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Introduction by John Price

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Introduction by John Price, University of Victoria, British Columbia

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John D. Meehan's new volume presents a grand panorama of Canada-China relations covering nearly one hundred years to 1952, focusing almost exclusively on the stories of Canadian missionaries, traders, and officials living in Shanghai. Meehan's thesis, as suggested in his prologue, is that Canadians', notably French Canadians', "experience of colonialism" put them in a unique position, allowing them to transcend their normative status as British subjects with all the colonial privileges this afforded, and predisposed them to be more critical of the colonial 'Shanghai mind,' which was so ignorant of Chinese conditions than otherwise might have been expected. He concludes, however, that despite the best efforts of some, Canada-China relations continued to be marked by an asymmetry in diplomacy, trade and immigration.

The storehouse of scholarship on Canada's early relations with China is slim indeed and, as the reviewers in this Roundtable note, Meehan has helped to fill this void by bringing together in a single volume many Canadian voices of bygone days. The scope of his mainly Canadian sources is impressive. What is unique about this monograph is Meehan's inclusion of the voices of francophone Canada and the anecdotal nuggets that flash across our screen as we rush through a century of complicated interactions in Shanghai. He includes vibrant characters in cameo appearances, such as Canada's first commercial agent, H.J. Craig, who turned out to be a speculator and arms merchant; Harry Hussey, an architect present at the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, who interviewed Yuan Shih Kai, became an aid to the Chinese delegation to the Washington conference of 1921-22 and assisted Chinese representations to the Lytton Commission in 1932; and Morris Cohen, a bodyguard to Sun Yat-sen. Written in an accessible style, it is indeed compelling at times.

All three reviewers express strong support for Meehan's study. Serge Granger lauds the study for illustrating a profound change in Canadian attitudes towards China and suggests that it is the best study to date. But all three reviewers also express certain reservations. Stephanie Bangarth points to a missed opportunity to explore questions of race and racism. Laura Madokoro seconds the view that this was a missed opportunity to draw conclusions regarding a possible transference of "colonial mentalities by those subjected to it." And Granger points to Meehan's exclusion of Chinese-language sources.

I can only concur with these points. It is entirely appropriate and indeed laudable that the author systematically explored and wrote up the stories that he found. However, I can't help wonder whether Meehan has not over-reached and conflated Canadian's early relations with China with Canadian experiences in Shanghai. For Shanghai, with its large colonial apparatus was hardly representative of China as a whole at this time. Were the Shanghai experiences of Canadians particular to that specific location? How did Canadian experiences in Shanghai compare say, to those of missionaries in Chengdu? Or to those in southern China? Was there a difference with attitudes of Britishers in Shanghai? There is little comparative framework. Instead *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* presents some wonderful stories within the framework of a traditional, nationalist 'colony to nation' narrative. Canadians in China are inscribed in this narrative as generally progressive, ready

to adapt to the tide of Chinese anti-imperialism unlike the insidious ‘Shanghailanders’ determined to protect colonial privileges. But as Laura Madokoro hints at in her review, the story may be somewhat more complex. To be sure, Canada did move from ‘colony to nation’ but this does not necessarily imply an end to, or even a substantial moderation of Canadian colonialism or racism. No doubt some Canadians in Shanghai reflected and supported Chinese demands for an end to certain aspects of colonial power. But that was to be expected. Their position in an imperial periphery required accommodation. As Bangarth points out, the Canadian Association of Shanghai may have advocated ending the Chinese Exclusion Act, yet it still barred Chinese Canadians from the Canadian Club. Here indeed was an opportunity to probe the complexities and contexts of race and coloniality.

So, was there a real transformation in Canadian views of China? Yes--and no. Even though the Chinese Exclusion Act was abolished in 1947, Prime Minister Mackenzie King and others remained determined to keep Canada ‘white’, a proposition that anchored Canadian diplomacy with China from the time of King’s China trek in 1909, through the war and into the 1960s. Some Canadians disagreed with anti-Asian exclusion, but not many. Certainly King was not one of them. What he worried about was whether exclusion was transparent and thus would embarrass the affected countries.

The author’s contention that Chinese Canadians, numbering about 200 in Shanghai by 1949, blended into the contact zone “regrettably leaving behind few traces” deserves scrutiny. To be sure, many sources tend to exclude or downplay the stories and activities of Chinese Canadians, so there can indeed be a problem of sources when trying to document their roles historically. Recognizing this impediment is one thing. However, to suggest that they have left few traces is perhaps going too far. Sun Yat-sen’s former residence in what had been the French concession is now a museum. The museum’s displays and education materials highlight the fact that it was Chinese Canadians who financed the building of this residence. And T.C. Davis, Canada’s ambassador in China from 1947 to 1949 especially noted the presence of Chinese Canadians who attended a reception he gave at the Cathay Hotel: “You would swear in talking to one of them that you were speaking to a Canadian of Anglo Saxon extraction.”<sup>1</sup> As Meehan himself attests, Chinese Canadians in post-1945 Shanghai represented close to one-half of all Canadians in the city. Their stories deserve due attention.

John Meehan has given us a book well worth reading but I hope this Roundtable will also be the stimulus for a long overdue discussion, at least in Canada, about the challenges of writing the history of Canada-Asia relations. How do we position histories that are based on a select cohort of subjects? Can we afford any more to write non-inclusive histories that risk reproducing a past that we have supposedly transcended? What does it mean to write transnational history in Canada? How do we effectively deal with questions of race and empire given that EuroCanadian policymakers went to great lengths to obscure their racism at the same time they fought to secure and preserve a white Canada? Given the linguistic

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<sup>1</sup> As cited in John Price, *Orienteering Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 196.

challenges of incorporating non-English language sources, can the individual monograph continue to be the standard for historians in Canada? Or should we be constructing multi-lingual research consortia with all the challenges that such co-operation entails? Hopefully the discussion of *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* can help us address these issues.

### Participants:

**John Meehan**, S.J. has written on the history of Canada's relations with East Asia and is the author of *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-1941* (UBC Press, 2004), which won the Prime Minister's Award from the Canadian embassy in Tokyo, and *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai: Canada's Early Relations with China, 1858-1952* (UBC Press, 2011). Currently the Eaton lecturer at Queen's University, Belfast, he has taught Canadian history, Asian Studies and missionary history at Campion College at the University of Regina. His most recent work involves the work of Jesuit missionaries in China and the resolution of the Chinese rites controversy. He has recently been appointed the next president of Campion College.

**John Price** is an Associate Professor of Japanese and Asian Canadian history at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. His recent monograph, *Orienteering Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* was published by UBC Press in 2011 (see the H-Diplo roundtable on the book at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIII-34.pdf>). He is currently writing with his colleague in China, Ningping Yu, a biography of Victoria Chung, a Chinese Canadian medical missionary who worked in China from 1923 until her death in 1966.

**Stephanie Bangarth** is an Associate Professor of History at King's University College at Western University and a Faculty Research Associate in the Collaborative Graduate Program in Migration and Ethnic Relations at Western University. She is the author of *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending North American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942-48* (UBC Press, 2008) and of a number of articles and chapters on Canadian immigration history and human rights activism, among others. Her current book project in progress will be titled *My Brother's Keeper: F. Andrew Brewin and the Making of Modern Canada*.

**Serge Granger** is Associate Professor at the École de politique appliquée at Université de Sherbrooke, Canada, and teaches international relations. He is particularly interested in Sino-Indian relations and the impact of the emergence of these two countries on Quebec. Visiting Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and visiting researcher at the University of Baroda and the University of Pune, he is the author of the book *Le Lys et le Lotus, Les relations du Québec avec la Chine de 1650 à 1950*, he is preparing a second book on Québec-India relations.

**Laura Madokoro** is a Trudeau Scholar SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow currently based at Columbia University. She completed her Ph.D. in History at the University of British Columbia in 2012.

The 1990s and the end of the Cold War ushered in new approaches to the study of diplomatic history, principally due to the accessibility of new archives in previously dark corners behind the Iron Curtain. The new diplomatic history also expanded the range of research beyond the Cold War and traditional concerns with power in politics into questions of race, gender and culture, among others, by using approaches from other disciplines. As Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Michael Hogan have observed, such developments have had the effect of a renewed approach to the examination of American foreign experiences in particular.<sup>1</sup>

Cultural diplomacy or the “soft” diplomacy of trade, investment, and missionary work has added a new element to the study of power in the international arena. Moreover, as diplomatic historians have embraced the role of ideas and culture in foreign policy, alongside the broader trend of transnationalism, the impact of other fields of history, notably social history and its focus on ‘race’, class and, gender, has come to reshape and reframe the study of American foreign policy in particular. Racialized perceptions are crucial in shaping foreign policy and there exists an impressive array of literature by American scholars that attests to this. In *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American-Japanese Relations*, Joseph Henning notes that “How we define others ... says much about how we define ourselves. Much of our own identity is invested not only in the qualities we ascribe to our particular people, but also in the allegedly unchanging differences between these qualities and those we ascribe to other peoples.”<sup>2</sup> Such trends have only just begun to affect the study of Canadian foreign policy. John Price’s *Orienteering Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* represents one such initial, and provocative, foray.<sup>3</sup>

It is through a mix of both ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ approaches in diplomatic history that John Meehan’s *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* figures in this review. In his examination of Canada’s early relations with China between 1858 to 1952, Meehan focusses his lens on the Canadians in Shanghai in this period – the missionaries, traders, government officials and others - who came to Shanghai for opportunity, exploitative and otherwise, throughout the shifting socio-political changes that would come to define China. That the book places these

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, “Diplomatic History and the Meaning of Life: Toward a Global American History,” *Diplomatic History* 21 (Fall 1997): 499-518; Michael J. Hogan, “State of the Art: An Introduction,” in Hogan, ed., *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations Since 1941* (University of Cambridge Press, 1995): 3-19.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph M. Henning, *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American-Japanese Relations* (New York University Press, 2000): 172

<sup>3</sup> John Price, *Orienteering Empire: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* (University of British Columbia Press, 2011). *Orienteering Empire* was the recent subject of a previous H-Diplo roundtable. See H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews, Vol. XIII, No. 34 (2012), <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIII-34.pdf>.

individuals at the heart and at the periphery of these fluctuations is a major strength. Meehan weaves the stories of those Canadians in Shanghai, along with the broader narrative of Canadian politicians and bureaucrats 'back home' within the context of Canada's evolving and at the same time, devolving, relationship with China. Drawing on personal memoirs, letters, fictional and non-fictional accounts of traders, missionaries, and teachers, among others, and with a keen eye for description and a sense of place that can only come from someone who has clearly visited Shanghai (as Meehan notes in his Acknowledgements, xi), *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* reads as part diplomatic history and part travelogue. The stories of such personages as the 'entrepreneur' Morris "Two-Gun" Cohen, the Jesuit priest Francis "Shanghai Mac" McDonald, the Canadian trade commissioner L. Moore Cosgrave, and the Protestant missionaries Donald and Elizabeth MacGillivray highlight the myriad roles Canadians played in a nearly one-hundred-year span of Chinese history. To varying degrees, these individuals can be considered as informal ambassadors or as cultural diplomats who were able to reach out to non-elites and to broader audiences in ways that may not otherwise have been achieved through regular diplomatic channels especially during the period when, as Meehan describes, there were no regular diplomatic channels. In such a fashion Meehan uses these individual case-studies to highlight, from the "bottom-up", the regular and irregular interactions that Canadians in Shanghai had with each other and with their Chinese neighbors. The significance of this qualitative reading of diplomatic history in relation to the "ordinary" Canadians in Shanghai is that it offers an important perspective for the re-reading of power in politics and in diplomacy. The case of the MacGillivrays and their respective work with the Christian Literature Society ["change China through the written word" (37)] and social reform in Shanghai is illustrative of the benefits of how non-state actors forged relationships in China. These voices, or life-stories as social historians employ the term, provide some very compelling reading. They also serve to place Canadians at the very center of a transnational history, refracting what might otherwise have been a Eurocentric account.

In other ways, *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* represents a continued nod to traditional interpretations. In particular I note the issue of 'race', whether that has to do with the "Shanghai mind" [10-11] as it is described in this account or with respect to some of the traditional major political figures that are sketched in the book. Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's attitudes towards China and the 'Oriental' colored his perspective and his dealings with the Pacific world.<sup>4</sup> There are some missed opportunities here about the role of race and racism among the elite and non-elite Canadians in and beyond Shanghai. How could members of the Canadian Association of Shanghai advocate a relaxation of the harsh measures of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act and still exclude Chinese Canadians from the Canadian Club in Shanghai? Racial attitudes certainly speak to the multiplicity of motives surrounding trade policy and immigration policy, among others.

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<sup>4</sup> See Price, *Orienteering Empire* and Stephanie Bangarth, "William Lyon Mackenzie King and Japanese Canadians," in John English, Kenneth McLaughlin, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, eds., *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio Press, 2002).

*Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* marks John Meehan's continued engagement with the transpacific world. This fascinating story of Canadian temporary residents of Shanghai provides an important contribution to the study of Canadian engagement with the Pacific world and in its early external relations more broadly. It also makes a strong case that current ad hoc relations and nationalism should give way to mutuality in order to forge a strong diplomatic and trade relationship. Only time will tell if the recent decision by the Canadian government to allow the China National Offshore Oil Company's (CNOOC) \$15.1 billion bid for Calgary-based Nexen will have the desired effects on Canada-China relations and what this will mean for the future of Canada-China free trade negotiations. The recently signed Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with China, a bilateral investment treaty signed in early November 2012, have some noting that the unequal treaties forced on the China of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have given way to 21<sup>st</sup> century treaties with China that disadvantage Canadian interests.<sup>5</sup> Now, as then, there remains an untapped potential for future growth, but will it be for Chinese businesses in Canada or for Canadian businesses in China, or both? We may observe Meehan's tale playing out in our own time.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Gus Van Harten, "Canada-China free-trade deal requires more debate," *The Province*, October 29, 2012, <http://blogs.theprovince.com/2012/10/29/gus-van-harten-canada-china-free-trade-deal-requires-more-debate/>.

John Meehan's explains that his book is not an exercise in nostalgia but rather an assessment of a formative period which charted subsequent Sino-Canadian relations. By dealing with the experience of Canadians in Shanghai, even though the city was not the capital but rather the metropolis of China, Meehan succeeds in demonstrating a profound change of Canadian attitude towards China. From indifference to mutuality, Canadians in cosmopolitan Shanghai viewed Chinese politics the same way as the rest of the world. Initially accepting unequal treaties imposed by foreign powers, Canadians began questioning the unequal status of China, especially in the wake of Japanese invasion.

The first chapter explains how British imperial gains in China benefited Canadian missionaries for providing them with protection and Canadian merchants, who enjoyed extraterritoriality. The strategic location of Shanghai explains why most of Canadian exports and imports were traded through the city since 1870. Pacific Ocean liners helped the growth of trade, and Canadian insurance services thrived, gaining a dominant share of the market. However, exclusionist policies in Canada towards Chinese nationals hindered the full potential of bilateral relations. The visit of MacKenzie King, Canada's future Prime Minister, failed to establish a gentleman's agreement which would have limited immigration and mainstreamed its process and thereby avoiding conflict with China over the subject. The Canadian failure to procure an immigration agreement with China, and its subsequent Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, remained a problem that characterized Sino-Canadian relations until the communist takeover in 1949.

The second chapter details the establishment of the Canadian presence and the sectors in which a growing number of Canadians prospered in Shanghai after the First World War. The end of the Chinese imperial system and the coming of the Republic of China were generally seen positively and many Canadians arriving in Shanghai believed that their businesses and evangelical endeavors would prosper. In 1909, Canada established a trade commissioner in Shanghai and notable growth propelled China to the position of Canada's second largest trading partner in Asia after Japan. However, trade suffered from a lack of interest from Canadian exporters and the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Even though Canadians in Shanghai pressured Ottawa to ease the entry in Canada of Chinese visitors such as scholars and students, trade never really reached its full potential. Furthermore, Ottawa did not recognize the Guomindang as the legitimate government of China until 1929 and did not reciprocate diplomatic representation, refusing to upgrade its commission in China to an embassy, which the Chinese had done since 1909. The missionary Donald MacGillivray organized the first Canadian association in Shanghai in 1919 which attracted about 250 members. Missionaries were more successful in developing a vast network of missions, notably the French-Canadian Catholic missions. The European powers suffered from the war and Canada was posed to be a great backup for producing missionaries.

The third chapter examines the reaction of Canadians in the wake of growing Chinese nationalism in the 1920s. After years of warlord politics, the reunification of China by the



Guomindang reached its apex in Shanghai where General Chiang Kai-shek turned against the communists and their sympathizers, unleashing deadly manhunts for three months. Canadians in Shanghai understood that this new reunification of China meant greater pride and demands for the abolition of extraterritoriality and unequal treaties. Ottawa's decision to open a legation in Japan, instead of China, further demonstrated the lack of interest Canada showed toward China. The depression and the confused diplomatic efforts to secure representation in China crippled trade between Canada and China, which fell from \$29 million in 1929 to \$11 million in 1931. It never recuperated. When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, Canada did not strongly condemn Japan and failed to see the upcoming invasion of the country.

The fourth chapter, entitled *A false security*, scrutinizes attempts to revive trade before the Sino-Japanese war (1937) and how it failed due to political complications in East Asia. Japan's growing assertiveness in Asia challenged China's stability and its capacity to assert its sovereignty. In Shanghai, the Japanese even shelled Zhabei, adding to the tension between the 25 000 Japanese and the Chinese in Shanghai. Weary of the fragile peace, Canadian missionaries and diplomats continued their work despite the tensions. While more missions were established, the political climate deteriorated rapidly.

The next chapter focuses on the Sino-Japanese War and World War Two which changed the course of Sino-Canadian relations. At first, Canadians in Shanghai questioned Canada's neutrality in the conflict because growing exports of minerals and steel to Japan encouraged the military machine. The beginning of the war in Europe greatly facilitated cooperation between England and America on issues aimed at curbing Japanese power in the Pacific. Canada followed initiatives taken by the United States and England by stopping exports of goods to Japan and prepared for war. Having sent soldiers to defend Hong Kong in case of attack, Canada declared war on Japan the same day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong and the Philippines. This critical juncture pushed Ottawa much closer to China, changing its policy of indifference to a more proactive stand. First, Canada opened an embassy (with full representation) in Chongqing, second, it relinquished its extraterritorial rights and, finally, the country contributed to the war effort by supporting the Guomindang against Japan. Ultimately, Canada scrapped the Chinese exclusion act in 1947 and proceeded to normalize immigration. The fate of Canadian civilians in Shanghai is depicted as a long journey of detention characterized by anxiety and boredom. Severe restrictions on those interned fatally hampered their cosmopolitan spirit toward Shanghai. When the war ended, many Canadians returned home and those left behind, especially the diplomats, expressed pessimism in post-war China. Diplomats saw the discrepancies of Guomindang policies and awaited the Communist takeover.

The last chapter demonstrates that relief efforts seemed futile when Mao Zedong's Communist army gains were announced. Canadian diplomats prepared for the outcome of the civil war and a divided opinion over the recognition of the communist regime marked Sino-Canadian relations. This division translated into a wait-and-see attitude for many reasons. First, American influence over Canadian diplomacy supplanted the traditional influence of England (which had maintained diplomatic relations with the new communist regime). Domestic lobbies also pressured Ottawa for caution. With many missionaries still in China, French-Canadian Catholics and Maurice Duplessis, Québec's Premier, accused

Ottawa of being soft on communism. Finally, the Korean War postponed any decision toward Canadian recognition of Red China. The Canadian presence in Shanghai ended as missionaries and diplomats were asked to leave in the 1950s.

Meehan concludes that Sino-Canadian relations passed from asymmetry to opportunity during the Second World War. Canadians in Shanghai shared a colonial attitude characterized by privileges and values. Failing to address immigration reform, mutuality in trade, and diplomatic representation in the past, Canada-China relations reached a critical juncture during the Second World War when Ottawa needed a military ally to combat Japan in Asia. The war pushed Canada to treat China as an equal partner, both internationally and domestically. Sino-Canadians obtained the right to vote in 1947, a year before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Meehan does not try to evaluate the political weight of middle powers such as Canada in countries like China but the narrative suggests that Canada did not pursue any real political agenda in Asia.

Meehan's book eloquently reveals that Shanghai was the center of Sino-Canadian relations. Because of the nature of the representation, diplomats mainly concerned themselves with business affairs, having little to do with consular affairs because of the exclusion of Chinese in Canada. Also, Canadian missionaries were using Shanghai either as a center of evangelical work or a landing point for those involved in inland missions. Meehan succeeds in presenting Shanghai as a city that changed China but also those Canadians living there. Shanghai probably represents the best city where the dialogue between China and the West could occur. Not only does culture and world politics meet in Shanghai but so do values and attitudes. The transformation of the Canadian mind reflects the changes occurring in Shanghai. Privileged by colonial injustice, Canadians in Shanghai understood that normalizing relations with China meant that Canada had to evolve and adopt international values such as freedom and equality.

Meehan uses a vast variety of English speaking sources, most of them from Canada. Until today, no author has used Chinese sources to provide an analysis of Sino-Canadian relations. This work remains to be done. However, Meehan's effort to open international relations to non-state actors signals a more constructivist approach to the field compared to classical realist studies. The use of Chinese sources would have added a more comprehensive interaction between Canadians and Chinese in Shanghai, and therefore clearly establishing the book as a revelation. Notwithstanding this omission, Meehan's book on early Canadian relations with China is the best study yet published.

In the introduction to *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai: Canada's Early Relations with China, 1858-1952*, the historian John Meehan explains that he was drawn to study the Canadian experience in Shanghai given the lack of attention the Pacific arena has received, until recently, by Canadian scholars. He then makes the case for looking at Shanghai specifically by observing that as a “city of myths and metaphors, dreams and deceptions, Shanghai was first and foremost a city of opportunity for many Canadians who settled there.” (Meehan, 11) In so doing, Meehan confirms to readers what the title and sub-title of his book suggest. His study explores two related, but not always connected, subjects: Canada's relationship with China up to 1952 and the experience of Canadians in Shanghai over almost a century of the city's dramatic rise and falls in fortune.

The prologue to *Chasing the Dragon* opens with the tale of the misadventures of René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle who failed miserably in his attempts to reach China from then Ville-Marie, now Montréal. Meehan uses this story as a way of introducing the long enchantment that China, and Shanghai, held for residents of North America. The six chapters that follow elaborate this fascination, documenting the experiences of Canadians in Shanghai from the height of the British imperial project to the Japanese attacks on China in 1931 and 1937 and finally to the Chinese Communist Party's rise to power. Four important themes emerge in this analysis: the ambivalence in official Canadian circles over the nature of formal relations; the critical role of non-official relations (including those of missionaries and traders) in cementing relations between the two countries; Canadians as moderating influences on the imperial project in Shanghai; and the seeming ineffectiveness of the advocacy undertaken by Canadians in Shanghai with respect to their government at home – particularly in the realm of immigration and extraterritoriality.

On the question of official relations, Meehan paints evocative portraits of the cast of characters who were responsible for figuring out the nature of Canada's formal engagement with China. Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King's first encounters with multilateralism at the 1909 International Opium Conference and his impressions of China make for compelling reading, as do the activities of various socialites, or consuls, from Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence Moore Cosgrave and Victor Odium (not to mention the antics of Herbert Marler, Canadian consul to Japan who proved persistently interested in the affairs of the Chinese mainland). Throughout Meehan's analysis, the degree of freedom enjoyed by representatives to Shanghai is paramount, giving serious pause to questions about where, exactly, Canada's approach to Asia was being formulated. Officials in Ottawa never appear as the driving force.

The theme of non-official relations is central to Meehan's analysis and it resonated strongly with me, in part because of where I was reading his work. At the University of British Columbia (Vancouver, Canada), where I spend a lot of time, there is a small college tucked away at the edge of campus. Surrounded by new construction, St. John's College was founded in 1997 with the support of the alumni of St. John's University in Shanghai. The Protestant Episcopal Church of America founded the university in 1879 and it operated

until it was closed by the Communists in 1952. Meehan mentions it in passing for it was a renowned institution in its time, boasting alumni such as businessman and politician T.V. Soong (brother-in-law to Chiang Kai-Shek), Lu Ping (the senior Chinese official at the Hong Kong handover) and the architect I.M. Pei. Dedicated to bridging Chinese and Western knowledge, St. John's College was established to carry on the unique cultural vision embodied in the university. St. John's College is evidence of the second theme in Meehan's work - the important role of non-official actors including the missionaries, traders and adventurers that made up the constellation of Canada's presence in Shanghai for almost a hundred years.

Meehan offers rich accounts of the work of various missionaries including Margaret Brown, Elizabeth and Donald MacGillivray, Thomas Robert O'Meara (principal of Wycliffe College), James Endicott and Alexander Trivett, dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral. The impact of other, perhaps less savoury characters, is treated with equal flourish, including Morris "Two Gun" Cohen, who resurfaces at various intervals in the narrative, most impressively as Sun Yat Sen's bodyguard. It is clear from Meehan's description that missionaries, travelers and traders all had formative experiences in Shanghai, however questions remain about the extent of these experiences. Meehan mentions future Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's early visits to the city in 1949 and 1960 but does not elaborate on what, if anything, these encounters produced. Even though the trend in recent international history now focuses in large part on relations beyond the purview of the state, in *Chasing the Dragon*, one is left to wonder about the lasting impact of non-official interactions. How pivotal was the Shanghai experience in shaping notions of a Pacific Canada? How did it translate in Canada? For instance, is St. John's College at UBC an exception in its evidence of enduring bonds? Or does it demonstrate that the experiences and connections forged in Shanghai had a strong influence on Canada's own development?

These questions emerge in part in relation to the third theme of the book, which is the impact of Canadian missionaries on moderating the imperial project in Shanghai. Meehan maintains that "despite their reliance on British protection, missionaries played a key role in challenging the Shanghai mind. Influenced by those they served, many championed Chinese nationalism by calling for racial equality, immigration reform, and an end to extraterritoriality." (181) This argument is compelling, though it could be explored more fully. Meehan notes that Canadians, and particularly French Canadians, were in a unique position because of their own experience with colonialism (11), but resists the opportunity to draw broad conclusions about the possible transference of a colonial mentality by the very people once subjected to it.

The broad temporal scope of the project raises the question of how exactly Canadians were identified, or self-identified, in Shanghai. Meehan himself notes that he adopts a broad view of what constituted a "Canadian" to include "those who were born in Canada, those who came from there directly, or in certain cases, those whose ties were more tenuous." (9) This is a geographically-bounded definition. Yet *Chasing the Dragon* spans pre and post-Confederation and therefore affords a wonderful opportunity to contemplate how traders, missionaries and others assumed a Canadian, rather than a British, identity abroad. Meehan suggests that Canadians in Shanghai in the early 1900s "displayed a colonial

identity marked by an emerging national consciousness.” (Meehan, 31) At one point did their presence become distinctively Canadian? Meehan hints at an answer in his chapter, “The Tide of Nationalism.” He writes that in the first three decades of the twentieth century, most Canadians “shed their colonial mindsets, organizing a Canadian Association....and asserting their interests through a trade office and newly established diplomatic service...Seeing themselves less as colonials than as nationals in their own right, they had greater sympathy for racial and political equality.” (Meehan, 83). In this way, Meehan hints at differences between Canadians, and perhaps in notions of Canadianness, amongst those who lived in Shanghai and those who made policy in Ottawa. Even though Meehan includes Canadians in the general category of ‘Shanghailanders’ (foreign settlers in Shanghai), he resists drawing forceful distinctions between their China experience and that of officials “back home.” (44) By contrast, Robert Bickers has argued pointedly about the gulfs that separated members of the British diaspora, including Shanghailanders, and their imperial masters in London.<sup>1</sup>

*Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* is an important study of Canada’s early relations with China and it points towards several potential avenues of future research. Perhaps most critically, there remains a need to elaborate foreign relations in terms of tangible impacts at home rather than relations constituted abroad. *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai* is a readable and well-researched volume that undergraduate students and newcomers to the topic will find accessible and informative. Meehan demonstrates the great hopes and expectations that Canadians, in all their incarnations, carried with them to Shanghai. He shows how people imagined the city, how they lived it, and in some cases, how they were disappointed by it. Meehan brings together the history of Canada’s presence in Shanghai and the history of Canada’s relations with China as a whole all the while treating them as distinct entities. This might be troubling to some. Or it may simply point to the fact that the history of Canada’s relations with China is necessarily a fractured one that is revealed as such by looking at multiple scales and the scattering of people who visited, worked and lived in the gateway city of Shanghai.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bickers, “Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai, 1843-1937,” *Past and Present* (1998) 159(1): 161-211.

Author's Response by John D. Meehan, Campion College, University of Regina

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I thank H-Diplo and these four excellent historians for their thorough consideration of my work, *Chasing the Dragon in Shanghai*. I am honoured to have four historians of such high calibre offer their critical evaluation of my book. As an author, it is illuminating to see how one's work affects others, especially when it opens further *pistes de réflexion*. Each commentator has enriched my own understanding of the topic by contributing his or her own insights.

The reviewers have all noted how *Chasing the Dragon* invites further investigation into the history of Canada's relations with China. Given the current importance of China to Canada, as I note in the book, it is surprising that more work had not previously been done on the topic, due no doubt to the predominantly Eurocentric focus of much early scholarship on Canada's foreign relations. Trained as a diplomatic historian, I intended the work as a companion volume to my book on Canada's early relations with Japan.<sup>1</sup> Both works sought to offset the traditional emphasis in diplomatic history on Canada's relations within the North Atlantic world. While both books maintain a traditional narrative based on diplomatic considerations, they include non-state actors, such as missionaries, traders and adventurers, and not merely to make the account more readable. The inclusion of such characters indicates their importance in the history of Canada's involvement in the region, leading me and others to conclude that such a history makes little sense without them. It is possible to tell the story of Canada's relations with the United States and other Western nations from a 'high politics' perspective, but this approach falls short when dealing with East Asia. The first Canadians present in the region were often missionaries, traders and other non-state actors, causing the historian to cast his or her net more widely. While Canada's relations with Japan clearly differed in many respects from those with China, ties with both countries were affected by such non-state actors as well as racial attitudes and prevalent myths espoused by many Canadians that were due largely to widespread ignorance toward East Asia at the time. The reviewers are correct in indicating that much more could be said on the role of racial attitudes, for instance regarding the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923. In my book, I point out that missionaries, traders and other Canadians urged Ottawa to repeal or amend the offending legislation but, regrettably, their influence in this regard was minimal. Laura Madokoro is quite right in pursuing the question of what impact, if any, these Canadian sojourners had on official attitudes and policies. Thankfully, the question of race is receiving the attention it deserves in more recent scholarship on Canadian-Asian relations. In this regard, I commend a recent conference at Harvard on the question as well as the fine work done by all four reviewers in this area.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-1941*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Details of the Canada Program Conference held at Harvard University in May 2013 may be found at: <http://conferences.wcfia.harvard.edu/canada/agenda>. Excellent work by the reviewers includes Serge Granger, *Le lys et le lotus: Les relations du Québec avec la Chine de 1650-1950*, (Montréal: VLB éditeur, 2005); Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending North American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942-*

While China lacked the diplomatic, political and economic clout of Japan, official Canadian policies toward both nations lacked coherence. There was not a strong lobby for either country in Canada at the time, apart from a few prominent academics, traders and missionaries, and Asian Canadians themselves lacked any significant political influence. This does not justify their omission from my study, something the reviewers point out, and I sincerely hope that future researchers are able to locate primary sources about them that I was unable to find. As Serge Granger observes, the story of Canada's relations with China awaits narratives that complement and deepen my own exploratory investigation: a narrative based on Chinese-language sources indicating Chinese attitudes and policies toward Canada during this period; and a narrative based on sources revealing the attitudes of Chinese Canadians themselves as cultural intermediaries. Shanghai attracted my attention as a “cultural contact zone”, a phrase coined by linguist Mary Louise Pratt in the early 1990s to refer to social spaces of encounter, usually within the colonial context.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to Granger's work, my account is generally from the vantage point of both English -- and French -- Canadian sojourners, those who tended to live within the city's foreign enclaves. I hope that future researchers can add these layers of context to my own account, one that invites further exploration.

The reviewers have noted the relative paucity of archival sources on official relations with China, particularly during the early period. As Laura Madokoro perceptively notes, there was a certain ambivalence toward China in official Canadian circles, no doubt shaped by widespread ignorance toward Asia generally at the time. More work needs to be done on Canadian sojourners in China and their impact on the home front during their furloughs and after their return to Canada. Her comments point to a larger methodological challenge that I faced in writing this book: the two related but (as she notes) “not always connected” topics of Canada's early relations with China – a topic that has received little attention from historians – and the experience of Canadians in Shanghai. On one level, the story of Canada's involvement in China's economic centre needed to be told, especially the role of its trade office there. Far too often, historians begin with the Trudeau government's recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1970, feeding the myth that official relations began at that point. Indeed, during my research for the book, I met one scholar who was surprised that Canada had any official ties with China before this date. Moreover, there is next to nothing published on the history of Canadian business involvement in China, though I am encouraging a few colleagues to publish their research on the activity of Canadian life insurance and other firms in East Asia. Both Serge Granger and I have sought to show that Canada's relationship with China has a long history.<sup>4</sup> Inspired by his work, I

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1949, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); John Price, *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); and Laura Madokoro, “Not all refugees are created equal: Canada Welcomes Sopron Students and Staff in 1956”, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 19(1), 2008: 253-278.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Louise Pratt. “Arts of the Contact Zone.” *Profession* 91 (1991): 33-40.

<sup>4</sup> Granger's landmark work, *Le lys et le lotus*, is essential reading in this regard and he has provided an excellent overview of the subject in “French Canada's Quiet Obsession with China”, paper given at academic workshop “Canada-China Relations: Past, Present, Future” held at the University of Regina, 7-8 October 2011.

acknowledge the early Jesuit ties but highlight the groundwork laid by missionaries and traders during the early twentieth century. Their contribution to my volume is intriguing and more than anecdotal. A consideration of their pioneering work indicates that Canada's involvement in China has been strongly influenced by personality. Without mythologizing well-known figures such as Norman Bethune, to whom I give only passing reference, my study suggests that in a relationship where official ties were often tenuous (due to sporadic official representation, political unrest and other factors), individuals clearly mattered. The extent of their influence is difficult to evaluate but they undoubtedly had an impact on subsequent relations, for instance through the so-called "mish kids," children of missionaries who later shaped foreign policy at External Affairs, and through notable Canadians at Shanghai, such as longstanding missionary and scholar, Donald MacGillivray, and the highly successful trade commissioner, Moore Cosgrave. Not surprisingly, MacGillivray and later Cosgrave were often seen as Canadian "ambassadors" in China's largest city. Moreover, the asymmetrical nature of Sino-Canadian relations is clearly outlined in my conclusion, something that shaped relations beyond the period that I examine in the book.

As Stephanie Bangarth points out, *Chasing the Dragon* indicates the importance of 'soft power' in relations between Canada and China, though (as she also notes) my chronology is largely shaped by a diplomatic narrative. In this light, the involvement of Canadian missionaries, traders and other non-state actors can be seen as preparing the way for NGOs in the postwar period. The work of my colleague, David Webster, has been insightful in this regard and I hope he and other scholars pursue this important connection more fully.<sup>5</sup> For French Canada, Serge Granger has shown quite persuasively how missionaries shaped an awareness of the world that inspired later *coopérants* to get involved in development work overseas, including in China.<sup>6</sup> Such non-state actors arguably shaped Canada's relations with China and much of Asia Pacific to a greater extent than relations with Western nations. The challenge here has been to show what was uniquely 'Canadian' about their experience. My book engages this issue, while undoubtedly leaving more questions than answers. In the case of Shanghai, some English Canadians blended into the 'Shanghailanders' culture, a privileged, largely Anglo-Saxon community that espoused a certain cultural superiority known at the time as the 'Shanghai mind.' As I point out, some closely aligned themselves to British life in the city, especially during the early period when it was difficult to distinguish British from Canadian identity. Yet I also point out important exceptions to this tendency: English Canadians who sympathized with the aspirations of Chinese nationalism; French Canadians whose sympathies were shaped by an evolving nationalism within French Canada itself; and left-leaning Canadians, such as United Church missionary

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Many of the papers from this workshop, including Granger's, are due to appear this summer in a special double issue of the *Journal of American East Asian Relations*.

<sup>5</sup> See Webster's insightful paper, "Human Rights NGOs in Canadian Relations with China", also due to appear in the upcoming special issue of the *Journal of American East Asian Relations*.

<sup>6</sup> Granger, "French Canada's Quiet Obsession."



and social activist Jim Endicott, who sympathized with Chinese communism. This was not a uniquely Canadian phenomenon, as similar variations were found, for instance, among American residents at Shanghai. Divergence within Canadian society at the time between imperialists, nationalists, continentalists and others was thus shared by Canadian sojourners at Shanghai. Again, I hope that future researchers will be able to add to this assessment the views of Chinese Canadians. Moreover, other scholars might address significant issues of gender, exploring how these influenced attitudes toward Shanghai and China more generally.

A final observation made by some of the reviewers concerns the challenging dual aim of my book. On the one hand, I hoped to explore early relations between Canada and China. On the other, I focused on the activity of Canadians in Shanghai, China's largest city, gateway, and economic centre. I am aware of the problematic nature of such a quest. At times, the two objectives coincided, particularly through the visits of Canadian officials and the work of the Canadian trade office and later the Canadian Consulate in the city. At other moments, such a focus meant giving less attention to important developments elsewhere in China, notably the establishment of an embassy at Chongqing under the first Canadian ambassador, Victor Odlum. In this sense, *Chasing the Dragon* is a micro-history that presents the experience of Canadians at Shanghai as illustrative, selective and not always typical of Canadian attitudes and policies toward China more generally. As I point out in my introduction, Shanghai was not China and scholars have long debated the extent to which it was typical or divergent of China as a whole. Still, given the historical data left by Canadians who lived in this fascinating cultural contact zone – and the relative lack of scholarship on Canada's early relations with China, I thought Shanghai was a good place to start. I hope that my consideration of relations might prove helpful to those who are unaware of the basic asymmetry that has characterized ties from the beginning. To other readers, it might show that Canada's current interest in China – and Shanghai in particular – has a long history indeed. If the book helps readers deepen their understanding of such increasingly important questions, it will have accomplished its aim. I am grateful to the four reviewers for recognizing the contribution of *Chasing the Dragon* and for suggesting ways in which future scholars might build on its preliminary conclusions, contributing their own insights and historical investigations.

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