

Tibetological Material in the *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*

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In addition to those journals in European languages that are entirely devoted to Tibetan Studies, there are a significant number of academic periodicals that regularly or occasionally include articles related to our field. Along with several others that have ceased publication, these are stored in major university libraries or are available on-line.¹ But as far as I can ascertain, the complete *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*, which was published at irregular intervals between 1922/23 and 1945, is not available in digital form.² As few libraries possess this rather eccentric publication,³ its obscurity tends to lead to its neglect by scholarship. Certainly many of the articles in the *JWCBR*S were not of academic standard, and some were amateurish in the extreme. But the *Journal* did publish articles by well-known pioneering scholars such as Joseph Rock (1884-1962), Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969), and the anthropologist Li-an Chi who worked in this area in the 1940s, as well as many by missionary-scholars J.H. Edgar⁴ (1872-1936) and D.C. Graham

¹ The most notable of the defunct publications, *Kailash Journal of Himalayan Studies* (Kathmandu) is for example, one of the many relevant publications available at <http://www.digitalthimalaya.com>

² Sichuan University Museum now offers, at a cost of \$1,600 [sic], an “unabridged” photocopied reprint of the (complete set of?) the journals, published in 2014 in 10 volumes (weighing 40 pounds [approx. 16kgs]). This reprint has not been available to me.

³ Cautionary note: various state and university library catalogues in the USA, U.K., India, and Australia have been found in error in regard to actual holdings of this journal. I have not located an institution there or in Europe that actually has a complete set of the journal.

⁴ On James Huston Edgar (1872-1936), see, David Templeman, ‘J.H. Edgar an Australian Missionary in the Tibetan Marches’, *Lungta* 11, 1998, pp. 25-33; also see on both Edgar and Graham (see n.5), Jeff Kyong-McClain, ‘Missionary archaeology on Republican China’s Southwestern frontier’, *International Institute for Asian Studies (Leiden) Newsletter*, 65, Autumn 2013, p. 4.

(1884-1961).⁵ With the frontier regions on the interface of Tibetan and Chinese polities and cultures now attracting increasing scholarly focus, it may be of value to place on record Tibetological articles in the *JWCBRS* in order to alert researchers in the field to these potential sources. In what follows I have therefore, after outlining the history and character of the publication, listed articles contained in this journal which could be of some interest to Tibetologists researching the Sino-Tibetan frontier regions.⁶

The West China Border Research Society was formed on the 24th of March, 1922, at a gathering of interested parties in the Chengdu home of Dr W.R. Morse, who became the first President of the Society. Most of its founding members were missionaries, including Morse, who was one of the founders and a faculty member of the West China Union University, a Protestant institution founded in 1910.⁷ The first formal meeting of the Society was held in October 1922 in the home of A.J. Brace, who was elected as Secretary of the Society, and the first public meeting was held in January 1923 at the Union university. The original group of sixteen founders initially limited membership to 25 persons (all of whom were to be missionaries), but that restriction was lifted in 1931 and the Society had around 200 members by the mid-1930s. While remaining predominantly from the missionary community, that membership included several prominent European academics as well as Chinese notables such as Chang Kai-shek and Madame Chang, who were elected honorary members in 1935.

⁵ On D.C. Graham, see Harmut Walravens (ed.), *David Crockett Graham (1884-1961), as Zoological Collector and Anthropologist in China*, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2007, which monograph reproduces several of Graham's *JWCBRS* articles; and see, Charles F. McKhann and Alan Waxman, 'David Crockett Graham: American Missionary and Scientist in Sichuan, 1911-1948', in Denise M. Glover, Stevan Harrell, Charles F. McKhann, and Margaret Byrne Swain, *Explorers and scientists in China's borderlands, 1880-1950*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011, pp. 180-210; also see (no author cited), 'Encounter In Sichuan: David Crockett Graham, The West China Border Research Society, and Orientalism' at <http://www.edayfeeks.com/davidcrockettgraham.htm>

⁶ I have excluded scientific or botanical papers. While including some articles of little more than historiographical interest, I have also excluded some of the more outlandishly speculative pieces, such as those pertaining to Edgar's untenable theory - on the basis of the inclusion of *Mani* in the common Tibetan mantra *Om Mani Padme Om* - that Bön derived from Manichaeism; see, for example *JWCBRS* Volume 3: 1926-29, J.H. Edgar; 'A Note on the Bons or Black Lama Sect', pp. 152-53.

⁷ On which Jeff Kyong-McClain and Geng Jing, 'David Crockett Graham in Chinese Intellectual History', in Denise M. Glover, Stevan Harrell, Charles F. McKhann, and Margaret Byrne Swain, *Explorers and scientists in China's borderlands, 1880-1950*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011, esp., p. 217.

The purpose of the Society was, according to the second article of its constitution; "to promote the study of the country, people, customs, and environment of West China, especially as they effect [*sic*] the non-Chinese." There was intended to be an emphasis on the exploration of the areas bordering western and southern Sichuan and members were initially expected to travel at least once in every three years into the tribal regions of southwest China and to report on whatever was their interest. But increasing "lawlessness and banditry" meant that by 1929 travel in these regions was increasingly difficult and the aims of the Society were altered to include "the study of all problems peculiar to the land and life of Western China, either Chinese or Aboriginal."⁸

The society defined 'research' as "investigation by exploring", with the collection and publication of empirical knowledge the stated goal. In an early address to the Society, Morse called for "careful, truthful, accurate observation along any lines which our natural abilities lead us", and considered that "no other mental requisite is necessary for carrying on our research on this almost unknown border" – an academic approach that was already becoming dated. Scholarship was, furthermore, held to be in accord with missionary ideals. "We are bound" Morse stated, "by the strong and subtle chain of honour. We are binding ourselves freely and voluntarily to study and work and sacrifice for the great cause of science, impelled to do so, it may be, by religious convictions." In keeping with the spirit and literary tendencies of the imperial age, Morse ended his address by exhorting the Society's members with a quotation from Rudyard Kipling's poem, 'The Explorer'; "..... Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the Ranges. Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go!"

The regular publication of a journal dedicated to advancing knowledge of the field had become one of the markers of a professional organisation during the 19th century and it seems that from the first the Society intended an annual publication. The first volume of the *Journal of the West China Border Research Society* was dated 1922-23 and printed by the Canadian Methodist Mission Press. But the West China Border Research Society was not the first of its kind. There had been earlier groups of missionaries who had sought to place their enquiries into local society onto a more formal footing. The Chengtu Association, for example, had been organised in 1904 with similar aims and the West China Union University had established a series of

⁸ All quotations from the Foreword to the 1929 volume.

scholarly lectures in 1915.⁹ But the *JWCBRS* was the first journal of its kind; earlier articles on the region had published in wider outlets such as *The West China Missionary News* or the *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

The *JWCBRS* was originally published on a bi-annual or tri-annual basis before becoming an annual publication in the 1930s. Its editors tended to be prominent contributors. J.H. Edgar, elected as an honorary member at the first meeting, was the main contributor to the first seven volumes of the journal and became President of the Society in 1932-33. His successor as editor was another frequent contributor David (D.C.) Graham, who had a Ph.D in anthropology from the University of Chicago and particular interest in the 'Ch'uan Miao' (Qiang) people. (The 1937 Journal is largely devoted to his studies of this group.)

It is clear that producing the journal was never easy. Its appearance was intermittent and the quality of paper on which it was printed steadily declined. Communication between editor and printer was also problematic for in 1935 it was noted that the type was being set in Shanghai by type-setters who knew no English. The situation worsened after the outbreak of war with Japan and with the increasing strength of the communist insurrection. In 1940 the editor pointed out that the journal's publication was greatly hindered by having "the printer in Shanghai, the editor in Chengtu, and the Japanese in between."

None-the-less, efforts were made to develop the *Journal* on professional lines. In 1931 the Society established links with the Harvard-Yenching Fund and in 1945 they received a subvention from the American State Department and (apparently a lesser sum), from the British Council. Given the political conditions in China by that time, those institutions presumably saw some political value in the journal's publication.

Efforts were also made to indigenise the journal. In 1935-36 S.C. Yang became the first Chinese President of the Society and in 1936 the *Journal* published its first article in Chinese. David Graham was joined as editor by Cheng Te-K'un in 1944 and Li An-che became President of the Society in 1944-45.

In its final years of publication the *JWCBRS* was divided into two separate volumes; with volume 'A' devoted to culture and volume 'B' devoted to the natural sciences. But it was not published in 1943, and as European missionaries were increasingly forced to withdraw from

⁹ The lecture series apparently continued into the 1940s, but the lectures were not necessarily published in the journal; this was the case, for example, with Alexandra David-Neel's 1938 lecture entitled 'Original Buddhism and Lamaism'.

the turbulent frontier realms the Journal ceased publication after its 1945 volumes.

Tibetological Contents.

[Original spellings and author's attributions are retained]

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J. Huston Edgar; 'The Story of Nya-Rong (Chantui)', pp. 60-62.

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D.C. Graham; 'A Collecting Trip to Songpan', pp. 40-45.

A.J. Brace; 'The Wheel of life or the Wheel of the Law', pp. 57-62.

Volume 3: 1926-29

J.H. Edgar; 'The Gangka – A Peak in Eastern Tibet', pp. 157-61.

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J.H. Edgar; 'Advice to Travellers on the Way to Lhasa', pp. 4.¹⁰

J.H. Edgar; 'Notes on Trade Routes Converging at Tachienlu', pp. 5-8.

J.H. Edgar; 'The Old Courier Service between Tachienlu and Lhasa', pp. 9-13.

J.H. Edgar; 'The Great Open Lands: or (a) What is China's Policy in the Tibetan Marches;

¹⁰ This consists of a proverb in verse form; it has been reproduced in Alex McKay (ed.), *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1998, pp. 15-16.

- and (b) Its Relation to Mission Programmes?', pp. 14-21.
- J.H. Edgar; 'A Journey through Nyarung from Litang', pp. 22-28.
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- J.H. Edgar; 'Prehistoric Remains in Hsi-Khang or Eastern Tibet', pp. 56-61.

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Anon; 'A Bibliography of J.H. Edgar's Writings', pp. 23-27.

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J.F. Rock; 'The Origin of the Tso-la Books, or Books of Divination of the Na-khi or Mo-so Tribe', pp. 39-52.

J.F. Rock; 'Hä-la or the Killing of the Soul as practiced by Na-khi Sorcerers', pp. 53-58.

Volume 9: 1937

R. Cunningham; 'The Lama's Cosmology', pp. 183-88.

R. Cunningham; 'Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hum', pp. 190-98.

David C. Graham; 'An Expedition to the China-Tibetan Border', pp. 215-17.

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Volume 11: 1939

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 Alexandra David-Neel; 'Nature Gods in Tibet', pp. 42-45.

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 David C. Graham; 'The Customs of the Ch'iang', pp. 69-100.

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 Alexandra David-Neel; 'The Tibetan Lamaist Rite Called Rab Nes Intended to Cause Inanimate Objects to Become Efficient', pp. 88-94.