

BELLA KING IN JAPAN AND CHINA: TRAVELLING AND COLLECTING IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Isabella (Bella) Cockburn Millar (1860-1927) was raised and educated in Edinburgh. In October 1887 she married the New Zealander Frederic Truby King (1858-1938); in November the couple moved to New Zealand. Bella and Frederic travelled to Japan in 1904. This was a recreational journey, motivated partly by Frederic's on-going ill health and exhaustion. Six months convalescence leave was granted by the Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals in May 1904,¹ and the Kings left *Kingscliff* on Thursday August 4th. They arrived in Kôbe on 22nd September and remained in Japan till November 10th. Bella King maintained two diaries during their journey. Her day book,² together with correspondence to her friend Charlotte Beswick,³ records their journey, and their first days in Japan.⁴ They trace their arrival through the Shimonoseki Straits and the Inland Sea, and their first, positive, impressions on embarkation. They take us from Kôbe through Ôsaka, Kyôtô, Nagoya, Yokohama and Tokyo, and they detail side trips to popular tourist destinations like Ôtsu, Nikko, Gifu and Lake Chûzenji. From Japan they take us to a short visit in China. A more detailed record was begun from October 23rd in a separate log.⁵ The detailed observations recorded in this document afford fulsome appreciations of Bella's perceptions of the places she visited in Japan and China, but also offer insights into changing relations of gender and class in Edwardian New Zealand and into bourgeois collecting habits of the time.

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- 1 Correspondence, Office of Inspector General, Lunacy and Hospitals to Frederic Truby King, 19th May 1904 and 31st May 1904, Hocken, AG-007-005/028.
 - 2 Isabella King, diary, 1903-1904, Hocken Library AG-007-005/035.
 - 3 Miss Charlotte Beswick, Matron at Seacliff Mental Hospital.
 - 4 Mary King, *Truby King the Man: A Biography*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948, 117-136.
 - 5 Isabella King, travel notebook documenting her journey through Japan, 1904, Hocken Library AG-007-005/033.

A New Zealander in Japan: What can we learn from Bella King's travel diaries?

Bella King's travel log maintains detailed, precisely framed accounts of their journey. These are intimate, often domestic in scale and outlook, and conceived for personal purposes. Her unvarnished representations of local scenes reveal how an Edwardian visitor from New Zealand perceived this world. They document the challenges of travelling in unfamiliar territories in 1904, and the support they enjoyed. Some observations may seem trivial, but practicalities of the passage of time and distance, preoccupations with weather, accommodations, diet or hygiene that she records in her diaries had significance for Bella that few travellers today might appreciate. Her observations are refreshingly unaffected by romanticised or exotic notions that had informed popular Western constructs of the Orient (Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* was first performed in the same year as the Kings' visit to Japan).

These documents also reveal a woman well-equipped for travel. The Kings were well informed. Bella refers to 'Murrays', or Chamberlain and Mason's *Murray's Handbook* for Japan,⁶ and also to 'Parke's Life'.⁷ Her copies of Chamberlain's *Things Japanese*,⁸ Binyon's 1907 *Drawings from the (Japanese) Old Masters* and *A Pictorial List of Nozawaya's Dress Goods, Silks etc.* survive today.⁹ Sources like these provided both practical travel information and contextual appreciations of the social and cultural institutions they encountered.

Patricia Sloane-White defines three characteristic forces informing late twentieth-century travel habits of middle-class Malays: travel represents, and defines, middle-class identity; it positions travellers within global communities; and recreational aspiration was tempered by an ethos of purpose and 'work'.¹⁰ Bella King might have appreciated these observations – albeit in more Calvinist terms. The privilege of international travel in the early twentieth century reflected and represented both the affluence and the wide-ranging interests of the middle class professionals with whom the Kings consorted. The sense of practicality that guided her systematic descriptions is consistent with the work ethic they both maintained at home. Bella's curiosity, purposeful thirst for learning, and intelligent eye are manifest throughout the log. Her explanations of the manufacture of mulberry papers in Okitsu in the log's end matter, for example, are acutely observed.

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- 6 B. H. Chamberlain and W. B. Mason, *Murray's Handbook, A Handbook for Travellers in Japan Including the Whole Empire from Yezo to Formosa*, 1899, London: John Murray.
 - 7 Stanley Lane-Poole and Frederick V. Dickins, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes Sometime Her Majesty's Minister to China and Japan, V. II: Japan*, 1894, London: Macmillan and Co.
 - 8 Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Things Japanese: being notes on various subjects connected with Japan for the use of travellers and others*, 1890, London: Kegan Paul. A copy remains in the Kings' library, now in Special Collections, University of Otago.
 - 9 Frederic and Bella Truby King, notes, photographs and mementos of a trip to Japan by Truby King and Bella King 1904, Hocken Library AG-007-005/028.
 - 10 Patricia Sloane-White, Why Malays Travel: Middle-Class Tourism and the Creation of Social Difference and Belonging, *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2007, 18, 2, 5-28.

Her appreciations of the functional arrangements of the Water Clock mechanisms in Canton, and, indeed, the ease with which she was able to explore the city and negotiate its transport and geography demonstrate a remarkable awareness and facility.

Entries in Frederic's hand also reveal this purposeful pragmatism. He expresses admiration for Japanese shipping services and scientific agriculture in extended and analytical passages. Lorraine Sterry suggests that in 1904 international respect for Japan still reflected stereotyped assumptions of its virtues of industry, cleanliness, honour and respect, and strength of character.¹¹ Frederic's apparent agreement with these assertions may have been encouraged by his familiarity with the Japan literature Sterry outlines, and bolstered by his philosophies of women's and children's health and understandings of Japanese practices in these areas: 'The Kings were in Japan satisfying Dr Truby King's curiosity as to the physical fitness of the Japanese race – superior, due to breast feeding – making them a warrior people to contend with'.¹² He later described the country as '...a nursery of strong, able-bodied men and women'.¹³ Clearly he was unfamiliar with the dismal picture painted by Isabella Bird some years earlier: 'It is painful to see the prevalence of such repulsive maladies as scabies, scald-head, ringworm, sore eyes, and unwholesome-looking eruptions, and fully 30 per cent of the village people are badly seamed with smallpox'.¹⁴

The Kings' enthusiasms were not always consistent with the observations Bella describes in the log however. Some entries do extol the virtues of Japanese labour. Bella frequently admires the hard-working women in agricultural and craft activities, but she also describes precarious arrangements for childcare (October 23rd and 24th) and her assertion that 'The people seemed very poor but quite happy...' now seems naively romantic in tone. Frederic notes the careful practices and superior work habits and attitudes of Japanese seamen: 'The Jap is always willing & Cheerful & on this a/c I would take them before the sailors of other nations'. In a subsequent sentence, however, he criticises their reckless seamanship and high collision rate. Similarly his descriptions of sophisticated scientific practices and institutional arrangements for agricultural education here seem incompatible with the accounts of primitive technologies like wooden tined forks he lists to illustrate his observations. Frederic's enthusiasms were undiminished by his own experiences however. Whatever he actually saw in Japan, his assumptions of its virtues complemented his profound belief in the benefits of fresh air and exercise, and the values of simple vegetable-focused diet and breast feeding confirmed the unswerving commitments of both Frederic and Bella

11 Lorraine Sterry, *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan: Discovering a 'New' Land*, Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2009, 45-47.

12 Correspondence: StephenWhite with author, 6 July 2011.

13 *Otago Witness*, 26 July 1905, 8.

14 Isabella Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, London, John Murray, 1880, 99.

to health improvements for women and children throughout New Zealand (and later abroad), promoted tirelessly in his lectures and their publications.¹⁵

The log reflects an awareness of Japan's place in the world at this time. Bella's observations of nurses and convalescent soldiers reflect contemporary events of the Russo-Japanese War, which had commenced with the naval attack on Port Arthur on February 8th 1904 and was to end at the Battle of Tsushima on May 28th 1905. Bella's letters also demonstrate their awareness of Japan's foreign relations at the time. Correspondence for September 24th 1904 describes street displays of Japanese flags with the note: 'The town is ready to celebrate the fall of Port Arthur'.¹⁶ The Kings shared New Zealand sympathies for Japan. Frederic's signature is one of 23, including those of Dr. Thomas Morland Hocken (1836-1910) and David Theomin (1852-1933), attached to an 'Address accompanying a casket presented to his Excellency Admiral H. Togo of His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Combined Naval Squadron as a memento (*sic*) of the Battle of Tsushima' forwarded to Tôgô, together with the gift of an ornate silver casket, following the Japanese defeat of the Russian Naval Squadron.¹⁷ Admiral Tôgô responded in February 1907.¹⁸ New Zealand approval was consistent with the spirit of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, established in 1902, and in place until 1921.

One important motivation for the Kings' journey to Japan seems to have been in its potentials for collecting. As James Beattie has explained, an important locus for this lay in the acquisition of plants.¹⁹ While there they purchased and gathered substantial collections of seeds and plants for Karitane.²⁰ In the log Bella notes their ordering plants while in Yokohama and collecting seeds and plants from gardens they visited (Nov. 2nd, 3rd), and Frederic's tending plants on board ship (Nov. 11th). Their enjoyment of Japanese gardens during the journey was to inform the Japanese-styled development of their own grounds at *Kingscliff* in Karitane and later at Melrose in Wellington.

The Kings also collected art in Japan. Bella refers to purchases of porcelains, basketry, niello work, cloisonné, *mingei* folk-crafts and papers. Her correspondence records visits to markets in Manila and (disparagingly) Hong Kong, and then more purposefully to the markets and factories of Kôbe, Kyôtô and Nagoya. References to porcelain purchases, together with the list of manufacturers of refined wares in the front matter of the log, reveal a knowledgeable collector. Bella seemed closely interested in

15 Roger Peren, ed., *Japan and New Zealand: 150 Years*, Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999, 26.

16 King, 1948, 124.

17 Correspondence: King et al to Tôgô 5th September 1905, Hocken, MS-0451-022/001.

18 Correspondence: Tôgô to Hocken, 25th February 1907, Hocken VAR-Vol24, No. 07.

19 James Beattie, Jasper Heinzen, and John Adam, Japanese Gardens and Plants in New Zealand, 1850-1950: Transculturation and Transmission, *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, 2008, 28, 2, 228.

20 Beattie et al, 229.

the craftsmanship informing the manufacture of diverse decorative arts objects. Closely observed descriptions of the craft processes and evaluations of quality are distributed throughout the log. Bella seemed well-informed also about *ukiyo-e* pictorial arts: ‘We have explored an old print shop and have bought over a hundred of the best prints of modern Japanese painters – Hokusai, Gekko, Kiyosai, Yusen, Beisen, Shirose and many others’.²¹ Some pieces survive. Her grandchildren remember a briefcase containing about 40 colourful prints by Yoshitoshi, Chikanobu, Eisen and Kuniyoshi they used to look through as children – ‘Stephen and I loved to look through them as kids. They were very beautiful, and a glimpse of something exotic’.²²

Bella’s enthusiasms were consistent with international, especially American, habits of the time.²³ Japanese art objects informed domestic reconstructions of Japanese tastes in arts and decoration. Importantly however, any construct the Kings may have developed was emphatically of the present, not the past, world of Japan. Many of the objects they collected were far from old. Bella purchased her porcelain pieces at source. She was buying contemporary works, elegantly ornamented in ways that represented current Japanese tastes, albeit sustaining earlier decorative tropes. Print artists like Yoshu Chikanobu (1838-1912) and Nagamachi Chikuseki (fl. ca. 1900), whose works have remained in family hands, were contemporaries. The Kings did buy some older works, but most were recent, up-to-date objects reflecting tastes that survived through the Meiji and Taishō periods.

In a simple sense, their art purchases were souvenirs. *Meishō-e* (‘famous-place pictures’), for example, were cheap, portable mementos that helped the Kings understand and remember this world. Importantly, and like Jessie Rhodes before her in 1891,²⁴ most of Bella’s purchases seem determined by domestic considerations. The selection of decorative arts, plants (hardly the easiest objects to transport) and prints was developed around the interior decoration and garden projects at *Kingscliff*. Bella’s entries specify the practical purchases of baskets and vases for use in their home. The diary entries especially also reveal the extent to which Bella managed their domestic affairs, and maintained social networks at home and, usefully for the journey, abroad in Australian urban centres. They record her activities around the development of their new home, and even, in notes from the first week of August 1903, her participation in the management of affairs, including the maintenance of the balance sheets, at *Seacliff*. These domestic roles and Bella’s involvements at *Seacliff* were precisely the contexts that nurtured the virtues of fine organisational skills, time management and efficiency

21 Correspondence October 17th, King, 1948, 136.

22 E-mail correspondence, Michael White to Trish O’Hagan, Wednesday 29th June 2011.

23 Christine Guth, *Longfellow’s Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004, 6-7.

24 Edwina Palmer, and Geoffrey W. Rice, A Honeymoon in Meiji Japan: The Diary of Jessie Rhodes, *The Journal of New Zealand Studies*, December 1997, 4, 64-94.

that informed her effective management of the practical arrangements of travel abroad.²⁵ Certainly her log descriptions of the independence with which they forged their travel arrangements or the challenge of locating a lost trunk of her purchases suggest a self-reliant, resilient and energetic application to the task at hand.

The Kings' travel in Japan, and the purposeful agendas they maintained, were conditioned through social and intellectual intercourse with professional and academic colleagues in Dunedin, and the privileged social circles with whom they mixed. These circles included the Theomins (place settings for Bella and Frederic still grace the dining room display at the Theomin home at *Olveston*) or the Hockens. Indeed, the arts, including Oriental arts, formed something of a locus for the social engagements of their milieu. David Theomin, for example, travelled widely, and maintained extensive interests in the fine and decorative arts. His home at *Olveston* was decorated with diverse Orientalia, including an extensive collection of Japanese arms, middle-Eastern textiles, and a fine, rare Chinese jade piece. Dr Thomas Hocken also visited Japan in 1901 and 1904, and appears to have collected some Japanese *shunga* woodblock prints, now lost.²⁶ He did, however accumulate diverse documents there, including shipping almanacs and other material that complement Frederic King's very pragmatic interests in shipping and agriculture. Others, like Esmond de Beer (1895-1990), travelled in Japan, and maintained Japanese collections in their homes. Their collections reflect contemporary affluent upper middle-class interests in Dunedin and beyond: they were tangible demonstrations of their wealth, status and intellectual stock.²⁷ Unusually however, given the grand agendas of these other collectors, and the survival of their extensive collections in public institutions today, most of Bella's objects are now dispersed, gifted or sold. This should not suggest that her collections were of slighter import than others. Bella's numerous log entries describing searching for goods, choosing and purchasing, packing and transporting them back to Karitane, suggest her accumulation was substantial, and verify the knowledgeable agendas and refined taste that informed her selections. Nor does it exclude her from the philanthropic attitudes adopted by these other collectors. Indeed, her history of contributions in womens health and childcare confirm her social principles and generosity of spirit. More likely it reflects two distinctive characteristics of her collecting. First, where the other collections were closely focussed – Theomin's on armour and textiles for example, Hocken's on bibliographic and archival material, de Beers on *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints – and each formed a coherent thematic collection, Bella's more Catholic taste led her to divergent choices that would never have sat well as a focused public collection. Second, Bella's choices were more personal than others, and driven by attitudes of domestic practicality. These domestic functions were preserved as she herself shifted homes, and as her collections were dispersed into other domestic settings through friends and family.

25 Sterry, 2009, 2.

26 David Bell, *Ukiyo-e* in New Zealand, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 2008, 10, 1, 28-53.

27 David Bell, Looking and Understanding: New Zealand Views of Japan Through *Ukiyo-e*, *The Journal of New Zealand Art History*, 2009, 30, 62.

Bella's diary entries repeatedly demonstrate the ways the professional and social networks of their Dunedin circles provided valuable support during their journey to Japan. Entries refer to meeting the Tullochs in Christchurch and the Hassells in Wellington, and a Mr Hudson, the Hansons, Dr and Mrs McDonall Miss Hanna, Miss Getting and Miss B., Mrs I., and Miss S., in Sydney, and an encounter with the collector Willi Fels (1858-1946) enroute to and from Japan. In Japan itself they mention the Martins, the Deverush family, and repeated meetings with Horace Carew and his family. Their initial visit with the Carews was, in part at least, one of commiseration. Captain Horace Carew, a mariner in Japan and China, was a brother of Edgar Hall Carew, stipendiary magistrate and coroner at Dunedin, who had died in Dunedin 31 August 1904, shortly after the Kings' departure.²⁸ These contacts also provided supportive travel associations however. On September 22nd and 23rd Bella records Captain Carew taking them shopping and sightseeing in the Motomachi and Nankô bazaar shopping areas in Kôbe. They met him again in Ôsaka on September 28th, and appear to have stayed at his home during their visit to Kyôtô until October 6th. On November 6th they visited the Carews and the Deverush family. Bella mentions Captain Carew's son, the younger Horace Carew, who had gone shopping with them in Yokohama, and whose inability to bargain effectively had so disappointed Bella. Captain Deverush was the pilot on the Kings' return journey through the Inland Sea to Moji. These contacts provided valuable assistance when facing the challenges of language barriers – there is little evidence here that Bella or Frederic made any attempt to conquer more than the most basic communication skills – negotiating, and distrusting, guides and porters, and arranging freight and transport.

Other women visited Japan in the early twentieth century, and in some ways their accounts of their experience coincide. The British visitor Marie Stopes (1880-1958) arrived in Japan on August 6th 1907, three years after the Kings. Stopes' time in Japan was longer than Bella's. There is, however, some consistency between the Japanese experiences of both women and in the ways they recorded them. Like Bella King, Stopes recorded her experiences in regularly maintained, and closely observed diary entries. Unlike King, Stopes published her journals, but she did so – ostensibly, at least – without editorial modification, '... jotted down at the time and place (to) mirror, as no rewritten phrases could, the direct impression that that time and place made on me'.²⁹

The candour of her observations corresponds closely with the unaffected directness of Bella's log. Unsurprisingly perhaps, given similarities in their education, both women bring the observational acuity, analytical tendency and economical concision of scientific minds to their records. Bella had been Dux of the Edinburgh Educational Institution for Young Ladies, and a prize-winner in the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women Examinations. Marie Stopes had been educated privately, then at St George's School in Edinburgh, North London Collegiate School, and University College in London.

28 Otago Witness, 31 August 1904, *Death of Mr E. H. Carew, S. M.*, Issue 2633, p. 33, paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=OW1904083 retrieved 24 October 2011.

29 Marie Stopes, *A Journal from Japan*, London: Blackie & Son, Ltd., 1910, vii.

Both accounts reflect an independence in travel habits that encouraged ventures beyond the tourist meccas. Both engage with Japanese histories and traditions, but also focus very much on the Japan of their day. For both women, the precision of these accounts is tempered by a refined sensitivity to the niceties of these social, aesthetic or natural worlds. Most importantly, their journals record experiences of real, everyday, and often mundane Japanese life. They represent it honestly, and in plain language that reflects their realistic world views during an era of rapid change in Japanese and world affairs.

Though Bella's views on family and women's health were very different from Stopes' views on birth control, both were much occupied with matters of public health care, and both saw evidence of the assumption of public responsibility for health care in Japan. The views of both women were conditioned by practical considerations, and both signal new, empowered, and modern, attitudes on life, and on social relations. It is a pragmatic and positive attitude, reflecting a rational world view. For Bella King, this outlook was to contribute to the reshaping and redefinition of the worlds of women, children and health in New Zealand, and inform New Zealand's developing world view and international relations with the Far Eastern regions during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Bella King's travel experiences provide some insights into these developing trends.

Bella King's 1904 travel log³⁰

Bella's travel log picks up the narrative from their arrival in Tokyo. Where the day book provides short, sharp and practical notes, the log develops more detailed accounts of her experiences of Japan. They embrace descriptions of the experiences of travel: how she moved about, what she saw, and enjoyed, and how she interpreted and appreciated the places she visited. Several themes recur throughout her narrative.

Sightseeing

Though the Kings' explored rural destinations beyond the main urban centres, their passage did also embrace visits to conventionally popular tourist destinations. An entry for October 23rd and 24th for example describes their visit to the graves of the Chūshingura *rōnin* at Sengakuji. On October 25th they travelled to Kamakura in Kanagawa Prefecture. Kamakura is rich in religious and political history (it lent its name to the Kamakura Period of Japanese history) and is the location of the immense bronze *Kamakura Daibutsu* or 'Great Buddha'. The great bronze statue of Daibutsu or Amida Buddha at Kōtoku-in is Japan's second largest Buddha, cast in 1252, and a popular tourist attraction. They visited Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū, the Hachiman shrine at Tsurugaoka that had been the setting for the opening events of the Kabuki drama *Kanadehon Chūshingura*, the tale of the *rōnin* whose graves they had visited at Sengakuji. They were also able to cross Enoshima-ohashi Bridge to explore Enoshima-jinja Shrine, and the Tropical Botanical Garden in Enoshima Island in Sagami Bay.

30 Bella's Japan travel log was kept in a small (162x102mm), sturdy 'moleskin' type notebook with lined pages. Sections of this log were included in Mary King's biography (1948, 136-149). Original spellings, gaps and grammar are retained in the passages included here.

Later, on November 2nd, they explored the popular parks and temples of Nara then returned to Kyôtô where they visited the Nijô area, in Nakagyô-ku, around Nijô Castle, and travelled on the Kamo (Duck) River. They also went to Arishiyama (Storm Mountain), Iwatayama Monkey Park, Toketsukyô 'Moon Crossing Bridge', the Rinzai School Tenryû temple and Matsuo Shrine and Sagano bamboo forest. They visited Kiyomizu-dera, the Gion geisha district, Kinkaku-ji, (Temple of the Golden Pavilion, alternatively Rokuon-ji, or Deer Garden Temple), Tô-ji – 'East Temple', Ginkakuji (Temple of the Silver Pavilion), Honen-in Temple in Higashiyama, and Chion-in. Bella makes special mention also of seeing the stone *meganebashi* 'spectacle bridge', so-named after its twin-arched structure, resembling the twin circles of eye glasses.

These were rigorous schedules. Their exploration, of 'Canton', on foot and by sedan chair, on November 15th, embraced a comprehensive range of sights. After anchoring at 6.30, going ashore to a hotel, and locating a guide:

...After breakfast we had a good walk round the Shameen³¹ & saw it well. The houses looked substantial and many of the gardens were very beautiful. We then got into our chairs...First we crossed the canal by the English bridge into Canton proper & went for a little way along the canal front, soon however we plunged into a narrow road & after that we passed along street after street about 6 or 7 ft wide & with gaily coloured & black & gilded signs hanging overhead & blotting out the sky. The streets were very crowded & the coolies carrying our chairs kept constantly shouting to make the people get out of the way...We then saw a temple somewhat like the Japanese Buddhist temples but much more tawdry & the surroundings were filthy & unkempt, with an unimaginable litter of broken pots, rusty tins & rubbish of all sorts. Then we went into the Hall of the 500 Genii.³² Here there are 500 images in rows around the hall & every day an incense stick is burned before each. The figures are all different and some are Europeans³³ – all inane expressions & tawdry being gilded wood with the gilt peeling off... We got into our chairs again and again traversed narrow streets...passing near Potter's field – the Execution ground which our guide wanted to show us. He apologised for not being able to show us an execution...The region is squalid...We next made our way to the water clock. It is in a pagoda-like building...When we were there it was quite accurate.

31 I.e. Shamian: a sandbank island on the Pearl River lying in the Liwan district just outside the Canton City wall. From 1863 European residential district and a popular and picturesque part of the City.

32 The Southern Dynasties Hualin Temple, north of Shamian. The Five-Hundred-Arhat Hall was constructed in 1861.

33 Bella notes one figure of Marco Polo.

We called & saw the R. C. Cathedral a fine building on an elevated position.³⁴ It has some good stained glass windows and holds over 2000 people...From the Clock Tower we went to the Five storied pagoda³⁵ which forms part of the city wall & from which a wonderful view of Canton can be had...We could see the Pagoda at Whampoa³⁶ & the course of the river towards Hong Kong...Just outside the wall was a cemetery on the hillside. The Chinese tombs seem to be made into the hillside & there are stone doorways in. There was a fort near the pagoda... Then we got into our chairs & went to the City of the Dead.³⁷ This consists of 200 chambers where the rich can house the coffins of their relations... After leaving this we journeyed through narrow ways where we saw restaurants full of coolies at food or “chow” as they called it. We passed many women with tiny feet – so small that they seemed to be without feet – encased in gay little slippers. Poor things, they could only hobble along.

We then came to the Flowery Pagoda which is nine stories high.³⁸ It has some bushes growing on it but otherwise it is not specially beautiful. It is a hexagonal building about 250 ft (?) high.

After seeing it we again traversed among streets & visited a silk store & crockery shops but we had to hurry as time was passing & we had to get back to the steamer. We soon got back to the Shameen & got a sampan for the steamer.

As their ship departed, Bella noted the views of the Cathedral and the five-storied pagoda and Whampoa pagoda, and described the busy river life including the ‘slipper boats’ and the Flower boats, *fa-shuen*, that provided night-life entertainments on the Pearl River. The Kings didn’t retire until the ship had passed through the Bocca Tigris and to sea.

Bella’s representations of China construct a less favourable picture than her rather idealised delight in the Japanese scene. Her repeated disapproval of dirty crowded streets, smelly, muddy rivers or ‘tawdry’ temple sculpture of Guangzhou notwithstanding, her descriptions of both the tourist destinations and of street life along the way are closely observed and finely detailed. The perceptive and informed descriptions of sights like the imperial Examination Halls visited on the same day reflect inquiring and purposeful agendas:

34 The Roman Catholic Cathedral (now Shishi Holy Heart Cathedral) built 1863-1888 just inside the City wall to the east of Shamian.

35 Zhenhai Tower, built 1380 by Zhu Liangzu on Yeuxiu Hill, now houses the City Museum.

36 The ‘Lyre’ pagoda on Whampoa Island on the Pearl River.

37 The extensive ‘City of the Dead’ was located outside the north gate of the City, just west of the Examination Hall.

38 Flowery Pagoda (Hua Ta), Liurong Si (Six Banyans Temple).

Presently we came to pigs wallowing & scraping among the slush & litter. Passed through a gateway & left our chairs. We were in a great bare walled courtyard with two or three swings like those at a public school with Chinese children swinging on them. We walked along & through another gateway along a broad flagged path to still another gateway on either side of which were high piles of flat boards reaching 18 or 20 ft high. We passed under this and on each side of the wide flagged road was a very weedy space & then rows of small lean-tos with narrow passages (under 3 ft wide) between. Each row contained 92 separate cells bare 3 ft wide & 5 ft deep with an open front the back wall forming the wall of the passageway for the next row. In each cell were 2 grooves, one about a ft from the ground the other about a ft above the first. The lower was to slide in the wooden floor the upper for a table on which the candidate for mandarinship writes the answers to questions. We now knew what purpose the stacks of timber on either side of the gateway were wanted for. There are altogether 10,200 cells. The examination every three years when the weeds are cut & the place tidied. The mandarins come & are housed in large temple like buildings at the end of the pathway & over the great gateways. The floors & tables are slid into place the ends of the narrow passages between the rows of cells are blocked after the candidates are in their rooms & 15 watchers parade each passage to see that no cheating takes place. Here the candidates remain for three days & four nights writing all the time. Food is handed in to them but they are not allowed to communicate with anyone outside. The strain proves too great for some of them & they die. Fifteen per cent are selected as "passed". This was one of the most interesting places we have seen

Gardens

Inevitably, the places the Kings enjoyed reflected their own interests at home, most especially their love of gardens. In Tokyo they had enjoyed their visit to the famous Sapporo Beer Garden. In Nara, the imperial capital of Japan between 710 and 784, the Kings enjoyed the extensive gardens and early Buddhist temples, including Tōdai-ji, Kōfuku-ji, Yakushi-ji, Tōshōdai-ji, Ryōsen-ji, the Shinto Kasuga Shrine, and the former imperial Heijō Palace:

Nov 2nd

It is a lovely morning. Our balcony looks out to a pond with a wide road running round two sides of it and there is a Japanese garden with stone lanterns, bridges and stepping stone. Before breakfast we went out and wandered round the garden, but it was not nearly so good as the Sapporo garden at Tokyo. After going round the garden we walked a little way in the park & saw & fed the tame deer.³⁹ Whenever they see anyone coming they

39 Ie. Nara Park.

come at once to see if you have anything to give them & there are always women selling little thin biscuits. We bought some & gave them to the deer & Fred took some photos. We then hurried back to breakfast & afterwards went through the Park to the temples.⁴⁰ The Park is most beautiful, the trees are magnificent & just now the colouring of the maples was very fine indeed. There are fine cryptomerias but there are also many other beautiful trees and the place is much more charming than Nikko;⁴¹ indeed I think it is the most beautiful place we have seen in Japan with the exception of Kioto which is also very beautiful. After seeing the temples, we climbed the hill at the back expecting to get a fine view, but we only arrived at a shrine among the trees. However we picked up a good many seeds & got a few plants by the way.

In Kyoto the following day they obtained introductions

...to see a private Japanese garden & a private house. First of all we saw the Miyako garden which is being made & some of the effects were so good that Fred determined to go back in the afternoon & take some photos... (We) Followed our instructions & had no difficulty in finding the garden. It was most lovely. There was a clear stream of water flowing through the grounds and it had been made the most of & the ponds waterfalls, tiny streams &c. were very beautiful. The large pond was full of carp & was surrounded by most lovely red & russet maples. The colouring was very fine & rich. There were several summer houses & in one, the water into it & there was a seat over the water. The rock work & stepping stones were very fine. We gathered some maple seed from the best trees.

Then we went to see the house. On presenting the card, we were ushered in & allowed to wander about at will among the dainty things. We were shown the tiny room used in the tea ceremonies with all the precious accessories in the little side room. There was a gong just outside the low 4 ft entrance on which to announce one's arrival. The maid brought us Japanese tea & we squatted on mats in a room overlooking the gardens with its stone bridges stepping stones, stone lanterns ponds, summer houses &c &c. Two of the rooms were spoilt by the introduction of European chairs and tables.

Shopping

The Kings' explorations of these and other gardens subsequently informed the designs of their own extensive garden projects. Diary entries include collecting and purchasing seeds and plants for their home garden from several of the gardens they visited. Bella's

40 Tōdai-ji.

41 Location of Nikko National Park and *Toshogu*, the mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu. The Kings arrived at Nikko on Sunday 16th October, subsequently visiting Lake Chūzenji (*Chūzenjiko*), Kegon Fall (*Kegon-no-taki*) and Hanaya Hodo Falls.

observations of Japanese domestic settings also motivated the decoration of her own home in Karitane in a similarly spare manner. Her extensive shopping expeditions in Japan provided the means to reconstruct Japanese tastes at home. Diary entries for 25th to 28th record their activities shopping and packing in Yokohama. A receipt from Nozawayaya, Yokohama, dated Oct. 27th for ‘Silk kimonos and cotton jackets & quantities of silks and cottons’, and Bella kept a catalogue of *A Pictorial List of Nozawayaya’s Dress Goods, Silks, etc.*⁴² They visited Isezakichô, the theatre district in Naka Ward in Yokohama; Isezakichô shôtengai, Isezakichô Shopping Street, was the principal shopping area for locals. They also visited ‘English Hatoba’, the Yokohama waterfront. Bella also records a visit to a porcelain factory at ‘Ata’, possibly Awa, one of the principal porcelain factories in Japan. In Atami on October 30th Bella records shopping for locally manufactured paper and silk fabric. While in Kyôtô in early November the Kings’ shopped at Nishimura silk store, at the shop of Seifu Yohei, ‘Artist to the Imperial Household of Japan (porcelain and ceramics)’⁴³ and at the Kurekozani porcelain factory. Porcelain was of special interest for Bella – as the log’s front matter list of manufacturers in and around Kyôtô verifies. Clearly she visited some at source: *We then saw Shezau’s pottery & found their wares very good. Got a few specimens We drove home in rickshas picking up our parcel at Shezau’s en route.* Entries for November 6th to the 8th describe their final shopping excursions on Motomachi and Hijanya where they purchased porcelain vases, *waragi* traditional Japanese sandals, and *tabi*, socks with a separated toe to accommodate the thong of the *waragi*. Her last entry before boarding ship describes their final scramble to locate a missing trunk before their departure from Kôbe.

Food and accomodation

Bella’s log contains numerous descriptions of their accomodations in Japan, of modes of travel, and of their encounters with the foods of Japan and China – they seem little impressed with either.⁴⁴ Her entries for their visit to Kurihashi on the 23rd and 24th of October describe a sparse, and little appreciated, lunch of *chi chi* (milk), sweet potato and *kasutera* sponge cake. On the morning of October 31st:

For breakfast we had first hot water and persimmons and sponge cake. Then broiled fish bread butter and omelet. Fred said the latter was not good so I did not try it. We did not enjoy our breakfast very much.

The limitations of the local diet provided one motive for visiting New Zealand expatriates like the Carew and the Deverush families in Yokohama that Bella recorded between the 6th and 8th of November. Contacts like these provided domestic comforts during the journey. They may also have provided the sources of the extensive list of recipes Bella’s maintained later in the log. Many of these are for sweet foods, cakes, deserts and

42 Hocken AG-007-005/028

43 Hocken AG-007-005/035

44 Peren, 1999, 26.

confections, but other less familiar American, Italian or Spanish dishes like clam chowder or *Pork & Beans (American)* were readily transferable to the Otago setting. Visits like these also maintained important social networks with expatriate communities.

Bella confronted the privations of travel and accommodation in Japan resourcefully, and with a sense of humour. Her description of bathing during a night at a *ryokan* (traditional inn) on the 30th of October is lightly philosophical:

We left the train at Kanibara & walked and rickshad to Okitsu where we dined at a Japanese inn & then got the tram to Hamamatsu where we stayed the night at a native inn.

I had a hot bath & it was amusing. I was escorted to the bathroom where a large tank of hot water was uncovered. There was a dish on the floor to scoop out the water but there were no towels. I asked for them & they brought a soiled tiny bath towel & when I took exception to it three women and 1 man with a note-book came in. He pointed out the following sentence to me: "Will you bath take?" I then looked ahead to see what came next but there was nothing about towels so I pointed to the soiled one & asked for a clean one in English. Eventually I got a tiny Japanese towel like the ones I have & had to make it do. The people still remained so I had to show them all out & then two or three of them remained laughing &c. outside the door until I appeared again. Then they asked me something & each held up the thumbs of her two hands & pointed to the bathroom but I could only say "Whakaninasen" (boiling hot) at which they bowed low & I said "Goodnight". Our beds were not very comfy and I felt cold partly from deficiency of towel.

Deficient though it was, the towel performed fine service as they walked along the Tōkaidō highway the following day: *We had to wash in a public place. I had last night's towel still wet & Fred had none at all. (We omitted to take our own as we did not expect to stay in native inns.)*

The Kings negotiated much of their travel on the spot, and enjoyed the whole gamut of Japanese transport modes, from funicular trams, buses, trains and rickshaws to long passages on foot. On at least one occasion, they underestimated the distance of their hike; on October 31st, failing to find *the ubiquitous ricksha* or engage a public bus, their resources were challenged:

We said "Maisaka" but as there did not seem to be much response we were hurrying on when a man came out & said "Maisaka". He soon had a wretched thin looking pony harnessed with broken harness in the shafts & he proceeded to walk along trying to make the horse gee-up. We said, 'hayahu, hayahu' & he got up on the seat and the pony began to back & jib. We thought it was not good enough & got out & hurried along again but soon we heard a clattering behind & there was the scarlet chariot lurching along at a great pace. The man pulled up & we got in & the pony jibbed again

but not for long & soon we were going along merrily. We found the station considerably nearer than the village but we must have gone over 2 miles & we had the vehicle to ourselves. We wondered how much to give the man & thought we would try 50 sen. The man was delighted and bowed to the ground & when we passed him again after going to see what time we had to spare he bowed low once again.

Japan in the world

For much of their trip the immediate attractions of popular tourist sights, shopping and traditional temple architecture and gardens seemed to dominate the Kings' interests. A handful of entries do indicate some awareness of the current engagements of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) however. On September 24th Bella notes celebrations on the Japanese victory at Port Arthur. Later in October she notes the presence of soldiers on leave, or, in the *onsen* (hot springs) town of Atami, recovering from the rigours of war: *Atami was full of convalescent soldiers in white kimonos & caps with red crosses. They all looked very well & very clean.* These occasional references reflect New Zealand's substantial interest in Japan's place in the Asia-Pacific region at this time, and they enhanced the first hand awareness of events that provoked Frederic's subsequent approval of Admiral Tôgô's victory at the Battle of Tsushima the following year (op cit). Bella's observations on hygiene here are consistent also with the Kings' broader preoccupation with matters of health and welfare.

Health and childcare

For all the Kings' avowed admiration of the benefits of healthy diet or breast-feeding in Japan, Bella's observations of women and child-care arrangements seem a little ambivalent. A entry for October 23rd and 24th records

Many of the small children had babies tied to their backs. One child of about 5 or 6 had a tiny infant not more than 2 months old tied on its back. The baby kept whimpering & the little mite kept giggling about while gazing at us & mounting up banks & going down them, often backwards. I was afraid she & the baby would fall but she did not.

I am sure there must be accidents frequently. In Tokio I saw a child double right back the upper strap had slipped. I thought its spine must be broken – as it was now propped up again & seemed all right.

The people seemed very poor but quite happy...

Bella would have had little confidence in Chinese health care practices. On the 15th of November she describes the interface of the worlds of spiritual and scientific medicine:

After leaving there we went to another temple in memory of a famous physician. Here were two wonderfully carved columns in each of which was

a loose ball which could not be extracted. Here the sick people come & there is a hall with figures along each side & according to the age of the person, a certain image is propitiated with a joss stick & an offering.

Besides the columns are fine reliefs carved out of a cement-like substance & side-by-side with them are curious reliefs of figures & trees coloured & very grotesque. The medicine dispensed in the temple seemed to be of one kind only viz heavy boluses inside a casing about the size of ordinary marbles. There was a large bowl of these at the main entry & people purchasing them. The guide pointed to a much betrayed & gilded image seated apart under a special canopy and evidently an object of great reverence. This he said was the greatest doctor in China & though he had died some three or four hundred years previously he was still regarded as the most potent & effective healer in the country. His was the medicine dispensed at the temple. Seemingly complete faith on the part of the poor. The guide a sceptic. (Fairchild says he has found it hard to get coolies to take quinine for malaria &c & when he has insisted, they have kept the drug in the mouth & ejected it outside. The same men took the native nostrums with seeming confidence).

Rural economy and agriculture

Throughout the diary Bella records carefully observed scenes of rural economic activities. On October 31st for example, after leaving Atami she records sawmilling, cottage textile industries and grain processing viewed as she travelled along the Tōkaidō:

In many houses were sounds of weaving & we went into one and saw a boy weaving cotton cloth narrow Japanese width. We also saw them grinding grain by means of a long beam and a wooden mallet. A man raised the beam and let the mallet drop on the grain which was in a large wooden rounded trough. Fred took some photos.⁴⁵

In some of these entries, like her end-matter description of the mulberry paper-making process, Bella's record is detailed enough to inform the reproduction of the practice at home. In China she notes the high standards of hand-crafted embroideries (which she purchased), and the manufacture of brooches and other ornaments from kingfisher feathers (which she did not purchase, ...*as they looked so tinny & unsubstantial*). They also saw the crafting of jade, ivory and bone, and finely crafted silk-weaving. Her observations were perceptive. Her descriptions of the manufacture of 'black wood' chairs and stools in China, for example, distinguish between fake and authentic work, and fine and poor craftsmanship:

45 These appear to be amongst those in a miscellanea file at the Hocken Library (AG-007-005/0280)

We then traversed streets where... they were busy making black wood furniture. Most of the latter is white to begin with and then stained. Some we saw was like rich cedar & the men were carving it & inlaying it with mother-of-pearl shell. This was for furniture for the rich Chinese. We saw a divan & little table for opium smoking. It looked rather clumsy.

The King's observations of these activities were well-informed. On the 25th of October for example, Bella records breakfast with Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935) immediately before their visit to Tokyo University of Agriculture (established from 1891 as the Tokugawa Ikuieiko School). Chamberlain had been resident in Japan from 1873, from 1886 as Professor of Japanese at Tokyo Imperial University. The Kings, like many visitors, were guided through Japan with his *Things Japanese* (1890 op cit. – their own copy survives in Special Collections at the University of Otago). Many of the observations in the log, especially those in Frederic's hand, suggest a practical interest in the commercial potentials of Japanese economic practices. Frederic's end-matter entries include comprehensive comparisons of the services and standards of the competing Inland Sea shipping companies. This was practical information echoing Dr. Hocken's collection of shipping almanacs while visiting Japan in 1901 and 1904. His observations on agricultural practices and educational institutions are detailed and positive. Visiting the Agricultural College outside Kyôto on November 5th he recorded the humblest practices for tilling and draining the soil, by hand and with ox-hauled ploughs, and for drying and winnowing grain. At the College itself however, Frederic records forward-thinking practices for teaching more scientific approaches to agriculture:

Class Rooms (1) Veterinary room (1) Chemistry lecture with 35 students. Teacher at blackboard & test tubes &c in front of him. Class intelligent looking & attentive.

(2) Equipped Chemistry Lab

(3) Physical lab

(4) Lecture to 30 or 40 students. Algebraical formulae on board & teacher actively lecturing & writing on board

(5) Lecture on manures going to a class of 30 or 40

Frederic's descriptions of Japanese agricultural practices may seem less innovative to those of New Zealand at this time, but his extended observations here on productive diversity within a small-scale and specialised institution, and an accessible interface between handwork and modernisation, seem consistent also with his own commitment to both the health benefits of physical work out of doors and productive self-sufficiency of the working farm at Seacliff.

Conclusion: A New Zealander Abroad

Like most travel diaries, Bella's log documents an engaging personal narrative, but her story also offers insights into intersections of travel, class, collecting and gender during the early twentieth century. They reveal a traveller who, if not overly adventurous (most of her destinations were well-known places) was certainly resourceful: Bella was willing to explore, engage and learn in unfamiliar cultural settings. She was observant (as her concise descriptions of diet, weather, transport or scenery demonstrate), and aware of political undercurrents (in public health care; the Russo-Japanese War) in Japan relevant for New Zealand. Bella's travel was well-informed from the wealth of published matter available at this time, and this facilitated both the practical arrangements of travel and her appreciations of the socio-cultural engagements she encountered. Her travel was also supported by networks extending from the Kings' Dunedin social circles to contacts in Australia and Japan. Her diaries record expatriate contacts like the Carews who sometimes accompanied the Kings on sight-seeing or shopping expeditions – not always with great success: Bella records with displeasure, 'We were disappointed in him'⁴⁶ when the younger Horace Carew failed to secure bargain prices when shopping in Hijanya. These networks (and, indeed, the luxury of international travel) reflect the privileged community in which they circulated. Though the catholic, trans-cultural tastes of the affluent social milieu of the Hockens, Fels, Theomins,⁴⁷ Hallensteins or de Beers⁴⁸ informed Bella's collecting during the journey, and her acquisitions reflected contemporary international tastes for Japonism,⁴⁹ clearly Bella's more diverse collecting was distinguished from these, and motivated, by domestic agendas centred around her home at *Kingscliff*.

Bella's entries also allude to changing gender relations in this period. On the one hand her views and practices were shaped by conventional frameworks: shopping, home decoration, gardening and cooking all reflecting her domestic roles at *Kingscliff*. Conversely, these roles, and Bella's contributions to activities at Seacliff, informed the effective organisational skills with which she cared for practical arrangements of travel, or her self-reliant confidence exploring unfamiliar places. They also balance the strong sense of purpose of her narrative with the 'human' dimension so evident in her poignant observations of children in Kurihashi or the quiet humour of her engagement with bath-house attendants. In sum, Bella's descriptions of her Japan and China experiences offer privileged insights into the perceptions of her upper middle-class milieu as it ventured into worlds beyond Otago. The diaries are one of the few surviving documents that reveal Bella's personal experiences, her own responses to new and engaging social and cultural settings, and the changing tensions of life for a well-positioned woman in early twentieth-century New Zealand.

46 King, 1904, November 8th.

47 Bell, 2008, 33.

48 Bell, 2009, 62.

49 Guth, 2004, op cit; Bell, 2008, 33.

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Dr David Bell teaches Art Education at the University of Otago College of Education, and contributes also to programmes in Art History and Theory. He maintains an active interest in the arts of Japan, especially *ukiyo-e* 'floating world pictures', and this has led to a research interest in collections of Japanese arts in New Zealand.