

Tyler Waite

Professor Kinzley

History 600

12 May 2017

### **Transport, Famine Relief, and Outsider Opportunity:**

#### **Collaborations between East and West to Stabilize China from the 1910s to the 30s**

If we take on a high-level view of China's modernization over the last 150 years, we are able to see an immense difference between the dynastic rule prior to modernization and the current state of China today. When we consider China's largest period of growth to be during Mao's reign, we forget about the period in which figures like Sun Yat-sen and later Chiang Kai-shek relentlessly attempted to restructure China into a country that could properly care for its people and find sustainability as a prominent world power. It is during this period that China was the most willing to accept foreign help in bringing their grand plans to fruition, and rightfully so. As China looked to modernize itself to match the stability of the West from the 1910s to the 30s, a new batch of outside intellectual and financial players joined in on the efforts. The lines between humanitarian aide and economic opportunity were blurred to create, a new, more progressive Chinese society. As we will explore in this paper, the vision of a functional China came with an unworldly price tag, and the country had no other choice to appeal to outside support. We will also explore the extent to which other countries, with a focus on the United States, were willing to subscribe to the Chinese cause. Lastly, we will center on John Earl Baker, a Wisconsin-native who spent his career from 1916-1940 fighting famine through untraditional

means and the motives, whether cosmopolitan or economic, that drove the decisions of his career. These motivations were nearly always intertwined in a deep web of conflicting narratives and balance sheets. My goal is to present various primary sources so that you have the capacity to decide who the real benefactor was throughout these relationships. I will carefully present the lens through which these arguments were made during the period in hopes of giving you the ability to objectively parse the events. I will present things not as ultimates, but as narratives that arise from changing tides both domestically in China and abroad in the West.

Sun Yat-sen confirms this notion of duality in purpose in his 1922 essay, *The International Development of China*, “The radical cure for all this [non-development in the country] is industrial development by foreign capital and experts for the benefit of the whole nation. Europe and America are a hundred years ahead of us in industrial development; so in order to catch up in a very short time have to use their capital.” (Yat-sen 198) It is upon this persuasion that we are driven to accept that every intention at this time was dualistic in nature. Compared to Maoist ideologies in China’s later periods, China was willing to recognize the world’s selfish motives out of desperation and call out to the world for support. Selfish motives were something to be aware of, but were not important enough to discredit and close out calls for foreign aide.

I would like to explore the openness that China had during this transitional period and how much of that openness stemmed from necessity. What caused a leader like Sun Yat-Sen to reach out to John Earl Baker seeking intellectual approval for his thoughts on creating a better China, and for what reasons did someone like John Earl Baker want to offer unwavering support for China? We will unwind the tug-of-war narrative between that tied famine relief and railroad

development together, a notion that was spearheaded by John Earl Baker himself, and attempt to understand which of the two was the means to the end. Externally, we will explore what it was that caused Western financiers and common people to perk their ears up and listen to what China had to offer. What, ultimately, did they see in China both as a people and as a culture? Was it more of a conquest or a helping hand? In this search, we may arrive on conclusions about the purity of humanitarian aide, especially when the other side of the coin here isn't religion, but instead money.

I will conclude by having us look at relationships in comparison to Sino-US relations today, both economically and politically, and how we can take the lessons learned from our interactions during the early 1900s and use them to understand our current relationship with China. I will compare the use of liaisons and cosmopolitan outreach during said period and today in hopes of finding overlaps or patterns, seeing just how much history has repeated itself in this specific context. We will perhaps find that the processes of cosmopolitanism and worldwide investment have changed very little since our interactions during this period compared to today.

...

China's first railroad infrastructure was conceived around 1867, almost 50 years behind the proliferation in the United States. By 1937, however, China had almost 13,000 miles of track running around the country. (Hou 125) The proliferation of this infrastructure with wrought with trouble from the beginning, as China was subject to ever-shifting political tides, starting from the Manchu Dynasty lasting until 1911, then the Republican government ruling from 1912 to 1926, and then the Nationalist government ruling from 1927 to 1937. The railroads were riddled with

issues of banditry, military corruption, and outdated facilities, not to mention constant shifts in power and ownership of the lines.

Perhaps the earliest authority within China to take the issue of transportation seriously was Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the first president and founder of the Republic of China. Analysis of his sentiment seems to show that he wavered between trying to protect China's own sovereignty and pleading to western countries to for help with his dream. It makes sense, though, that it would be useful to win over both China's own citizens and the west's political leaders "Dr. Sun was eager to secure the confidence of the Chinese people for this plan of international development of China's railway system. He recalled the old days when foreign bankers disregarded the will of the Chinese people and thought that they could do everything with the approval of the Manchu government alone. [...] Had the foreigners through fair dealings first secured the confidence of the Chinese people, many of the difficulties would have been avoided." (Chow 61) Here, Dr. Sun Yat-sen understands the threat of imperialism and if China wished to be successful moving forward, they must be proactive in identifying intentions of control from abroad.

He also recognized that the problems that he wanted to surmount couldn't be tackled by himself. Later in his 1922 work, *The International Development of China*, his tone conveyed less reluctance in soliciting help from overseas, perhaps as a last-ditch effort to clean up a nation that was overrun with seemingly insurmountable issues. He offered utopian visions of a new world order, going so far as to say that "there will be no more competition and commercial struggle as well as in the world." (Yat-sen 8) He was hoping to leap off of the destruction of World War by promoting China as a country that could be crafted into a peace-loving nation of the world. "The recent World War has proved to Mankind that war is rhinos to both the Conqueror and the

Conquered, and worse for the Aggressor. What is true in military warfare is more so in trade warfare. Since President Wilson has proposed a League of Nations to end military war in the future, I desire to propose to end the trade war by coöperation and mutual help in the Development of China,” he says. “This will root out probably the greatest cause of future wars.” To a certain extent, he was right. Much of what he said in this report set the stage for China’s continued vulnerability up until the Maoist era. Dr. Sun Yat-sen had been trying, like many others before him, to control the chaos and find harmony domestically. To many, he was simply too ambitious at this point in his career. In one letter sent to Dr. Sun in May 1919, it was expressed that his plans were “so complex and extensive that it [would] take many years to work them out in detail,” going on to say that “you doubtless are aware that it would take billions of dollars to carry out even a small portion of your proposals.” I believe that Dr. Sun Yat-sen understood that he was incredibly ambitious, but he most importantly understood that in order to save China from its own demise, something big had to be done. It would take lasting commitment both domestically and abroad to move China towards stability.

If anyone was positioned to be an effective liaison for sharing resources between the US and China, it was John Earl Baker. John was born in 1880 in Eagle, Wisconsin, a small village in Waukesha county southwest of Milwaukee. He first arrived in China in 1916 as an economist and advisor to the Chinese Ministry of Communications where he held that position until 1926. Concurrently, he was the Director of the American Red Cross’ famine relief efforts in China from 1920 to 1921. In 1931, he helped the National Flood Relief Commission strategize for flood relief. (Young 377) In 1937, he helped the Railway Ministry of China set up and operate a system of accounts and records. (Young 356) He was later appointed by former President Harry

Truman as the chief American member of the joint rural reconstruction commission in 1948, which “sought to develop rural irrigation and flood control in southwest China.” (Ex-Resident of Eagle Dies) He left China soon after Mao’s rise and retired in California.

His official positions are largely irrelevant, though. As an individual, he served three main roles during his time in China:

1. To assist government officials in combatting famine,
2. To act as a liaison to the West in raising funds for such efforts, and
3. To assist the government and China’s intellectual class in solving China’s transportation issue.

Through his writings, we can start to get a better understanding of who he was as a person and what exactly drove him to be so involved in the stabilization of China during this period.

However, it may first be useful to frame how Western help was perceived within China since the late 1800s until the time that Baker left the country.

There was a definite reluctance to bring in foreign capital to rebuild China, especially with matters relating to something as capital intensive as railroad construction. This reluctance is mostly valid, however. An excerpt from *Foreign Trade and Industrial Development of China* explains the situation well:

The Chinese people by and large considered foreign capital in China as dominating and oppressive, not merely because of its large share in the various sectors of the Chinese economy, but because of the special background against which it was possible for foreign capital to grow to such mammoth proportions . . . With their superior technology,

managerial efficiency and financial backing, foreign enterprises in China waged easy competition with native industries which before the 1930's never had a chance to establish themselves, for they were deprived of tariff and other proper protections.

(Cheng 41)

Even the first introduction of railroads into China was forced upon the Chinese. A British firm proposed to build a railway between Shanghai and Suzhou in 1863, but the project was rejected by Chinese authorities. Later, another British merchant decided to construct a test railroad about one third of a mile long in Beijing to demonstrate the use of railroads to the Chinese public. Naturally, the Chinese were "suspicious and hostile" and the authorities ended up destroying the line soon after (Hou 60). In 1867, Shen Baozhen, an official of the Qing dynasty said that "The cleverness of the West is beyond compare." (Huenemann 1) Perhaps it would be fitting to add the West's persistence to that critique as well.

As China's development advanced through the decades, bringing in foreign capital was unavoidable. "At current prices foreign capital in China doubled between 1900 and 1914 and redoubled between 1914 and 1931." (Hou 13) By 1937, 91% of railroads in China were foreign-owned. (Hou 127) Could this trend be reversed? Sun Yat-sen had tried to propose a system of "fair dealings" rooted in first obtaining the confidence of the Chinese people, but that vision quickly fell flat. As we will see later, though, John Earl Baker would mirror this same sentiment. We will also see the techniques and philosophies he used in trying to reassign power back into the hands of the Chinese people and put China on a path of reconstruction.

We know that John Earl Baker was passionate about China's famine problem, but just how prevalent was famine in China and how did he arrive at the idea to transportation to fix famine? M.J. Cheng tells us that "between the years 108 B.C. and A.D. 1911, there were one thousand, eight hundred and twenty-eight famines in different parts of China, or, on average, one every year." (Cheng 41) He also says that "it is estimated that twenty per cent of China's manpower is employed in transport, whilst five per cent is sufficient in western countries. Yet in spite of this, the actual transport produced is relatively meagre and of poor quality." (Cheng ix) Surely such staggering comparisons were not taken lightly by Baker. Such a statistic is hard for anyone to ignore. Going through famine every single year certainly doesn't insinuate that the root of the problem is in climate conditions.

A report in 1879 talked about some of the crossovers between the poor conditions and the failing transportation. Through its vivid imagery, it isn't hard to imagine just how bad the conditions were: "Broken carts, scattered grain bags, dying men and animals, so frequently stopped the way, that it was often necessary to prevent for days together the entry of convoys on the one side, in order to let the trains from the other come over." These reports don't sound much different than the ones that were presented in American newspapers almost fifty years later when a former Beijing newspaper editor reported to the *Los Angeles Times* saying "the most disheartening scenes I have ever witnessed in all my years in the Orient and in all my travels in the interior. Thousands begged for a piece of bread, for coppers, for anything I could give them." (Doom Millions 1) The aforementioned report goes on to suggest that there was a sustainable method in which to tackle both of these issues together, critiquing that "no idea of employing the starving people in making a new or improving the old road ever presented itself to



the authorities.” (The Great Famine 119) It was perhaps upon these proposals that John Earl Baker formulated his thesis on how to fix China.

Baker also knew that China had been attempting to build up its transportation infrastructure for decades and had constantly failed for one reason or another, most of which stemmed in ever-shifting political tides and foreign hands dipping their hands too far into the pot. To combat this, he knew that he had to suggest that the finances of the railways be put into the hands of the Chinese government. He suggested that “the Chinese government can hardly handle the old mortgage load and future rehabilitation, though it will not repudiate past obligations. This authority advises that the government of China should arrange with the mortgage holders to take over the older responsibility and leave to the railways the working out of rehabilitation finance. ‘Once these railways become able to carry traffic in quantity,’ says Mr. Baker, ‘there need be no doubt as to their earning power.’” (Griffin 31) By this time in 1938, China had held \$5.70 USD in foreign investment per capita. The presence of foreign capital had now gotten out of hand. Actually, he had presented the same exact sentiment almost 20 years earlier alongside Sun Yat-sen’s remarks. Baker said that “such capital should be a guest. It may have profit, it shall have honor, it shall have protection. But theirs is the house, and when the period of the invitation is over the guest shall depart carrying his releasing, his honors and his profits, but no more.” (What is the Trouble in China)

Having issues with transportation was almost as much of a problem for those financing the railways (and therefore colonizing the country) as it was for China as an entity. Longterm, it was in the best interest for all involved to let China retain control over the railroads as the country developed. Chow explains that “once a country has been colonized, the inadequacy of its

transportation facilities becomes a weakness to the colonizer. The problem is exactly the same as that confronting an independent state, which in order to remain viable, must have an administrative center from which the farthest reaches of the domain may be controlled.” (Chow 127) To some extent, these issues were universal. If Europe, for example, could only reach its customers at China’s port cities, then there is an artificial cap put on the overall market potential within China. If transportation reached throughout the different corners, however, goods would be able to appeal to a broader range of customers and new industries could be born. On the flip side, this same infrastructure gives the nation access and control to its own nation when the colonizers leave. The medium is relevant no matter what; it’s the power that dictates its use. In this case, hostility would only grow if the control of internal transport remained in the hands of outside nations.

In *The Dragon and the Iron Horse*, Ralph Huenemann takes an analytical approach in trying to understand how much of China’s development during the period of 1867-1937 was due to imperialistic motives and to what extent foreign players came out on top. In my view, he provides one of the most wholistic approaches to use when answering this question. First, he says that “the railway bonds offered the rentier an expected rate of return in the neighborhood of 5.2 percent—though these expectations were rudely disappointed in the end. This rate of interest was determined in competitive markets and thus involved no exploitation within the Leninist meaning of that term. Similarly, the costs of construction were probably not inflated to any significant degree by monopoly power, despite the existence of the rail-markers’ cartel.” (Huenemann 242) Here, he refers to the mess of funding that went into railway development, that, while chaotic, wasn’t terribly unique when compared against similar

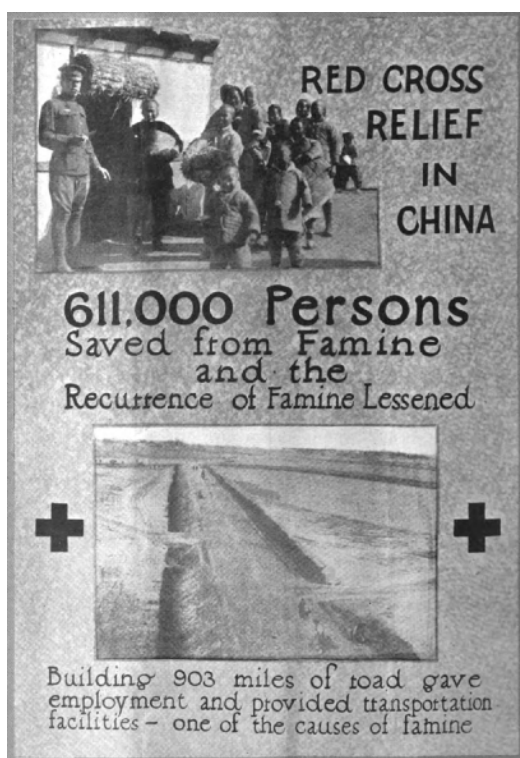
scenarios throughout history. I do find credibility in this claim considering that other resources have shown that traditional market forces were at work and by the time China was trying to raise the funds to build such an infrastructure, developed nations that had the money didn't race to take advantage of the "opportunity." The financial gains that were to be had were relatively modest, or least on par, with endeavors happening around the world at the same time.

He does admit that there was some money to be had for financiers, saying, "The situation in the financial markets was different, however, and there is no doubt that some excess profits were captured by the financial middlemen because of the oligopoly in treaty-port banking." (Huenemann 242) The notion is believable; financial middlemen are historically the first to take advantage of such a situation. He argues that, "in the larger context, this problem was a relatively unimportant one" because "as soon as there existed a cadre of Chinese bankers who were familiar with world financial markets, it proved rather easy to tame the Old Lady of the Bund." (Huenemann 242) And this again makes sense. Being inexperienced caused China to have to pay a premium in certain regards, but perhaps that is part of the process of developing a nation. I tend to view China's goals during this time as being those of redefinition coming off of the heels of the Qing dynasty, saturated in Confucian ideals and centuries of dynastic government structure. China had to understand how to play the game, and going through the process of redefinition inherently welcomes others who want to take advantage of naiveté.

I think the nuance here is that if any substantial gains were to be had, there is little proof that these were based in gaining or maintaining spheres of influence in the middle kingdom. Perhaps the most important question to ask is whether or not outside funds ultimately helped China grow as a nation during this period. Speaking on this, Huenemann makes the final

assertion that his “own calculations suggest that the railways *did* provide an economic benefit to China, despite the context of imperialism within which they were built.” (Huenemann 247) The argument is ultimately hard to deny. In fact, it is painfully obvious that the timeliness in which foreign capital flowed into China was instrumental in developing the China that we have today.

Early in John Earl Baker’s career as the Director of the American Red Cross’ famine relief efforts in China from 1920 to 1921, famine relief was a little more straightforward. He spearheaded a handful of successful operations in those two years. Most notably, he lead a road construction project in Shandong province. It was here that he was first able to play with the



A Red Cross poster soliciting donations in 1921

notion of labor in reconstruction as a form of sustainable famine relief. The poster to the left shows the dual purpose of the road construction; it provided both employment (and therefore food) to residents in Shandong as well as infrastructure for them to more reliably bring in grain sent by organizations providing famine relief. According to John, the project had to halt halfway due to a lack of funding, but it seemed to have bolstered a better quality of life, even if only in one region of China.

The late 1920s marked a major shift in the way that philanthropic organizations in the US and the government in China operated. The American Red Cross released the “Report of American Red Cross Commission to China [on causes of famine, relief measures, and transportation facilities]” in 1929 after members of the organization had

concluded their trip overseas. Within its 100 or so pages, it laid out the new stance of the Red Cross, saying that the “American people who give funds to China under the urgency of poignant appeals to save starving millions should realize that their gifts may be expended upon projects which, however valuable, bring aid to a much smaller number of persons than the same amount of expenditure would help if applied to other forms of relief.” (Report of Commission to China 24) In plain English? China’s issues were too large to be tackled via philanthropic support from outsiders. An article in the New York Herald Tribune told its readers that “Officials of the American Red Cross advised the Department of Public Welfare officials that the China famine relief was well sponsored, but it showed no evidence of being big enough to accomplish its objective....” (China Relief Barred, 1929)

The Red Cross report was harrowing at times, especially when contrasting the grave scenes that it depicted with the stance that these issues were not to be solved under the guise of “famine relief.” It went so far as to suggest that perhaps this continued famine could act as a sort of remedy for the “population problem” in China:

China’s population will be double its present total by the end of this century unless the normal increase is checked by famines, epidemics and wars. In past centuries tremendous catastrophies [sic] of such character have reduced the population by many millions, but as they did not reduce the rate of increase, their effect was overcome within a few years. [...] In a word, China presents a population problem which defies solution by any available means. (Report of Commission to China 18)

It was this Malthusian doctrine that irked John Earl Baker. In one of his many books about China, *Explaining China*, he said, “What should we think of a Parliamentarian who refused a dole to his flood stricken constituency on the ground that ultimately the country would be just as happy if they all perished? It may be contrary to the public good, but a mother *will* call in a physician to save the life of her sick child, in spite of the fact that if it died more food would be left for other children a hundred years hence. He who answers indifferently when told of any great catastrophe, has thought of his pocket-book before he answered; his first impulse was one of sympathy. We are all fathers or mothers or brothers or sisters or some other close relative, at least in spirit, to the other members of the human family.” (Baker 235)

I believe that Baker was struggling to keep morale up within China as well as abroad when trying to tackle the problem of famine. He wrote that many of the intellectuals in China accepted famine in the countryside as the “will of heaven” and accounts a time when he was at a dinner during the early days of the famine in 1920 expressing sympathy towards the cause. A prominent Chinese physician, a woman (he notes), responded to his remark on the prospects of the deaths of millions by starvation, to which she replied, “What of it? Next year there will be another crop of a million Chinese babies.” (Baker 241) He also says that “In 1921, when famine was reported from that province, no one believed it. One said, ‘Just a deliberate attempt to grab money’; another, ‘Oh, there may be some suffering because of military disturbances’; and yet another, ‘There will always be beggars in China.’ but as for famine—real, genuine famine, famine caused by drouht [sic], the same as in the north—why, ‘Nothing doing.’ Was not Hunan one of the best irrigated provinces in China?” (Baker 234) He was stuck between a population

that was either too apathetic to put their own efforts into solving the problem and organizations in the West that had withdrawn their support citing the immensity of the problem.

Returning back to the report of 1928, it is clear that Baker shifted his efforts to helping the Chinese government solve its problems internally, perhaps rooted in his frustration in appealing to outsiders. The report says:

Dr. C. T. Wang, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Chinese Government, speaking with Mr. John Earl Baker, who represented China Famine Relief, Inc., said with emphasis that the Chinese Government does not wish foreign organizations to undertake in China relief projects which involve the construction of public works. He said that such works affecting rivers, highways, and the property and rights of Chinese citizens should be the sole concern of the government of China, that the government itself needed no charitable assistance. He added that if charitably inclined Americans wished to help the Chinese Government they might do so by buying its bonds. (Report of Commission to China 24)

It was at this point that infrastructure was seen as the true solution to many of China's issues regarding quality of life. Previously, issues of transport were generally presented under the lens of economics and maintaining (or edging out) spheres of influence. John Earl Baker had hinted at the use of transportation to combat famine in some of his early literature (with the Red Cross in 1920-1), but it wasn't seriously considered until this time.

This rhetoric was brought to cosmopolitan US citizens via a handful of newspaper outlets. One reads, "The reason for the Red Cross not wishing to take the matter up as an emergency was due to the present unrest in China and the difficulty in conveying food to them if

it was sent there.” (China Relief Barred, 1929) There was a certain amount of pushback to this by other missionaries, an article in 1930 says that “Mr. Andrews [a missionary born in Gansu province] said: ‘The Red Cross investigators were entirely correct, so far as they went. However, they failed to see even the fringe of conditions that I have been witnessing for the past ten months.’” (Tells of Suffering in Chinese Famine, 1930) Mr. Andrews did, however, admit in the same article that it was “extremely difficult [to distribute supplies] because of the rugged mountainous country and difficulty of transporting supplies.”

...

Now that we have taken a look at John Earl Baker’s actions, can we make any assumptions to his character? It is not my goal to impress upon you the kind of person that he was or what his absolute motives may have been, but instead to give you points upon which to judge his character for yourself. What could it have been that motivated a small-town Wisconsin man to travel overseas and lead a completely different life than his peers growing up? I have a sense that he craved adventure, finding some sort of comfort in the process of building up a nation. Although I’m sure he was a religious man in some sense, I was absolutely hard-pressed to find any references to him tying his religious beliefs together with business or policy. In fact, he never spoke about it in his letters to his wife and child. The label of cosmopolitan seems ill-fitting as well as it conjures up ideas of shallow incentive as the driving force for action. The number of years that he spent *in* China also combats that notion because someone who acts in a cosmopolitan fashion would normally be in their homeland sending aide or contributing some other way to an outside nation.



Another area that speaks to his character is that no matter what organization he was a part of, he always served one of three main functions and one ultimate mission: to boost the quality of life for all of its citizens. When finance came into the picture, he always advocated to give keep power and control domestically. It is almost certainly because of these facts that he was viewed so respectfully by his peers both domestically and abroad and is what afforded him the opportunities to create close relationships with the Chinese government. Something about him was different. He had immense knowledge, but didn't force it, and he held important positions, but only used them to guide the nation to brighter frontiers. Perhaps it was his love of pragmatism and the desire to use that on a grandiose scale.

It is almost impossible to measure how Baker's pleas to let China stand on its own, that is, to deal with governmental and economic issues internally while allowing foreign aid to help where it needed it the most, worked as a protective measure to guard against controlling businessmen. The financial support that he was able to bring into the country, however, was most certainly incremental in rebuilding China. By pitching it as a humanitarian issue, he and the others around him in China were able to hold protect the sovereignty of the nation while rebuilding it with help from the world.

More broadly, I will cautiously assert that there was no sizable return for those that were involved in China's transportive and industrial expansion as it pertains to famine relief. To take the argument even further, there was also no ultimate thievery of Western nations during this period. Without a doubt, there were periods of control wherein the West had the advantageous position; there was simply little to show for it in the end. If Mao's regime hadn't taken control when it did, then perhaps things would be different. There is a very good chance that if Sun Yat-

sen's globalist ideals had persisted through the late 30s and 40s, the story would have been different. But for the period that these ideas did persist, they did accomplish something in the end.

In the end, John Earl Baker was very much like you and me: he balanced the comfort of the past with the promise of the future. He is relatable in a surprising way; I found his voice to be relatable over time; earnest but not overbearing, pointed but not pretentious. While reading personal letters that he had written to his wife in the early 30s, I uncovered something unexpected; the underpinnings of sacrifice:

But it certainly looks now as if we should have to work during our old age and live simply. What of it? I love you best in a gingham dress, and the food you cook is the best of all. Some how, I've always had tucked away in the back of my mind the idea that sometime we would drive out to the edge of nowhere and build ourselves a cabin on the bank of a stream; make a little garden, hunt a little, fish a little, read a little and make love a lot, while we wore out our old clothes. It would be nice to go back to town once in a while and put on our evening clothes, go to a concert or the theatre and eat at a fine restaurant, talk with our banking and professional friends — and then back to our quiet little Eden. We may have it yet. (April 24, 1932)

I realized that he was never able to shake the ideals of small-town Wisconsin life. He described such a simple, beautiful, and yet obtainable lifestyle. Surely he was financially able to support such a life, but he sacrificed that for something bigger. It is under this premise that makes it hard for me to be as pessimistic as my original thesis.

I suppose I must be careful, however, because when translating such emotional viewpoints to the other side, I see the problem that lies herein. Others that have analyzed this complex time period, especially as it pertains to transportation and nation-building, and have criticized the use of emotional narratives. On the use of foreign capital for railroad development, Huenemann says that “the literature on China’s railways has long asserted that, prior to 1949, the iron horse offered China no economic benefits and may have done substantial harm. I have tried to show that much of this literature is deeply flawed, both by its casual distortion of the facts and by the inadequacies of its analytical framework. This is a literature long on impassioned rhetoric and short on proof. I understand, and sympathize with, the emotions that propel this kind of writing. But I do not believe that feelings of anger and humiliation are justification for shallow scholarship.” (Huenemann 247) Having read a number of works on the topic written from the Chinese perspective (both domestically and as intellectuals studying abroad), I can see his complaint. Objectivity is hard to sustain when it is hard to uncover motives in others and inside of oneself as the writer.

Still, it’s hard for me to conclude that he was a malicious person. I do hope, however, that I have presented enough information to you as a reader to determine your own conclusion. We’ve armed ourselves with enough background information about how pervasive the use of foreign capital was from the late 1880s through the late 1930s to understand the threat. We have heard Mr. Baker’s side of the story and the techniques that he used to reassign power back to the Chinese. We saw how Sun Yat-sen’s original vision of friendly independence was lost and found again. And lastly, we have taken a hard look at his actions trying to find any notions of foul play and false motivations.

We have also taken into consideration Huenemann's position on railway finance and how there was little ultimate power lost through their worldly financing. Power is constantly shifting and it is important to remember that history is rarely ultimate. What has been lost can almost always be found again, and I think it was the hope of John Earl Baker that China would find itself again. Fast forward to the 2010s and China has invested billions of dollars into building infrastructure for developing nations such as Africa (Joyous Africans Take to the Rails, With China's Help): I think Mr. Baker would be proud. In many ways, he was ahead of his time. He objectively helped China in a period that was typically wrought with other players "helping" via the means of religion or through expansion of spheres of influence. Today, we see a lot more of this objectively humanitarian aide crossing the borders of different countries. He proved to the Chinese people that they didn't have to be cautious of all Westerners, especially when in a position that was so close to the government and their operations. It is an interesting contrast to the politics that Mao played following the founding of the People's Republic of China. It is also quite interesting to think about how John Earl Baker's efforts to rebuild China played into some of the infrastructure that the Party used during their different campaigns. There is no doubt in my mind that China is different because of his efforts. Next time you take a train, drive down a road, or visit the countryside in China, it is my hope that you will think of him.

### Works Cited

American National Red Cross, Department of War. "Report of American Red Cross Commission to China [on causes of famine, relief measures, and transportation facilities; with some data and list of persons consulted]." Report no. C44, 1929.

American National Red Cross. "The Red Cross Bulletin." Washington, D.C.: Published for the Dept. of Chapters, American Red Cross, by the Bureau of Publications, 1917.

Baker, John Earl. "Ability of Railroads to Pay Wage Increases." Thomas Gibson's Special Market Letters, Gibson Publishing Company, 1911, pp. 153-193.

Baker, John Earl. "Chinese Railway Accounts." Beijing, 1923.

Baker, John Earl, 1880-1957. "Explaining China." New York, D.: Nostrand Company, 1927.  
Print.

Baker, John Earl. "Fighting China's Famines." Unpublished, 1943.

Baker, John Earl. "Investment Values of Chinese Railway Bonds." Paris, 1923.

Baker, John Earl. Letter to Willie Katherine Baker. 1 July 1931, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Box 1 MAD 4 /24/I6.

Baker, John Earl. Letter to Willie Katherine Baker. 10 July 1931, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Box 1 MAD 4 /24/I6.

Baker, John Earl. Letter to Willie Katherine Baker. 15 April 1932, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Box 1 MAD 4 /24/I6.

Baker, John Earl. Letter to Willie Katherine Baker. 24 April 1932, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Box 1 MAD 4 /24/I6.

Baker, John Earl. Letter to Willie Katherine Baker. 8 May 1932, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Box 1 MAD 4 /24/I6.

Baker, John Earl. Letter to Willie Katherine Baker. 9 November 1938, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Box 1 MAD 4 /24/I6.

Baker, John Earl. "Standardization of Chinese Railways." *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, vol. 17, June 1922, pp. 392-94.

Baker, John Earl. "What is the Trouble in China." *China Monthly Review*, no. 14, 25 Sept. 1920, pp.166-67.

Buck, Peter. "American science and modern China, 1876-1936." Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980. Print.

Caine, Allen B. Letter to John Earl Baker. 2 August 1938, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Box 1 MAD 4 /24/I6.

Cheng, Ming-Ju. "The Influence of Communications, Internal and External, upon the Economic Future of China." London: G. Routledge & sons, ltd., 1930. Print.

Cheng, Lin. "The Chinese Railways, Past and Present." Shanghai: China United Press, 1937. Print.

Cheng, Yu-Kwei. "Foreign trade and industrial development of China: an historical and integrated analysis through 1948." Wash. U.P Wash, 1956.

China International Famine Relief Commission. "Publications B." 1926.

China International Famine Relief Commission. "Seeds for China's Arid Areas: A Famine Prevention Project." B 38. 1930.

"China's Railways; a Story of Heroic Reconstruction." Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1950.  
Print.

Chiu, Cheng Lun. "The Principles of Transportation." Shanghai, China: Commercial Press, 1929.  
Print.

Chow, Chuen-tyi, 1933-. "China's Internal Transport Problem: the Case of the Railway's First Century, 1866-1966." [Ann Arbor, Mich.]: [University Microfilms], 1974. Print.

"Doom Millions." Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File): 1. Jan 14 1930. ProQuest. Web. 11 May 2017.

"The New Era in Chinese Railway Construction." Pacific Affairs, vol. 10, no. 3, 1937, pp. 276–288., [www.jstor.org/stable/2751342](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2751342).

"Ex-Resident of Eagle Dies." Unknown. (Newspaper Clipping)

"The Great Famine: [report of the Committee of the China Famine Relief Fund]." Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1879.

Griffin, Eldon. "China's Railways as a Market for Pacific Northwest Products; a Study of a Phase of the External Relations of the Region." Seattle: Bureau of business research, College of economics and business, University of Washington, 1946. Print.

- Hou, Chi-ming, 1924-1991. "Foreign Investment and Economic Development in China, 1840-1937." Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965. Print.
- Huenemann, Ralph W. "The Dragon and the Iron Horse: The Economics of Railroads in China, 1876-1937." Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1984. Print.
- Jacobs, Andrew. "Joyous Africans Take to the Rails, With China's Help." The New York Times. The New York Times Company, 7 Feb. 2017. Web.
- Lee, En-han. "China's Quest for Railway Autonomy, 1904-1911: a Study of the Chinese Railway-Rights Recovery Movement." [Singapore] :Singapore University Press, 1977. Print.
- "Poor Transport Hinders China's Famine Relief." New York Herald Tribune (1926-1962): 1. Mar 10 1929. ProQuest. Web. 11 May 2017.
- "The Railroads of China." Business Digest and Investment Weekly, vol. 25, 3 Feb. 1920, pp. 162-63.
- Special to the, Herald T. "China Relief Drive Barred in Connecticut." New York Herald Tribune (1926-1962), Mar 24, 1929, pp. 10, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Tribune / Herald Tribune, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/docview/1111955883?accountid=465>.
- Sun, Yat-sen, 1866-1925. "The International Development of China." New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1922.



“Tells of Suffering in Chinese Famine." New York Times (1923-Current file), Jan 15, 1930, pp.

3, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, <http://>

[search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/docview/99078077?accountid=465](http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/docview/99078077?accountid=465).

Trescott, P. B. (1993), “John Bernard Tayler and the Development of Cooperatives in China,

1917–1945.” *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 64: 209–226. doi:10.1111/j.

1467-8292.1993.tb01390.x

Young, Arthur Nichols. “China's Nation-Building Effort.” Hoover Press, 1971.