to have 109 rooms, with stabling for 80 horses, forty of which had to be kept constantly saddled, presumably for use by imperial messengers.

Moving on to the Yuan [Mongol] dynasty, an interesting account, if indeed it is genuine, claims that Marco Polo mentioned the foundation of Nestorian Christian churches at Zhenjiang [Cinghian fu] by a Nestorian Christian governor, Mar Sargis [or Mar George] from Samarkand. Kublai Khan, the Mongol emperor of China during the 13th century employed foreigners within his civil service, one of whom was Marco Polo who spent three years as Governor of Yangzhou, the city a short distance upstream on the northern arm of the Grand Canal immediately across the Great River from Zhenjiang. The story goes that the maternal grandfather of Mar Sargis cured Genghis Khan of a sickness by administering sherbet and his secret recipe. The latter was passed down the family and each generation did good business ensuring their fortune. The story of his appointment as governor would appear to have been confirmed by various entries in the old records of Zhenjiang in which there are references to seven Christian monasteries [i.e. churches] in or near the city, adding that the Zhenjiang Christian population in about AD1280 amounted to 215.10 These were started after Mar Sargis had a dream in which he was instructed to construct seven Nestorian churches. Using his fortune he is said to have completed all seven but unwittingly with one on the site of a former famous Buddhist monastery which Mar Sargis was ordered to hand back to the Buddhists. Of the remaining six two were said to have been on the ridge running inland from the former site of the British consulate.

During the early days of the Ming, in the reign of the Yongle emperor, various expeditions sailed down the Yangzi from Nanjing, and out into the Eastern Ocean, a commander of several of the expeditions being the renowned eunuch, Zheng He. The policy of despatching such expeditions far beyond China’s shores was short-lived. Between 1405 and 1425 Zheng’s fleet voyaged through south-east Asia
and on as far as the coast of Africa bringing back treasures which included the first giraffe. These expeditions would have sailed passed Zhenjiang and must have been a sight to behold.

Today Zhenjiang is twinned with Tempe, near Phoenix in Arizona. Presumably there is a common factor linking these two places but whatever it might be has escaped me.

Hostile incursions up the Yangzi

Down the centuries many raids by Japanese pirates on the eastern Chinese seaboard, some large scale but mostly small, led to the permanent awareness and terror amongst the Chinese along the coastline. The Yangzi estuary was not spared and on a number of occasions they even penetrated up River as far as Zhenjiang. Having been beaten off during the 12th century they reappeared in force during the early 13th century, and in 1419 they were beaten decisively and piracy stopped for a while. The Japanese were again defeated in 1542 by Yu Dayu, however, they reappeared in force in the Yangzi in 1550 capturing Zhenjiang before going on to threaten Nanjing. For three months they plundered the Zhenjiang area before retiring with their booty. For many a year the hills around the city each had beacons ready to fire to warn of impending Japanese attacks. - and by the end of the 14th century their depredations were recurring annually.

A major incursion up the Yangzi was made in 1629 by a naval force despatched by Zheng Zhilong, the father of Zheng Chenggong, better known to foreigners as Koxinga and Taiwan’s most famous hero. Koxinga was a child of destiny, a seagoing warlord who opposed and fought the newly-established Manchu Qing dynasty on the mainland from his base in Taiwan. He finally established a new mini-dynasty which ruled Taiwan for some twenty or so years. His father, Zheng Zhilong [1604-1641], had been a notorious Xiamen [Amoy] Chinese pirate chief who had made a fortune through his trading and piracy, raiding the shipping and settlements of south China with his fleet of pirate raiders and trading junks. The Ming authorities, to tame him, allowed themselves to accept his offer of service and were forced into making him an admiral and a marquis in charge of the suppression of piracy - and thus drew his teeth.
The force despatched up the Yangzi in 1629 by Koxinga’s father was led by Zheng Huigui, Koxinga’s uncle. It arrived off Zhenjiang just as the Manchu army was crossing over to Jin Shan [Golden Island], causing the Manchus to pause, change their plans and move further upstream for their crossing. However, the Manchus, having taken Nanjing, upstream, they floated downstream on rafts and after coming under fire from Zheng’s force, still went on to capture Zhenjiang. Zheng fled down stream and back down the coast to Fujian. It was just at that moment that Koxinga’s father deserted to the Manchu side. With most of Fujian province within his power Zheng, despite his submission to the alien Manchus, welcomed the Ming emperor who was fleeing ahead of the southward advance of the Manchus as a means of augmenting his power. Despite his protestations of loyalty he failed to aid the emperor’s restorationist cause by the simple expedient of inactivity.

Our next episode begins fifteen years after the execution of Koxinga’s father in Beijing where he had been held hostage, with Koxinga himself vigourously opposing the Manchus. In 1659, Koxinga hearing that the Manchu forces were preoccupied in Yunnan province sailed to the mouth of the Yangzi where he remained whilst a portion of his fleet commanded by Zhang Huangyan, sailed up the Great River, captured Zhenjiang before sailing on to Wuhu, far upstream beyond Nanjing. Koxinga, himself, landed on Congming island near the mouth of the Great River and having marched across country, he entered the old Ming capital of Nanjing in triumph, where he proclaimed the restoration of the Ming. However, he was promptly besieged in Nanjing for four long months before surrendering the city and being able to escape. The failure of the second raid up the Yangzi led the Manchus to install large garrisons within the major walled cities down the Yangzi, Zhenjiang being but one. In each city a special quarter was set aside for the Manchu garrison, members of which were forbidden to have too much intercourse with the native Chinese and quite categorically were forbidden to marry them. The Manchus at first were merely feared but as the years passed so they grew to be heartily disliked. And in their later years they were despised. There was a remnant of the Manchus still in Zhenjiang in the 1920s, whose poverty was a burden on local Parities and the authorities and whose extensive burial grounds down the centuries of both the Manchu White and Yellow Banners were still standing in the city’s south-west suburbs. It was claimed that Zhenjiang reflected typical Jiangbei culture with a dash of Peking from the
bannermen stationed there.

The great Qing emperor Qian Long, travelled far and wide throughout his empire on Inspection Tours and visited Zhenjiang. He had a particular love for the monastery at Jin Shan. Lord Macartney was yet another visitor who, in 1792, passed through Zhenjiang on his way up to Beijing, during his unsuccessful attempt to achieve British diplomatic representation there. He was much impressed by the crossing of the Yangzi from the southern arm of the Grand Canal to the start of the northern arm, and by the pagoda-crowned islands he observed on the Yangzi. These would be Jin Shan and the Ganlu Si. Some twenty-five years later Lord Amherst's Mission to Beijing also visited Zhenjiang. His visit was also unsuccessful and, moreover, he was treated with gross discourtesy in the Capital.

The storming and capture of Zhenjiang by the British force under Sir Hugh Gough on the 21st July 1842 during the First Anglo-Chinese War

This episode in Zhenjiang's history is described in Part II by Phillip Bruce.

The problems facing the Qing emperors and their survival from both within and without China during the seventy or so years after 1840 heightened political consciousness and the increasing weakening of control due to unrest and an increase in brigandage. During the latter years of the Qing forced confrontation with Western culture in treaty ports led to the spread of popular unrest and Zhenjiang was no exception.

The Taiping era

The Taiping Rebellion was an armed rebellion against the Manchu Emperor. It grew out of worsening social and economic conditions, with a number of secret societies and clan groups offering an existence economy and protection. The foreign dynasty of the Manchus had lost its drive and with opium addiction widespread, the scene was set and
the time ripe for an insurrection...

The rebellion began among the Hakka people in the southern provinces of Guangxi and Guangdong and by 1853 was spreading north and west, led by Hong Xiuquan, a schoolmaster who had picked up a smattering of Christianity. Whilst suffering from an illness he experienced severe hallucinations and saw that his mission was to free the Chinese from Manchu rule. He also convinced himself and others that he was the younger brother of Christ and a son of God sent to save mankind. The Taiping rebels were known colloquially by the Chinese peasants as the Long-haired Rebels, Chang Mao, as they refused to shave the front of their head. [China’s Manchu conquerors had ordered that all Chinese males would shave the front half of their head and wear the rest tied into a lengthy queue or ‘pigtail’]. Hong Xiuquan’s liberated territory was known as the Kingdom of Great Peace, Taiping Tianguo and by 1860 he had more than a quarter of China under his control. Much of the fighting between the Manchu Imperial forces and the Taiping rebel armies took place across Zhejiang province and down the Yangzi, especially around the Taiping capital at Nanjing. With Zhenjiang captured by the Taiping in April 1853 [a mere eleven years after the British had taken the city], their control of the southern bank of the Yangzi was virtually complete. Zhenjiang lay deserted during the Taiping era being no more than a fort occupied by the Taiping rebels. The pagodas and temples were all destroyed with the usual Taiping iconoclastic fervour and in many places their stones used as fortifications. The city, surrounded on three sides by a remarkable line of Taiping trenches some ten to eleven miles in length, was besieged several times by the Imperial forces. Each time they were driven off with the city remaining in Taiping hands until compelled by a failure of supplies the rebels were forced to evacuate it early in 1857. Zhenjiang never fully recovered. The Taiping were finally defeated in 1864 when their capital at Nanjing finally fell to the Imperial forces - assisted by several foreign-led armies of Chinese and western mercenaries, one of which was the Ever-Victorious Army under General Gordon. Rasmussen in 1905 refers to the decayed trench system as ‘Gordon’s trenches, with some of his guns still to be found sunk deep into the soil of their embrasures’. He added that ‘the only reminder now [1905] of the Taiping Rebellion was the thousands of graves covering the countryside, and the ghost-ridden walled city where the whole population had been put to the sword’. Thomas Adkins, the British Consul in Zhenjiang,
writing home in October 1861, four years after the Taiping evacuation of Zhenjiang wrote ‘it gives me the blue devils to walk in the neighbourhood of this wretched city. Thousands of acres of rich land lie uncultivated and overgrown with rank grass. The cottages are all destroyed and a very few old men and women represent a teeming population. Not a junk moored off the city wall and only one very dirty street remains of what was once a large and haughty town. I don’t think the rebels will be back this year. They have lost a very important post up the river and their head den [Nanjing] will soon be threatened by the Imperialists’.

In 1854 a new American Commissioner arrived en poste in Shanghai and decided to visit the Taiping headquarters in Nanjing as a US diplomatic representative. He sailed up the Yangzi in the USS Susquehanna but as they passed the Taiping fort at Zhenjiang a shot across their bows caused him to send a small party ashore to demand a reason for the ‘insult’ and an apology. The Zhenjiang Taiping commander explained that they were keeping a vigilant eye on traffic on the Yangzi and required all vessels to hove to until permission to proceed was received from Nanjing. The US representative repeated his demand for an apology and threatened to sail on on the morrow come what may. He also provided a sketch of the US flag so that such an insult may never be repeated. They sailed on as planned and having had many meetings with Taiping commanders at various levels, including one with the Eastern King, the US Commissioner realised that in view of the tone of the Eastern King’s written response, amongst other things requiring Tribute from the Americans, any continued attempt to institute diplomatic relations with the Taiping was a waste of time. Whereupon they returned to Shanghai, wiser but no further forward. However, they did take the opportunity before returning of sailing a hundred or so miles further up stream to areas not before visited by US or British expeditions. The Americans, sad to say, appear to have obtained little new about the Taipings to add to what was already known.

Zhenjiang temples

The four major temples were the Jin Shan Temple with its pagoda, the Ganlu Si [Sweet Dew Temple] on the Beigu Shan, the Dinghui Si on Jiao Shan and the City God temple. There were also a number of
other smaller temples, some well known, others hardly known at all. These include the conspicuous red-walled Dicang Wang Temple not far from the south-west corner of the city wall; the Doutian Miao and the Xiu Wang Miao, both referred to earlier. All were destroyed during the Taiping occupation, though many were rebuilt during subsequent years only to fall into disuse during the Japanese occupation as well as since 1949. The Jin Shan Temple and the Ganlu Temple today are the premier tourist sites in Zhenjiang, with the Dinghui monastery, though less easily accessible, being a good third.

There used to be an interesting group of memorial temples on the Ganlu headland [Consular Bluff], a favourite resort for native Chinese picnic parties. One of these shrines was dedicated to Zhu Xi, a Southern Song dynasty neo-Confucian philosopher, born in Anhui in AD 1130, and probably best remembered for his commentary on Confucian classics, with his 'Rituals for Family Life' being influential throughout China as the standard authority consulted by high and low alike. He was the Confucian scholar who, whilst prefect at Zhangzhou in Fujian in 1190, attacked Buddhist and Daoist practices and issued orders laying down punishments for those who disobeyed the rules. Despite this he wrote commentaries on the sacred books of Daoism. He retired in 1196 and after his death four years later was posthumously appointed Chief of the Imperial Tutors with the rank of Lord. He has long been deified, with a portrait installed in a temple in Jiangxi province at an early stage during the twelfth century to encourage sacrifices to him by local scholars and gentlemen. He was revered in Confucian temples from about 1250, and during the reign of Kang Xi he was elevated to a position just under the 'Ten Noted Men' [The Ten Disciples of Confucius].

Another shrine was dedicated to Peng Yulin 彭玉麟 [1824-1890], the Chinese admiral in charge of the Yangzi Fleet which operated with success against the Taiping rebels. Peng was remembered by foreigners for his incorruptibility as well as his inability to understand the westerners. During the short French war with China in 1884-5, when in Guangzhou as the Imperial Naval Commissioner sent to organise its defences he proposed sending emissaries to Singapore to poison any French officers who might have been enjoying British hospitality there. Beijing frowned on his plan and he was unable to see why. He was also violently opposed to the introduction of iron-clads into the Chinese navy.
Although not part of the Zhenjiang story a Daoist cult centre on Mao Shan, a mountain some fifty miles to the south, was visited annually by a stream of pilgrims in the Spring, a great many of whom passed through the convenient port of Zhenjiang. The Daoist Mao Shan school was arguably the most powerful Daoist sect during the Tang and maintained its great prestige down to at least 1949. The Mao Shan Daopai as it is known, is renowned for its seances and medium trances, and according to Mao Shan sect priests was founded in the fourth century AD with the Mao Shan sect priests considering themselves to be the highest ranking of all Daoist orders. The sect originally appears to have been meditative and only later did it fall into line with other sects.

In 1917 two images were observed by Otterwill in Zhenjiang, in procession, Yan Gong and Jiang Gong, both patron deities of river boatmen. Both deities were popular on altars in and around Nanchang, Anjing and along the Yangzi. Also popular in central China, C. B. Day records that Yan Gong in Zhejiang province was one of the Five Daoist deities who presided over a period of danger, a member of the Celestial Board of Health.

There have been but few references in western writings to the legend and role of Yan Gong, a Patron of Sailors. According to Doré, he was regarded in Central China as the protector of sailors and the god of the tides [Chao Shen]. This, presumably, means the patron deity of sailors in the rivers and estuaries of the Yangzi basin. However, Yang Laoda is the usual patron of boatmen on the Yangzi. Werner provides a more detailed description of Yan Gong, the god of sailors, adding a little to Doré. He notes that Yan Gong had a temple built in his honour near Shanghai during the reign of the first emperor of the period of the Three Kingdoms [ca. AD 240] and that he was the deified hero in that temple who protected Shanghai from rebel attacks during the reign of Ming Shi Cong [ca. 1540]. Other legends claim that he was born during the Song in Jiangxi, that he was one of the four major deities of Jiangxi province, and was a censor famous for his integrity. Or that he was again a native of Jiangxi but born during the Yuan, and drowned during a storm when returning home. He was buried but was seen by the inhabitants of his native district on the same day. When his coffin was brought to Nanchang and opened it was found to be empty, a miracle which led to a temple being built in his honour. Sailors have
since sought his assistance to calm storms. In yet another legend Yan Gong is claimed to have saved the life of the first emperor of the Ming during a crossing of the Yangzi; and Werner, after relating a complicated story about the presence of a mythical creature being found, noted that Ming Hong Wu, having realized that he had been saved by a spirit called Yan, bestowed the title of Marshal of the Metropolis upon him and ordered a temple to be built in his honour.

Images of Yan Gong have been only noted on altars in the area of Nanchang in Jiangxi, and in the southern maritime provinces of China including Taiwan and Hong Kong, but not within Chinese communities in South-east Asia.

Jiang Shen, literally the spirit of the river, is the generic title for a nameless deity on the Yangzi about whom little is known. She is said to have taken on human form and been bathing in the nude when she was stranded by the low tide. A fisherman caught and raped her, and died! The image of the deity seen in the temple near Wuhan on the Yangzi was that of a fish.

Jin Shan Si

The Song emperor Zhen Cong [998-1022] first gave the name of Longyou Dao, the Island of the Imperial Swim, to Jin Shan island after he had had a dream that he had been swimming in the Yangzi from it and then some ten years later gave permission to the monastery on the island to take the name Longyou Chan Si, which indicates that the temple was of the Buddhist Amitabha School of Meditation. It was restored to prominence and imperial patronage in about 1323 following several annual religious congresses.

Visitors nowadays see a hillock, Jin Shan, Gold or Golden Hill, on which the temple stands with its tall octagonal pagoda with galleries marking each of the seven storeys outlined against the sky. This pagoda crowns the buildings and dominates the River and for a small gratuity permission to ascend the spiral staircase may be obtained. Today’s pagoda, known as the Cishou Ta, was built in 1900, though according to historical texts there used to be two pagodas. These stood one at each end of the temple, and were first built during the Tang, though reconstructed several times down the centuries.
There also used to be an early Buddhist shrine dedicated to the former abbot of renown, Fa Hai, concealed in cave on the hillock. In recent times the few foreign tourists visiting Zhenjiang have been perplexed by the description of Jin Shan being an island when it is so obviously part of the mainland. The reason is all too obvious. Alluvial silt left by the Yangzi floods down the past hundred and fifty years has not only completely joined the island to the mainland but also reclaimed part of the River, land now used for agriculture. 19th century western accounts of the town usually tended to begin with a description of the view from the Yangzi of the pagoda of the temple on the island of Jin Shan or, during the storming of the town by British forces in 1842, of troops being disembarked on the mainland across the strip of water at that time still separating Jin Shan from the mainland.

According to Doré's description of the Jin Shan temple following his visit during the early days of the twentieth century, "the visitor was confronted on entering with the Falstaffian figure of the Buddha Maitreya [Mile Fo], the Buddha of the Future, squatting in his turret as guardian of the precincts. Behind him opens out a vast vestibule at the sides of which are four gigantic statues - about fifteen feet in height - of the Four Heavenly Kings, Si Da Jingang, inner guardians of the monks and the monastery. Crossing the inner court, one entered the great Hall. On the altar were two Buddhist triads. Facing North are gigantic statues of Sakyamuni, Yao Shi Fo and Mile Fo, the Buddhas of the Present, Past and Future. Beside Sakyamuni in the centre, stand his two disciples, the old Kasyapa and the young Ananda. Right and left of the altar are the two guardians Li, the Pagoda-bearer and Wei Tuo. Facing South is the Triad San Da Shi: Guan Yin, Wen Shu and Pu Xian. Guan Yin rides over the waves on a sea monster; near by are the rocks of her sacred isle, Pu Tuo and, in between these, sundry immortals and Buddhas were housed. The Golden Boy, Shan Cai and the Naga Maiden, Long Nu are conventionally in attendance on Guan Yin whom the authorities in the temple recognise as formerly having been a god - not a goddess".

The second large Hall was the Hall of the Yangzi Spirit, Jiang Shen [Spirit of the River]. Serving as a military barracks at the time of Doré's visit "it retained of its former glories only one ordinary-sized statue of the god, in a lateral niche, viz. a fish about three metres in length carved in wood with a copper plaque providing the honorific
titles of the god”.

The third hall contained Guan Yin, as the ‘patron of offspring’, with statues of the Buddhist trio Dicang Wang etc., about her. A special little shrine to the left contained the ‘thousand-handed’ Guan Yin.

Doré added that a visit to a smoky grotto, reeking with the acrid odour of ‘joss-sticks’ rounds off the tour of the cult buildings. Here there were two ugly statuettes, Guan Yin and Yanguang Pusa, the Bodhisattva of Eyesight; strings of cash hung as ex-votos for the former. In the depths of the grotto, sticks of incense were burning night and day before the statue of one, Pei Toutuo ippo, a Hunanese [so said the monks] who discovered gold in what was then called Fuyu Shan 浮 玉 山. He was said to have built the temple with the proceeds of his mining and the temple name was then changed to Jin Shan, Gold Mountain.

A square artificial lake enclosed by a stone balustrade is referred to as the First Spring under Heaven after the waters were declared to be the sweetest for brewing tea. Not surprisingly a tea house offering tea brewed with water from the spring is served to today’s visitors.

My wife, eldest daughter and I visited the Jin Shan Temple during a cold spell one March in the mid-1990s and found to our disappointment that the images were all modern, replacing those destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. However, along the leading edge of the main altar we recognized some twenty or so small images of the Sinicised Vedic deities similar to those I wrote about in Vol. 38 of JHKBRAS. The fact that the great Qing emperor Qian Long had a particular love for the monastery at Jin Shan, referred to earlier, may explain why these Vedic images are also present on the altar in the Jin Shan Si, possibly copied from the images in the temples in Beijing’s Western Hills, again connected with the early Qing.

Another highly visible pagoda, known as the Sengjia Ta, stands on top of the Dingshi Shan, just under a mile south from Zhenjiang’s former southern gate. It was built on this site during the Ming having been moved from its former location during temple reconstruction.
The fight between Lady White Snake and the monk Fa Hai leading to the flooding of Jin Shan

A popular and well-known opera, Bai She Chuan 白蛇傳, tells of Lady White Snake’s fall from grace and of her eternal imprisonment under a pagoda. It begins with a small white snake which, having been both virtuous and devout for many thousands of years, became immortal and could change at will into the form of a beautiful young maiden. As a snake she had been saved from death by a compassionate man and would have to repay the debt at a future date. She discovered that the man, in his latest incarnation, was a young scholar, Xu Xian, living in Hangzhou and after recruiting as her maid a small blue snake who too could change into a young woman, she returned to Earth having been warned by the Xi Wangmu, the Goddess of the Western Heaven, not to abuse her magical powers.

She met the young scholar and they promptly fell in love. She explained that she was the daughter of a deceased army officer and lived in some style in a large house, produced by her magic, on the lakeside at Hangzhou. They were soon married and set up a herbalist store in which all three helped prepare and sell the medicines. White Snake enabled her husband’s recipes gain widespread fame by the addition of a small addition of a magical powder and their fortunes were made. However, Xu began to be suspicious of the personality and origins of his wife and went to consult his old teacher, the Abbot Fa Hai at his monastery, Jin Shan Si, on the island in the Yangzi and sought his advice. The Abbot too was suspicious and gave Xu a potion to add to his wife’s drink which would change any non-human back into its true self. To his horror his wife was revealed in her herpetological form and he, petrified, dropped dead with fright.

The power of the potion soon wore off and when White Snake found that her beloved husband was dead she went off to the Western Heaven to obtain herbs of resuscitation. Her husband, now recovered, was unable to get over his experience and lived a life of nervous apprehension. He returned to his teacher and explained what had happened. The Abbot explained that he too feared for Xu as both his wife and her maid must be transformed snakes who could do him great harm. Xu remained in the monastery in hiding. His anxious wife set out to find him and was met by the Abbot who ordered her away. She
pleaded with him and explained that she was a good person and truly loved her husband. She added that she was due to bear his child in the not too distant future. The Abbot, who is the villain of the tale, would have none of it and White Snake at her wits end called on her allies, the fish and crustaceans of the Great River to her aid. The violent and prolonged rainstorm flooded the entire area around Jin Shan island in an attempt to free her husband and as the waters rose White Snake again pleaded with the Abbot offering to call off the dangerous river waters. He refused to listen, used his own cloak to quell the waters and even tried to catch her in his magical urn to incarcerate her but to no avail as she was protected by Wen Chang, the God of Literature, as her future son was destined to achieve the status of Zhuang Yuan, the First Scholar in the whole country. The Abbot immediately knew that he was no longer able to catch or destroy White Snake but would be able to do so once she had borne the child.

The Abbot gave Xu his magical urn and explained that once the son had been born he was to capture her in it and she would then be incarcerated forever. Xu returned home and after tearful explanations from both husband and wife they were reconciled, though once the child was born Xu threw the urn at his wife. Having been captured by the magic urn she turned back into her original form. Almost immediately the Abbot materialised and took the urn with its prisoner and placed it under the Thunder Peak Pagoda on the shores of Hangzhou’s lake. Xu bitterly repented betraying his wife and sought obscurity as a solitary Buddhist monk far away.

The son grew into a handsome and talented youth and only when he had become the long forecast First Scholar, a Zhuang Yuan, was he told the sad tale of his ill-fated father and mother. At an auspicious time on an auspicious day he prepared an elaborate sacrificial ceremony in memory of his mother and there, before the Thunder Peak Pagoda he knelt in prayer. His mother, freed for a very short period as a gesture by the local guardian deity, appeared dressed in white. She approached her son and full of tears explained her love for his father and the sad ending, and especially the dreadful punishment she was suffering for having caused the deaths of so many innocent people in and around Zhenjiang by ordering the land to be flooded. She was escorted back to the Pagoda to continue her agony - for all eternity.
Beigu Shan

The Ganlu Si [Sweet Dew Monastery] is situated in the northwest corner of the city on the summit of Beigu Shan, a low hill with steep cliffs down to the coast. It is the site described in the old legend of the marriage of Liu Bei, the ruler of the Kingdom of Shu. Traditional operas and tales of teahouse story tellers based on this legend are still popular today. The romantic legend, which may have a genuine historical basis, is said to have taken place during the Three Kingdoms period, 2nd century AD, when Liu Bei was the ruler of kingdom of Shu [in what is today Sichuan and then, one of the Three Kingdoms]. Liu went to the rival state of Wu [nowadays Jiangsu province and part of Zhejiang] and married as his secondary consort the sister of its ruler, Sun Ce, whom we have already mentioned. He is said to have either courted or married her in the Sweet Dew Monastery during his stay there. Another version claims that Liu Bei was invited by Sun to visit the Sweet Dew Monastery to meet his future mother-in-law. Sun actually planned to have Liu assassinated though Liu learned of the plan and escaped taking the ruler’s sister, Sun Shangxiang, with him. Yet another version describes how Sun Quan, the king of Wu and brother of Sun Ce, was displeased by Liu Bei’s failure to return a piece of land he had borrowed from Wu. Sun offered Liu the hand of his sister in marriage but planning all along to withdraw the marriage offer when the ceremony was about to be held and Liu Bei was in Wu territory. At the same time he would require Liu to hand back the land. Liu’s secret agents warned him of the plan and Liu managed to get Sun Quan’s mother and, of course, the prospective bride, to meet him at the Ganlu Temple. They were delighted with what they saw and immediately consented to the marriage. Sun was furious at being outsmarted and not only losing his sister but without even regaining the land.

The dating of Liu Bei’s visit and the conventional date of the foundation of the temple during the Eastern Jin dynasty cannot be reconciled unless Liu Bei’s host, Sun, had a palace on the site which two hundred years later was either converted into the temple or the temple was built on the site of the palace.

The Ganlu Si iron pagoda was first built during the Tang, originally with nine storeys. However, down the ages natural disasters have removed the top five, though a further two storeys have been added
since. Legends claim it to be either a Buddhist pagoda dredged up from the bed of the Yangzi Song dynasty from about 1000 AD or a memorial shrine to a Song dynasty prefect of about 1090.

A stone Stupa or dagoba [containing Buddhist relics] is situated on a stone platform supported by four pillars over a busy street in front of the Guan Yin Cave to the north of Yuntai Hill to the west of Zhenjiang. In years gone by people heading for the small ferry across the Yangzi had to pass under it and gained confidence for their chancy ferry crossing from the protective power emanating from the relics. It is said to have been built during the Yuan dynasty during the 13th century.

**Daily life of foreigners in this insignificant Treaty port**

During the heady days of westerners within the Yangzi basin the steady stream of river steamers sailing the river under the protection of foreign flags and the twin fleets of protective river gun boats of the RN and USN, trade flourished and even an early form of tourism existed. Zhenjiang was famous for silk piece-goods, silk cord tassels for official hats, medicated wine called White Flower Wine, *Baihua Jiu*, aromatic plants, and fine sturgeon. However, for the foreign residents the greatest bane was the boredom. Although there was the Club where cards, drink and perhaps a few books and newspapers helped while away the long evenings, the ennui of the same faces, the same voices and the same topics of conversation was sufficient to bring some to the verge of suicide and some over it.

Life was fairly constrained. There were only two provision stores to serve the foreign community during the first decades of the 20th century, Foo Chong and Chong Hsin. And according to L.C. Arlington Zhenjiang Concession, despite its very limited numbers, boasted its own aristocracy, with the Consul and the Commissioner of Customs as joint Sovereign Lords. The port, he added, was full of individuality, and social life; and the clubs - that for the Upper Circles [Zhenjiang Club] and that for the Lower Strata [Customs Club] - combined to produce constant gossip and occasional friction. There were a number of peculiar characters but none more peculiar than an American missionary who had been divorced by his wife owing, it was said, to his peculiar ways. He professed to carry out the teaching of St. Paul by consorting with the coolies in the native city, and providing them with
food and shelter with money he collected from foreigners. He always wore straw sandals, Chinese clothes and cap, and had a strong Chinese complex. The local Chinese adored him, but not so the missionaries; they detested him, even refusing him food and shelter, or any assistance whatsoever - consoling themselves with the reflection that he was a 'disgrace to the cloth'.

Dr. James Hayes has reminded me that he produced a note for Volume 23 of this JHKBRAS [1983] in which he provided extracts from A. H. Rasmussen’s *China Trader* describing the westerner’s community shooting bungalow in about 1905. Rasmussen was barely twenty when he joined the Chinese Maritime Customs at Zhenjiang, a small, lonely British concession. When first posted there he had been assured by others that Zhenjiang was a very nice and clean Concession, with a good club and excellent shooting. He found this to be a good description of the Concession but not of the native town. During his first four years, two of the original thirty-five Europeans died, two went mad, two cut their throats, and he himself was twice nearly murdered by smugglers. After several years with the Imperial Maritime Customs he was offered a job representing a foreign firm still in Zhenjiang and found himself now one of the upper set. No longer could he walk down the crowded streets of the Concession but must ride in state in his sedan chair, borne by his four chair bearers garbed in his firm’s colours. Rasmussen’s sanity was saved by the presence of a small shooting bungalow in the countryside near by, looked after by a caretaker. It was about eight miles away on a hill called Wu Chow where he would stay during his off-duty hours either reading or hunting wild boar. Though it was relatively expensive in ammunition and tips for the beaters he was able to lessen the latter by sharing expenses with shooting companions. Rasmussen spent many happy hours scanning the visitors’ book finding out more about previous hunting successes and failures. He describes how he relieved his boredom by walking up and down the Bund, three hundred yards there and three hundred back, and for a change he walked along the only cross street to the south gate of the Concession, two hundred yards there and two hundred yards back.

One of the most lucrative trades around Shanghai and Zhenjiang used to be that of being shot. Foreign merchants often went up the creeks in house-boat parties, or wander about the fields in the outskirts, looking for snipe. There were no hedges or game laws and innumerable
small boys were always at hand to do the beating, gun-carrying, ditching and picking up. It often occurred, under these circumstances, that a few dust-shot were put into the calf of a man’s leg, and occasionally even an eye was injured. A fairly definite tariff gradually established itself; so much so that people used to dodge behind bushes or lurk in the ditches, so as to be ready to raise their hands and yell the instant a gun went off in their direction. Very few Chinese rustic skins were without an assortment of sores and bruises; and nothing was easier than to rub a shot or some powder in and pretend that an ‘internal injury’ had occurred. With irate villagers gathering around timid or non-Chinese-speaking sportsmen were often only too glad to compromise on the spot; especially if a few old women with buckets of liquid manure joined in the discussion.

Zhenjiang, some twelve to fourteen hours sailing upstream from Shanghai, was yet one more of the points of call on the Yangzi. Ships only stayed a matter of 30 or so minutes only and tied up alongside one of the hulks or pontoons. These belonged mostly to foreign shipping or trading companies, though there were one or two hulks owned by Chinese businessmen, moored off the concession, from which it was reached by a bridge as there are pronounced seasonal differences in level. Passengers landed and were quickly cleared by the Customs House. The city, at the back of the foreign concession, was the prefectural capital with a Daotai 道台, a Prefect or Circuit Intendant, and the Dantu, the County Magistrate. A Co-Prefect in charge of coast defences and a Prefect of Police were also located in the city, and in addition to the Manchu [Tartar] garrison stationed in Zhenjiang, under the command of a Lieutenant-General there was the ordinary Chinese garrison under a Lieutenant-Colonel, consisting of several battalions of local militiamen and trainbands [bodies of citizens trained in the use of arms].

Law and order was maintained in the settlement up to the turn of the 20th century by a body of British-officered Sikh policemen. Tall, imposing and forbidding-looking, they despised the Chinese and were equally heartily feared and disliked by them. The Chinese, amongst other things, complained bitterly about the iniquitous rates of usury charged by the Sikhs!

At the age of 65, the indomitable traveller and writer Isabella Bird,
in 1896 took herself off up the Yangzi and later wrote about her six-month journey, including her stopover in Zhenjiang. She travelled on the steamer *Poyang* and ... 'after passing Silver Island [Jiao Shan], a wooded rock on which there is a fine temple, we reached Chinkiang, the first of the treaty ports on the Yangtze, and well situated at the junction of the Grand Canal with the river. On my two visits I thought it an attractive place. It has a fine bund and prosperous-looking foreign houses, with a British Consulate on a hill above; trees abound. The concession roads are broad and well kept. A row of fine hulks connected by bridges with the shore offers great facilities for the landing of goods and passengers. Sikh police are much *en evidence*, the *hum* of business greets one's ears, traffic throngs the bund, the Grand Canal is choked with junks, ... and judging from appearances only, one might think Zhenjiang a busier port than Hankow, the great centre for commerce in Central China'. Mrs Bird then goes on to describe the passing trade including... 'our German rivals have done a very 'neat thing' in starting an albumen factory, in which the albumen, dextrously separated from the yolks of ducks' eggs, is made into slabs, which are sent to Germany for use in photography, the production of leather, and the printing of cotton, etc.' She also commented on 'the beautiful Golden Island [Jin Shan], separated as recently as 1842 by the channel south of the island where there is now an expanse of wooded and cultivated land sprinkled with villages'.

The hulks were replaced many years ago, and yet again, since 1980, their wooden piers have been rebuilt into a row of some half dozen concrete piers. Sir Robert Hart, the Inspector-General of Chinese Maritime Customs for forty-five years, referred several times to 'the hulks at Chinkiang' usually because the hulk owner, Bean in one instance, was involved in a law case with the local Customs Commissioner.

Isabella Bird learned of a number of charities and organisations for the welfare of the poor from the British Consul, W R Carles, and from Rev. W W Lawton who had made careful investigations for the Christian Literary Association of Zhenjiang. She noted that there were an orphan asylum and a benevolent institute for girls in Zhenjiang as well as a benevolent institute with eighty boys. For adults there was a Bureau for Advancing Funds, of inestimable advantage to the struggling farmer or merchant. There were also two free dispensaries, with nine
doctors in charge, and a Lifesaving institution possessing six well-equipped, well-manned boats always on the river near the port, and ten others dodging about above and below. There was also a free ferry, with thirteen big boats, for crossing the oftentimes stormy and dangerous Yangzi. The city also had a winter 'soup kitchen', a Widows Relief Society and Widows' Home, the latter connected with a Boys' Orphanage.

Another of the many Western visitors to pass through Zhenjiang was one of the first British Indian Army officers to study Chinese in Peking. Colonel Wingate eventually retired from the Indian Army as the Director of Military Intelligence but not before he had accomplished, among other things, a journey back from Peking to India overland between September 1898 and May 1899 to collect information 'of all kinds'. In the October during his journey up the Yangzi he disembarked from the Butterfield and Swire boat at Zhenjiang and was met by the British Consul, E. L. B. Allen who put him up in the consulate. [One of Allen's claim to fame was his hatred of the maddening noise of cicadas which he disposed of by shooting them with his pistol]. Wingate remarked in passing that Zhenjiang was unique among treaty ports in that it had only a British settlement; consequently most of the trade was divided between British and Chinese.

Consulates were set up in Zhenjiang not only by Britain but also by France, Germany, Austro-Hungary and, for a short while, by America.

British Consuls and the Consulate

In 1858 the ruins of Zhenjiang were declared a treaty port open to foreign trade, and in 1861 a site was leased and laid out for a British concession. The British Consul first lived in the temple on Jiao Shan before renting a house on the slope near Guan Yin's Cave, the site which some sixty years later became the premises of the Chinese Life Saving Association which professed to be part-owner of most of the river foreshore.

Later, a purpose-built Consulate was built on land acquired on the side of Yin Tai Shan [Consular Bluff] together with offices for the foreign employees of the Chinese Maritime Customs erected at the
opposite extremity of the foreign settlement. Some years passed before the site was occupied. On 5th February, 1889, the Consulate building was burnt in a riot together with several neighbouring houses. The final Consulate of a main building and four houses was erected on the same site in 1890. Built predominantly of red brick with white and grey bricks forming the decoration, it had double windows to keep the rooms warm during the bitter winters and a royal reign tablet on the rear wall. This white oval plaque bearing the enjoined letters VR is still in place a century or so later.

All the British consuls serving in Zhenjiang from its opening in 1860 found time hanging heavily and a number became medically unfit within a short time of taking up their posts. Adkins, the Consul writing to his father in December 1861, wrote in passing that ‘the office of Consul at a thriving port is no sinecure I can tell you. He is judge, bishop, police magistrate, coroner etc. etc etc. As is usual his own countrymen give him the least possible support and abuse him like a pickpocket.’ It was also soon realized just how unimportant Zhenjiang had become to foreigners and by 1867 it was decided to post a junior consul to the port under the aegis of the senior consul at Shanghai. However, ten years later the number of British residents had increased sufficiently to warrant a return to the consular post being restored to its former independent status. It was by no means a comfortable place to live though P D Coates wrote that all in all Zhenjiang would have been a pleasant enough post had the [foreign] community been more congenial.24 One incident in the history of the consulate in Zhenjiang related by Coates, tells how in 1879 the Chairman and Treasurer of the Zhenjiang Concession Council, Bean, a British merchant who held several of the nineteen concession leases, physically assaulted H. J. Allen, the British consul, in the Club when the latter as Consul had asked to examine the Council’s books before approving its accounts. Duff, another merchant, was the Secretary to the Council. Coates describes the constant and major friction between Bean and Duff, Bean and the Consul, and between other foreign residents of the Concession and this was reiterated by William Mesny as we shall soon see. Oxenham, a subsequent Consul in 1886, described Bean as a coarse, cantankerous, uneducated man of low tastes and malignant disposition who had insulted practically every Consul and Customs commissioner serving at the port.

Adkins described in one of his letters to his father how English
rowdies knew that no American official in all the ports of China has the means of checking outrages on the part of American citizens. Accordingly, whenever an English thug gets into a scrape he claims to be American. He then described a case in point ‘the Captain of an American boat came to me bringing with him a Chinese who had been badly cut on the arm. He said that the wound had been inflicted by an Englishman, a passenger on his boat and that the Briton was a desperate character. I accordingly applied to Franklin, the Commander of the [British] gunboat lying here for assistance. He very soon had an armed boat alongside the Yankee craft and the swordsman was speedily hauled out and brought before me. I read the Chinaman’s complaint to him and he in reply said he wanted to see the American Consul, I told him that as an American had handed him over to me as an Englishman I should deal with him unless he could prove his right to American protection. He defied me so I sent him a prisoner aboard the Banterer gunboat. On the day following I had no less than three witnesses that the scoundrel was an Englishman. At length when he saw his impudence would carry him no further he acknowledged himself to be a British. He was tried accordingly and got six months in Hong Kong jail with hard labour, at the end of which, he is to be conveyed under arrest to England as being too dangerous a character for a quiet country like China’.

In another letter Adkins explained that ‘I am making myself obnoxious and disagreeable to certain of my countrymen who think that Treaties are made that they might have the pleasure of breaking them. I have seized and confiscated three vessels for smuggling and have given a rascal three months hard labour for trading in salt. Really the Chinese have good reason for distrusting us. We sell arms to the Rebels and teach them how to build forts after making treaties of peace and friendship with the reigning power’.

When E.H. Parker was Consul in about 1877 roads were just beginning to exist and the Municipal Council had succeeded in providing a respectable walk of three or four miles for exercise. However, a gigantic, old worm-eaten coffin had been left where it lay by the builders planted squarely in the middle of the fine new road, just where it left town. Rumour said it dated from the Mongol dynasty. No one dared touch it, and it was generally supposed that the ‘owners’ were sitting tight and waiting for their chance. The Daotai said that
Parker might pitch it into the nearest ditch as far as he cared, but it was as much as his place was worth for him to touch it. The Municipal Council issued notices and offered compensation, and meanwhile every day during their walks and rides they had to go round the obstructive eyesore. The Daotai had second thoughts and issued a proclamation saying that he had expostulated with Parker and in his reverent affection for human bones told him that he would have to wait for the agnatic descendants to come forward. This put Parker in a very uncomfortable position and he determined to go the Daotai one better. He therefore issued a proclamation explaining that no one had greater affection for human bones than he but pointed out that the coffin ran the risk of desecration, and that even distant members of the family were authorised to take it away at once. He then gave a broad hint to the Municipal Council that if distant members of the family turned up at dead of night with pick and shovel, no questions would be asked. It blew hard that evening and the air was filled with sleet. When he went out for his early walk the coffin had disappeared. The dealers in donkey-skins had taken four municipal policemen, dug a hole in the next field and then, after transferring the coffin, had slunk away. Nothing happened!

Parker explained how Chinese and Tartar soldiers made a nuisance of themselves not only trouble making but also simply by strolling through the foreign settlement in order to steal a look at foreign devils. When he was Consul there, certain Europeans used to connive at gaming-houses, and take shares in native theatres; not to mention pawnshops, drinking houses and other places ever less orthodox, all flourishing under the sacred nose of Her Majesty’s Consul. He found Zhenjiang a very rowdy place both from a foreign and native point of view. Consequently the municipal police had plenty of work. One strolling warrior was arrested for ‘committing a nuisance’ and promptly punched the policeman’s head. He was at last overpowered by others, and temporarily lodged in the consular gaol, the keeper of which was a one-eyed old soldier named Joshua Nunn, who boasted several medals, and had served his country bravely and well in the wars. Some more Chinese soldiers soon gathered round, and began to threaten a rescue, and even burn down the Consulate. Parker gave orders to plucky old Nunn to lock the man up in his strongest cell whilst he sent a pencil message round by the tingchui to each of three sturdy Britshers: “Please step round with your gun: I expect a row”. In less than five minutes they were there, and with Parker sat before the entrance with their guns.
The Consulate was on the most commanding elevation, at least fifty feet above the road with a steep mountain behind. About two hundred unruly soldiers gathered round the lower enclosure but seeing the four-armed men did not approach. A written message was sent off to General Tao, commanding the permanent camp, half a mile off, stating that the man would not be released until the general came in person, identified the prisoner and punished him. After half an hour General Tao in his chair, with Colonel Peng on his charger, arrived and were informed that there was no intention to claim jurisdiction over or be harsh with the arrested man, but that it had to be clearly understood that if any soldiers or even officers came in to the settlement, they would be forced to obey the municipal bye-laws; and the Consul was the municipal chairman. The General was not too happy about the position he found himself in but was civil. He went with Parker to the prison, spoke with the man through the bars and as a result the man received about twenty slight bastinado-strokes on the spot and all was settled.

The winter of 1877-8 was unusually bitter; the year of the great Shanxi famine when millions of Chinese perished from sheer want of food. Neighbouring provinces were invaded by endless streams of refugees and more especially so through the area surrounding Zhenjiang - because all roads from the north lead there. The authorities had provided thousands of mat hovels, on and against the city walls where shelter from the bitter wind was obtainable. Skilly was served out gratis twice a day with between fifty thousand to a hundred thousand refugees congregated around Zhenjiang.

As we have already noted Zhenjiang was far from being the ideal posting and at least one consul there, in 1923, is known to have committed suicide. Consular duties brought hazards which, while not thought of as routine, were certainly sufficient to cause many a consul to look back with horror and amazement at what they had survived. One such consul would recall that in 1913, during the early days of the period of the war lords following the foundation of the Republic, with petty armies looting and causing endless unrest, soldiers of one such war lord, Zhang Xun, approached Zhenjiang bent on plundering the city. The British consul and a lone western merchant went out to face them - then, after very nearly being shot they held them at bay until one of their officers appeared and brought them under control. In another incident during the anti-British movement troubles of 1925 the British
consul was nearly hit by a bullet that entered his office through the window. This same consul was involved during student protests later the same year when the police quarters were set alight and the students rampaged through the town intent on killing foreigners. He and his family were only saved by the timely arrival of Chinese soldiers, and escaped by river down to Shanghai.

Today the Zhenjiang Museum occupies the former British Consulate at 85 Boxian Lu in Boxian Park at the heart of the old town. Amongst the items on display in the grounds is an anchor said to have been from H.M.S. *Amethyst*, the frigate of the British Yangtze Flotilla, which, after weeks of being blockaded, stuck on a sand bank, escaped downstream despite having been badly damaged by shell fire from the PLA [People’s Liberation Army] during their thrust south across the River in 1948 to liberate China from the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek. British efforts to seek a diplomatic solution involved Edward Youde, a twenty-four years old, third secretary at the Embassy, who volunteered to reach the senior PLA military officer at Yangzhou to seek a safe-conduct pass for the *Amethyst* to sail unmolested downstream back to Shanghai. He first had to obtain passes to permit him to cross the line between the Nationalists and the Communists. After several days of adventures and lengthy cross-country hikes, sometimes under fire, Youde reached the senior PLA officer and his request was forcibly rejected. His mission a failure, he returned, again amidst numerous adventures to report to his Ambassador in Nanjing. He later became better known as Sir Edward Youde, one of the last Governors of Hong Kong.

Christian missionaries

There were Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries, Anglicans and the ‘faith missions’, Baptists, Presbyterians and the Lutherans, and so on, as well as the individual evangelicals, zealous saviours of souls. The most important aspect of this work, though most would not see it in this light, was by setting an example, though this in no way belittled their social, medical and educational work. Medical missionaries, another dedicated breed, were an exception with their professional abilities being widely welcomed not only by Chinese but also by the Europeans within both treaty ports as well as in the remoter parts of China in which they lived and worked.
There has been many an article printed in Britain and the US both for and against their nationals whose activities as missionaries in China varied from the mild and mediocre to the wild, bigoted and in a number of instances weird and incomprehensible. There were those whose lonely lives drove them to despair, to insanity and even to suicide. Others caused untold harm to the cause by their intemperate sermons, lectures and even actions. Their success rate in China was abysmal and The Times even wrote that missionaries in general were not very well educated and not gentlemen.\textsuperscript{26} This was not always so and their social origins did not matter, but with a number taking the Bible literally, their grasp of the accepted meaning of biblical scriptures and of language, both English and Chinese, was inadequate leading not only to blinkered bigotry but also to an inability to ‘sell’ their ideals. There were a great many good, well-intentioned missionaries but with the general evangelising attitude of the Victorian era most Chinese found any spiritual message out of step with their personal religious experience and their own culture. Christianity as taught during the 19th and early 20th centuries failed to appeal to or attract contemporary Chinese who were possibly no more than mildly intrigued to hear what a foreigner might have to say. The multiplicity of sects, teachings and churches, as well as different terms for God, confused Chinese. The Roman Catholics had a far higher conversion rate primarily due to their sympathetic attitudes and policy of getting as near to being one of the community, in dress and living conditions [apart, that is, from the very rare luxuries of wine and cigars].

Missionaries had first seen the Taiping Rebellion as the outcome of missionary enterprise. This view changed when it became apparent that the Taiping leadership had revised and interpreted Christianity. The Taiping leaders had, for example, adopted polygamy for themselves whilst banning it for their followers, and lived in luxury having misappropriated untold wealth.

The notable early Protestant missionary, Griffith John, made a sweeping reconnaissance across the Yangzi basin in June of 1858 but when visiting Zhenjiang he decided that it was too close to the Taipings at Nanjing and moved on.\textsuperscript{27}

The London Mission eventually commenced work in Zhenjiang in 1868, and regarding the city as an outstation of Shanghai they rented
a chapel where they stationed an evangelist. By the turn of the century Zhenjiang had become an important Protestant missionary centre in its own right, with adequate missionary cover and the accessories for Mission work including a women's hospital, a girls' school and the large and well-organised men's college of the Methodist Episcopal Mission. China Inland Mission had by this time also opened a station in the city as well as their own hospital.

Aspects of life which today sound strange were not uncommon, such as the missionary in Yangzhou, immediately across the wide Yangzi from Zhenjiang, having to cross the river with his bride for the civil ceremony at the nearest consulate, in Zhenjiang, before ferrying her back to their future home.

During the 1860s and 1870s, the great famine in the Yellow River and Yangzi basins and the anti-missionary troubles across China, Hudson Taylor, who had founded the China Inland Mission in 1865, travelled widely encouraging his workers and authorising the expenditure of funds on orphanages and relief. In mid-March of 1877 he stopped over in Zhenjiang for a month, during which time a fire which had devoured houses all around the Mission premises had stopped short of the Mission, merely scorching one of its window frames.

Gunboat diplomacy was part of life on the 19th century Yangzi with recalcitrant mandarins being brought to heel when, for example, they ignored the cries for help of foreigners under attack from mobs or even encouraged such violence either openly or tacitly. In October 1868 a major confrontation in Yangzhou, the city immediately across the Yangzi from Zhenjiang, involved a large crowd of uncontrolled rioters bent on killing foreigners. They attacked the home of Hudson Taylor and his family, injuring several members of the China Inland Mission. HMS Rinaldo, a British gunboat, arrived and under its guns, the Viceroy in Nanjing agreed to terms demanded by the British Consul, Medhurst. However, the Rinaldo's captain fell ill and the gunboat had to be withdrawn. The Viceroy promptly repudiated the terms he had agreed and a further force of four Royal Navy vessels had to be sent to exert military pressure once more upon the Viceroy. Terms were again dictated and once more agreed. Meanwhile Hudson Taylor and his family had been accommodated in the home of the British Consul in Zhenjiang.
In early December 1881 Hudson Taylor convened an informal missionary conference at Zhenjiang to discuss the crucial and imperative need to increase their numbers in order to accelerate the pace of converting China. This was an on-going problem raised and discussed by Protestant missionaries across China down the years. The staff and language students from the Missionary Language School at Anqing, another city on the Yangzi, were invited to attend the Zhenjiang conference as were missionaries of the American Episcopal Church.

In 1900 Mr Absolom Sydenstricker and his wife were both Presbyterian missionaries living in Zhenjiang, together with their daughter Pearl who was eight. During the first months of the Boxer troubles they refused to flee, then in July of that year when conditions had worsened they were compelled to escape to Shanghai, to return a year later. Life for a growing young woman was fairly circumscribed with the white population limited to the few in the consulates, other missionaries and a dozen or so men working with British and American companies. Pearl left in 1917 to marry Mr Buck, an American missionary and academic interested in China’s rural economy, at NanSuzhou in Anhui. Pearl’s mother died in Zhenjiang several years later and was buried in what was then known as Zhenjiang’s foreign cemetery. In 1920 Pearl’s father sold their house and moved to Nanjing. Pearl Buck spent in all some forty-three years in China, and her writings brought Chinese social inter-relationships, especially those of the peasants, to the western readers, possibly the first to achieve a worldwide circulation leading to many a westerners’ first fascination about China. She wrote many a book and chaired many a public meeting telling people, mainly in the US, of the enduring spirit and resilience as well as the wretched lives lived by Chinese peasants and of the threat from Japanese Imperialism. Her best known works include The Good Earth, and a translation of the Shuihu Ji, ‘All Men are Brothers’, one of China’s most popular pieces of literature. Her parents’ family house in Zhenjiang, at the present day address of 6 Runzhou Shan Lu, is now one of the leading tourist attractions, for Americans in particular, despite being part of a semiconductor factory.

In May 1905 Hudson Taylor, freshly back from recuperation in the Europe stopped by Zhenjiang on his way to Changsha, where he visited the graves of Maria [his first wife who had died there in July 1870] and his children in the little cemetery among the hills. He, himself,
was buried there beside his first wife in the Zhenjiang cemetery when he died in Changsha a mere two months later. By the late forties the cemetery had disappeared beneath industrial buildings.\textsuperscript{28}

There was quite a scandal about the Methodist chapel in about 1907 when, during an evening service, the whole congregation started to wriggle and scratch themselves. Many left hurriedly and the preacher was almost alone when the service ended. It was then discovered that the Chinese caretaker had turned the place into a paying doss-house for coolies and beggars, and every pew was crawling with bedbugs and lice.

Mesny’s Involvement with Zhenjiang 1863/5

Now to an entirely different slant on activities within Zhenjiang. William Mesny was a Jerseyman who ran away from home in 1854 at the age of 12 and arrived in China in 1860. His autobiographical writings describe scenes from his diverse and exciting career in China from his earliest days as a lowly gaoler in Hong Kong, through his sailing days as a master on a small Yangzi trader, his time as an Imperial Customs Tide-waiter in Hankou, to the peak of his career serving with the Chinese Sichuan Provincial Green Standard army, ending up as a brevet Lieutenant-General. From there on he was a self-appointed adviser to senior Chinese officials, travelling far and wide throughout China, and ending his days as an impoverished ‘poor white’ first in Shanghai and towards the end in Hankou where he died in 1919. Although he had little to do with Zhenjiang itself during his time on the Yangzi he was involved with others who had.\textsuperscript{29}

Mesny, writing about his time on the Yangzi, first as a youth commanding a lorcha\textsuperscript{30} and then as a Customs Officer with the Chinese Imperial Customs, explained that on his first trip up the River the comparatively short journey on from Zhenjiang to Nanjing took five hours with a call at Shi’er Wei, an important salt town on the northern bank of the river. An hour and a half before reaching Nanjing ships would pass the Third Fort guarding the narrow defile under Guanyin Shan. It was there that in April 1862 Mesny was wounded and captured by a fleet of Imperial gun boats whose role it was to stop supplies of all kinds reaching the Taiping rebels. Mesny was sailing for Hankou from Shanghai with a full legal cargo but to the Imperial gunboats, the ‘Imps’ as they were referred to by westerners, all vessels were fair game. Mesny
was a young man of twenty just starting his lifelong career in China. In his Miscellanies he described how on his arrival at Hankou commanding the sailing lorchia, Hailong Wang [the Dragon King], he was paid off by the owners, the Mc Twins, who offered him a job as superintendent builder of a large hong [company office/warehouse] they intended erecting on the Bund. He accepted - as the Hailong Wang was laid up. However, as he actually wished to return to Shanghai to marry local maiden, Zhu Wenjing, he took leave and in one statement he claimed that he sailed aboard the Huguang, a new beam-engine paddlewheel river steamer on her maiden voyage. In another he explained that he had left Hankou at the end of 1862 in charge of a cargo boat which was captured by the Taipings. This occurred when, having called at Zhenjiang on 1st or 3rd of November 1862 [his accounts vary], he was on his way to Shanghai in charge of a cargo boat, and was captured, with his crew, by the Taiping rebels, midstream, at Fu Shan Zhen. Mesny’s colourful description of his time with the Taipings began with him being brought in chains before a senior Taiping who ordered him to ketou [kowtow]. Mesny wrote that he refused and that he only bowed to God. ‘So do we’, cried the Taiping, and promptly ordered Mesny’s release. Mesny continued his tale describing how the Senior Taiping had dined Mesny and offered him his daughter in marriage and the command of a Taiping vessel with the rank of vice-admiral. In another version elsewhere in his Miscellanies Mesny claimed to have been wounded twice during the capture and was at first badly treated by his captors. But once the Taiping discovered that he could play Chinese tunes on his four-octave flutina, their behaviour entirely altered. On a more credible note he was required to write to his employers in Shanghai demanding 100,000 Spanish Carolus dollars ransom.

Mesny was puzzled at the time why various senior Taiping officials should have vied to hold him their captive. It later transpired that at first these officials had not appreciated the power and capabilities of the foreign-led Chinese force [meaning the Ever-Victorious Army] sent against them; and when they did the Taiping officials’ first act was to obtain and hold foreigners to prevent the violent wrath of the foreign-led force being brought down on them. One of the foreigners Mesny saw momentarily, also in Taiping hands, was Frank Phillip de la Cour, another Jerseyman, who had been taken whilst shipping arms.

Having managed to send a secret message to Shanghai that he was
alive and a prisoner of the Taiping in Nanjing Mesny was rescued by the Royal Navy in March 1863 after four to five months not too unpleasant captivity after a threat from the captain of the Royal Navy gunboat HMS Slaney to bombard Nanjing. Aboard the gunboat was Adkins, the British Vice-Consul from Zhenjiang, who informed Mesny that he had been given up for dead a long time ago, and that an account of his slaughter and dismemberment had been published in Shanghai papers. Released from Taiping captivity at Nanjing in April Mesny was taken by the British Vice-Consul to his station at Zhenjiang where he was feted for a day or so before being advised to take ‘the opportunity of a lifetime’ as mate aboard a large American owned lorch, damaged by fire and being towed to Hankou by the Express, a British river steamer.

Adkins lived his lonely and dangerous life in Zhenjiang where his health deteriorated to the extent that he had to take medical leave. He also made occasional trips to the Taiping capital at Nanjing to demand compensation for the plundering of British vessels by the Taipings, which were far from enjoyable, even on occasions, sickening. In a letter to his father dated 20 March 1863 Adkins wrote that ‘I received information that an Englishman was a prisoner in Nankin. My purpose here is to get the unfortunate fellow out of the clutches of the Rebels. I have just sent a dispatch to the head swell [Rebel] here and am awaiting his reply. I shall probably have to go to the city tomorrow’. From the date of Adkin’s letter this almost certainly refers to Adkins’ trip up to Nanjing to effect Mesny’s release from Taiping captivity.

Before Mesny decided to return to Hankou, he later explained, he had seriously considered going back to Nanjing where he would have used his unique triangular yellow Taiping flag which would have ensured his welcome, there to wed the ‘fair charmer’ [the daughter of one of the Taiping leaders] who had written such a beautiful poem expressing hope that he would return to marry her. Mesny was now offered a number of contracts to sail cargoes through the Taiping lines, all of which he rejected on the advice of the British Vice-Consul, Adkins.

Mesny frequently wrote of various pretty women at the roadside during his journeys across China who had attracted him or, more to the point, were attracted by him. His descriptions of ‘fair maidens’ in towns and villages eyeing him and he ogling them crop up regularly with a
regular aside about their breasts and occasionally their naked crotch. He also made much of his affairs with Chinese women and at this point, in 1864 had a ‘romantic and intimate interlude’ with a young Chinese widow. She did not appear to be short of money and, having sought Mesny’s company, accompanied him up river from Zhenjiang to Hankou where they remained until she left to join her in-laws in 1865. He had been away for a fortnight to the cotton growing districts and on his return had been handed a very polite letter from the ‘fair charmer’ thanking him for all his attentions to her and informing him that she was continuing on to her late husband’s home in Hunan there to rear her children and end her days in virtuous widowhood. She ended, wishing him joy and happiness, by saying that the Chinese banker would hand Mesny a little keepsake to be retained by him in everlasting remembrance of their unexpected meeting at Zhenjiang, their romantic adventures and intimacy on the voyage up the Great River, and their separation for ever at Hankou.

Mesny’s visit to Zhenjiang 1874

After he had left military service in 1874 Mesny made frequent and repeated egotistical assertions to prominence and repute within Chinese bureaucracy and commercial circles with his endeavours, so he claimed, concentrated on guiding and promoting what he described as the westernisation and modernisation in China. It is far from clear how he made a living after 1874 though later we read in his Miscellanies that he had obtained lucrative business in Guiyang at one stage; that in 1886 he had an insurance agency in Shanghai; and was also the representative for the Lartigue Railway Construction Company. He must have had many other irons in the fire to enable him to travel so widely and so far within China, of which only a few were described in his Miscellanies.

In late 1874 he travelled down river to Zhenjiang and then overland through Shandong to Beijing, spending the winter in Jinan. From the dates he gives in his autobiographical notes Mesny must have left his bride fairly soon after their marriage as he travelled ‘through Shantung province on his way to Peking from Chen-kiang’ [Mesny does not explain why he was there though almost certainly it would have been no more than a port on his journey from Hankou to Shandong]. In Shandong he visited, amongst other places, the home and burial place of Confucius at
Qufu, and Tai Shan, the Holy Mountain, where he saw thousands of poor pilgrims assembling. Mesny claimed that, as an adviser to the Governor of Shandong province, Ding Baozhen, he persuaded the Governor Ding to establish an arsenal near Jinan and build a railway from the Yellow River to the arsenal. Mesny also claimed to have persuaded him to dredge the Yellow River and to fortify Weihai Wei and Jiaozhou [both places later occupied and governed by Britain and Germany respectively as leased territories]. Mesny also claimed to have persuaded Ding to develop the mineral wealth of Shandong ‘which he did though in a small way only’.

**Riots and mob violence**

Zhenjiang suffered its share of mob violence and riots during its treaty port era. One of the major problems confronting westerners within China was the ever-present possibility of petty or even major violence against their persons and property. Often the disturbance to the peace, due to whatever cause, would be exacerbated by either western impetuosity and/or the indifference and inactivity of the local intendants [mandarins] and their staffs. There were also the perils of banditry, of pirates, of rebels or simply of thugs.

One afternoon in 1865 the astounding news was received in Hankou that three foreigners had been most barbarously hacked to pieces in Zhenjiang, and were not expected to live. One was Francis Pickernell, a friend of Mesny, and another was Charles Lewis of Boston, an American, a former ship and messmate of Mesny’s, whilst the third was another friend and fellow Jerseyman, Filleule, all of whom died from their horrible wounds. The outrage caused a profound impression upon all foreigners in the river ports and John, Mesny’s younger brother, who had not been at Hankou very long, felt very sad at the loss of three such friends. The outrage was said to be due to mistaken identity. A man named Stone, a master of a lorcha on the Yangzi, appears to have offended some Chinese military officials who had insulted his Chinese wife, and they had attempted to avenge themselves in this horrible manner.

One fine evening in about 1866, during the time the Nianfei [or Nianzi], the so-called Twisting Bandits, were in the neighbourhood of Hankou, Mesny relates the dreadful tale of four westerners who saw a favourable opportunity to join up with one of the roaming gangs of
bandits to seek their fortune. Mesny explained that the opportunity occurred for 'the four bold adventurers' to leave the city together with the bandits together with several old Taiping chiefs, amongst whom was a brother of the Shou Wang, the Taiping leader who formerly had held Ningbo. The four, Jerome, a cripple having had one of his legs damaged during the [Opium] war; Captain O.P. Damström, a Swede; Anthony Fiamin, an Austrian from Fiume; and Beeman, a Britisher from London. Mesny believed that they were the only foreigners who actually served with the Nian rebels. Mesny went to see them off and Jerome embraced him very affectionately after the manner of his country. They had not been gone very long when Mesny received a letter from Damström saying that he had been wounded in a cavalry charge against some 'trainbands' who had attempted to cut them off from the main body. The Four Bold Adventurers had then accompanied the Nianzi in their revolving rambles all over the country lying between the Yangzi and the Yellow River from Hankou to Zifu and back again until the whole body of the bandits had been beaten and dispersed. At the dispersion Damström had been taken prisoner by the Imperial forces and as such had been brought down to Zhenjiang in a cage, or so Mesny understood, and had it not been for Captains Welsh and Macdonald who had been in charge of the artillery and rocket batteries in one of the Imperial camps Damström would very likely have been done to death like his three companions none of whom, though they had surrendered to the Imperial forces, ever returned to the [treaty] ports. Beeman was said to have been buried alive in Shandong, Jerome and Anthony appeared to have been murdered by their captors in northern Jiangsu [province], having become separated during the last few days march.

We know remarkably little about Mesny's life during the 1880s. A very serious famine ravaged Anhui province during 1888/9, and Mesny, then aged 46, made two long journeys through Anhui and northern Jiangsu provinces to judge and report on the extent of suffering. During his journeys, Mesny later wrote, he discovered that Earl Zeng [Guochuan], the Viceroy of Nanjing, needed the funds raised earlier by a Shanghai charity, the Renjishan Tang, to appease and pay off the Cantonese bandits, the Shap-ng Tsoi, who were very active in the Yangzi valley at the time. Mesny added that he, Mesny, in 1889, had assisted in the pacification of the excited populace at Zhenjiang where he had arrived a few hours after the British Consulate and other buildings
had been destroyed and burned down. Thousands of rioters had arrived there in boats and destroyed foreign property. These enigmatic statements suggest that Mesny believed that ‘charity funds for famine relief’ were being misused by the Viceroy and others to buy off bandits, even if he does not actually spell it out. There is no indication in his Miscellanies to whom he reported after his fact-finding mission or what he did with his information about the famine, or whether he actually provided physical relief for some of the unfortunate victims.

As so often happened a very minor incident, in this case concerning a Sikh policeman, grew in a matter of hours into a major riot. It was riots in 1889 referred to by Mesny, when the Sikh, a member of the municipal police force of the Zhenjiang Concession, was alleged to have struck a Chinese. According to Arlington it was started by the Concession Chief of Police, an Indian, accidentally killing a coolie who ‘dared’ to have his head shaved on the Bund [a terrible thing to shave the head on the Bund!]. The events followed a not unusual pattern with the mob throwing stones and the Europeans managing to escape to a ship on the Great River but not before telegraphing for assistance to Shanghai. The Chinese authorities too had been called upon for help and though both Chinese police and soldiers arrived they simply stood around and did nothing. Both the British and American consulates were destroyed; meanwhile Shanghai replied requesting additional information and advising the westerners in Zhenjiang that a gun boat was being prepared. Order was restored by Chinese troops on the following day. Three days later the British gunboat arrived and was boarded by the Consul who was greeted by a gun-salute. The very first report of the guns sent every Chinese off the Bund and out of the Concession like a cloud of smoke being dispersed by a typhoon. A benefit arising from the riot was the construction of a new consulate office and house with its own garden. A slightly different picture of the cause was given by Consul Parker which he had obtained from hearsay. The Zhenjiang municipal police had arrested a Chinese military officer for ‘reckless riding’.

After the riots of the 1880s strong, double riot gates of stout iron bars were constructed, each with a span of some twenty feet, so that the whole of the width of the Bund, some forty feet, would be barred when they were closed. The Concession police during the first decade of the 20th century consisted of some sixteen Shandong men from the
recently disbanded Weihaiwei Regiment of the British Army, trained by British officers.

During the Boxer troubles in 1900 a number of missionaries fleeing south from their threatened mission stations, having passed through Anhui, reached safety at Zhenjiang on the south side of the Yangzi.

Extraordinary case of the Englishman who wanted to be King of China

Mesny wrote at length some ten years after the event about a case in 1891 into which he had been drawn and which, according to him, caused his name to be dragged through the mud by Li Hongzhang, the most powerful and senior Chinese imperial official in Peking, and to all intents and purposes ended any future credence he might have had as a business adviser to the Chinese. He began by writing that:

'As I was turning over some old notes of mine I found the following [on Mason] almost begging to be printed so as not to be lost.' He then described his version of his involvement with Mason and the outcome. Mesny claimed that it was believed by many that he [Mesny] had been involved with Mason [Charles Mason was a junior officer in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs, stationed in Zhenjiang], as a member, if not the head, of an illegal secret society. This led to him being ostracised by Chinese officials, as well as the desire of the apprehensive and phobic wife of Mesny to separate herself from him and his apparent connection with rebels, even going as far as wishing to divorce him.

The story as described in Mesny’s article is as follows:

'In the early part of 1891 the Municipal Council at Hankou decided to buy a machine gun as a means of protecting the foreign concession and its inhabitants from periodical riots. I therefore wrote to the municipal councillors offering them a machine gun and 30,000 cartridges.

By some means or other, Mason got this letter and tried to get the gun too. He first wrote me a letter offering me all sorts of good things if I would engage 1000 foreigners, and raise a force wherewith to capture the best ships in the northern squadron also the Wusong, Jiangyin and
Silver Island forts. I did not answer his letter, but noted the date thereon and the date on which I received it. I was requested to send an answer to someone in Zhenjiang. I gave the letter to Consul Mowat.

As I did not answer Mason's letter he called early one morning and I asked who he was and what he wanted. He replied that he was the United States consular marshal at Hankou and had come down to see the machine gun I had offered to sell to the Municipal Council at Hankou and wished to know if my machine was a single action or double action gun. I showed him the gun and how to work it, and he decided to buy it. He then wished me to send it somewhere on the Yangzi. I said I could not let it go out of my house until it was paid for, and would not deliver it any where outside the limits of a treaty port unless provided with a special passport or huzhao. Mason then said that he was going to Ningbo and would call for the gun on his return. He did not do so. He went to Hongkong engaged a lot of foreigners, instructed them to come and report themselves to me for duty, etc., etc.

On Mason's return to Shanghai he brought a lot of firearms he had bought in Hongkong. They were seized, and the men he had engaged were looked after. He himself was introduced by Mr R.E. Bredon, Shanghai Commissioner of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs, to the Daotai of Shanghai who invited him to dinner and to witness a theatrical performance as if he, Mason, had been a popular hero.

He lived in the Central Hotel and was a frequent visitor at the Shanghai Club where he had been introduced by Mr Bredon.

Meanwhile all sorts of tricks were being practised to inveigle me into a trap. Conch shells were blown at all hours of the night about my house under the direction of Mason. A host of extra police officers and detectives were placed on special duty on my property, at the switch-back railway. I suddenly remembered the letter that had been sent me. I thereupon called on Mr acting-consul Mowat and insisted on his reporting the matter to H.M.'s Minister at Beijing. Mowat pooh-poohed the whole thing as a farce and so it proved in reality though very costly and dangerous to me.

Instructions were soon received from H.M.'s Minister at Beijing and Mason was removed from the Central Hotel on the Bund to H.M.'s
gaol on Amoy Road, at the end of the Kueichou Road, and he probably occupied [sic] a cell that had previously been prepared to receive me.

Mesny was commanded to appear before Her Britannic Majesty's Supreme Court from China and Japan in Shanghai on the 8th day of October 1891 to give material evidence and testify what he knew concerning the charge that Charles Henry Allen Welch Mason of Shanghai on or about the 13th inst. [sic] did have in his possession or under his control five pounds or thereabouts of an explosive substance under circumstances that gave reasonable suspicion that he did not have it in his possession for a lawful purpose. He attended as requested with the result that Mason got nine months imprisonment, at Shanghai and to be deported from China for ever thereafter or something like that. Thus it happened, added Mesny, 'that this biter was bitton.'

Mesny added that he had suffered ever since of the evil effects of this monstrous attempt to involve him in a treasonable plot. 'I have never been able to obtain employment from the Chinese Government since those days and many of my Chinese friends have cut me dead under the impression that I must have been guilty of some collusion with Mason in some inexplicable manner.'

Thus in 1892 when I called on Earl Li Hongzhang at Tianjin he accused me of being the head centre [sic] of all the Gelao Hu men in China.

'Last winter [noted as 1892 but printed a number of years later] I was in Nanjing and in a fair way of getting a good command when Zai Jun, the Daotai of Shanghai, I believe, telegraphed to the Viceroy to beware of me as I was a dangerous character, the friend of Mason, the plotter. My own wife has told me hundreds of times that she is in dread of the awful fate that awaits me on this account and has begged me to grant her a letter of divorce and let her take the children away [sic: plural as this was printed many years later and he had by that time a second child], she has worried the life out of me during the past few months with this clamour for a divorce and I believe that she is being incited thereto by designing people who take advantage of her weakness of mind to thus annoy me, and when they have got my wife away from me by divorce she ceases to be British [i.e. post-1898], then will they do to her what they do not dare to do now, and probably kill my children.'
so that I may die childless, as I am now old and not likely to have any more children. I had never met or seen Mason before he presented himself to me as being the United States Consular Marshal at Hankou, which was a lie he being actually a Custom House Officer at Zhenjiang.'

Let us try to unravel the sorry story of Mason and Mesny. It is involved and still has aspects which are difficult to fathom. We have a number of versions or parts of it available to us but will confine ourselves to three: Mason’s own story, briefly described below, written some 30 odd years later after he had roamed the world as a vagrant worker; the letters from the Inspector General of the Imperial Customs, Sir Robert Hart; and Mesny’s bitter accusation. Mason, according to Mesny, practically ruined him and certainly caused Mesny great personal problems as he explained in great detail in his Miscellany. It is difficult to fit these three pieces of jigsaw together as there are few elements in common; however, the basic story is there. Mason bought a large quantity of foreign arms, ammunition and explosives with which to arm a rising against the Imperial government, and having been arrested in Shanghai, was tried, sentenced, gaoled and finally deported. Mesny was called as a witness but was accused to his face by the Chinese Premier, Li Hongzhang, of being the chief or very senior in the anti-Imperialist bandit body, the Elder Brother Society. This led to Mesny being ostracised by Chinese officialdom and, as his be all and end all as a business go-between was his contacts with Chinese officials, his life quietly slipped downhill thereafter.

According to records - 'Charles Welsh Mason, a young Englishman, had joined the Imperial Maritime Customs in December 1887 and was sent to Zhenjiang, an important port but a minor port on the Yangzi, as 4th assistant B, where he joined the Gelao Hui and became involved in a conspiracy to overthrow the Chinese government. In July of 1891 he took two months leave and went to Hong Kong where he purchased a quantity of arms and ammunition for the Society and arranged for it to be shipped to Shanghai and from there on to Zhenjiang. He also recruited men for the Society and bought a quantity of dynamite which he carried with him to Shanghai where he requested Commissioner Bredon of the Imperial Maritime Customs to allow it to be shipped on to Zhenjiang so that he, Mason, could uncover more of the Chinese rebels’ plans. Bredon refused the “sting” and instructed Mason to report to Hart in Beijing. Instead, Mason took a river steamer
up to Zhenjiang where he was stopped, searched and arrested for carrying arms. He was returned to Shanghai where he was tried and gaol for nine months. The Chinese were furious having wanted his head’.

Mason’s own version described his life in some detail and, in particular, his escapade in Zhenjiang and Shanghai in 1891. He began his book with a lengthy piece about him charting his aims and future some year or so after he had arrived and settled in China as a member of the Chinese Imperial Customs. He had decided to make himself king of a great country, first by forming a band of robbers to attract more desperate men and expand the band until he was strong enough to seize a city and plunder its public treasuries and arsenals. From there on he foresaw that things would move rapidly. As he wrote many years later, describing in a summary of his aims and objectives, he had decided to make himself the King of China because, he reasoned, he was in China, was popular with the Chinese, spoke their language and the Imperial Government was weak. He decided to use the Gelao Hui to further his aims. He planned it for some two years, so he wrote, and then in 1891, at the age of 25, he embarked upon his scheme. The plan was to bring a cargo of arms from Hong Kong and distribute them to Sha’s [a Gelao Hui chief] five hundred men in Zhenjiang, and they would then rise and attack the authorities.

Having purchased the rifles, he had them shipped by coastal steamer to Shanghai where, following an informer’s tip, Customs men were waiting. Mason, confronted by a Shanghai-based Customs officer, declared that he had been keeping the shipment under observation of his own volition all the way from Hong Kong. He was at first believed or at least given the benefit of the doubt, and was taken off to lunch by the Shanghai Customs Commissioner, Bredon. Mason, hating himself for being a turncoat, fled Shanghai to Zhenjiang where he was promptly arrested, and interrogated at the Customs headquarters in Shanghai by the local Chinese Imperial Daotai. Having confessed all to him but having also refused to name names, even after having been shown photographs of his mangled, tortured and decapitated Chinese friends, he was put before the British Supreme Court in Shanghai where he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a year or so in gaol followed by deportation. He never mentions Mesny, nor any aspect of the case as described by Mesny.
Mason's book is fairly thick and contains numerous anecdotes about life on the China coast which in the main have no particular relevance to his later criminal escapade. He explained that he had had no experience of criminal matters and therefore made many mistakes which, with hindsight, he should never have made. He referred also to the American consul in Zhenjiang, General Alexander C. Jones, Mason's oldest and most intimate friend in the port, a southerner who had commanded cavalry on the losing side of the Civil War; and then later, in Hong Kong, Mason assumed the role, in disguise, of an American sailor who had been beached in Hong Kong. He made a great point in his book of how Sir Robert Hart had favoured him as a good employee of the Customs Service, and that looking back he was able to see that Hart had been at pains to try to warn him off doing anything stupid. The tenor of the tale was that Hart and others, including the US consul and the British Consuls in Zhenjiang, had known that Mason was up to something even, perhaps, what he really had intended to do. Mason ends with no apologies or even any thought of the stupidity of his acts. Out of context his book would be a "cracking good yarn" but taken at face value it depicts Mason having Walter Mitty fantasies.

Hart's letters to his London representative reveal that Mason was a 4th Assistant B in Chinchiang [Zhenjiang] in 1887. By mid-1891 in a short sentence within one of his letters, not in any way connected with Mason, Hart refers to the Gelao Hui whom he did not see as particularly hostile to either foreigners or Christianity but were anti-dynastic and whose activities were incipient rebellion. In the October of the same year he first mentions the Mason affair and comments on the immense harm it had done to the Service. He attached a draft telegram in which he called Mason 'a foreign conspirator who had bought arms, seized at Shanghai, with his own money, and whether he himself [Mason] was amateur detective, conspirator, dupe or lunatic remained to be seen as also whether his disclosures, plot confederates, etc., exist elsewhere than in his own diseased imagination'. There is no indication in any of Hart's published letters that he was aware of Mason's plans despite, as we learn later, all had already been revealed to the local Customs Commissioner in Zhenjiang.

In Mason's Confessions he tells of his attempt to resign from the Customs and of Hart's reply which explained that according to the regulations this was not possible. He added half way down his letter to
Mason that ‘You [Mason] have been left at Chinkiang not because you have been overlooked, but because you have shown a particular proficiency in acquiring the Nanking dialect, and I did not wish to interrupt these studies by transferring you to another province. It is also important for me to train certain men in the intricate business of Transit Passes peculiar to Chinkiang alone, and I have been pleased with your mastery of this branch of our work’.

For the next couple of months Mason’s name crops up in some dozen or so of Hart’s letters, usually towards the end of a letter on, what were to Hart, weightier matters. Such comments included ‘The Yamen finds “Mason Affair” very handy: it can now return the Legation fire neatly after last summer’s bombardment sustained for the riots, etc.’

Mason was brought to trial in the British Supreme Court before the British Consul-General and the Shanghai Settlement’s Chief Judge, N J Hannen, on 29 October 1891, charged simply with the illegal possession of dynamite to which he pleaded guilty. Although he had declared before and after the trial that he was a member of the Gelao Hui, had acted to further its plans to overthrow its government, and had personally brought the dynamite into China with unlawful intent, these facts were not mentioned at the trial nor did the Chinese government produce any evidence. The Chinese Legation in London later exerted pressure to demand that Mason, on his release from prison in Shanghai, be tried in Hong Kong on charges of crimes and conspiracy against the Chinese state. Mason was, however, not tried again.

Hart, at one point, refers to Mason’s comrade Croskey who Mason himself mentioned in his “Confessions” as a spy, put there by the Customs Service to watch Mason and who, according to Mason, betrayed and ruined him. In practice Croskey had been promoted from the outdoor staff to the indoor, and then posted to Zhenjiang. Mason somewhat naively explained his plans and plots to Croskey shortly after they met, and Croskey informed his boss in Zhenjiang who in turn asked Croskey to learn more about Mason’s plan. Croskey resigned from the Service in the November ‘on Sir Robert Hart’s recommendation’. Croskey, according to Hart, was a promising young American citizen, a grandson of the first Sir Thos. Bazley, a Manchester MP.
The last mention of Mason in Hart's letters refers to Mason in 1897 having sent Hart his book *The Shen's Pigtail or Other Cues of Anglo-China Life*. Mason, wrote Hart, had been in low water at home and twice (Hart) had helped him. Mason was, added Hart, a clever fellow who, before the C'Kiang affair broke out had just got himself on to the ladder of advancement, and in that matter [the Mason affair] he was to Hart's mind, the victim of mixed motives - he was curious, and he wanted to serve Hart, and got into a quicksand.

Hart was much kinder to Mason that ever Mesny would be. Mesny, in his *Miscellany* some ten years later, related in great detail, both from notes and from memory, the extraordinary story related above of being persecuted by Mason.

Mesny also wrote in his *Miscellany* [6 Feb. 1896] that he had gone through the evidence [on the Mason Case] in the *British Blue Books* and could not see how any mortal could come to any other than one of two conclusions - either Mason had been paid by the Chinese to get up a bogus scare [to create anti-foreign action] or that he was a mere maniac. Nine tenths of his revelations had been unquestionably pure fabrication. At the bottom of the page Mesny added without offering any evidence, 'I am now fully satisfied that Mason was paid by the Chinese.'

On an entirely different aspect of life in Shanghai we read in a postscript from Mesny on the snobbish attitudes of the British in China that adds colour to our story. The British Consul in Shanghai held a party in May of 1899 to celebrate the birthday of Queen Victoria. Mesny wrote in his *Miscellany* that despite not receiving an invitation, a fact which confirms that he was ostracised by fellow Britons, possibly because of his wife or because he made a point of living among and mixing with Chinese, though it could also have been due to his very pro-Chinese stand, he turned up at the Consulate only to be turned away by the British police at the gate. This short note in the *Miscellany* describing the slight would appear to have been his method of getting his own back.

As with most small expatriate bodies factions existed. Mason described in his *Chinese Confessions*, the problems of a 'British bachelor in the Imperial Customs Service in Zhenjiang, a small Customs
post on the Yangzi, a place where John Mesny, William’s brother, had also been employed in the Imperial Customs. ‘If you belonged to the Duff faction you couldn’t speak to a clerk of Bean’s if you passed him on the Bund; if you belonged to the Bean faction [and Bean was the drinking, swearing, concubine-keeping Scotsman] you were taboo in three houses where there were wives, and therefore decent entertainment’s. But if you frequented Starkey, the hospitable, or Emery with his lawful Chinese wife, you were ostracised by the wealthy faction.’

Transit passes

You will recall that Mason, according to the Inspector General of Customs, had a grip on the subject of Transit Passes. E. H. Parker, who retired in 1895 to become the Professor of Chinese in Manchester, had been Consul in Zhenjiang in about 1877/78 and he explained that ‘from the first day of his arrival piles of mysterious documents came pouring into the office which demanded immediate attention. These were ‘Bonds to be signed by British merchants, guaranteeing that the goods brought down under transit-pass were their own property, and undertaking to export them at once. The chief staples were ‘donkey-skins, lily-flowers and melon-seeds’. The question he asked his predecessor during the hand-over was ‘What do we do with donkey-skins in England?’ The reply was that it was no business of the Consul: the British merchant swears they’re his, and that’s all the Consul has to do with it. After the departure of his predecessor Parker asked one of the British merchants the same question. He replied that he had not the remotest idea what was done with the donkey-skins, but that they were certainly his, ‘in a way,’ the question of joint interest being a ‘custom of the trade’. The export of donkey-skins at the time was enormous, certainly several hundred tons a week. The Daotai was a fine, tall, gentlemanly old man, who had been a Peking Foreign Office clerk. He knew nothing of anything, and only wanted peace and quietness. He, like Parker, thought that donkeys never died, neither had ever seen a dead donkey anytime during their lives, and was quite unable to explain the mystery. He added, however, that he understood from the merchants that the well-to-do-classes in England took donkey-skins and tea as a tonic. Parker told him that he did not believe a single donkey-skin ended up in England to which the Daotai added that he had a shrewd idea that melon-seeds and lily-flowers don’t go there either’.
The transit-pass business was becoming a nuisance and Parker feared that if the items being passed increased without limit then the Chinese merchants would bring the whole trade down. The Daotai suggested that as only five articles have been mentioned in the bonds Parker had seen to date the simplest thing was to permit as many donkey-skins, etc., as merchants like whether they export them or not, so long as it is limited to these five articles. Parker agreed. Some eight years later, when Parker was stationed in Korea, the then Consul in Zhenjiang wrote to solve a question which was cudgelling the legal brains of that port. The question was ‘on what principle had donkey-skins, melon-seeds and lily-flowers received favoured treatment?’ Parker replied that he had noted that during the previous ten years goat-skins had replaced donkey-skins and therefore assumed that the donkeys were now all dead. And even in 1903 Zhenjiang was the one port in China where transit-passes still flourished, even in purely Chinese hands. The mystery would seem to have been solved when Parker found an explanation in 1887, when Prince Chun, father of the Emperor, was treated for fever with boiled donkey-skin and mud taken from the bottom of a deep well.

The last days of the foreign concession at Zhenjiang

In October 1911, when the Emperor and his Court were overthrown, the Chinese Imperial Navy unit in Zhenjiang, consisting of twenty sampans each with one muzzle-loading bow gun, surrendered to the Republican revolutionaries. The Imperial Garrison of one hundred and fifty men also surrendered together with its four ancient muzzle-loading guns, all being handed over to the Republicans.

Against the backdrop of mounting nationalism and hostility towards foreigners the War Lord period from 1916 until the late 1920s meant that China was ruled by hundreds of tyrants, with private armies, some large but most were petty, whose interminable activities caused widespread suffering. They all had their individual aims as well as the common feature of such “generals” of extracting the maximum of taxes from all and sundry. Zhenjiang did not escape and suffered from occupations and incursions from the forces of various War Lords as well as widespread destruction during the mutiny by the local garrison in 1922.
During their drive north to eliminate the War Lords and unify China under the Republic, the Nationalist [KMT] forces entered Zhenjiang in March of 1927 and at the same time took over the Concession. Most westerners left for Shanghai whilst those who remained lived aboard hulks on the River or as close to the River as they could get. Even the British Consul was withdrawn to Shanghai where he continued to carry out his Zhenjiang duties. Eventually, in 1929, bowing to the inevitable the Zhenjiang Concession was finally retroceded to Chinese control and the treaty port, as such, was no more.

Gerald Yorke travelled to China in 1931 planning to spend a couple of years travelling around China and studying, to satisfy a childhood dream. Not long after his arrival, as Reuter's correspondent, he joined a party chosen by the Chinese Government to inspect the dyke systems of the Yangzi and Huai river valleys which had just been rebuilt as a result of the disastrous floods in 1931. During the tour with the party they departed from Shanghai and reached Zhenjiang early the next morning. They were greeted on the hulk by a band which played valiantly out of tune. After motoring through the town to a public garden they were entertained at a European luncheon. The weather was cold but presuming that any entertainment would be indoors an under-dressed Yorke froze in the open pavilion. A Shandong medicinal wine was served with the first course; appetising dishes came hot from the kitchen, all of which sat on the table waiting for the Chairman of the Provincial Reconstruction Committee to finish his welcoming speech. When the tepid lunch was over they were each given a pamphlet describing the flood protection work done and the reconstruction planned for the future, a perfect example of how provincial officials wasted their time and country's money by publishing, with their portraits next to the title-page, an account of rather more than they have done and of what they would like one to think they are going to do. The afternoon was spent sight-seeing at the monastery on Silver Island [Jin Shan], with its hundred or so monks and its ancient fir tree in the outer courtyard. The tree had but one branch still alive, its trunk bound in iron and its base enclosed in marble - a symbol of the passing of classical Chinese culture. The monastic treasures were all displayed, the bronze vessel from the Zhou dynasty, a drum from the Han, and a jade belt belonging to a former statesman, possibly Ming. There was also a small hexagonal column inscribed with the Daode Jing, the Daoist classic which had surprised Yorke as he had not expected to see a Daoist classic in a
Buddhist temple. The party ended the day at the sunset service at which, in the twilight, before three huge statues of the Buddha, stood the abbot surrounded by serried ranks of robed monks. The whole service was beautifully done with only one incongruity - a small boy walked past with a basket of bean curd wrapped up in a copy of the Los Angeles Daily Herald. The Inspection party continued their journey on to Nanjing that evening.

A typical announcement in the China Inland Mission journal, China's Millions, noted that ‘In August 1932 Communist activity in North Anhui had prevented four lady workers of the CIM appointed to that part of the field. They had continued their language training in Chinkiang through the summer’. The policy of the then central government of Chiang Kai-shek placed blame for any banditry on the shoulders of the Communists who were then based in Jiangxi province.

Zhenjiang was one of the cities overrun during the Japanese advance on Nanjing in the December of 1937 when the former Concession was largely destroyed in the hostilities between China and Japan. However, Zhenjiang appeared on the international scene at least once more during the run up to the Second World War. In their drive south in April 1938 the Japanese 5th Division crossed the Yangzi at several places including Zhenjiang and pushed on forcing the KMT [Chinese Nationalist] divisions along the River Huai defence line to the south to crumble.

To frustrate Japanese use of the Yangzi as a route by which to advance into central China the KMT forces sank a number of ships at strategic points including a number near Zhenjiang. To ensure that freight got through Butterfield and Swire transhipped cargo brought down from up-river on to a dedicated boat they kept moored between Zhenjiang city and the entrance to the southern part of the Grand Canal, and then once more transhipped it on to junks which carried the cargo down the Canal south to Shanghai. Parts of Zhenjiang, including the B & S office, were destroyed during the comparatively short period of heavy Japanese bombing preceding the eventual capture of the city and their advance up the River. The small British B & S staff simply moved to the APC installation outside the city.
Zhenjiang city has grown beyond all recognition. Since the Communists came to power in 1949 Zhenjiang has suffered the same trials and tribulations as all other cities in China and only within the last decade or so of the 20th century did modernisation and development take off. Today it has wide streets, modern shops, drainage and factories as well as all the benefits, or otherwise, of westernisation. Also, three historical sites have been granted Asia-Pacific Heritage Protection Awards for 2001 by UNESCO. They are the Stone Pagoda, the Guan Yin Cave and a charitable association hall, all on Xijindu Street.

NOTES

1. Zhenjiang city walls were said by the British military to have been thirty feet high and five feet thick.


3. The area selected to be the foreign settlement was chosen in 1861 and divided into lots. Ground rent was paid to the Chinese government by leaseholders to whom titles for 99 years were issued through the British Consulate. They would have expired in 1960 had not the treaty port as a whole been formally surrendered [rendited in official parlance to avoid using the word surrendered] in 1929 after it had been decided that minor concessions were more trouble than they were worth.


5. Taot'ai [Daotai] was the term for a Qing dynasty Circuit Intendant.


7. Clennell, W J (June 1922) *The Historical Setting of Chinkiang or a Bit of 'Consular Bluff'* Shanghai : New China Review : Vol IV. No. 3 [Clennell provides much greater detail than is offered here].

8. Sun Quan's city was built on Beigu Shan.
9 Li Zee-min (1950) *Chinese Potpourri*. Hong Kong: Oriental Publishers. [He relates a local Hong Kong legend about the arrival of the young emperor escorted by Lu in what is now Kowloon, fleeing ahead of the Mongols. Li claims that the headman of the Hakka walled village of Kowloon was Tan Gong who died during the last battle with the Mongol fleet when Lu, with the emperor in his arms, jumped overboard to their deaths].

10 Couling, Samuel (1917) *Encyclopaedia Sinica*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh

11 Yu Dayu is recorded as being a native of Fujian who died in 1573 having made his name as the victor in the struggle to defeat the Japanese pirates along the coast of China and in particular that of Zhejiang.

12 Yang Xiuqing as one of the leading lights of the Taiping Rebellion, to whose military genius much of the early success of the movement was due. He was known as the Taiping Eastern King [or Prince], and professed to be the spokesman of God. After the capture of Nanjing by the Taipings he established his palace in the yamen of the former Viceroy and lived in great state. By 1856 he had begun a campaign of political and religious intrigue to usurp the position of leader and to overthrow Hong Xiuquan, the founder. His plans were uncovered and he, his family and thousands of his supporters were slain by Wei Changhui, the Taiping Northern King.

13 extracted from the Transcription of the letters written from China to Milcote, Stratford on Avon by Thomas Adkins between 1855 and 1879 by courtesy of Theo Christophers of Dorridge, West Midlands: November 1999


15 Although the name was known much earlier Mao Shan has always been the centre of a Daoist sect, [see Kita Aziya gakuho, a Japanese Journal, Vol. 2].


17 Werner, E.T.C (1932) *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh


Bird, Isabella (1899) The Yangtze Valley and Beyond: London: John Murray


Simon Winchester in his book The River at the Centre of the World London: Viking: 1997, expresses grave doubts. He suggests that the anchor on display is too small for a frigate’s anchor and could well be a foreign anchor lost from a smaller vessel at some time down the years.

The Times: London: 10 March 1869

Griffith John was a pioneering London Mission Society evangelist.

A number of the headstones have been preserved in the Zhenjiang Museum housed in the former British Consulate.

Stevens, Keith (1992) A Jersey Adventurer: Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 32: 60

Lorcha - a vessel of about 100 tons burden, having a hull of European build, and generally commanded by a European captain, but rigged with Chinese masts and sails, and manned by Chinese sailors.

Mesny, writing in his Miscellanies many years later, frequently confused dates and facts.
T. Adkins joined the China Consular Service in 1854 and was the first Vice-Consul in Zhenjiang, being posted there in May of 1861, preceded by an assistant, Phillips, in the February who had been sent to the ruined city to set up the Consulate in a ruined temple. Within a week of Adkins arrival he had moved the Consulate a mile down river to safer accommodation away from the Taiping fighting. He remained there, on an island, living a monotonous life alone as Phillips had been transferred elsewhere. He left Zhenjiang in poor health in February 1865 after serving there for three and a half years to return to the UK.

This was the Cantonese title by which the bandits were known. In Mandarin it would be Shiwu Zi 'The Fifteen Sons'.

Robert Anderson Mowatt, former consular official: acting Chief Justice and Acting Consul-General Shanghai, April - October 1891.

The Elder Brother Society [Gelao Hui]: a secret society sworn to overthrow the Imperial government, the foreign Manchu Qing dynasty and replace it with a Chinese emperor.

Mesny’s son would have been about six at the time of this story, whilst his only other child, his daughter, had not yet to be born.


Transit Passes are discussed in a separate chapter below.

According to Mason in his Confession Croskey had told him that Croskey’s father was an English baronet in business in Vancouver and his mother a Spanish Creole of San Diego in California.


View across the Yangzi from the pagoda of the Jin Shan St, Zhejiang (photo courtesy of Jennifer Welch)
The Jin Shan Si above the city of Zhenjiang
Print from China-The Scenery, Architecture, and Social Habits
T. Allom: Fisher, Son & Co London 1856
Image of Chinese vedic deities on the front of the main altar in the Jin Shan Si
[see Note 19-photo by the author]
Incense burners in the courtyard of the Jin Shan Si [photo courtesy of Jennifer Welch]
The Former British Consulate in Chinkiang [Zhenjiang], now a museum [photo courtesy of Jennifer Welch]
British troops storming the West Gate of Chinkiang Fu (Zhenjiang) in 1842
Print from *China-The Scenery, Architecture, and Social Habits*
T. Allom: Fisher, Son & Co London 1856