

Archibald Ross Colquhoun

March 1848 - 18 December 1914

By Samuel Stephenson

(Edited by Douglas Fix)

Archibald Colquhoun was born off the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, in March 1848 to British Doctor Archibald Colquhoun, who worked for the Honorable East India Company's Service of Edinburgh.(1) Colquhoun received his education in Scotland, and then went to work in India as a civil engineer, employed by Indian Public Works; he eventually rose to the position of executive engineer.(2)

In 1879, Colquhoun served as the secretary and second in command of the Government Mission to Siam and Siamese Shan States.(3) After completing this mission, he returned to England on furlough for a few months. He spent most of his furlough engaged in planning for an expedition with C. Wahab through southern China and the Chinese Shan states. This 1881-1882 expedition explored the territory from Canton to Bhamo in order to trace the best route for a railway connecting Burma and China.(4)

Colquhoun's career took yet another turn in 1883 when he became the *London Times* correspondent during the Franco-Chinese War. While serving in this capacity, as traveler and political commentator, he made brief visits to Hong Kong and Tonquin in 1883, and to Keelung and Tamsui in 1884.(5)

After the end of the Franco-Chinese war, Colquhoun traveled to Siam in connection with the railway construction that was currently underway there in 1885. Apparently taking a liking to Colquhoun's proposal for the annexation of Upper Burma, the British government appointed him the Deputy-Commissioner of the Sagam district in Upper Burma, where he served until 1889.(6)

Colquhoun then accompanied the Pioneer Force to South Africa and became the first Administrator of Mashonaland upon its occupation by Britain in 1890. While serving in this post, he executed the Manika treaty. He subsequently returned home in 1892, visited the United States in 1893, and retired in 1894. Retirement did not, however, keep Colquhoun from traveling and actively engaging in a number of pursuits. He visited Central America in 1895 to examine Nicaragua and the Panama Canal routes;

returned to China in 1896, in connection with negotiations for railways; and from 1898 to 1899 traveled through Siberia, Eastern Mongolia, and China from north to south.(7)

In 1900, at the age of 51 or 52, Colquhoun finally married Ethel Maud Cookson, who (using the pen name Mrs. Towse Jollie) later published several works, both together with and independent of Archibald Colquhoun.(8) From the early 1880s until his death, Archibald Colquhoun continued to publish widely and to read a number of papers before the Royal Colonial Institute, the Geographical Society, the Society of Arts, and the United Service Institution; he also contributed to English, American, and German reviews.

Colquhoun spent much of the rest of his life traveling. From 1900-1901, he and Ethel traveled in the Pacific -- the Dutch East Indies, Borneo, Philippines, Japan -- returning to England *via* Siberia. From 1902 to 1903, he traveled in the West Indies, Central America and the United States, and throughout South Africa in 1904 and 1905. In 1913, Colquhoun once again visited the Panama Canal and carried out one last mission for the Royal Colonial Institute in South America before his death on 18 December 1914.(9)

Selected Publications:

Across Chryse: Being the narrative of a journey of exploration through the south China borderlands, from Canton to Mandalay. London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1883.

The opening of China: Six letters reprinted from The Times on the present condition and future prospects of China. London: Field and Tuer, 1884.

The truth about Tonquin: Being The Times special correspondence. London: Field and Tuer, 1884.

With J.H. Stewart-Lockhart. "A sketch of Formosa." *The China Review* 13 (1885): 161-207.

Burma and the Burmans: Or "The best unopened market in the world". London: Field and Tuer, 1885.

English policy in the Far East: Being The Times special correspondence. London: Field and Tuer, 1885.

With H. Hallett and A. Terrien de Lacouperie. *Amongst the Shans.* London: Field and Tuer, 1885.

"The physical geography and trade of Formosa." *Scottish geographical Magazine* (Edinburgh) 3 (1887): 567-77. Reprinted in *Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society* 3 (1887): 226-238.

The key of the Pacific: The Nicaragua canal. Westminster: A. Constable, 1895.

China in transformation. New York: Harpers, 1898.

The renaissance of South Africa. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1900.

The mastery of the Pacific. London: W. Heinemann, 1902.

With Ethel Cookson Colquhoun. *The whirlpool of Europe: Austria-Hungary and the Habsburgs.* New York: Harpers, 1907.

From Dan to Beersheba: Work and travel in four continents. London: W. Heinemann, 1908.

Honors and Memberships:

Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society; Gold Medalist Royal Geographical Society; Silver Medalist Society of the Arts; Member of the Institute of Civil Engineers; and editor of *United Empire* (Royal Colonial Institute Journal).(10)

Notes:

1. Otness, Harold M., *One thousand westerners in Taiwan, to 1945: A biographical and bibliographical dictionary* ([Taipei]: Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1999), p. 33; *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916 (London: A. and C. Black; New York: MacMillan, 1920), p. 150.

2. *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916, p. 150; Kirk, Foster, John, *A supplement to Allibones critical dictionary of English literature and British and American authors* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1900), Vol 1, p. 369.

3. *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916, p. 150.

4. *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916, p. 150; Kirk 1900, p. 369.

5. *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916, p. 150; Kirk 1900, p. 369; Otness 1999, p. 33.

6. *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916, p. 150; Kirk 1900, p. 369.

7. *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916, p. 150.

8. Ibid.; *Who was who in literature, 1906-1934* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1979), Vol 1, p. 242.

9. *Who was who*, Vol 1, 1897-1916, p. 150.

10. Ibid.; *Who was who in Literature, 1906-1934*, Vol 1, p. 242; Kirk 1900, p. 369.