

China in the Baha'i Writings

Exported from Holy-Writings.com on 2026-06-19 — 1 clipping

Of the efforts to transmit the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to the world's immense variety of cultures and peoples, the campaign in China has been one of the most arduous. It has been challenged by the sheer geographic and demographic expanse of the country, by problems of translation, of human resources, and by a lack of means of communication; and it has been inhibited too by the successive waves of political and social upheaval which have shaken the country across several generations. In a reference to these conditions, Abdu'l-Bahá referred to the "groaning of India and China" (WOB,17). The Bahá'í Teachings first reached China during the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they remain unknown to the masses of the world's most populous country.

An account of the Bahá'í Faith in China falls into interrelated and not necessarily distinct periods. The first, from the 1880s until the emerge of the first Chinese Bahá'ís, the second, lasting until the Communist Revolution of 1949, a third, from then until the late 1980s, and a fourth, covering the most recent years. This paper documents the efforts which have been made to promote the Bahá'í Teachings in China during these periods, on the basis of primary and secondary materials available in English.

China has been mentioned several times in Bahá'í Writings. In his early treatise Secret of Divine Civilization, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to the lack of education in China, whether spiritual or material:

It is certain that the people of China are, in the sight of God, among the most rejected of men, because they worship idols and are unmindful of the omniscient Lord... (p.26)

Today [ie, 1875] from the standpoint of population the greatest nation in the world is China, which has something over four hundred million inhabitants. On this account, its government should be the most distinguished on earth, its people the most acclaimed. And yet on the contrary, because of its

lack of education in cultural and material civilization, it is the feeblest and the most helpless of all weak nations. Not long ago, a small contingent of English and French troops went to war with China and defeated that country so decisively that they took over its capital Peking. Had the Chinese government and people been abreast of the advance sciences of the day, had they been skilled in the arts of civilization, then if all the nations on earth had marched against them the attack would still have failed, and the attackers would have returned defeated whence they came. (p.110-111)

China's lack of "material civilization", however, did not imply that China lacked in capacity, or in noble spiritual and intellectual traditions. In his later letters, published collectively as Tablets of the Divine Plan, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to the need for Bahá'ís to prepare themselves prior to travelling to China for the purpose of promoting the Bahá'í Cause: "China, China, China, China-ward the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh must march!", 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote in 1917,

Where is that holy, sanctified Bahá'í to become the teacher of China! China has most great capability. The Chinese people are most simple-hearted and truth-seeking. The Bahá'í teacher of the Chinese people must first be imbued with their spirit, know their sacred literature, study their national customs and speak to them from their own

stand-point, and their own terminologies. He must entertain no thought of his own, but ever think of their spiritual welfare. In China one can teach many souls and train and educate divine personages, each one of whom may become a bright candle of the world of humanity. Truly, I say they are free from any deceit and hypocrisies and are prompted with ideal motives.

Had I been feeling well,

I would have taken a journey to China myself! China is the country of the future. I hope the right kind of teacher will be inspired to go to that vast empire to lay the foundation of the Kingdom of God, to promote the principles of divine civilization, to unfurl the banner of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and to invite the people to the banquet of the Lord!

The Bahá'í Writings acknowledge

that Bahá'í pioneers reached China early (WOB,84). They also note the influence of Russian communism on China (WOB,181). Until a nationalist revolution in 1911, China was ruled by emperors of the Ching Dynasty. The last Emperor abdicated on 12 February 1912 and the revolutionaries declared China to be a Republic. The first President of the new Republic was Dr Sun Yat-Sen (Sun Zhongshan).

The downfall of the monarchy was

followed, however, by a period of foreign incursions into Chinese territory. Japan had occupied Taiwan in 1895, and invaded North-east China in 1931, and entered Beijing in 1937. This was also a period of internal instability and civil war, and the period 1916-1926 was characterised by the rule of

"war-lords" in different regions of the country. The ruling Kuomintang government was challenged by the rise of the Chinese Communist Party. These political foes waged civil war in the 1930s, until the Communists took power in 1949. Shoghi Effendi described the fall of the Chinese Dynasty as one of the world-wide events of "divine chastisement" afflicting the countries of the world since the advent of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.

Early Bahá'í travellers

Abu'l-Fadl

The Persian Bahá'í scholar

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani is reported to have travelled in the 1880s through Russia to China and Kashgaria (Chinese Turkistan), but little is known about his activities in detail. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is reported to have expressed a desire to visit Kashgar, and even to have secured a passport with the intention of setting out on this journey alone, but to have been prevented from leaving Akka by Ibrahim Pasha.

In 1902 an unnamed Persian

Bahá'í was posted Shanghai to represent in 'Ishqábád-based business. This may have been Mirza Abul Badhi, whom American Bahá'ís Mason Remey and Howard Struven met in Shanghai when they visited China from late 1909 until January 1910, during their world-wide tour of Bahá'í communities. From Burma Charles Mason Remey wrote to Mrs H.C. Wagner:

"Shanghai in China

was our next field for doing a little work. There

interest in the teachings is just beginning. While there we met Mirza Abdul Baghi (pronounced baj-jy) one of the firm Persian Bahá'ís, who has lived here for several years past.... At last, after visiting various ports, we found ourselves settled in the Mashrak-el-Azkar, at the above address, amid the Bahá'í friends here in Rangoon." see alsoGPB 261.

About 1914 Mirza Mehdi Rashti, Ali-Hasanoff, and Husayn Uskuli moved to Shanghai as tea-merchants for their "Omid Trading Company", although only the latter remained after the outbreak of war. Mr Uskuli (Mírzá H.A. Ouskouli) had first arrived from Ashqabad in 1915. When his wife died in Ashqabad in 1923 brought some of his six children to China. These included Ridvaniyyih and her husband S.A. Sulaimani, who established an importing business, and remained until 1950. After a period in Iran they pioneered at the commencement of the World Crusade to Formosa (Taiwan). Mr Uskuli remained in Shanghai for all years, except 1918-1922, until his passing there in 1956.[Suliemani, 1970 #419] Another Persian Bahá'í, Mirza Hossein Touty, resided in Shanghai in 1918-19, In January 1921 he left China, living for periods in the Russian seaport of Vladivostok and then the southern Philippines province of Mindanao, before returning to live for an extended period in Shanghai.

A number of Bahá'í women also visited China in these early years. In the course of four visits, Martha Root and spoke in some 100 universities, colleges and schools (noted in GPB 386-7). She was joined on one of her visits (as described below), by Agnes Alexander, who was resident in

Japan.

Chinese abroad

Since the Chinese constitute one of the most widespread racial diasporas, it is not surprising that a number of Chinese nationals, and others who were ethnically Chinese, encountered the Bahá'í Teachings while resident or travelling in other countries. Some Chinese attended Bahá'ís meetings while in Washington for a Peace Conference in February 1922. Bahá'ís were also in contact with Chinese scholars attending several North American universities.

T.J. Chwang, who is regarded as the first Chinese believer, attended Bahá'í meetings in Chicago and returned to Shanghai in 1916. Another early adherent, Mr Chan S. Liu, heard of the Bahá'í Faith while studying at Cornell University about 1921. He returned to Canton to become President of the Agricultural College at Sun Yat Sen University, and was later appointed director of the Bureau for the Improvement of Sericulture, Department of Reconstruction, Honglok. His article, "A Chinese view of the Bahá'í Cause", appeared in Bahá'í World vol.v 1932-1934, p.665-6. Mr Liu thus came from an educated family. His relative C.T. Wong, as reported at the time, had been Minister for Foreign Affairs "during the recent trouble in Manchuria".

Japan and Korea

Other early contributions to the spreading of the Bahá'í message in China came from Japan and Korea. In 1917 a Korean Bahá'í translated a pamphlet into Chinese, which was published by the Bahá'ís in Shanghai, and

the "No.9" compilation was also translated and published by 1926 (as The Bahá'í Cause in China), by the American Bahá'ís. About 1922 Agnes Alexander introduced the Bahá'í principles to a group of Chinese students, including some from the Peking Women Teachers' College, during their study visit to Japan.

II

The first visit by Martha
Root

Perhaps the first concerted public campaign to promote the Bahá'í Teachings in China was that by Martha Root in 1923. For six months she taught advanced English at the Peking Esperanto College. She was joined in China for some of this time by Ida Finch. According to Star of the West report Miss Root had been "in Peking studying the life of the great and ancient civilization of China and preparing for her lectures and journeys in behalf of the message of world-unity." As was the case when she passed through or resided for a time in other countries, articles on Miss Root and the Bahá'í Faith soon appeared in the local press. The North China Standard for Tuesday July 3, 1923, printed a news item about `Abdu'l-Bahá carried by Asiatic News Agency Services. An extensive interview with Miss Root appeared in The North China Standard, Tuesday, September 25, 1923. October 4, 1923, The Peking Daily News carried a report "Another Religion Comes to China" and the North China Standard for the same day carried a similar item under the heading "Miss Root Gives talk on Bahá'í 'Revelation'". On 12 January 1924 The China Press advertised a talk Miss Root was soon to

present before Shanghai's Esperantists.

After a devastating earthquake hit Japan Agnes Alexander and her sister joined Miss Root, and travelled with her for the next three months, visiting many cities in the north of China, including Yentai (Chefoo), the birthplace of Confucius. met her in Shanghai, and accompanied her from there back to Japan. Miss Root spoke at several colleges in Wuhan, with the assistance of Mr K.T. Yang. The three women then travelled by rail through Nanking to Shanghai. At the end of December 1924 the Alexander sisters sailed for Hawaii, while Miss Root remained in Shanghai another two and a half months.

In 1923 Miss Root introduced the Bahá'í Teachings to a number of significant public officials. These included, in Canton, President of China, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, who requested that he be sent Bahá'í books. In Shanghai, she met Dr Y.S. Tsao, President of Tsing Hua University, who in 1930, as described below, became an active member of the Bahá'í community. Fung Yan L. Folk, another educated individual in Canton, wrote to Miss Root on 11 April 1924:

I want to assure you that during your brief visit in Canton you have sown seeds for the Bahá'í Cause which, in due time, will bring forth a thousand folds. You have certainly given a new impetus to my religious life. I have found in the Bahá'í teachings that something which I have hitherto sought for in vain. I find that it satisfied both the requirements of the intellect and the longings of the

heart.

The Bahá'í movement

appeals to me in that it is a movement for the doing away of all kinds of prejudice, which is so detrimental to all kinds of thinking both spiritually and intellectually and for the ushering in of the new era of universal brotherhood through the spirit of good will.

I like the Bahá'í

movement, in that it gives one the freedom to express one's religious life, in whatever way is most suited to one's nature and thinking, so long as it is for the fullest realization of self, in the attainment of the chief good of humanity.

The 1930 visit of Martha Root

When Miss Root returned to China

from Hong Kong in September 1930 she visited Canton, Shanghai, and Nanking, renewing old friendships, and taking up new opportunities. Her correspondence with at this time indicates the considerable impact her public appearances and private activities as a teacher of Esperanto had on numerous individuals. K T. Yang, in Shanghai, who had assisted her work in Wuhan in 1924, and who had assisted in translating copies of her talks into Chinese, wrote:

How glad I was, you may

imagine, when I found your name printed under the subject. How do you do? I hope you are always in your good health.

You are really a wonderful lady. You work diligently and permanently for your mission: for peace of the world, for spreading of Esperanto and for propaganda of your religion. I think you have certainly made some great advances for your movement. Could you kindly tell me some interesting news concerning your work during these years?

Miss Root arrived in Canton in September 1930 to find a well-planned itinerary. The Bahá'ís assisted her in meeting the Governor of Kwangtung Province, Chen Ming-Shu, and made plans for her to speak on radio, lecture at the University and other higher institutions, and meet several newspaper editors. She lectured on a Tuesday at the Government College of Telegraphy; on Wednesday at the Royal Asiatic Society (on "The Bahá'í Movement in Five Continents"); on Saturday morning at the Shanghai College (on "Bahá'í Scientific Proofs of Life after Death") and Saturday evening, at the Royal Asiatic Society lecture room, and under the auspices of the Esperanto Society (on "Esperanto as the Universal Auxiliary Language"), and late Monday afternoon another lecture at the Royal Asiatic Society lecture room. These meetings were anticipated in reports in the Shanghai Times and the China Press on 19 and 23rd September, while other reports appeared subsequently.

Similar press coverage appeared prior to Miss Root's two week visit to Shanghai. The "Day by Day column" of the North China Daily News announced in September:

"All those interested in the Bahá'í Movement will learn with interest that Miss Martha L. Root, a New York journalist, who has just made a four months journey through Persia and has been giving a series of lectures throughout South China on the Movement, will arrive in Shanghai some time in the middle of this month."

The Shanghai Bahá'ís arranged for Miss Root to lecture three times in the National Geographic Society Hall. The most significant result of her visit, however, was acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith by Dr Y.S. Tsao and his Swedish born wife, Eileen Tsao. As already noted, Miss Root had met the Tsaos during her visit in 1923. Agnes Alexander, who came to Shanghai from Tokyo "for a few days" to assist Martha Root, later recalled:

Martha bravely went out to the College without any previous introduction, but was received most kindly by Dr. Tsao and his wife, who is Swedish by birth, but American naturalized. Afterwards Dr. and Mrs. Tsao entertained us in their home and invited me to speak in the Auditorium of the College on the Bahá'í Faith to the whole student body, and a second time he called a meeting for any students who might be interested to meet and talk with us."

Martha Root described Dr Tsao, a

graduate of Yale University, as "one of the keenest educationists in China and a distinguished writer of Chinese affairs". His contribution to the development of Bahá'í literature in China is discussed further below. Following her visit, meetings were being held twice each month, on Saturdays between five and seven pm. The Bahá'í community included the seven members of the Uskuli family, plus four others: Miss Cooper, Mr and Mrs Tsao, and Mr Touty. Photos of the Bahá'ís of Shanghai appear in Bahá'í World 1928-1930, p.361; 1930-1932, p.421. The Tsao's may be in a picture of Bahá'í World Vol IV. & Vol VII. There were other declarations in Shanghai during Martha Root's 1930 visit. These included Mr Chan S. Liu, of Canton. Sometime after the tragic death of her husband, Mrs Eileen Tsao moved to Hong Kong, and later to Sweden.

Nanking

After visiting Shanghai, Miss Root travelled with the Sulaimanis to Nanking. She stayed at the Yengtze Hotel. In one week she lectured at Nanking Central University [Gin Ling? as mentioned by Sulaimani] to an audience of more than two thousand students, interviewed the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Education, as well as Dr Paul Linebarger, the legal advisor of the Chinese National Government, and several other state officials. Her 45-minute speech at Nanking Central University on Monday, 6 October, was part of a memorial service. She also met leaders of the Y.M.C.A., and addressed that group, as well as several colleges and other schools. Three thousand small booklets were later distributed to these groups.

Contact with ethnic Chinese also occurred in other countries. In 1932 members of the Chinese Club

in Los Angeles, including president J. Kam Machida (the wife of a Japanese), in addition to Japanese and American Indians, attended interracial dinners sponsored by the Bahá'ís of that city (Louis Gregory, "Racial Amity in America: An Historical Overview", The Bahá'í World Vol. VII, 1936-1938, p.663). In Hawaii, in May 1937, Martha Root spoke with Professor Shao Chang Lee, Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy at the University of Hawaii. Lee had first encountered the Bahá'í teachings in San Francisco in 1919, when asked to lecture on "Chinese Philosophy" at the Bahá'í Centre. He knew his friend and teacher Dr Tsao to be "a great exponent of the Bahá'í teachings in China" and had discussed the Faith when visiting him in 1928, 1933, and 1935.

Kai Tai Chen:

Since the Great War has come to an end every many seems to realize the demoniacal nature of fighting. The voice of peace is now heard on all sides. Men are doing their utmost to prevent a future war. But in order to do this effectively the best method is to spread abroad the spirit and teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Mrs Keith Ransom-Kehler

The noted American Bahá'í traveller Keith Ransom-Kehler visited China in August 1931. Although different in temperament to Martha Root, she had a similar capacity to attract interest in the Bahá'í Faith. On

the boat from Japan, for instance, she met Rev. K.T. Chung, and discussed the Bahá'í principles with him thoroughly. In November 1931, as noted above, Rev. Chung contributed the preface to Tsao's translation of Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era. A.M. Suleimani reported to Ella Robarts in Green Acre:

We...had a very beautiful time last week when Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler on her way from Japan to Australia passed through Shanghai and was amongst us for one day, delivering gladdening news of Bahá'í activities in Japan and other lands.

In Shanghai Ransom-Kehler broadcast on radio, delivered public lectures, and met prominent educators and officials. From newspaper publicity in Australia, we know that Mrs Ransom-Kehler visited Dr Tsao and Mr C.S. Liu.

Publications

In 1926 M.H.A. Ouskouli was establishing a magazine, to have articles in Persian, English and Chinese. A number of Chinese writers were contributing articles to Bahá'í publications. James Y. C. Yen contributed "The Intellectual Shock in China", *Star of the West* vol 19; and "Mass Education Movement in China", *Star of the West* October 1925, 16:7. Several Bahá'í books were published in Shanghai in the early 1930s. These included *Light of the Age* (1926). Published in 1931 were *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, *The Most Great Peace*, *Paris Talks*, *The Goal of A New World Order*. *The Valuable Contribution of the Bahá'í Cause (I & II)*

(1932), and Kitab-i-Iqan be translated into Chinese. An index to Some Answered Questions was published in 1933, and Some Answered Questions, which Shoghi Effendi had asked Chan Liu to translate about 1933, was printed in Shanghai in 1940.

Liu explained when writing to Martha Root that when Shoghi Effendi had asked him to undertake translation of Some Answered Questions, he found that Dr Y.S. Tsao had already commenced the task, so had not wished to duplicate the effort. Dr Tsao was tragically killed in a car accident, however, and it is believed that up to ten chapters of completed translation were lost. Mr Uskuli had then arranged for someone unfamiliar with the Bahá'í teachings to undertake the translation, and was arranging for its printing without having its accuracy checked. This same letter Martha Root sent on to Roy Wilhelm, with her added note explaining that whereas Dr Tsao was a scholar, who "insisted on perfection", Mr Uskuli was a "devoted Bahá'í who does the best he knows". She asked that the question concerning the quality of the translation not be brought up with Mr Uskuli, as it was already with the press. Besides, he had been ill, and she did not wish to worry him.

Canton

By the mid 1930s there were active Bahá'í communities in Canton, and Shanghai.

Chan S. Liu resided at 6 Park Sui Fiong Tai Tong Street Old City, Canton. In 1935 he translated some Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, including Ishraqat, which his colleague Mr Chow assisted in refining. In 1936 Liu translated the Hidden Words, also corrected by Mr Chow. He got Mr

Liang, chief secretary of the Legislative Yuan, to write the introduction. Although Liu was occupied in his profession in the silk industry, he looked forward to a time when he could devote all his time to translating Bahá'í literature, which he felt his country was much in need of. He printed 2,000 copies of *The Hidden Words* in March 1937, and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* was ready for the press at the time war broke out in August 1937.

Martha Root explained to Roy Wilhelm that:

Chan was so particular about his own [translation] that he sent "*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*" to Peiping to be looked over carefully by some great scholars. Now it is ready to be printed.

In August 1937 Mr Liu's wife and children departed Canton to stay for several months with her parents at Kweilin, the capital of Kwangsi. The atmosphere in Canton was intense, as the government was preparing to resist attack from Japan. Liu was extremely pressed for time, but was undertaking a little translation work each morning before leaving home. Martha Root knew the value of Liu's contribution, and knew of her own illness. She urged Roy Wilhelm to stay in close touch with him. In 1939 she made inquiries on his behalf concerning migration to Australia. By 1938 Mr Liu was in Hong Kong, but by 1940 was back in Kweilin, Kwongsi, where he seems to have been in the employment of the Provincial Government. In 1944 he was at 56 Fu Hing Rd, Shamean, Canton.

Shanghai

In 1926-30 the Uskuli family resided at 41 a Kiangse Road. There were seven family members. Uskuli, two daughters and a son, a son-in-law, and his mother-in-law. Martha Root reported to Roy Wilhelm in 1937 that Mr Uskuli spoke very little English, and no Chinese, but was "eager to serve and he only lives for the Cause." During 1934-36 the Shanghai Bahá'ís maintained a library at a room at the Chinese Y.M.C.A. (BW34-36, p.79)

In 1934 the American painter Mark Tobey visited Shanghai, to visit his friend Teng Kuei, who had studied at the University of Washington in 1923. The city, wrote Arthur L. Dahl, "gave Mark fresh impressions of the energy, the fascinating lines and textures to be found in the streets of a cosmopolitan city, and also the characteristics of Chinese life, culture and art." While in China Tobey had met Dr Tsao, and on his return to the United States had arranged for a compilation on the Bahá'í approach to economics to be forwarded to him.

Another who visited the Shanghai Bahá'ís at some time was Prof. Raymond Frank Piper, chair of the department of Philosophy at Syracuse University, who had heard of the Faith in Hawaii during a 17 month journey around the world studying religion, and whose essays on the principle of unity as found in the Bahá'í Writings later appeared in the journal World Order.

Some significant Chinese Bahá'ís

Y.S. Tao's article, "The Unity of Civilization" had already appeared in Bahá'í

Yearbook 1925-26 (p141-7). At this time, however, Tsao firmly believed in the suitability of the Bahá'í teachings for China, but does not seem to have been familiar with the contribution to be made through application of its' administrative order. Tsao wrote:

The Bahá'í revelation is not an organization. The Bahá'í Cause can never be confined to an organization. The Bahá'í revelation is the spirit of this age. It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahá'í Cause is an inclusive movement; the teachings of all religions and societies are found here (p.146)

suggesting the influence either of early communications to Western audiences by Abdu'l-Bahá, based on a simplified view of its administrative requirements, or else the influence of conversations with Martha Root, who also sometimes introduced the Bahá'í Teachings in these terms. Moreover, Tsao's position in China was remote from the expanding Bahá'í communities in North America and elsewhere, was not conducive to see the emergence of Bahá'í administrative institutions in other countries. There were, additionally, Bahá'ís in other parts of the world at this time who promoted the idea that adoption of Bahá'í belief freed them from what they regarded as the limitations of "organised religion". Thus Horace Holley reported in his "Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities in the East and West" for the period 1930-1932 that:

The Cause in China has not yet developed to the point of elective Assemblies; the activities are maintained through the devoted loyalty of a few, but by these few knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh has been made to penetrate far into the consciousness of the educated class.

Dr Tsao was also active in writing for the press in China, and in translation of `Bahá'í Writings and other materials into Chinese. An article by Tsao that appeared in The North China Daily News in 1931, for instance, was forwarded by A.M. Suleiman to The Bahá'í Magazine. The Bahá'í World 1932-1934 reported:

Valuable translations by Dr. Tsao of Shanghai into Chinese included "The Tablet of Iqán", "Paris Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá," and the Index to "some Answered Questions," the book itself being under way in a translation expected to appear in the near future. The same faithful worker has given Chinese renderings to a number of articles and pamphlets, among them 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to the Committee on a Durable Peace, the Hague. (p.29)

In his essay "The Bahá'í Cause in China", which appeared in Bahá'í World 1930-1932, Dr. Tsao explained the relationship between the the

Bahá'í principle of the common origin of religions was in harmony with Chinese belief. He believed the Chinese were looking for a new formulation of the Confucian teaching, "Rectify the heart, ennoble the person, regulate the family, rule the country and pacify the world", and believed it had been provided in part by Sun Yat Sen's "three principles", Nationalism, Democracy and Socialism. Tsao felt, however, that Dr Sun's formulation "The People's State, People's Rights and People's Livelihood", compared unfavourably as a "philosophy of life to regulate human behaviour", and that the Bahá'í principles, because they are based on universalism, fill China's needs:

To a real Bahá'í believer, the sight of human sufferings, ignorance and poverty will redouble his efforts to work for their improvement. Vainglory, pride and selfish gains will naturally be banished from one's thoughts. China decidedly needs such men and everybody knows it and feels it keenly. If the Bahá'í Cause can supply such men, China will accept this Cause willingly and eagerly.

In 1930 Dr Tsao had offered to translate J.E. Esslemont's work Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era into Chinese, and advanced the project quickly. In correspondence with American Bahá'í Victoria Bedikian in November 1931 Dr Tsao indicated that the increasingly difficult conditions being experienced by the Chinese people, and the positive response to the Bahá'í Teachings that they demonstrated whenever he spoke

of them, encouraged him to complete the work, which was at that time undergoing final revision. A proof copy had been sent to Agnes Alexander to assist her in the translation into Japanese. Shoghi Effendi sent a donation toward the costing of printing. The Reverend K.T. Chung wrote an introduction. "The translator of this book is neither a priest nor a theologian," Tsao wrote of himself in its introduction,

"but he believes

religion to be education in the broadest sense of the world, especially as the relation of religion to the advance of civilization is so intimately intertwined.

When the Bahá'í Cause was first introduced to him, he at once realized how broad and deep the principal beliefs are and how befitting they are to the present world.

Several years ago in an address on "The Unity of Civilization and the Universality of Religion" given before a liberal Christian gathering, the twelve principles of the Bahá'í Faith were read to them and they at once understood that these principles are in harmony with the ideals of unity and universalism.

Patriotic leaders like Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and General Chen Ming-chu who heard and read about the Bahá'í beliefs have also declared them to be highly desirable to the present needs of China and the world. They have all realized the existing conditions of social life in China and the weaknesses of human nature, so it is their belief that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh as far as they know, will be able to advance and expedite the progress of civilization, while such broad and noble principles can

never produce any harm.

In 1932 a letter by Tsao appeared in Prof.

Pritam Singh's *The Bahá'í*

Week. Tsao reported that his translation of

Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* was 'being revised

for the last time and will soon be in print in the Chinese

language'.

In the introduction to a

pamphlet, *Some Principles of the Bahá'í Faith* Tsao

explained that he had concluded that the Bahá'í teachings could

"regenerate China". There seems to be evidence that

Tsao was in contact with senior public officials in different

parts of China who were sympathetic to Bahá'í ideals. Ho Chien,

for example, then governor of Hunan Province, contributed an

article to *World Order* after having read a copy of the

North American magazine, which Tsao translated into English. It

was this conviction that spurred Tsao to spend his evenings in

translation work. Tsao had translated *Some Questions Answered*,

part of which was destroyed during the printing process. Tsao died before

being able to retranslate the destroyed passages. Mr Ouskuli

approached I.S. Shen to complete the translation, which was

completed by May 193(8?). (BW38-40, p567, cf *Bahá'í News* 88:8;

109,6). Dr Tsao was killed in a car accident on 8 February 1937,

shortly before the arrival of Martha Root for what was to be her

final visit to China.

Martha Root's fourth visit -

1937

Shanghai

Martha Root arrived in Shanghai from Japan in July 1937, and remained there until August 17. Tony Seto had written for her a letter of introduction to Dr Fong F. Sec, of the Commercial Press in Shanghai, who had studied in America, and who Seto had had met in Honolulu some years earlier in the home of Leonard Fong.

She met Walter H. Chen, for twenty years the editor of the North China Daily News and author of The New Life Movement. Chen, who read the Hidden Words (perhaps given him by Root?) was a friend of Generalissimo and Mrs Chiang Kai-Shek.

After leaving China Miss Root sent copies of her book, Tahireh the Pure to H. Touty, with a request that he forward one to the editor of the North-China Daily News. A review appeared several months later, which Touty forwarded to Root together with his own comments.

Hostilities between Japan and China commenced at 10 am on the morning of August 13. As the phones were no longer working Mr Touty sent a note to Miss Root urging her not to worry, as British, French and American forces had landed to protect the settlement. He asked if there was anything he could do for her. On the 17th Miss Root departed as a refugee on the steamship President Jefferson, which reached Manila on August 20, five minutes before the occurrence of the worst earthquake in that city in a century.

Nanking

Tony Seto, then in San

Francisco, provided Martha Root with an introduction to his cousin, Dr and Mrs Ping Ling in Nankin. Miss Root was "native American," he wrote to them, "but is a world citizen and a lover of humanity. She is now on a lecture tour around the world for the Bahá'í Faith." Seto deemed it a personal favour if they could "show her the points of interest in and around Nanking", or better still, if they could "arrange to have her speak before the organisations there".

1940-1953

Following the second world war several individuals who had become Bahá'ís in North America returned to China. These included Mr Chu Yao Lung, Mr M.S. Yuan and Mr Tien Lee Chien. Mr Chu resided in Nanking and introduced his neighbour Mr H.C. Yuan to the Faith. All four migrated to Taiwan as Chinese government employees in 1949.

At about the end of 1945 Bernice Wood, who had become a Bahá'í in Washington DC in October, arrived in Chungking to work as a medical administration assistant with the UNRRA. After two months she transferred to Shanghai, where she resided for the next three and a half years. By 1949 there were Bahá'ís in Canton, Nanking & Shanghai.

Canton

In Canton Miss Root met Fuey

Ling, a teacher. In January 1939 Ling wrote to Root to say she was now in charge of a normal school with 300 students, and that she often thought of Miss Root and her "inspiring personality and of the cause you are trying to promote and spread throughout the world".

— China in the Baha'i Writings (Used by permission of the curator)