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Life in the Field: The Papers, Diaries, Notes, and Tapes of Anthropological Research Conducted by Morton Fried in China (1947-48) and Taiwan (1960s) Available in the Columbia University Libraries

Frances LaFleur

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Columbia University's C. V. Starr East Asian Library was founded in 1901 and presently holds over 500,000 volumes in the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Manchu, and Mongol languages as well as western-language books and periodicals relating to the study of East Asia. Vernacular and western materials cataloged since 1981 are housed in open stacks in the library's headquarters in Kent Hall; some of the older Chinese and Japanese materials are housed in stacks in the Library Annex, open to Columbia affiliates and to outside scholars and researchers with an introduction to Starr Library.

In addition to the working collections mentioned above, Starr Library also has a number of rare and special materials housed in the Special Collections Room. Included are its substantial Chinese gazetteer collection; its original editions of Chinese genealogies (second only to China's Shanghai Library in number); its oracle bone collection; printed and manuscript editions of Chinese Buddhist sutras of the Five Dynasties, Sung, and Yuan periods; Ming and Ch'ing editions of belles lettres; and Ch'ing Imperial Gazettes. In 1968 more than five hundred titles of the Yi Song-ui Collection of Korean rare books were purchased, including one hundred particularly valuable volumes printed in metal movable type believed to have been cast in the 1590s. The Japanese special collection includes approximately five hundred woodblock printed books dating from the late seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries as well as one outstanding treasure—an early scroll which is a text with illustrations of the Tale of Genji.

In recent years the C. V. Starr East Asian Library has begun more actively to acquire ephemera, personal papers, and other archival materials. It has amassed a considerable collection of Red Guard publications from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, an archive on the Chinese Student Democracy Movement of 1989, and in 1988, Anne Swann Goodrich, wife of the late scholar L. Carrington Goodrich, donated much memorabilia from their lifetime involvement with China, as well as her extensive collection of Chinese paper gods. The Morton H. Fried collection of personal papers, field diaries, anthropological notes and tapes is one of the most recent acquisitions in this area, having been donated by Martha Nemes Fried and her children, Nancy Fried Foster and E. Steven Fried, in late 1988.

Morton Fried spent his whole professional life at Columbia University, so it is most fitting that the fruits of the research he conducted should find a permanent home here. Even before he had completed his doctoral dissertation in 1951, he had already begun lecturing in Columbia's Department of Anthropology. He remained affiliated with the university until his passing in 1986. From 1966 to 1969 he served as anthropology de-

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partment chair and, despite ill-health, he worked indefatigably until his last day—he was correcting student papers at the time of his death.

A native New Yorker, Fried grew up in a middle-class home near Poe Park in the Bronx. His lively intellect manifested itself early—already in elementary school his hand was raised constantly and he became known as an "upsetting student" for those teachers who were not prepared to deal with his probing questions. His father, a second generation American of Hungarian and German extraction and a largely self-educated Customs Inspector, read widely and loved music, setting a very positive example for his son.

After graduating from the Townsend Harris High School for gifted children, Fried entered City College of New York at the age of fifteen. Initially, he was attracted to English literature but, when a friend introduced him to anthropology, he was quickly seduced by the rigors of the discipline and the tantalizing prospect of life in the field.

He had only completed one semester of graduate work at Columbia when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943. Because of his formidable talents, he was selected to enter the Army's Chinese program at Harvard which was run by the eminent linguist, Chao Yuan-jen. He rapidly developed a fascination with Chinese language and culture. No doubt his incentive was increased by the Army's policy of sending the bottom fourth of its classes directly to active duty in Europe and posting the casualty lists of those classmates on the Harvard bulletin board.

After serving in the 101st Combat Engineers, Yankee Division, and being discharged in 1946, he resumed his studies at Columbia. He obtained a Social Science Research Council grant to conduct dissertation research in Ch' u Hsien, Anhui Province, not far from the city of Nanking. At that time (in Fried's own words) Ch' u Hsien had "an atmosphere that was to Shanghai as Shanghai was to New York's Chinatown—in short, [it was] the real China."1 It was a walled market town which, including the farming villages outside its walls, had a population of about 40,000. He was invited to stay in the home of Ch' u Hsien's wealthiest merchant, the local representative of the Standard Oil Company. Since the town had no market for gasoline (having no automobiles) and no electricity, Mr. Bien's business consisted of selling kerosene for household lamps.

Many of the most moving materials in the collection are the letters which Fried wrote to his recently widowed mother about his life in the merchant's household, which consisted of "Mr. Bien, his wife, five children, two nephews, twelve clerks, two accountants, a cook, a baker, three baker's assistants, three nurses, two boy servants, a half dozen coolies, and one American."2 From these letters home, one can easily see that as the months progressed, he became more and more intimately integrated into the daily life of the people around him. Altogether there are twenty-five such letters, most typed single-spaced and running to several pages, at times illustrated by amusing sketches of the personalities and the environs. These letters were carefully preserved in clear plastic in a looseleaf binder, and are, for the most part, quite legible and in fairly good condition, although the edges are somewhat brittle. A few of them however, are now quite fragile, having been scribbled on Chinese rice paper under less than ideal circumstances. Such is the one he sent on October 2, 1947 in which he said:

1Letter to his mother, September 12, 1947.
2Letter to his mother, Ch' u Hsien, November 19, 1947.
This is written by candlelight in a small room while two old Chinese men play Chinese chess across the table, pausing every so often to comment on how quickly I write and marvel that they cannot understand a word.³

At present all of these letters are being encapsulated in mylar and bound into a single volume.

There was a darker side to life in central China at this time. Everyone was poised for the final great confrontation between the Nationalists and the Communists; a confrontation that would determine the fate of the country and of the way of life that Fried was so intent on documenting. Occasionally, tidbits in the letters reflect the stresses of wartime, especially the tremendous problem of inflation in Shanghai, where he visited his wife on weekends during the first months:

Money is all paper money. The denominations are $500, $1000, $2000, $5000, and $10,000. There are also $100 bills but they are hangovers from years past and if you get one you throw it away. There are two rates of exchange, the official government rate which today is 55,000 to one U.S. and the Black market, which is about 85,000 to one U.S. Prices are adjusted in general to 91,000 to one U.S. ... Salaries are paid at the official rate. It's confusing at first and you have the feeling it's all play money. But soon the horrible truth is clear. You can't win and you have to husband your resources. Now to make it all clear, here are some prices ... Camel cigarettes, 18,000 a pack ... Trolley fare 3,000 to 5,000, Newspaper 5,000, Restaurant (first class) 150,000 per person for dinner.⁴

Even Ch'ü Hsien, remote though it seemed from the turmoil of the modern world, was not immune. In January of 1948 Fried told his mother:

There are many soldiers quartered here now. My own room was fitted with a spring lock when I left and the lock combined with an official looking placard I set up (which not more than three people in the whole town could read) was enough to keep my little sanctuary out of the hands of the military. Even now as I write some soldier who sleeps with uncounted companions in the next room is scraping some mournful but thoroughly pleasing little tune from his little Chinese instrument.⁵

However, most of Fried's sober reflections on the gathering storm are found in his diary entries rather than in his letters home. In October 1948 he traveled north to Hsiang-chou in eastern Honan to the headquarters of the 5th Chinese Army with N.Y. Times correspondent, Henry Lieberman. At that time, he believed that Nanking would probably fall by the end of January 1949. His slow local train took him through the city of Hsü-chou which he described as "a very much overgrown Ch'ü Hsien." Passing beyond the city on the train he wrote:

³Ch'ü Hsien, November 19, 1947.
⁴Shanghai, October 25, 1947.
⁵Ch'ü Hsien, January 9, 1948.
From Suchou [Hsü-chou] west one passes a small range of hills and then comes into a limitless plain. There are far fewer streams to be seen and ground water is negligible. There also seem to be far more trees in evidence than in the Ch'u area. From Suchou westward the land near the railroad is broken continuously with fortifications, lateral trenches, earthworks, pillboxes, castellated breastworks, moats and barbed wire. These works give the land a barren touch, one can easily imagine any light-hearted goddess of fertility giving such a place a wide berth. Evidences of combat are not few: at every station the station house is a gutted shambles, along the right of way are twisted rails, broken bridges, wreckage of cars and engines. One travels with a feeling of apprehension. We did not disbelieve the news that yesterday's train was held up by four armed bandits.6

The trip, covering only about one hundred miles, took Fried and Lieberman twenty-four hours. The pillaging that they witnessed by troops in the countryside and the meeting with various commanders convinced Fried of the Nationalists' corruption and ineptitude. Shortly afterwards he wrote his mother that he and his wife intended to leave China within two months.

In addition to the handwritten diary of the trip to Honan and the letters home, the other materials dating from this first sojourn in the Far East include four pocket notebooks, about thirty photographs of natives of Ch'u Hsien engaged in daily tasks, some typewritten pages describing the economy and social structure of Ch'u Hsien, several transcriptions of interviews with ethnic minority subjects, and carbon copies of letters he wrote on the progress of his work to his professors at Columbia and sponsors from the Social Science Research Council. In one such letter, reacting to the recent passage of the Fulbright bill, he optimistically advocated that, in the future, the best approach to studying a Chinese community would be [to create a] team of two anthropologists to diagnose the community, a historian to translate and précis the local historical documents, a psychologist to administer personality tests, and an agronomist to fill in details of soil conditions, crops, and the future of the area agriculturally.7

The fall of China to the communists in 1949 forced Fried to turn his attention elsewhere. In 1954 he spent three months in British Guiana researching the adaptations of the Chinese community to the complex fabric of the colonial British and local Caribbean environment. Among the twenty-seven journal articles for which offprints exist in the Fried collection, there are two which deal specifically with issues facing overseas Chinese and their loss of traditional customs.

But the greater part of his scholarly life was spent researching surname distribution and class associations on the island of Taiwan which he had first visited in August of 1948 and chronicled in his diary. Altogether, Fried made more than ten trips there, spending a full year, several summers, and many shorter stints collecting data himself in the field. Though the collection in Starr Library does include some unpublished data and preliminary manuscripts on surname distribution, the bulk of the material represented here found its way into his two-volume work, *The Distribution of Family Names in Taiwan*, and therefore is perhaps of less interest to scholars than the data relating to the clan associations which he dubbed his "Halls of the Ancestors" project. This latter material,  

6Diary, October 16, 1948.

7Letter to Prof. Steward, Ch'u Hsien, December 2, 1947.
which has never been published, includes seven volumes of field notes Fried compiled between October 1963 and August 1964 as well as ten pocket notebooks. It also includes Chinese transcriptions of interviews of subjects conducted by his assistant Ch'en Shao-t'ing, anthropological notes (in eleven notebooks) by Ch'en, work reports in Chinese completed by Taiwanese from thirty-eight lineage groups on their involvement in class activities, and many newspaper clippings, legal and social clan documents, class registers, lineage tables, photos, and audio tapes which Fried recorded at various clan ceremonies. There is also a rough draft of a manuscript in five chapters which he based on these materials but did not live to refine and polish. The diaries and field notes in particular are a rich source of information, not only on the importance of ties of blood, but also on the nature of Taiwan politics in an era when the native majority was struggling to release itself from the Kuomintang's strangle hold.

For example, there are accounts from clan meetings which include mediations of disputes among clan members, discussions of rituals to be performed and their fiscal implications, and much gossip about local political scandals. The following is an excerpt describing a politician from one of the key clans in Keelung:

It is said that Mr. X [a non-KMT politician] has about ten grownup children by his first wife who died years ago ... The second wife is a woman X married on the Mainland during the war. She is described as a former wine-house girl and an illiterate. Some time ago X was said to be seeing another woman and his present wife laid a trap for him and actually managed to have him arrested for fornication. Mr. Y said that Mrs. X is a very stupid woman who is being used by the KMT in an attempt to discredit her own husband.

Note: Mr. X was subsequently re-elected.8

Because of the intimate nature of many of the reports on the Taiwanese interviewed and observed in the project and the fact that many are still living, the Fried family has stipulated that the Halls of the Ancestors materials be restricted to scholars who have received the written consent of Martha Fried or her daughter, Nancy Fried Foster.

In addition to the above mentioned categories of material, the collection also includes correspondence covering the 1950s to 1980s which Fried received from a number of anthropologists and scholars, including China's well-known sociological pioneer, Fei Xiaotong. When pieced together, these letters chronicle many of the developments in American China Studies in the Cold War years, and give flesh and blood insight into the motivations behind some of the significant projects in Chinese anthropology.

There are also twenty-nine preliminary and unpublished articles on various aspects of Chinese culture and anthropology, lecture notes, tapes of lectures delivered by Fried in the United States and Taiwan, and detailed glossaries of Chinese kinship terms. These materials would no doubt be of interest to any non-Chinese student beginning to tackle the intricacies of the traditional Chinese family system, and might even aid the youthful Chinese researcher, since many of these forms and much of the nomenclature of Chinese kinship is dying out in modern China and Taiwan.

At present this collection of material is still in the process of being sorted and housed in archival document boxes. A preliminary inventory of the collection, an itemized listing

8Notes, April 2-22, 1964, p. 4.
of materials consisting of thirteen typed pages, has been compiled by two Columbia graduate students, Ann Ch'iu and Ning-sheng Xia. This will be refined to show the location of materials once they are permanently housed. Aside from the restricted access materials relating to the Halls of the Ancestors project, the collection is open for use by all qualified scholars and students engaged in research and publication. Letters of application for use of the materials are welcomed in advance of an anticipated visit, particularly in the interim while the materials are being sorted. Written and telephone inquiries may be directed to Marsha Wagner, East Asian Librarian, Amy Heinrich, Head of Reader Services, or Frances LaFleur, Chinese Curator, at 300 Kent Hall, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027. Telephone: (212) 854-2578.