

The Sage Without a Country:  
The Political and Literary Life of Dr. Shih-Shun Liu (劉師舜)  
(1900-1996)

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## **Abstract**

Shih-Shun Liu was my great-grandfather as well as a diplomat for the Republic of China from the late 1920s until 1958. While his life is relatively left unknown to many historians, his contributions to the Kuomintang are significant and help us to understand the inside workings of the ROC and its diplomacy during this time period. Liu was a beneficiary of the Boxer Indemnity scholarship provided by the United States and made use of his love for education and poetry to pursue a literary career that defined the second portion of his life. Liu's life as a scholar and diplomat offer unique insight to the Chinese experience during such a significant era in modern ROC history.

## Introduction: Shih-Shun Liu

### Thinking of My Brothers and Sisters on a Moonlit Night after our Separation during the Disturbance in Honan and Distress in the Country

The times are hard, and scanty are the harvests;  
Ours no more is our ancestral property;  
And, With the fighting scarcely over,  
The fields and gardens all devastated,  
Brothers, relations, scattered east and west,  
Are caught midway along the road.  
I am like a wild goose that has flown a thousand li,  
An autumn leaf that's driven far off its course.  
Tonight as we look at the moon, our tears will flow;  
Though at five points, we meet in thoughts of home.  
-*Po Chû-I*, ~800 AD<sup>1</sup>

Growing up I simply knew the man as Lao Gonggong. He was the grandfather of my father, a first-generation Chinese American, and my great-grandfather. Although I never met him, since he died in 1996, a year before I was born, I always heard stories about this great man who was related to me but seemed like this legendary figure.

My great-grandfather was Dr. Liu Shih-Shun, a diplomat for the Republic of China (ROC) during the Second Sino-Japanese War and the beginning of the Cold War. During his lifetime he served in the Nationalist (KMT) government under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, was ROC Ambassador to Canada and Mexico, and also represented China on the United Nations Trusteeship Council. Although the life of my great-grandfather has not been recorded by any known scholars outside of my family, his life remains an important and significant part of my family history as well as the modern history of the Chinese people.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the ROC experienced some of the most fragile and vulnerable moments in Chinese history. With the rise of a new Nationalist

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<sup>1</sup> *One Hundred and One Chinese Poems*, translated by Shih-Shun Liu (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 75.

government under the rule of the ambitious general Chiang Kai-shek, China faced civil war with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as well as the Second Sino-Japanese War. With the fate of China seemingly up for grabs, people such as my great-grandfather took their places in history as they joined the Nationalist-ruled regime in hopes of creating a strong China that was reminiscent of what it had been in the centuries before and that could stand up to imperialist invasion and intimidation.

Many historians and scholars have attempted to define the image of the Nationalist government that rose to power during this tumultuous era in Chinese history. Jay Taylor presents a unique perspective when it comes to the KMT and Chiang Kai-shek in his book, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China*.<sup>2</sup> Unlike some historians who are quick to criticize the ruthlessness of Chiang and his government, Taylor outlines Chiang as a very complex man. On one side Chiang is a ruthless leader known for killing hundreds of thousands of communists during his rule; on the other side he is shown to be a passionate and introspective leader who wanted to return China to its strength and position in the world as a leader. Taylor's book gives an in-depth look as to how Chiang came to lead the KMT and how his strong character and desire to restore China's greatness attracted people like my great-grandfather to the Nationalist party. During the 1930's and 1940's Chiang struggled not only to legitimize his position as the leader of China, but also faced enemies on all fronts with the civil war with the CCP and the Second Sino-Japanese war.<sup>3</sup> Taylor encapsulates the gravity of these decisions that were placed on Chiang's shoulders with his use of many of Chiang's own diary entries. *The Generalissimo* becomes a crucial book in understanding the intricacies of Chiang

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<sup>2</sup> Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

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Kai-Shek, a man that my great-grandfather worked so closely with and it reveals to us the type of government that these people were representing and what they believed they were representing.

While Taylor's book focuses on the life of Chiang Kai-Shek and the events surrounding him, Hsiao-Ting Lin's book *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-Shek, The United States and the Making of Taiwan*, covers the development of the ROC on Taiwan by the Nationalist government after their defeat by the CCP.<sup>4</sup> Lin argues that "the making of the separate Taiwan state was not the result of deliberate forethought and planning either by the United States, the KMT, or the CCP. Rather, it was the outcome of many ad hoc, individualistic factors and decisions related to war or alliance maintenance, or even serendipity."<sup>5</sup> Throughout his life, Shih-Shun Liu's experiences and memories of Taiwan reflected the argument that Lin proposes. The mainlanders who came with the ROC regime never wanted to stay in Taiwan, and they had never planned to. In the life of my great-grandfather this is reflected through his constant struggle to find national identity and his continued support of fighting the communists even after 1949.

Hsiao-Ting Lin's book addresses the connection between the ROC and Taiwan and the ROC's motivations to return to mainland China, but historian Lloyd Eastman covers why the ROC had to flee to Taiwan in the first place. In his book *Seeds of Destruction*, Eastman examines the question of "Who lost China?"<sup>6</sup> This question dissects the key players in China's history before the Second World War and after the Communist uprising to 1949, and searches for who is ultimately responsible for collapse of the ROC and the rise of the CCP. Eastman comes to

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<sup>4</sup> Hsiao-Ting Lin, *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-Shek, The United States, and the Making of Taiwan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

the conclusion that the ROC is to blame for its own demise. He argues that the unbearable taxes on the peasant class, a weak and damaged military, and the condemnation of the party by Chiang Kai-Shek himself all concluded in the falling apart of the ROC on mainland China and the subsequent migration of the government to Taiwan. Eastman even quotes Chiang criticizing the KMT, “To tell the truth, never in China or abroad, has there been a revolutionary party as degenerate as we [the Kuomintang] are today; nor has there been one as lacking in spirit, in discipline, and even more in standards of right and wrong as we are today. This kind of party should long ago have been destroyed and swept away!”<sup>7</sup> Eastman’s work displays a ROC that is weak and incompetent in meeting its own desires to create a strong and modern China. These events and deficiencies that were throughout the ROC government present a possible argument as to why government officials such as Shih-Shun Liu ended up stepping away from their positions after so many years.

While the life of my great-grandfather was centered mostly around his work in the ROC government and his roles during these historical events, he also had a scholarly side to him that is reflected in his numerous translations of Chinese works into English after his political career. However, Liu’s most notable work came from his doctoral thesis, *Extraterritoriality: Its Rise and Its Decline*, which he wrote in 1925.<sup>8</sup> In this short book on the origins of extraterritoriality Liu depicts China as being a victim of this imperialist practice. In one of his sections on extraterritoriality in China he states, “In spite of the vigorous attempts made by the Chinese Government to assert its territorial sovereignty, there was an equally strong tendency on the part of the nationals of some foreign Powers, especially Great Britain, to set Chinese law and

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<sup>7</sup> Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*, 203.

<sup>8</sup> Shih-Shun Liu, *Extraterritoriality: Its Rise and Decline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925).

jurisdiction at defiance.”<sup>9</sup> While he never states his true opinions explicitly, one can gather that he recognized China’s exploitation by these Western powers and desired for it to one day be viewed as a world leader once again. Works such as *Extraterritoriality* revealed Liu’s political and national views about the state of China during the 1920s and its previous history. Through all of these scholarly works, one can start to put together an image of the type of world that my great-grandfather lived in.

This paper will focus on the life of my great-grandfather Shih-Shun Liu and seek to understand the nature of his character and the motives for his political career. Throughout this study of his life I will argue that he embarked on a political career partly out of expectation by his family and also through his own desire to strengthen the weakened image of China. While the majority of this paper will focus on Liu’s education in the United States and his political career in China and Taiwan, it will also make a point to look into his life after the KMT and what ultimately caused him to leave the government. Partially due to both the possible heartache from losing his home country to the frustration of the increasingly corrupt KMT, Liu left his life as a politician, settled down in America, and retreated to a life of Confucian letters and poetry. Liu’s life serves as a significant perspective into the workings of the ROC government during a critical time in its history, thus allowing us to better understand the long-lasting effects of this era.

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<sup>9</sup> Liu, *Extraterritoriality*, 85.

## Part I: Setting a Nationalist Foundation: Early Childhood and Education in America

### The Roving Son

The thread in the hand of the loving mother  
Is woven into the roving son's garments.  
Before he leaves, she makes her stitches double,  
Fearing he will be long in returning.  
However deep his gratitude, how can he ever  
Repay a debt that will bind him always?  
- *Mêng Chiao, ~700 AD*<sup>10</sup>

Jiangxi Province has traditionally been a very agriculturally centered province, with most of their economy being based on crops such as rice and cash crops such as cotton. Jiangxi also relies heavily on their exportation of mineral resources since it leads most Chinese provinces in resources such as copper, gold, silver and tungsten.<sup>11</sup> Throughout its history Jiangxi province has found itself at the center of major historical events. During the Taiping Rebellion Taiping Rebels had taken over the entire province; the rebellion decimated much of the rural areas since the rebels and the Qing government were practicing total war.<sup>12</sup> Jiangxi province also bore witness to the rise one of the most significant groups of the twentieth century. In the 1920s Jiangxi became one of the early homes to the developing Chinese Communist Party. Due to its rural area the CCP found it relatively easy to recruit rural citizens that felt unrepresented by the new urban-based Nationalist government. This rich history of Jiangxi shaped and molded its people as they lived through the impact of these events. One of those citizens that once called Jiangxi home was my great-grandfather, Shih-Shun Liu. Liu grew up in a tiny rural village called Tianbao in

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<sup>10</sup> *One Hundred and One Chinese Poems*, 73.

<sup>11</sup> "Jiangxi Province," *The China Perspective*, 2011, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120815200822/http://www.thechinaperspective.com/topics/province/jiangxi-province/>.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), 323.

Yifeng county, northern Jiangxi. Out of his humble beginnings, in a relatively insignificant town, Liu would soon find himself being a part of the most significant historical moments of the twentieth century.

Shih-Shun Liu's daughter, Lena Cheng (I refer to her as Auntie Lena), wrote extensively on the history of my great-grandfather's upbringing. Through her memoir on him and the Liu family she claims that the Liu family is directly related to Liu Jiao, who was the younger brother of Liu Bang, the first emperor of the Han Dynasty.<sup>13</sup> Auntie Lena traces our family's roots all the way back to Prince Jiao through the writings of Liu Shang (223-263 AD). Auntie Lena goes on to claim, "Up to my generation, our family has produced sixteen consecutive generations of scholars and ten continuous generations of high government officials."<sup>14</sup> In her memoir all of this comes before she says anything about my great-grandfather and his career in the Republic of China government. While Auntie Lena never directly says it, her organization of her memoir suggests that the impressive political career of Shih-Shun Liu came as expected due to the family's history as intellectuals and royal background. In a way Auntie Lena's memoir creates a lore around the life of Liu that foregrounds the events that occurred later in his life.

Shih-Shun Liu was born on July 17, 1900, the same year of the Boxer Rebellion. The year of his birth became symbolic in a way as his future would be greatly impacted by the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship that was provided by the United States to Chinese students. Throughout his early childhood Liu grew up in Tianbao village and is portrayed as being extremely mature for his age by Auntie Lena. In one example she tells of a story that adds to the mature moral compass of Liu, "When he was ten years old, Dad was on a boat with his mother and sister, Jiao-

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<sup>13</sup> Lena Cheng, unpublished memoir (2018), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

xiang. He witnessed his mother striking his sister with a rod. Without a word, he approached his mother, took the rod from her hand and tossed it into the river. It took great courage to defy one's elders that way."<sup>15</sup> This portrayal of Liu adds to a savior-like image that will later help to define his life. While these questionable stories of royal blood and maturity are difficult to fact check they do not stray far from the impressive nature of Shih-Shun Liu

During his childhood Shih-Shun Liu found himself to be a beneficiary of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship. After the famed Boxer Rebellion of 1900 China was forced to pay reparations to the eight nations that invaded the Qing. The United States used some of the money paid to them to westernize the Chinese education system and started the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship. This scholarship gave Chinese students the opportunity to come to the finest American schools and study for free. The United States also used this money to establish Tsinghua College, a westernized Chinese school that would prepare students to study abroad in the US.<sup>16</sup> Liu would eventually find himself attending Tsinghua in hopes of getting the chance to study in America. However, prior to his introduction to western education Liu attended the prestigious Xingyuan Middle School in Nanchang. Auntie Lena later claims that he had to withdraw and transfer to a public school after half a year because his family could not afford the tuition.<sup>17</sup> Auntie Lena goes on to state, "It was then that he learned of students from every province being recruited for a wonderful new school [Tsinghua College] about to open in Beijing, over a thousand miles away. The quota for the entire province of Jiangxi was five students plus two alternates. Without telling anyone, he and his best friend, Qiu Chun, applied

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<sup>15</sup> Cheng, unpublished memoir, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Stacey Bieler, *Patriots or Traitors: A History of American Educated Chinese Students* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 54.

<sup>17</sup> Cheng, unpublished memoir, 3.

and were accepted.”<sup>18</sup> However, Lena again makes the point that his family could not afford to send him to Tsinghua and that they had to work for a whole year to afford the tuition.<sup>19</sup> It does seem strange that a family with such a history of government officials and scholars would come off as poor during this time, but it is consistent throughout Auntie Lena’s memoir, likely because of the destruction and poverty that all of Jiangxi experienced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Tsinghua College became the new home for Shih-Shun Liu for the next eight years beginning in 1912 and exposing him to western teaching as well as teaching him English. Historian Stacey Bieler explains how students were sent to Tsinghua and its purpose for Chinese students:

Richer provinces on the coast, such as Jiangsu (where Shanghai was located), which had paid more money toward the indemnity, sent eight or nine students to Tsinghua each year, while poorer inland provinces sent two or three. The plan was for Chinese students to learn enough English by attending eight years of middle school and high school so they could enter American universities as juniors.<sup>20</sup>

Liu excelled in the newly established college and became known for his mastery of the English language. His fluency in the English language would later serve him well as a member of the Republic of China Treaties Committee, where Auntie Lena claims that he helped to write many of the treaties between the ROC and other countries.

Liu’s exposure to the weakness of the waning years of the Qing dynasty through his youth could easily have encouraged him to adopt a more nationalistic ideology later in his life.

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<sup>18</sup> Cheng, unpublished memoir, 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Bieler, *Patriots or Traitors*, 54.

The fact that he went to the American-funded Tsinghua College is evidence of the weakened state that the country was in during the early years of the ROC. This post-Boxer rebellion world that he had grown up in displayed that the Chinese people were frustrated with the way that Qing leadership was handling the issues of imperialists as well as Christian missionaries. Historian Paul Cohen argues,

The Boxer Uprising, like no other single event, encapsulated all the social and political dilemmas of the Qing dynasty at the close of the nineteenth century.

Foreign economic encroachment, disruption of local society by Christian missionaries, weak leadership in the Qing court, popular resentment of the foreign imperialism, and the military dominance of the foreign powers, all played a role in the catastrophe that was the Boxer Uprising.<sup>21</sup>

As Cohen explains, this frustration with the helpless feeling within China caused many young intellectuals such as my great-grandfather to join movements like the Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-shek. Parties like Chiang's KMT called for a stronger China without the influence of foreign powers. In a way they would modernize China but also long to return to a period in history where China was respected and seen as a world power.

This growing nationalist sentiment is what drove these students to go to the United States to continue their education so that they could bring back their westernized knowledge to help bring China back into relevancy. In 1920 Liu had graduated from Tsinghua College and was awarded with the Boxer Scholarship and began his education in the United States at Johns Hopkins University. During his time at Johns Hopkins he also took some summer classes at

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<sup>21</sup> Paul A. Cohen, "The Boxer Uprising," in *China: Adapting the Past, Confronting the Future*, edited by Buoye Thomas, Kirk Denton, Bruce Dickson, Barry Naughton, and Martin K. Whyte (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 62.

Columbia University and eventually gained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Johns Hopkins.<sup>22</sup> After he graduated from his undergraduate studies, he received a fellowship from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This global think tank was founded by Andrew Carnegie as a way to promote cooperation between countries and increase international engagement with the United States.<sup>23</sup> Part of this fellowship required Liu to spend each year studying at a different university in order to gain a more diverse learning experience. During his first year he chose to study at the University of Michigan and then decided to return back to Harvard University in 1923 where he received his Master of Arts degree. The following year Liu was lucky enough to receive a second grant from Carnegie and decided to wrap up his education in the United States at Columbia University. He received his Ph.D. in International Law in 1925 and wrote his doctoral thesis, *Extraterritoriality: Its Rise and Its Decline*.<sup>24</sup>

In order to understand much of the life of Shih-Shun Liu one must analyze his most critical work, *Extraterritoriality*. At its base it is simply a history the origins of extraterritoriality, and its involvement inside China with the increase in imperialism and its eventual decline. It is understandable with why Liu would have written this book with his Ph.D. in International Law since extraterritoriality is the exemption from local law for foreigners who are instead under the jurisdiction of their own country. Through his book Liu not only touched on the historical significance of extraterritoriality, but also inadvertently showed us that China's jurisdictional sovereignty had not been respected in the past and that it deserved recognition. In the beginning of the book Liu outlines the origins of extraterritoriality, exemptions of foreigners from local

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<sup>22</sup> Shih-Shun Liu, Bachelor of Arts Diploma, Johns Hopkins University, 1921.

<sup>23</sup> "Carnegie at 100: A Century of Impact," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010, <https://carnegieendowment.org/about/centennial>.

<sup>24</sup> Cheng, unpublished memoir, 4; Shih-Shun Liu, Doctor of Philosophy Diploma, Columbia University, 1925.

laws, and traces it all the way back to examples such as thirteenth century B.C. Egypt, where merchants from Tyre were allowed to dwell in certain precincts and even had their own temple for worship.<sup>25</sup> The development of extraterritoriality changed over time and quickly found itself spreading to every part of the globe with the help of Western imperialists seeking to exploit other countries for their resources. Eventually extraterritoriality was introduced to China in the Treaty of Nanking after the termination of the Opium War with Britain in 1842.<sup>26</sup> Liu even cited multiple cases where Qing Dynasty territorial sovereignty was disrespected prior to 1842 which could easily have led to the rise of extraterritoriality. In one section Liu quotes American merchants who were forced to comply with Qing laws in the case of Terranova in 1821, “We are bound to submit to your laws while we are in your waters, be they ever so unjust. We will not resist them.”<sup>27</sup> Throughout the book Liu picks his sources to create the image of a victimized China by the power hungry and exploitative western powers. Liu later made the point that the Chinese government made many attempts to assert its territorial sovereignty, but it was met with resistance from countries such as Great Britain.<sup>28</sup>

Extraterritoriality became a crucial piece that led to Chinese frustration with the West and helped fuel the Boxer Rebellion. This became a significant part of the environment that Liu grew up in since my great-grandfather was born in the aftermath of the Rebellion. It is extremely likely that this tumultuous environment allowed a more nationalist ideology to develop in people like my great-grandfather. Some of the imperialist powers of the time assumed that China would take to Westernizing its judicial system such as Great Britain. As Liu explained,

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<sup>25</sup> Liu, *Extraterritoriality*, 23-24.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

China having expressed a strong desire to reform her judicial system and to bring it into accord with that of Western nations, Great Britain agrees to give every assistance to such reform, and she will also be prepared to relinquish her extra-territorial rights when she is satisfied that the state of Chinese laws, the arrangement for their administration, and other considerations warrant her in so doing.<sup>29</sup>

While the Chinese government at the time did desire to reform the judicial system and westernize, nationalists such as Liu saw these requests by countries as demeaning to the image of China. Some of these countries saw China as falling behind and not reaching the level of civilization that many of the Western powers had at the time. This patronizing attitude toward China could be seen as a motivation for Liu to show China's weakness and exploitation by imperialist countries in the book. While *Extraterritoriality* contained an abundance of valuable information regarding China's foreign relations with imperialist powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, its tone mirrored the tone of Shih-Shun Liu and it caught the eye the Nationalist government.

Liu's early success in his education and book eventually brought him back to China where he sought to begin his journey of strengthening the national image of China. In 1925, after finishing five years of education in the United States, Liu returned to newly named Tsinghua University as a professor. Liu's professional beginning as a teacher is emblematic of his desire to bring back a modernized mindset to China that could stand as equals with the West. By

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<sup>29</sup>Liu, *Extraterritoriality*, 217-18.

educating the next generation of young Chinese students Liu might have hoped to add to the increasing nationalist sentiment in the 1920s and display how China would be destined to be a global superpower once again. This demonstration of giving back to the people of China through education and his expertise in international law created an opening for his political career to flourish in the next few decades.

## **Part II: The Making of a Chinese Diplomat in the Shadow of War: Shih-Shun Liu's**

### **Political Career (1927-1958)**

#### An Autumn Resident on the Pa

On the Pa plains the storms have subsided;  
At night I see rows of wild geese  
And the leaves falling from the trees.  
Under the lamp's dim light I am all alone;  
In an empty garden white dew moistens the earth;  
Beyond the lonely wall is the monk, my neighbour.  
Long confined within this secluded garden,  
When can I ever give my service to the state?  
- *Ma Tai (799–869)*<sup>30</sup>

In 1927 Shih-Shun Liu had finally seemed to settle back down in China. At this point he was already an accomplished scholar with the publication of his book *Extraterritoriality* and his new teaching position at Tsinghua University. Not only was his career flourishing but in 1926 he also became a father as his wife, Fu-Chu Chi Liu, gave birth to their first son Julian (Ju-ren). Julian would later become my grandfather and my namesake as I share the same root ren (忍) in my Chinese name. In 1927 Liu's life would begin to change as he was offered a position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Treaties Committee. Liu would join this Committee in the newly formed Nationalist government of the Republic of China, and it would soon kickstart the

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<sup>30</sup> *One Hundred and One Chinese Poems*, 111.

rest of his political career. Although it might have appeared that he was reaching the peak of his life, Liu was just beginning his journey that took him all over the world and allowed him to take part in one of the most historically significant governments in recent history.

During this same period, where Liu was beginning to find his place in the world, another significant man was also figuring out his place in history and was quickly on the rise. In 1925, the same year that Liu returned to China, the famous leader of the Chinese revolution against the Qing Dynasty, Sun Yat-Sen, died. Soon after Sun Yat-Sen's death there was a need for a new leader in the Kuomintang (KMT). The military leader Chiang Kai-Shek would soon fill this void in ways that far exceeded anyone's expectations. Historian Jay Taylor depicts Chiang as a complex man who was torn between a passion to return his country to the former greatness it once emulated as a world power and man of violence who desperately tried to stomp out any opposition to his government.<sup>31</sup> In this period of transition that faced the KMT after Sun's death, Taylor displays Chiang as a person who was desperate to fill the void left by Sun and legitimize his position as a leader of the ROC.<sup>32</sup> Chiang eventually married Soong Mei-Ling, the sister-in-law of Sun, and displayed his willingness to destroy opposition to the newly formed ROC in attacks on Communist forces such as the Shanghai Massacre in 1927 that would take the lives of thousands of Chinese communists and sympathizers and eventually cause the remaining CCP members to flee into the Chinese countryside. Taylor states that, "After the Shanghai purge, Chiang's prestige rose among the warlords," which became an instrumental part for Chiang to eventually conquer all of the remaining warlords in China and achieve his goal of reunifying the

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<sup>31</sup> Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

country under the ROC.<sup>33</sup> In 1928 Chiang would become the leader of the ROC and be dubbed “the Generalissimo.”

While Liu was a new addition to the government that had recently witnessed the rise of Chiang Kai-Shek, he quickly saw his own rise to political power come into fruition. For his first few years working in the ROC he found his passion working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). It is likely that in this part of the government, Liu believed that he would have some sort of effect on the way that China was being displayed to other countries. Through his work in the MFA he may have thought that he could have help to deliver a stronger image of China to the world. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Liu took part in the treaties committee where he eventually rose to the position of Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1937.<sup>34</sup> (See appointment document in Image 1.) At one point in her memoir Auntie Lena even claims that, “Most of the treaties between this new Chinese government and other nations were written by him, because of his mastery of the English language and his knowledge of international law.”<sup>35</sup> While this statement is most likely not entirely true (since more than one person usually wrote these treaties), it does refer to the fact that he did work on international treaties due to his extensive knowledge of English and international law.

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<sup>33</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 68.

<sup>34</sup> Official ROC document: appointment of Liu to the position of Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1937.

<sup>35</sup> Cheng, unpublished memoir, 5.

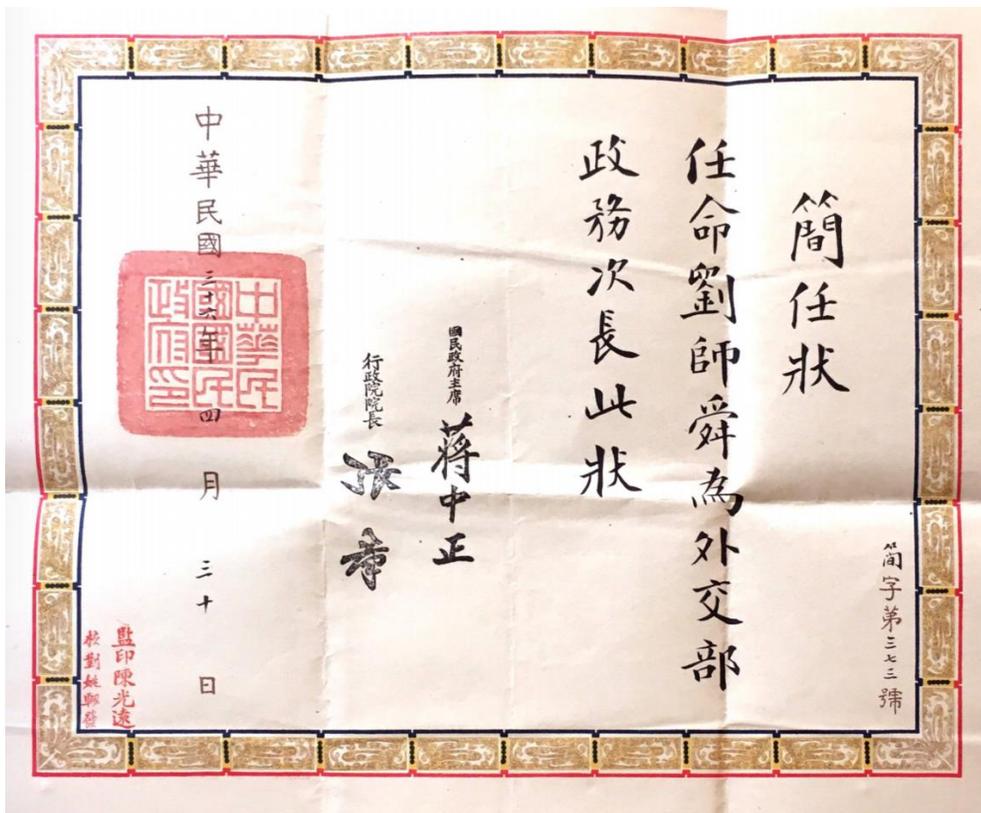


Image 1. Official certificate marking Liu’s appointment as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed by Chiang Kai-shek, April 30, 1937.

### Career in Canada

In 1941 Shih-Shun Liu began the most monumental portion of his career. While he had spent the entirety of his Foreign Affairs career in China it was now going to take him across the world as he was appointed the first Ambassador from China to Canada in 1941. (The ROC had previously had diplomatic relations with Canada through its ties with the United Kingdom.) This appointment came at a crucial and interesting moment in both Chinese and Canadian history. While it was significant because China was seeking as much help as it could from Western powers in order to fight the Japanese, it was also slightly controversial in the sense that Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King had a history of viewing the Chinese as an inferior race. In his

own words and actions King displayed a clear stance on the issue of Asian immigration into Canada. As early as 1908 King was quoted as saying, “That Canada should desire to restrict immigration from the Orient is regarded as natural, that Canada should remain a white man’s country is believed to be not only desirable for economic and social reasons but highly necessary on political and national grounds.”<sup>36</sup> After King was elected Prime Minister in 1921 he essentially put his words into action and in 1923 passed the Chinese Exclusionary Act, which essentially closed the doors to any Chinese that were looking to immigrate to Canada.<sup>37</sup> King again reasserted his position on immigration in 1938 in his diary, writing, “We must seek to keep this part of the Continent free from unrest and from much intermixture of foreign strains of blood.”<sup>38</sup> These statements by King and his clear opposition to working with the Chinese only made the appointment of my great-grandfather more significant. As we will see later on, the anti-Chinese position that King held is not one that is reflected in the memory of Shih-Shun Liu.

Liu’s appointment to Canada not only served to create another ally for the struggling Chinese but it allowed Liu to display a respectable but strong representation of China. Even in his arrival to Canada we see the significance of his presence to the Chinese people. Author John Price lays out this scene in his book *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific*:

In February 1942, the arrival of the first Chinese minister to Canada, Dr. Liu Shih-Shun, brought King to the train station to greet him. ‘Quite a pretty sight to see the station filled with Chinese in their best clothes, carrying Chinese flags, all

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<sup>36</sup> Claude Bélanger, “Canadian Opinions of Immigrants (pre 1945 period),” Quebec History: Marianopolis College, 2006, <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/readings/CanadianOpinionsofImmigrants.html>.

<sup>37</sup> H.F. Angus, *Canada and the Far East, 1940-1953* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), 32.

<sup>38</sup> Bélanger, “Canadian Opinions of Immigrants.”

present to greet their new Minister,' recalled King.<sup>39</sup> In a way, Liu was indeed 'their' new minister since those of Chinese ancestry had little standing in the Canadian polity. For King the Chinese remained at this point a race apart.<sup>40</sup>

Price outlined Liu's arrival with King's own words and described Liu as a heroic figure who would give the Chinese people a more legitimate representation in the country. While King was said to still be apprehensive of the Chinese people, he and Liu would spend the next few years putting aside their differences and, seemingly against all odds, becoming close friends.

Early on in his foreign diplomatic work inside Canada, one of his most notable accomplishments was being responsible for bringing Soong Mei-Ling, better known as Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, to Canada on her 1943 visit to North America. My great-grandfather can be seen with Madame Chiang in many of the photos in his collection. (For example, see Images 2-3.) Her arrival to North America not only marked an improving relationship between China and the West but it also marked the second time a woman had spoken in front of the Congress of the United States. This ongoing effort to improve the global image of China had been a long goal of Chiang's regime and for a while it seemed like people such as Liu were helping to contribute to this goal.

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<sup>39</sup> John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review* (second series) 6, 1 (1953): 1-15.

<sup>40</sup> John Price, *Orienteering Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 2011.



Image 2. Shih-Shun Liu (middle) with Madame Chiang (at left), 1943. Shih-Shun Liu, personal collection.



Image 3. Madame Chiang with Mackenzie King (at right) and the Earl and Countess of Athlone (at left), 1943. Shih-Shun Liu can be seen just behind the left shoulder of Alexander Cambridge the Earl of Athlone. Shih-Shun Liu, personal collection.

Throughout his career Liu displayed what he thought was his duty in reviving the diplomatic image of the ROC. During his time as Ambassador to Canada he met with numerous

other ambassadors from all over the world. This is shown through the many invitations from ambassadors that Liu chose to hold onto.<sup>41</sup> While this act of meeting other ambassadors seems relatively typical of what one would think an ambassador would do, it tells us a significant part about Liu. Not only was Liu desperately trying to create bonds with other nations to benefit the ROC during the war, but he also saw himself as being an example of what the Chinese people had to offer to the world.

One of the ways that we see the image of China improving in this wartime period was through the relationship of Mackenzie King and Liu. While King had made his position on Chinese people quite clear, the personal letters that he and my great-grandfather sent each other never really reflected his prejudiced attitude. Liu held on to a series of letters that date from 1943 to 1946 and while their seeming friendship might have been a diplomatic formality, the letters revealed a certain amount admiration and respect that they had for each other. In a letter of December 31, 1944, King wrote,

I wish I could tell you how much your friendship means to me. You have given me so many expressions of it, in the year now drawing so rapidly to its close that it is difficult indeed for me to attempt the least of thanks. I do thank you, however, most warmly, and from the bottom of my heart. My own life has to know you personally so well, and by coming to know so much better, in so many ways, your great country, its ancient culture, its modern authors, its leading personalities, and its brave people.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Shih-Shun Liu, collection of official requests to meet from international diplomats, 1942-46.

<sup>42</sup> Mackenzie King, letter to Shih-Shun Liu, December 31, 1944.

One can only assume that both parties saw this relationship between China and Canada as a positive. King later talked about how he had been opened up to the world of Chinese culture and he acknowledged his fascination with Chinese poetry just like my great-grandfather's.<sup>43</sup>

This political relationship between King and Liu continued to grow through the years as Liu brought more Chinese guests to speak with King and increased the bond between Canada and the ROC. In 1944 Liu was even promoted to the title of Ambassador, becoming the first Chinese Ambassador to Canada. Liu was also known for bringing military figures such as ROC General Chang Chun to meet King, and it is even claimed by Liu's nephew Richard Liu that he was responsible for getting Canada to provide 100,000 guns to the ROC in order to fight the Japanese.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately Liu and King's relationship seemed to become a beneficial piece in helping the ROC to create the illusion that they were once again to be a respected country.

Eventually toward the end of my great-grandfather's term as an ambassador, King sent him a signed copy of his autobiography as a gift. (My family still has this book in our possession today). In his letter thanking King, he responded in the similar fashion of King's letters and displayed how much King's friendship had meant to him. He stated,

Indeed, it is the extreme kindness and thoughtful consideration with which you treat your friends that have won from them all the deepest admiration. The qualities such as you possess in this particular regard are doubtless unequalled not only among statesmen of your caliber but even among those who are less prominent and who have more times for attending to matters of this kind. I, for one, consider myself most fortunate in being stationed at a Capital where the

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<sup>43</sup> King, letter to Liu, December 31, 1944.

<sup>44</sup> Shih-Shun Liu, letter to Mackenzie King, November 4, 1946.

leader of the government is a man who combines in himself such rare attributes as those which are yours.<sup>45</sup>

Liu's career in Canada was no doubt a major milestone in his foreign diplomatic career. Throughout his time in Ottawa he was able to witness the workings of a Western government as well as the importance of foreign relations in its most extreme form. With his experience working with the Prime Minister of Canada and being the strong leader for Chinese people in a foreign country Liu provided Canada with an unexpected but ideal standard for Chinese culture and pride, and he provided the Chinese immigrants in Canada with a respectable face that had the power to express their interests and relate with them.

### **Career After Canada**

In 1945 the world was entering a new age as the Second World War was coming to an end. In October of 1945 the United Nations was established in San Francisco and while Liu was still serving as the Republic of China's Ambassador to Canada, he had already begun the transition to the next stage of his career.

When the United Nations was established in San Francisco the Republic of China, was put on the Trusteeship Council as one of the five victorious world powers. This was significant because, like mentioned before, leaders such as Chiang Kai-Shek and Liu had been longing to have China receive global recognition as a world power once again. However, while this was a moment of pride for the ROC it was still a turbulent time period, since the Chinese Communist Party had resumed its campaign against the ROC for control of China. While the ROC was once again engaged in a civil war, they chose representatives from the KMT to act as ambassadors to

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<sup>45</sup> Shih-Shun Liu, letter to Mackenzie King, January 4, 1945.

the UN. Quo Tai-chi was the first ambassador of the ROC to the UN and Shih-Shun Liu was appointed as a key member on his delegation. His role in this delegation was unknown but we do know that he was present at many of the first sessions of the UN.<sup>46</sup> In fact one of the most interesting pieces of memorabilia that I found in his collection was a pin from one of the UN's first assembly in Montreal in 1946 where he was the Vice President of the assembly. (A picture of the pin can be seen in Image 4 along with requests to meet from other representatives). Liu held on to all of these invitations to UN meetings and even held on to an invitation to the first meeting regarding the first commercial use of international airspace.<sup>47</sup> While we do not know exactly what position he held on these delegations we can assume that he held a position of importance. This is further supported when the second ROC Ambassador to the UN, Tsiang Tingfu, took over in 1947. During this time period there were many pictures taken of the Chinese Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations. In all of these pictures we see Ambassador Tsiang seated in the middle, usually with Liu typically seated right next to or one seat away from Tsiang. These pictures were formally organized and therefore the seating was very important, thus showing the significance of someone such as my great-grandfather. Like all members of the UN from the Republic of China, Liu's role in the representation of China became more and more significant as time went on.

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<sup>46</sup> Official ROC document: appointment of Liu to the position of Representative for the Republic of China to the United Nations, 1945-1954.

<sup>47</sup> Official UN document: invitation to the First UN Session on the International Commercial use of Airspace, 1947.

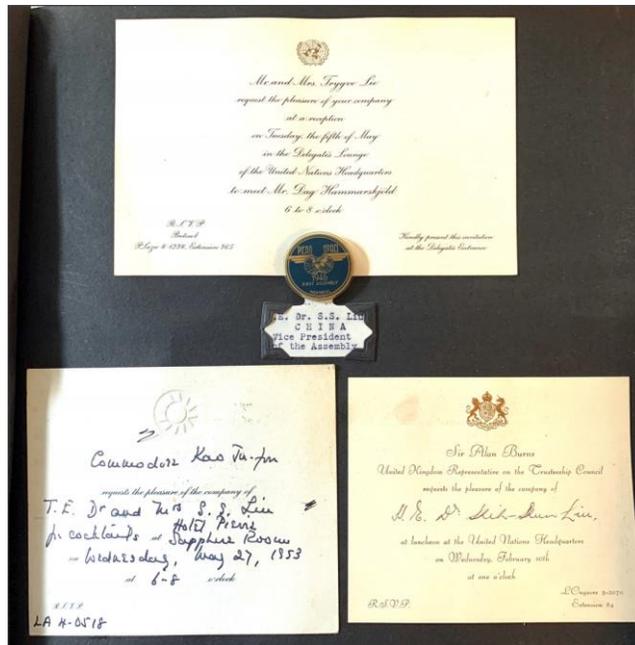
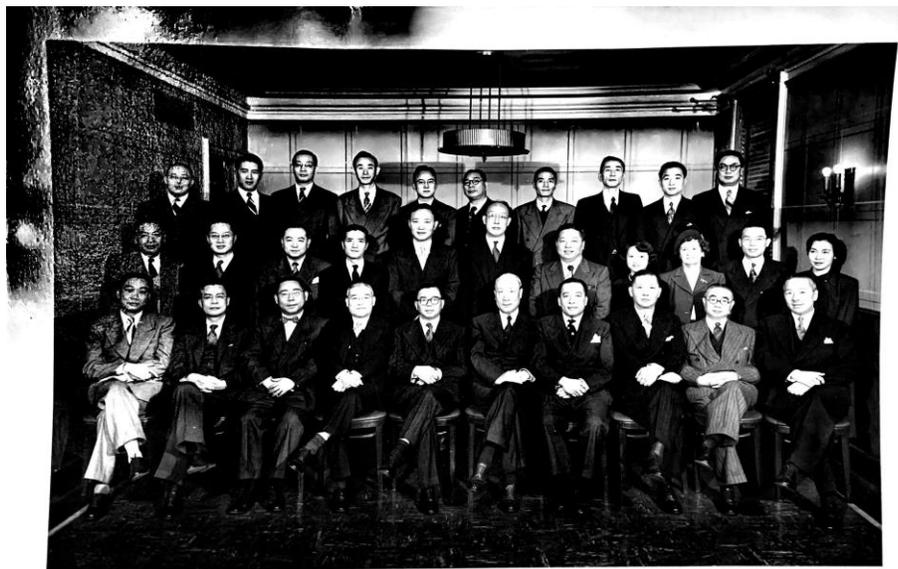


Image 4. Pin from United Nations First Assembly in Montreal, 1946, where Liu was the Vice President of the assembly. Collection includes invitations for Liu to meet with different members of the UN, 1953.



聯合國大會第五屆常會中國代表團合影  
 中華民國九年十二月於紐約

Image 5. Photo of ROC Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations, December 1950. Tsiang Tingfu is seated in the first row in the 5<sup>th</sup> seat from the left. Shih-Shun Liu is seated just to the left of Tsiang.

As mentioned earlier, throughout these first few years after the Second World War had ended the Chinese civil war had picked up once again. While at the time the world recognized the ROC as the legitimate government of China it became harder and harder for the ROC to justify this position as the Chinese Communist Party took control of mainland China in 1949. At the end of that year, the ROC, including Liu, fled to Taiwan. The ROC's escape and occupation of Taiwan became the next great chapter in the history of China and brought us closer to the modern tensions that still remain between China and Taiwan.

In his book *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-Shek, the United States and the Making of Taiwan*, Hsiao-Ting Lin argues that the ROC never really planned on staying in Taiwan and that there was always the desire by the KMT to retake mainland China.<sup>48</sup> For years, Chiang and other members of his government saw Taiwan as just a temporary stopping-off point where they could regroup, regain their strength, and one day return home. This hopeful dream can be seen in one of the documents that my great-grandfather held on to. One of the documents that I found to be significant in the trunk was a flyer from 1953 that was looking to raise money to help fight the communists overseas.<sup>49</sup> Sources such as this one can point to this desire to continue to fight the communists even years after the ROC fled to Taiwan. Lin even states that,

In the following decade, despite the U.S.-Taiwan defense treaty, the desire by Chiang Kai-Shek and his government to launch a military counterattack never really evaporated. This underlying attitude was first demonstrated in the years before the second offshore crisis of 1958, and then again revealed in the

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<sup>48</sup> Hsiao-Ting Lin, *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-Shek, The United States, and the Making of Taiwan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1-13.

<sup>49</sup> ROC flyer: Overseas Chinese anti-Communist fundraiser, 1953.

development of a series of secret plans for a military reconquest of the mainland in the early 1960s.<sup>50</sup>

Lin's assessment of the creation of Taiwan is crucial in understanding the sense of loss that is felt by members of the ROC such as my great-grandfather. Due to this catastrophic loss of their homeland these some of these people went the rest of their lives without returning home. These people not only felt like they had lost the homeland of one of the most ancient cultures in history, but they had also lost any sense of national identity that they had. I believe that these emotions and thoughts plagued my great-grandfather for years after his resignation from the ROC and I think that he never quite found peace in his life.

Lloyd Eastman, in his book *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution 1937-1949*,<sup>51</sup> argues that the Nationalist government of the ROC was ultimately responsible for its own downfall and loss of mainland China.<sup>52</sup> This was a time period where the ROC was facing adversity in every direction that it turned. In the decade following the prosperous and successful Nanking Decade the ROC's legitimacy was tested and stretched beyond its capabilities. Eastman claims that the Nationalist regime "had never developed a governmental administration capable of implementing the Kuomintang's policies and programs."<sup>53</sup> He also goes on to blame the poor connection between the central government and the provinces as well as the weakened military post war with Japan.<sup>54</sup> Eastman's argument not only showed that the ROC was to blame for its own failure but he shows that a lot of the later

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<sup>50</sup> Lin, *Accidental State*, 237.

<sup>51</sup> Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 1-9.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>54</sup> Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*.

failures and weakness that came out in the decades after 1949 were a result of the weakness displayed by the ROC in these crucial years. Eastman's argument even shows us that Chiang was extremely critical of the KMT and even believed that they did not deserve to prosper.<sup>55</sup> This critical behavior from Chiang becomes reminiscent of Jay Taylor's accounts of Chiang in *The Generalissimo*.<sup>56</sup> Through his use of Chiang's personal diary Taylor displays a very critical Chiang like Eastman. This fall from power became a significant part in the history of the ROC and again it embedded itself into the attitudes of people like Liu.

Eastman's acknowledgement of the weakness within the government of the KMT itself includes the amount of corruption that began to occur within the ROC in the years after World War Two. Taylor supports a similar notion and notes the corruption within the ROC, "Zhou Enlai's agents and Chiang's many other enemies exaggerated or fabricated many accounts of corruption in the postwar period, but many were true."<sup>57</sup> While we have no evidence that Liu was ever corrupt or exploited his positions in the government there is evidence that the very nature of corruption is what led him to resign from the ROC.

In 1956 Liu remained in the field of foreign diplomacy but transitioned out of the United Nations as Chiang had requested that he become the new Ambassador to Mexico.<sup>58</sup> Shortly after being appointed to this new position Liu moved his family to the embassy in Mexico City, as documented by his daughter Lillian Jackson. Lillian recounts living a very luxurious life in Mexico City with her family. She describes a house that was extremely spacious with a giant

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<sup>55</sup> Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 103.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>58</sup> Official ROC document: certificate marking Liu's appointment as Ambassador from the Republic of China to Mexico, April 11, 1956.

staircase in the middle of it and its own staff of chefs, servants, and guards.<sup>59</sup> This picturesque life that they lived in Mexico seemed like some sort of vacation spot for the Liu family with their own private chauffeurs driving them around all over the vast city. Lillian's account of Mexico gives us what seems to be a superb and memorable time in Mexico for the family, so why did Shih-Shun Liu not hold onto nearly anything that would be reminiscent of his time as the Ambassador to Mexico?

Throughout my research on my great-grandfather I began to see a trend in the number of documents and memorabilia that Liu had kept during his time in Canada compared to his time in Mexico. While Liu did not have as many documents on his career in Mexico, this lack of information can serve as its own answer as to why Liu decided not to hold onto the memories of his time there.

Liu's decision to actively forget his two years of diplomatic service in Mexico is understandable when considering what events were encompassing the ROC at the time. During the 1950s a number of corruption cases came out about Chiang's government; these caused numerous officials within the government to leave their positions, such as the ROC Ambassador to the United States, Wellington Koo, in 1956<sup>60</sup> and eventually my great-grandfather in 1958. One of the largest cases of corruption within the ROC government occurred in the early 1950s with the scandal centered on ROC Air Force General Mow Bangchu. In the early 1950s it was discovered that Mow had been embezzling money from the ROC while he was serving as a

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<sup>59</sup> Richard Jackson and Lillian Jackson, *Love Song and Sorrow* (unpublished memoir, 2001), 23-27.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen G. Craft, *V.K. Wellington Koo and the Emergence of Modern China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 251.

diplomat in the United States.<sup>61</sup> Fearing extradition, Mow fled to Mexico where he was captured by Mexican authorities and placed in a prison cell next to Leon Trotsky, where he stayed until 1955. After his release Mow remained in Mexico and eventually reached a settlement with the ROC in 1958 that was negotiated by George Yeh and required Mow to return the money that he had stolen but allowed him to hold onto \$200,000 for future living expenses. This story was heavily covered by the global media, including multiple articles in the *New York Times*.<sup>62</sup>

While I could not find any clear connection between the events surrounding General Mow and Liu, it is clear that the corruption displayed by Mow and other high-level ROC officials convinced many members like Liu and Koo to resign from their positions. In Canada, Liu felt like he was fulfilling his duty of representing China as a country on the rise and was slowly gaining the respect of the western powers. However, his time in Mexico seemed to be characterized with damage control and more of a desperate attempt to save the failing image of the ROC. In the end it was clear that the ROC did not represent the same China that Liu had served proudly early on in his career. Liu's choice to not hold onto any of the documents from his time in Mexico reflect a person that is trying their hardest to forget a painful part of their past.

It is claimed by Liu's nephew Richard Liu that Shih-Shun Liu had an encounter with another member of the government that caused him to resign from his position. During his term as Ambassador to Mexico, Liu had his direct communication with Chiang Kai-Shek blocked due to the acts of Foreign Minister George Yeh, who would later become the ROC Ambassador to

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<sup>61</sup> "Mexico Holds Mow at Chiang Request: Chinese Nationalist General is Accused of Taking Funds Intended for Planes." *The New York Times*, August 14, 1952, 2.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.; "China Air Agents Sue Chiang in Libel: General Mow and Col. Hsiang Seek \$4,000,000 Damages for Story on Dismissal," *The New York Times*, January 22, 1952, 3; "Mow Extradition Barred in Mexico: Decision by court for General wanted by Nationalist China must go to President," *The New York Times*, February 22, 1953, 3.

the United States. Richard Liu claimed that Yeh prevented Shih-Shun from communicating with Chiang and requested that Liu send in a letter of resignation stating that he had health issues. Richard goes on to claim that Liu no longer wanted to take part in a government that was trying to undercut its own people and from then on, he was no longer a member of the Nationalist government of the Republic of China.

Liu's resignation from the ROC was not unusual for this time period as many other members of the ROC began to see its corruption and flaws wreaking havoc on its own people. In 1956 Wellington Koo, chose to resign from his post partly out of exhaustion but also due to the low wages that the ROC paid to its ambassadors.<sup>63</sup> Historian Stephen Craft speculates why Koo left and states,

Koo finally had his way and resigned as a diplomat for the ROC government. Someone once told Koo that military work was a "thankless job and an endless job." Koo felt that diplomacy was the same: "One could not see the results of one's effort, whereas in other fields one could feel one was building something and in [the] course of time could see it function." Another drawback of diplomacy was that "one had to face one crisis [after] another not only calling for unremitting effort but causing continued anxiety and worry."<sup>64</sup>

Koo's reason for leaving the ROC seemed eerily similar to any reason that led Liu to leave the ROC. This evidence becomes more significant as well because Koo and Liu most likely knew each other and shared many of the same challenges of diplomacy and while maintaining loyalty to their nation.

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<sup>63</sup> Craft, V.K. *Wellington Koo and the Emergence of Modern China*, 251.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

Liu entered the service of the ROC right at a moment when they needed new strong nationalist figures such as himself, and he left its service when they had pretty much exhausted him into submission. Liu's career became an important part of history as it offers an insight into the workings of the ROC government during this increasingly tumultuous time period of Chinese history. Through these years serving in the ROC Liu displayed his desire to help his country to revive the victimized image that was left by the Qing dynasty and bring China to the forefront of the world once more. However, in the end Liu also displayed how a weak government and national catastrophes can wear down the passion of anyone into a hollow shell of what it once was.

**Part III: Life after War and Corruption: Liu's life and literary pursuits after retiring from  
the ROC**

Reminiscence

When a man reaches middle age, often  
He turns his head and looks behind him.  
How many times on his life long journey  
Has he been happy, how often has fate been unkind?

When I think of my own past, I am sorry  
For all the errors I have committed.  
I'll try to make up for them. But how can the Yangtze  
Ever turn west from its eastward voyage.  
- Jennings Wong (year unknown)<sup>65</sup>

In the years following his retirement in 1958 a number of new developments occurred in the life of Shih-Shun Liu. While on the surface, Liu might have retired due to the corruption that he began to witness from ROC members such as George Ye or the weakness within the ROC government, I believe that his retirement reached deeper than this. His rise within Chiang's government came during the Nanking Decade, a period of time where the Nationalist government was seeing political and social growth and success. This was the government that Liu believed had so much potential and would be responsible for returning China back to their former recognition. However, Eastman alludes to the fact that the ROC never set up a strong stable government, and this very same factor came back to lead to their own demise.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately the China that the ROC represented in the 1920s-30s transformed into an unrecognizable country to Liu in the 1950s. While Liu was a part of the Nationalist government of the ROC he was first and foremost a citizen of China. As it became more and more certain that they would not be able

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<sup>65</sup> *One Hundred and One Chinese Poems*, 131.

<sup>66</sup> Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*, 1-9.

to return back to their homeland, there became less of a motivation to continue to support a waning government.

The second development that began after Liu's retirement and even early on in the 1950s was the difficulty mainland Chinese (called *waishengren*, or "provincial outsiders" by native Taiwanese) had holding on to their national identity after the ROC fled to Taiwan.<sup>67</sup> In an article titled "The Nuances of Waishengren," by Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang and Mau-Kuei Chang the authors argue that many of these *waishengren* often had a shared experience in this post-civil war life.<sup>68</sup> They argue that while these Chinese mainlanders were often despised by the native Taiwanese for being a privileged class, the *waishengren* often dealt with internal issues such as identity crisis and a loss of national identity.<sup>69</sup> While Liu moved to the United States after his retirement from Ambassador to Mexico he still experienced some of the same issues that many *waishengren* faced in Taiwan. Liu might have even experienced these feelings of abandonment and loss of national identity more than the typical citizen of the ROC due to his high position in the government. In a way the failure of Nationalist China to regain the mainland laid even heavier on his shoulders than the typical *waishengren*. For Liu, not only did the ROC fail and deteriorate away from the strong image it was trying to portray, but he lost his country and home that he cared so much about. For him everything that made him Chinese and who he was, was lost when the Chinese Communist Party took over in 1949. To add to the matter, corruption by people such as George Yeh made Liu feel as if he had even been abandoned by his own

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<sup>67</sup> Mau-kuei Chang and Meng-hsuan Yang, "Understanding the nuances of Waishengren: history and agency," *China Perspectives* (2010/3): 108-122.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

government. In conclusion Liu ended up settling in the United States not because of his love for the US, but because he had no reason to return to Taiwan after everything he had been through.

Liu and his wife ended up living for the next few years in Princeton, New Jersey to be near to their oldest son Julian Liu (my grandfather). While it might have seemed to be the most arbitrary place in the world for Liu to set up the rest of his life, it was the place that made him feel the most at home. The Northeast area was where he had gone to school when he was in America and it was also where many of his family members and children had established their families.

Liu's career not only was a point of pride for the Liu family, but it continued to have its impact on the family members as the years went on. In 1958 my father, King Doumer Liu (the firstborn son of Julian Liu), was born. His namesakes were both Mackenzie King and Paul Doumer (the President of France), two people that Liu admired and respected throughout his political career. Liu's daughter Lillian Jackson also went on to pursue a scholarly career in Ottawa, Canada.<sup>70</sup>

While Liu's family members were just getting their starts in the world Liu decided to start the next phase of his life. In his retirement Liu found a new passion to encapsulate him back into Chinese culture and ideology through his translations of Chinese poems and books. While this might have seemed like a new step in Liu's life it acted as a bookend since his scholarly career began with his writing of *Extraterritoriality*. However, later in his life Liu's work emulated that of the typical old Chinese sage. Liu found translating to be an art form and became recognized for his ability to translate Chinese works into English. Even in one of his most popular translated works, *One Hundred and One Chinese Poems*, Liu is applauded by John

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<sup>70</sup> Jackson and Jackson, *Love Song and Sorrow*.

Cairncross for his ability to translate Chinese poems into English and still maintain their flow and elegance. Cairncross states, “All translators of poetry, it has often been observed, are expected to combine the conflicting desiderata of fidelity and beauty. But the task of the writer who sets out to English the Chinese poets is even more exacting. He must not only produce a work of art in his own language but also devise means of giving his version a specifically Chinese touch.”<sup>71</sup> Liu’s passion for poetry was mirrored in the many compilations of old Chinese poems ranging from all points in history and it was also shown in the numerous scraps that he held onto in the trunk that contained pieces of poetry. This pure talent of translation that is described by Cairncross no doubt adds to the depth of importance and responsibility that Liu had in translating these forgotten works. In a way Liu’s translations were a lifeline to keep these certain parts of Chinese culture alive in the modernizing world.

While poetry seemed to be Liu’s first passion when it came to literature, he also shared a keen interest for Confucius’ writings and translations. Liu’s most notable work in this field most likely came in the form of his translation of Chen LiFu’s commentary on the Four Books, titled *The Confucian Way*.<sup>72</sup> While the book became relatively popular and the most well-known of Liu’s work, Chen’s name simply brought more significance to the book. Chen, like Liu, also served as a head Chinese diplomat in the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek during the same years as Liu. Chen had worked his way up to the position of confidential secretary for Chiang Kai-shek and was a controversial figure since he and his brother founded the right-wing anti-communist CC Clique.<sup>73</sup> Putting Chen’s political significance aside, Liu’s passion for

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<sup>71</sup> *One Hundred and One Chinese Poems*, ix.

<sup>72</sup> Li Fu Chen, *The Confucian Way*, translated by Shih-Shun Liu (New York: KPI, 1986).

<sup>73</sup> Li Fu Chen, *The Storm Clouds Clear Over China: The memoir of Chen Li-fu 1900-1993* (Palo Alto: Hoover Institution Press, 1994).

Confucian thought drove most of his studies and scholarly work later in his life. While we don't know if Shih-Shun Liu was a devout follower of Confucius teachings, he clearly found that they contained a certain amount of importance and connection to his Chinese roots.

Liu's writing also went beyond *Extraterritoriality* and his love of poetry. In 1988 Liu followed another trend of the classically retired Chinese scholar and looked into his roots. Liu produced "Mozhuang Liu's Founding and Fan Yan," which went into the complete ancestry of the Mozhuang Liu clan, the clan that our family descended from.<sup>74</sup> In this short account of our family's history Liu connects our heritage all the way back to the late Han Dynasty. This is the same source that Auntie Lena had referenced earlier when she claimed that he was related to the brother of founding emperor of the Han Dynasty. While this source is very interesting and contains possible ties of our family back to these significant historical figures, it does a lot to show us how Liu actually thought of himself. By writing this book Shih-Shun Liu displayed that not only was he related to significant people throughout history, but it shows us that he believed he belonged shoulder to shoulder with these figures. Liu dedicated his whole life to creating a strong and powerful image of China and so did the people that Liu claimed to be related to. Not only did Liu feel like his career and effort to maintain China's dignity was a duty but it was in his blood.

While most might see the political career of Shih-Shun Liu being the most defining feature of his life, there is no doubt that Liu's literary career played a major role in developing his image in history. Auntie Lena even made the claim that Liu's literary career was in many ways more significant than any of the work that he did in Canada or foreign diplomacy.<sup>75</sup> While

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<sup>74</sup> Shih-Shun Liu, *Mo zhuang Liu shi zhi chuang shi yu fan yan* (Taipei Shi: Taiwan Shang wu yin shu guan, 1988).

<sup>75</sup> Cheng, unpublished memoir, 2018.

he no longer was a part of a government that could actively make a change in strengthening the waning image of China, he still did have some say in how China would be remembered by history. By choosing to translate many of these traditional Chinese works into English, Liu continued his fight to bring China dignity by making its culture more accessible to the West. By just prolonging that memory of these old Chinese poets and scholars Liu was ensuring that the China that he remembered would not be forgotten in the age of Communism.

**Part IV Treasured Documents and Remembrance: Family memories of the trunk and their experiences with Shih-Shun Liu**

The Return Home

I was young when I left home,  
But when I returned, I had grown old.  
Though I still speak the local tongue,  
Gray are my temples.  
The children saw but did not recognize me;  
They smiled, and asked where the stranger came from.  
- *Ho Chih-Chang (659-744)*<sup>76</sup>

History is greatly dependent on the way that we remember history and this undoubtedly applies to Shih-Shun Liu. Throughout my own life and throughout the writing of this paper, my memory of my great-grandfather was completely dependent on the memories of others and the information that I could deduce from his documents that he left behind. Since Liu died the year before I was born, I never got to meet the man and make any memories of him for myself. To me Liu always seemed like this mythical figure that was a part of our family. He was a person who almost seemed too significant to even be related to me and my family, especially as we drifted further and further away from our Chinese ancestry in each generation. However, while I did not have anything but the stories that people told me about him, I did have the old trunk which opened a completely new world to me.

In 2018 my grandmother Nancy Liu, Julian's wife and Shih-Shun's daughter in-law, passed away. After her death the family decided to disperse all of the belongings that my grandma had held onto between her three children. My father ended up with an old steamer trunk with my great-grandfather's initials printed on it. Inside was a collection of documents spanning the entire length of the twentieth century that all dealt with the life and career of my great-

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<sup>76</sup> *One Hundred and One Chinese Poems*, 19.

grandfather. While this was not the first time that the family had opened the trunk, it was most likely the first time that the Liu family had become rededicated to the task of preserving the memory of Shih-Shun Liu in about two decades.

One of the things that became important in the story of Shih-Shun Liu was in the manner that his relatives remembered him. When we compare the memories from different family members there is often a distinct difference in how each generation remembers Liu. When looking at the excerpt from Auntie Lena's memoir it is pretty clear that she not only admires her father, but she reveres him in a way that compares him to the possible Han Dynasty ancestors that he might be related to.<sup>77</sup> Even the way that Auntie Lena presents her story is reminiscent of a story of a sage who has been wise since birth and experienced a premature maturation. Similar to Lena's memory of Shih-Shun Liu is the memory of Lillian Jackson, Liu's youngest daughter, that is recorded in her memoir *Love Song and Sorrow*.<sup>78</sup> While the memoir is told through Lillian's perspective it was written and put together by her husband Richard Jackson. Even though Lillian displays a great reverence for her father throughout her memories of him, her recollections give us another side of remembrance that Lena does not. Since Lillian was born in 1937, most of her early memories of her father are of him being absent and in Canada serving as the Ambassador. To Lillian she simply sees him as a father who she greatly misses during this time period, not a great political figure for the ROC. Lillian and Lena's memory of Liu prove to be so important in the telling of his story because they display that the same person can be remembered in numerous ways by different people who are still very close with him.

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<sup>77</sup> Jackson and Jackson, *Love Song and Sorrow*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*.

Like stated before, when it comes to the memories of Liu, they often change as we move along the generations of his children and grandchildren. One memory of Liu that tends to stand out is that of my father King Doumer Liu. In the 1970s Liu's wife died in New Jersey, which caused him to end up moving to Sunnyvale to be close to the family of his son Julian who had moved there in 1960. Shih-Shun Liu spent time with my father on a weekly basis as my father's family would typically take care of Shih-Shun in his growing old age. My father recalled that my grandmother used to cook dinner for Shih-Shun every night and take it to him as well as continually have him over for family gatherings. However, while my father's family religiously took care of Shih-Shun, my father's most defining memory of Shih-Shun was how bitter he was towards him and his family. My father would often recall how Shih-Shun would criticize Julian and his wife for not raising their kids right and how he often clashed with my father, who was a teenager at the time. As my father grew older he said that he would remember his grandfather's bitterness and often tied it to the fact that he was a man that had lost his country and he believed that being part of this failed government took a drastic toll on Shih-Shun's life after politics.

When I was conducting my research I could not help but attach this memory from my father to the waishengren experience described above. Liu's life after he left politics was a extremely different world than he was used to. Not only did he lose his country and his sense of national identity but even his own children and grandchildren seemed to be slipping farther and farther away from what it meant to be Chinese. My father's family developed in the Silicon Valley in a time when they were one of the only Chinese families at the time and thus their emphasis on their Chinese culture had taken a backseat to their attempts to fit into a more western culture. I believe that Shih-Shun witnessed this and could not help but feel like he was losing every little bit of his culture to this quickly modernizing world. While his development of

becoming like the unique waishengren in Taiwan did not take place in the same exact way as this ethnic group, he developed a similar loss of national identity and bitter remembrance of the Chinese civil war as these people did.

Not only did Liu continue to see, what he believed as, the loss of Chinese culture through his family, but he also witnessed the loss of recognition for his country. While in the years following his retirement, Liu did display a certain amount of frustration with the ROC government, he still could hold onto the fact that the ROC was still recognized by the world as the legitimate China. While the United States had many issues with Chiang Kai-shek they decided that they would rather recognize the ROC than the Communist-led PRC. This decision helped the ROC to be recognized as the legitimate China in the United Nations for decades after its establishment. However, in 1971 the PRC took the ROC's place representing China in the UN, and eight years later even the United States ceased to recognize the ROC as the rightful government of China.

While this event took place long after he had left the KMT, the decision made by the United States in 1979 no doubt had a serious effect on Liu and his continued feelings of abandonment. Not only had he lost the country that defined who he was and everything he stood for, but now the world did not even recognize this government that he stood for as a legitimate country. In this moment of despair in his life Liu held on to letters from a Leonard Conner who was the owner of Conner Energy Corporation. While I could not find any information about this individual, Conner did seem to be a close friend with Liu as well as an American supporter of the ROC. In one of his letters regarding the US decision to cease recognizing the ROC, Conner states, "And so, with regard to China, and the existence of its countless masses: No one denies them recognition, but did we have to do it like asses? Rapprochement was more than inevitable,

it was coming with ineluctable trust. So, did it have to be done with irreparable damage to the whole world's trust?"<sup>79</sup> The fact that Liu kept this letter hints that he appreciated this grassroots American support, even if the US government no longer recognized the government he had given his life to.

In most cases when it comes writing on a historical figure, it becomes very difficult in breaking down how we should remember that figure, but what I feel like one of the biggest things that we have to take into account for each memory is that each one speaks a little truth about the actual person. Since I never had any experiences with Shih-Shun Liu myself, most of the memories that I created in my head came from a mix of my father's memories swirled together with what I could derive from the artifacts and documents that he left behind in the trunk. But while each person that was close to Liu shared a different way in how they remembered him, they all helped to contribute to the complex character that he left in our memories. Lena saw her father as an immovable figure that was destined to become a great scholar and diplomatic leader. Lillian saw her father as a simple man who was just her dad and more than anything else, she just wanted to be with him. My father saw his grandfather as a complex man who was bitter and short with him but grew to respect the courage and integrity that Shih-Shun had to represent his people and eventually leave them for a more fulfilling life. While the documents and photographs help to piece the story together, our memories of him help to paint the portrait of him.

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<sup>79</sup> Leonard Conner, "To the Chinese People of Taiwan and All Decent Thinking People of the World: In Regard to February 28, 1979," Shih-Shun Liu personal collection.

## Conclusion

In view of what the future holds in store, we must rededicate ourselves, one and all, collectively and severally to our problems of peace with the same vigor and determination as we have faced our problems of war.

*-Shih-Shun Liu, 1945<sup>80</sup>*

The life of Shih-Shun Liu is an example of the importance the background characters play in history. While Liu was never on the front page of any newspapers and is hardly remembered by anyone outside our family, his effects on history are still significant. His life serves as a microcosm of the Chinese experience, as well as a valuable insight into the workings of the ROC government during this tumultuous time period in Chinese history. While the history of the diplomatic relations between the ROC and the world and the rise and decline of the Chinese Nationalist government have already been told by many historians such as Lin, Eastman and Taylor, individuals such as Liu allow us to keep learning about this dramatic era in modern history. Through Liu we gain more reasons for why people joined the ROC government in the 1920s-30s, and also why they ultimately left the ROC in the 1950s. We also are allowed to witness the views that other countries had when it came to the ROC through the letters of Mackenzie King and Liu's numerous other diplomatic relations. These little experiences that Liu held onto have become valuable information in the hunt for answers concerning this period in Chinese history.

While Shih-Shun Liu might not have been or ever will be a prominent figure in Chinese history his life is a testament to the character and pride of the Chinese people. He began his

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<sup>80</sup> Shih-Shun Liu, "Address of his Excellency Dr. Liu Shih-Shun, Chinese Ambassador to Canada, on the Unconditional Surrender of Japan" (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation: August 14, 1945).

journey early as a child being educated in a westernized school in a China that was struggling to develop and catch up with the modern world after decades of exploitation by imperialist powers. Eventually his hard work took him to America where his ideas on nationalism and diplomatic relations between countries began to develop. This growing nationalist sentiment towards China and the acknowledgement of its victimization by western countries led Liu to join the KMT at just 25 in hopes of reviving the image of China to the prominence that it once had. This passion to improve the representation of China led him all over the world, but it also eventually gave way and the ugly side of corruption and a weak government led him to turn away from the country he so longingly wanted to save. Eventually Liu attempted to keep his memories of China alive through the traditions of poetry and Confucius thought and extend its ancient culture to the western world.

Like mentioned earlier the person that we choose to remember is all influenced by our own experiences with that person and the memories of others. While most may see Liu as a ROC diplomat during the Second World War and the Cold War, he was also a scholar, a father and even a great-grandfather. In conclusion the story of Shih-Shun Liu is not a political or scholarly story or even a memoir but rather it is an analysis on the human experience when it is tested and pushed to its limits. At the heart of it Liu's life leaves a genuine but transparent history that is emblematic of a dream to simply improve the world that he lived in.

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