Mutual Images and Self Reflections: Views from Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai and Singapore

Philip Yuen-sang Leung

Abstract

This paper examines and analyzes the records of two Lis: Li Zhongjue 李鍾珏 from Shanghai who visited Singapore in 1887, and Li Qinghui 李清輝, a Singaporean who visited Shanghai in 1888. Both Lis seemed to be quite impressed by the cities they visited and had left their impressions, observations and reflections in print. Li Zhongjue’s Xinjiapo fengtu ji 新加坡風土記 (A Description of Singapore in 1887) is a widely circulated and well known treatise among students of Singapore history, but Li Qinghui’s Dongyou jilüe 東游紀略 (A Brief Record of the Travel to Eastern Countries) is a historical document “re-discovered” by the author in recent years. It was published only once in the form of serialized essays in a local Chinese newspaper in Singapore, the Lat pao 励報, from February 12 to March 5, 1889.

This paper examines the family and cultural backgrounds of the two Lis and the setting upon which the journals were written, comparing their perceptions and impressions of the “Other” as reflected in their writings. From there we could learn about the living conditions and politico-cultural environment

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of the two cities in the 1880s. But more importantly, this paper attempts to show that the Lis’ gazing at each other not only revealed what they saw in the new environment, but also initiated a process of self reflection and self evaluation in the two men about their own community and their home city. These reflections in turn deepened their commitment of reform in improving the conditions of their own city.

**Keywords:** Shanghai, Singapore, Li Zhongjue 李鍾珏, Li Qinghui 李清輝, overseas Chinese

1. Introduction

Although the two modern cities in Asia—Singapore and Shanghai—are a thousand miles apart, they are well connected in the age of aviation and telecommunications. Business transactions and communications of all kinds, official or private, can be conducted within hours if not minutes through computers, cables, fax machines and telephones. Even person-to-person relations and interactions have become easier with direct flights everyday and the frequent movement of people between the two cities. However, the situation a century ago was quite different. Before the end of the nineteenth century, Singapore and Shanghai were not well connected, if not totally isolated from each other. People of Shanghai in the nineteenth century were generally not aware of the existence of the island in the South Seas, while the people of the Lion City or “Singapura” (including those who came originally from China) paid very little attention to what happened in Shanghai. Though there were steamships connecting the two port cities operated by P&O and other shipping companies, carrying both commodities and passengers between these two cities periodically throughout the year, mutual attention and affection had not yet been developed. They occasionally glanced casually but seldom gazed at each other. Many of the travelers between the two cities were British merchants and colonial officials because Singapore was a British colony and in
Shanghai the British had a huge share of commercial interest and a “semi-
colony” in the International Settlements. However, to most of the Chinese liv-
ing in these two cities in the past century, they were remotely separated and
mutually unfamiliar. Their knowledge of the other came from a variety of
sources ranging from hearsay of the sailors to the talks of traveling merchants
and adventurers. It was not until the 1880s that the Chinese in the two port
cities had begun to pay more attention to each other and to develop a more
informed view of the other. In the end, knowing more about the other became a
learning experience and brought responsive changes upon their own city in the
following decades at the turn of the century.

This study compares and analyzes the travel accounts of two visitors, one
from Shanghai to Singapore, Li Zhongjue 李鍾珏 and the other from Singapore, Li Qinghui 李清輝. Both took their trips in the 1880s, Li Zhongjue
in 1887 and Li Qinghui in 1888, and after spending a sustained period of time
in the other city the two Lis had each left us with a lengthy journal which
recorded their experiences and observations. From their writings we could gain
some knowledge and insight in the mutual gazing process. A gaze is observing
and watching attentively and selectively, not just a casual glance. Ordinary
travel journals focus on scenic places, historical sites, curios and places for
tourists such as special restaurants and monuments. The records left by the two
Lis are quite different because they paid more attention to social life, economic
development, and municipal administration, although they also covered some
scenic spots and local habits and customs. What attracted their attention in the
new environment? Where did they choose to visit in the unfamiliar city? What
were the most interesting or most concerned issues to the visitor? These are the
questions about the “other.” But more importantly, the new environment and
new sights, sounds and thoughts also initiated a self-reflecting and self-evaluat-
ing process in the two men. The things and issues in the new city reminded
them of the familiar turf and environment back home just like gazing at a mir-
ror one would see the reflection of oneself. The reflective thinking set off a
reformative impulse in the visitor (and it was especially clear in the case of Li Zhongjue) and deepened the commitment of the two men when they returned home to promote social and cultural reforms in their home cities. These reforms directly or indirectly brought the two separated cities closer to each other in the last decade of the nineteenth century and helped the cities gravitate into a common orbit in the twentieth.

2. Li Zhongjue’s Visit to Singapore (1887)

Li Zhongjue 李鍾珏 (1853-1927), originally named Li An 李安 and later generally known as Li Pingshu 李平書, was born in Gaoqiao 高橋 of the Baoshan 寶山 county in the suburb of Shanghai in 1853. As his father was a Confucian scholar who obtained the xiucai 秀才 degree, Li Zhongjue not only inherited an interest in Confucianism but also a passion for Chinese medicine. He was interested in collecting all kinds of herbs and fond of Chinese acupuncture. Like other young men of his time, he studied hard for the civil service examinations administered by the local government, hoping to obtain a jinshi 進士 degree and become a high-ranking official later in his life. After studying the Confucian classics for a period of time in Shanghai at the Longmen Shuyuan 龍門書院 under the directorship of Liu Xizai 劉熙載, he went north in 1877 to Beijing for the examination where he met several friends, Zuo Binglong 左秉隆, Wang Fengzao 汪鳳藻 and Wang Fengchi 汪鳳池 who were students of the Peking Tongwen Guan 同文館 (Foreign Languages Institute).  

1 Li Zhongjue’s grandfather Li Xianglin 李顯琳 and father, Li Shaolin 李少琳, were both Chinese medical doctors. Li Shaolin was also a Confucian scholar with a xiucai degree. See Zhu Jieqin 朱傑勤, “Xinjapo fengtu ji de zuozhe Li Zhongjue 新加坡風土記的作者李鍾珏,” in Asian Culture, vol. 5 (Singapore, April, 1984), p. 3.

2 Ibid. For a biographical sketch of Li Zhongjue, see Shi Luo 史洛, “Li Pingshu qiren qishi 李平書其人其事,” in Dang’an ya shixue 檔案與史學 (Archives and History), (June, 1994), pp. 41-47. See also He Zefu’s 何澤福 biography in Qingdai renwu bianweihui 清史編委會 (eds.), Qingdai renwu zhuangao 清代人物傳稿 (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe 遼寧人民出版社, 1999), vol. 8.
Zuo Binglong came from a bannerman family in Guangdong while the two Wang brothers came from Jiangsu in East China. They became close friends and sworn brothers, although later on they went separate ways in their career building. Zuo Binglong, after graduation from the Tongwen Guan, worked briefly as a minor official at the Zongli Yamen (Foreign Ministry) in Beijing and then received an overseas assignment as secretary to a Chinese consulate office abroad. In 1881, he was appointed China’s Consul to Singapore by the Qing government to replace Hu Xuanze or Hu Ah Kay, a local Cantonese merchant who was also known as Whampoo, and arrived in the British colonial port-city the following year.3

What did Li know about Singapore before his visit to the city in 1887? We don’t know specifically what or how much Li knew about the Lion City before his 1887 visit. But we can be sure that Li had acquired some geographical knowledge about the island because he had studied Wei Yuan’s Haiguo tuzhi (An illustrated gazetteer of the maritime countries) and Xu Jiyu’s Yinghuan zhi (A brief account of the maritime world), the two most updated and popular geographical works about the external world available to the Chinese at that time. Since he was a close friend of some of the Tongwen Guan students such as Zuo Binglong and Wang Fengzao, he should be familiar with the records of China’s early diplomatic missions abroad including that of Bin Chun and Zhang Deyi, who also covered a little bit of Singapore.4 Moreover, before his trip to Singapore he had been working for a few years as an assistant editor of a local paper in Shanghai.


4 Both of them visited Singapore on their way to Europe in the 1860s and 1870s. See Fujian shifan daxue lishixi huaqiaoshi ziliao xuanjizu ed., Wan-Qing haiwai biji xuan (Beijing: 海洋出版社, 1983), pp. 1-4, 7-10.
which covered heavily the trade and business in China and the Southeast Asian region. In addition, he should have gained some knowledge about the city from the letters of Consul Zuo Binglong, his close friend. Despite all that, Li was not ready for a trip to explore the outer world in the early 1880s. He was aspiring to become a traditional scholar-official in the Qing bureaucracy and working hard to build an official career. Thus, in 1886 at the age of 33, he took another civil service examination in Nanjing and succeeded in getting his juren 舉人 degree. During the period of waiting for a substantive appointment, he received a letter from Zuo Binglong, the Chinese Consul in Singapore, inviting him to visit the British colony in the South Seas. He accepted the invitation and left Shanghai for Singapore in April, 1877. Li Zhongjue stayed in Singapore for about two months, enjoying the hospitality of his old friend at the Chinese Consulate and visiting different places and communities in the island city. He recorded his observations and comments in a treatise which was published later as Xinjiapo fengtu ji 新加坡風土記 (A Description of Singapore in 1887).

**Singapore in Li Zhongjue’s Eyes**

Li Zhongjue left Shanghai for Hong Kong in January, 1887. However, his trip was unexpectedly delayed because his mother suddenly fell ill and he had to return to Shanghai for two months. He then set sail again in March, arriving in Singapore in early April. He was well received by his old friend and sworn brother Zuo Binglong, then Chinese Consul in Singapore. During the entire period of his visit, Li stayed at the Chinese Consulate and enjoyed the company and hospitality of his old friend. During his two-month sojourn in the island city, he visited many places observing the living conditions of the local

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6 Li’s Fengtu ji was first published in 1895 in Changsha 長沙 and then reprinted a couple of times. The edition used here was a photo-print version of the original publication by the Nanyang Shuju 南洋書局 in Singapore in 1947 with a preface by Xu Yunqiao 許雲樵.
Chinese community at close range and commenting on the social and economic problems of the British colony in addition to visiting various departments of the colonial government and various ethnic communities on the island. However, the Xinjiapo fengtu ji (hereafter Fengtu ji) was not written in diary form, as it did not specify the dates and events that occurred in those weeks. Instead, it was written as a treatise or small pamphlet with the purpose of informing the Chinese back home about the local customs and conditions of the British colony.

The Fengtu ji begins with history and geography: how Singapore was “discovered” by the British, taken from the Malays and then established as a British colony. The name of the British founder of Singapore, Thomas Stamford Raffles, was not mentioned, however. It then talks about the location of the island, the distance between Singapore and China as well as the neighboring countries such as Sumatra, Johore and Rhios. After the brief historical and geographical introduction, it then introduces the five main local ethnic communities in the island: Chinese, Europeans, Malay, American, and other, including Indians and Siamese. According to him, the Chinese community in Singapore constituted the largest group, followed by the Malays. He cited the 1881 census statistics in the treatise:⁷

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hokkiens</th>
<th>Cantonese</th>
<th>Teochews</th>
<th>Hakkas</th>
<th>Hailams</th>
<th>Staraits Chinese</th>
<th>British Chinese</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24,981</td>
<td>14,853</td>
<td>22,644</td>
<td>6,170</td>
<td>8,319</td>
<td>9,527</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>86,066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The census of 1881 actually shows the Chinese population in Singapore as 86,766.⁸ The discrepancy might be Li’s careless mistake or an error in print. Nevertheless, it clearly indicates that Li had access to the census data of 1881.

Li also reported with statistical details on British military manpower in

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⁷ Li Zhongjue 李鍾珏, Xinjiapo fengtu ji 新加坡風土記 (Singapore: Nanyang shuju 南洋書局, 1947), p. 4.
⁸ Census Returns, 1881 (Singapore: Straits Settlements, microfilm at the National University of Singapore Library).
Singapore: how the 1,357 men were distributed and where they were located. He also discussed the administrative structure of the colonial government, including the Viceroy, Chief Secretary, Chief Judge and Secretaries of Home Affairs, Revenue, Land Administration, Public Works, Security, and Chinese Affairs.\(^9\) He also listed the other countries which had foreign consuls besides China: the U.S., Germany, Russia, France, Austria, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Belgium, Cuba, Siam, Sweden and Norway.\(^10\)

The focus of Li’s attention, of course, was on the Singapore Chinese. First, he mentioned briefly the history of the Chinese Consulate: it was founded in the third year of Emperor Guangxu 光緒 (1877) as a result of the recommendation of Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾, China’s first minister to Great Britain. In the initial period, the Consulate consisted of only two staff members and was operated without financial support from the Qing government. It was not until 1879 that the Chinese government finally put the consular office under its diplomatic arrangement with a regular budget.\(^11\)

Li then spent several pages on the state of commerce in Singapore especially the financial strength of the Chinese mercantile community. He praised the free trade policy of the British that taxed only tobacco and liquor.\(^12\) He pointed out that the pepper and gambier trades were the most crucial part of the Singapore economy at that time, and that the pepper trade in Singapore and the region was comparable to the businesses of tea, silk and cotton in China.\(^13\) He then went on to say that the traders and planters involved in this business were primarily Chinese and some of them had become exceptionally wealthy. The richest merchants in Singapore, he said, had accumulated assets of over tens of

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9 Li Zhongjue 李鍾珏, *Xinjiapo fengtu ji* 新加坡風土記, op.cit., p. 5.
10 Ibid., p. 6.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 7.
13 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
millions and the moderately wealthy also had millions.\textsuperscript{14} He made a pitch here that the rich overseas Chinese were interested in obtaining official ranks and titles from the Chinese government and, more importantly, they were willing to contribute money for prestige and honor.\textsuperscript{15} However, according to Li, those who became Christians were “unruly” (jie 杖) and not submissive to Chinese authority. Furthermore, said Li, they were corrupt and contaminating to Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{16} In this connection, he praised the efforts of his friend Zuo Binglong, the Chinese Consul, in promoting Chinese education and literature in the Chinese community, saying, “there has been a cultural revival in recent years.”\textsuperscript{17}

Li described the Chinese life and customs in the crowded area of Da Po 大坡 (Greater Town, i.e., Kreta Ayer or Niuche Shui 牛車水) thus: “it was a busy mart with foreign firms, banks, post office and a customs house by the seaside...and the most crowded area was called Niuche Shui with restaurants, theatres, brothels and other dirty elements.”\textsuperscript{18} On prostitution, Li said, “there are more than thirty-some hundred prostitutes who have registered with the Chinese Protectorate. But other than that, there are numerous illegal ones who either come from Canton or the local Chinese community.”\textsuperscript{19} About the theatres, there were both male and female troupes performing in the Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese dialects. According to Li, the price of the admission tickets was quite inexpensive, hence drawing a lot of common people to the theatre.\textsuperscript{20} He then went on to describe the restaurants, inns and lodging places, gambling and smoking habits, cityscapes, gardens, tiger hunts and other local customs.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{14} Ibid., p. 9.
\bibitem{15} Ibid., p. 10.
\bibitem{16} Ibid., p. 9.
\bibitem{17} Ibid., p. 10.
\bibitem{18} Ibid., p. 12.
\bibitem{19} Ibid.
\bibitem{20} Ibid., p. 13.
\end{thebibliography}
In the *Fengtu ji*, what concerned Li the most seemed to be two things: the coolie trade and useful Western institutions. First, he reported the inhumane treatment of the Chinese coolies in the hands of brokers. According to him, these poor Chinese coolies were either being trapped or cheated into entering a contractual relationship with the manipulative traders. They were forced to work as hard laborers just like slaves. Their living conditions were extremely poor and lamentable. He then called for more awareness among the public, more prevention by local officials and punishment of the brokers and crooked businessmen (*jianshang* 奸商) by both Chinese and British governments. In his opinion, the Chinese officials in Singapore (i.e. his friend Zuo Binglong) had made repeated attempts to change the situation, but the British colonial government was not cooperative on this issue.\(^{21}\)

Li was not always critical toward British institutions or Western culture. In fact, in the *Fengtu ji*, he mentioned some Western institutions in very positive terms. First, the fire alarm system in the Colony: The people of the city were alerted either by the fireworks or a rocket shot up from the mountain top (Huangjia Shan 皇家山 or referred to by the British as Fort Canning) when a fire broke out in the evening hours or by a flag hoisted at the top of the hill when a fire broke out in the daytime.\(^{22}\) Second, the water supply system: distilled water was channeled from the highlands in the Northwest down to the city area through metallic pipes.\(^{23}\) Third, about the public roads: Li reported that construction projects and maintenance work were carried out throughout the year. For instance, the roads were wide and smooth, and the bridges were built with steel and iron, much stronger and sturdier than the bridges in Shanghai.\(^{24}\) Fourth, on schools and museums: Li mentioned the schools ("large and small") without comment, but praised the museums, saying that they were,

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 17.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 12.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 14.
\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 15.
“complimentary to the schools and very helpful in promoting knowledge and education.” Lastly, on the hospitals. He said, “they are different from the Chinese hospitals, and sometimes the Chinese people are reluctant to go into these (clinics/hospitals). However, their administrative system is excellent and should be imitated (guizhi zhi shan, guke fangxing 規制之善, 固可仿行).”

3. Li Qinghui’s Visit to Shanghai (1888)

Li Zhongjue might have met another Li by the name of Li Qinghui during his stay in Singapore because Li Qinghui 李清輝 was a businessman and community leader in Singapore who was extremely active among the Chinese in the late nineteenth century. Like other early leaders of the Singapore Chinese community, Li came from Malacca with a Baba background. The Babas were descendants of Chinese immigrants who settled down in the Malayan peninsula before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of them married local wives and became “Malayanized” in their living styles, habits and daily language. Some of these Babas, especially the wealthy ones, had retained Chinese language and education by hiring Confucian scholars from China to be private tutors for their sons. Li belonged to such a family, and when he grew up, he developed a strong interest in traditional Chinese culture. Born in 1830 in Malacca, he was the fourth son of the Li family who owned the Zhen Yu 振裕 company. The Li of Zhen Yu produced eight sons, all of whom rose to become well-known businessmen and community leaders in Malacca and Singapore. In terms of cultural habit and orientation, Qinghui was somewhat different from his brothers because he had a strong interest in Chinese literature and had learned Chinese calligraphy and classical poetry composition while his brothers and other family members were primarily businessmen. The

25 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
26 Ibid., p. 16.
27 For an analysis of the Baba community, see John R. Clammer, Straits Chinese Society (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1980).
Lis began their business venture in Singapore in the early nineteenth century soon after the arrival of the British. Li’s father-in-law was one of the leading Chinese businessmen-cum-community leaders from Malacca, Chen Jinsheng 陳金聲 or Tan Kim Seng (1805-1864). Chen was one of the wealthiest merchants in early Singapore, having established connections with the Hokkien (from southern Fujian) merchants in Shanghai before the Taiping rebellion. Li Qinghui’s eldest son, Xilang 錫瑩, had also started a branch company, Hongxing 鴻興, in Shanghai in the 1860s in the aftermath of the Taiping disruption, in Shanghai where he lived with his wife and their young son Shenmu 深木. It was because of this connection that Li Qinghui had decided to make a trip to the East partly to visit his family in Shanghai and partly to fulfill his personal longing for the more “cultural China.” He left Singapore in the spring-summer period of 1888, stopping over in Saigon and Hong Kong before arriving in Shanghai in May 1888.

Shanghai in Li Qinghui’s Eyes

Upon arrival in Shanghai at about 5 p.m., Li got off the steamer and was taken by a horse-drawn carriage to his son’s residence-shop, the Hongxing, located in the French Concession where he stayed throughout the summer. In the first evening upon arrival in Shanghai he was entertained by his family with Chinese opera at the Dangui Yuan 丹桂園, a famous local theatre. In the following days he visited the Jing’an Temple 靜安寺, the Shen Gardens 申園, the Zhang Gardens 張園, the Chenghuang Temple 城隍廟 and many other scenic places and famous sites in the city of Shanghai just as other new visitors to the city would have. Li recorded the places and events in a journal almost everyday. The Dongyou jiliu 東遊紀略 was written in dairy form and covered

all the coastal cities that Li Qinghui visited in China and Japan. Although the pages devoted to Shanghai were more than those to other places, the descriptions were on the whole quite brief compared with Li Zhongjue’s *Fengtu ji*.

What did he do and where did he go during his sojourn in the city of the East? In addition to the famous gardens and temples, Li visited the following places in Shanghai:

- Tungwen shuguan 同文書館
- Youli yinhang 有利銀行 (Mercantile Bank)
- Gong he yong 公和永 (Silk Filature)
- Dianshizhai 點石齋 (Printing Shop)
- The Yamen of Shanghai Daotai 道臺衙門
- Renji tang 仁濟堂 (Renji Charitable Hall)
- Qingjie tang 清節堂 (Qingjie Chastity Hall)
- Shanji tang 善濟堂 (Shanji Charitable Hall)
- Jiqi zaozhi ju 機器造紙局 (Machine Shop for Manufacturing Paper)
- Zilaishui ju 自來水局 (Running Water Bureau)
- Hanpan yuan 涵園 (Bath House)
- Zhao shang ju 招商局 (China Merchants Steam Navigation Company)
- Shen bao guan 申報館 (Newspaper)
- Jiangnan zhizao ju 江南製造局 (Kiangnan Arsenal)
- Zhang Quan huiguan 彰泉會館
- Xujiahui 徐家匯 (or Ziccawei, Catholic Cathedral and Museum)
- Longhua Pagoda 龍華塔
- Huishen gongxie 會審公廨 (The Mixed Court)

From the places Li visited we could surmise that Li was interested in both traditional things and modern enterprises. Traditional landscape gardens, Chinese edifices, and historical monuments were his favorite sites. In addition he showed great interest in new things such as modern industries, banks, churches, newspapers and Western restaurants. He was impressed by the effectiveness of the paper cutting machinery and the operation of the running water
system in the International Settlement. He also paid close attention to the production process of firearms and gun powder at the Soochow Arsenal. At the Xujiahui 徐家匯 (Ziccawei) Catholic compound, he showed interest in almost every thing he saw, including the thermometer, observatory, telephone, cathedral, paintings, maps and library.\footnote{Li Qinghui 李清輝, 
\textit{Dongyou jīlìe} 東游紀略, in \textit{Lat bao} 咭報, 2162-2180 (Feb. 12, 1889-March 5, 1889), here cited from Liang Yuansheng 梁元生, “Li Qinghui yu Dongyou jīlìe” 李清輝與東游紀略, in \textit{Nanyang xuebao} 南洋學報, vol. 39, nos. 1&2 (1984), p. 41.} From these observations we know that Li was not merely a conservative Confucian scholar as he appeared to the Chinese in mid-nineteenth century Singapore or a businessman who longed only for profit and pleasure, but rather a complex man interested in both the Confucian classics and Western technology. Of course, there was the natural businessman in him: he was also interested in business operations and trade opportunities. Moreover, in this city far away from home he seemed to have a number of business friends from Singapore, Malacca, Hong Kong and Shanghai. The Zhang Quan Huiguan was the place where these old Hokkien friends would meet.\footnote{Ibid., p. 41.}

4. Reflections in the Mirror: Gazing at the Other and Seeing the Image of One’s Self

I think both Lis’ records are historical documents of value. To us readers of more than a century later, they are veritable accounts from which we can learn about the various facets of social and economic life of the two fast developing cities in late nineteenth century Asia. This will certainly enable us to better understand the living conditions and urban developments in Singapore and Shanghai during that crucial period of rapid change. To the two visitors themselves, the journey was an eye-opening experience and the cities they visited represented a new environment, stimulated new thoughts and conjured new images. It is natural that both of them were attracted to new things and interest-
ed in the new environment. To Li Zhongjue, however, the visit was more than just a casual sight seeing experience. The interest in the people, the institutions, and the environment was so intense that we could call it “the gaze” in postmodernist parlance. Even for Li Qinghui, his observations and reflections were sometimes intense and serious. But more importantly, the records represented more than a unilateral process of seeing the new or gazing at the “other.” Old things, including traditional culture and establishments at home were always in the mind of the two Lis. Oftentimes, the writer would make reference to or comparison with the relevant things in the home city, their familiar turf. While Li Zhongjue often compared Singapore to Shanghai, Li Qinghui had less of a tendency to compare and contrast. Nevertheless, references or connections were made with Singapore in Li’s travel diary. In other words, the journals are not only records of their gazings at the other, but also records of reflections upon their own roots. When they looked at the other, they acquired new knowledge and digested new information. Meanwhile, the imagining of their own city and the process of remembering was also taking place, which led them to juxtapose some of the faces or images of the two cities within their minds.

Li Zhongjue in his Fengtu ji referred to his home city Shanghai many times. For instance, when he reported on foreign diplomatic representation in Singapore with regards to the founding of the Chinese Consulate there, he criticized foreign diplomatic intervention in the legal process of China. Specifically he pointed out that the establishment of the Mixed Court in Shanghai was a discriminatory institution against the Chinese and was not practiced anywhere else in other parts of the world. He also commented on the lack of variety of food in restaurants and the scarcity of lodging in Singapore, saying that the situations in Hong Kong and Shanghai were quite disparate. The reception at the pier was also different, as the visitors were well received in Shanghai but in Singapore the passenger had to arrange transportation from the ship to the

32 Li Zhongjue 李鍾珏, Xinjiapo fengtu ji 新加坡風土記, op.cit., p. 6
shore. In addition, the public roads in Singapore were wider, smoother and better maintained, Li said. Also the bridges were mostly constructed with steel and iron, he continued, “they seem much sturdier than those in Shanghai.”

In other places he also compared the institutions in Singapore such as schools, museums, and medical practices to the situation in Hong Kong, Macao and China in general. From these references we could better understand the views of Li Zhongjue toward West and East, and between tradition and modernity.

Li Qinghui’s report did not dwell in comparisons because it was written in diary form, being straight forward and chronological. He did not mention Singapore’s places or customs in the diary, but he met a number of people who reminded him of Singapore. The family members that he met of course had a deep impact on him, such as his son, daughter-in-law and grandson who settled down in Shanghai and his youngest brother Qingyuan (清渊) who accompanied him during this trip to the East. Even the tablets of his father-in-law Chen Jinsheng (陳金聲) and uncle Li Zixi (李自西), who made significant contributions to the Huiguan in its resistance to French occupation during the Taiping period, at the ancestral hall of the Zhangquan Huiguan reminded him of home.

Another Singaporean he met in Shanghai was Qiu Wenchuan (邱文川) who, according to Li, was born and raised in Singapore and then working as a staff member of the British Consulate in Shanghai. Gan Shiyu (甘時雨), another person from Singapore who had been living in Shanghai for more than ten

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33 Ibid., p. 13.
34 Ibid., p. 15.
35 Li Qingyuan was one of the founders of the Yongchun Huiguan in Singapore, see Chen Jinghe (Chen Ching-ho) and Chen Yusong (陳育松), Xinjia po huawen beiying jilu 新加坡華文碑銘集録 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1971), p. 221. For a more detailed biography of Li, see Song Ong Siang, One Hundred Years’ History of the Chinese in Singapore (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 110-111.
36 Li Qinghui 李清輝, Dongyou jili 東游紀略, op.cit., p. 41.
years, also came to see Li Qinghui at his residence. Other people he met in Shanghai included brothers Huang Ruyu 黃如雨 and Huang Rulai 黃如來, originally from Penang, and Xiao Pilie 蕭丕烈 who was the brother of Li’s old friend Xiao Pimou 蕭丕謀 from Malacca. It was not only people that reminded him of his home city and of the Southeast Asian region, but also the sights and sounds in this new city. For example, he realized the summer day in Shanghai was much longer (with 15 hours of sunlight) than that in Singapore, and when his friends at the dinner table began singing songs and reciting poems, he remarked, “that aroused the homesickness of the traveler.”

5. Concluding Thoughts

Did the sojourning experience in a distant new city have lasting influence on the traveler? We cannot find concrete or direct evidence in their writings after the trip to discern the immediate effect of the journeys upon their lives and thoughts. However, their social and cultural actions in the following years in Shanghai and Singapore might be indicative signs for our assessment of the impact of their journey abroad.

Li Zhongjue, as we all know, had later risen to become one of the most important community leaders in Shanghai at the turn of the century. He became the director-general of Shanghai’s Public Works Bureau 上海城廂總工程局, which planned and oversaw all the construction, transportation and development projects in the city. Under Li’s leadership the city carried out a series of municipal reforms including broadening roads, improving harbor facilities, and

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., p. 44.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
expanding electricity, water power and other utilities, some of which were areas of concern in Li’s *Fengtu ji*.

As for the Li in Singapore, he and his family also became activists in community work and municipal reform. Li himself was more interested in promoting Chinese culture and education. His company Chen Yu contributed generously to the Confucian school in Singapore, the Cui Ying (Chwee Ying) Shuyuan 莘英書院 in 1896. Moreover, both Li brothers Qinghui and Qingyuan also became more active in their own Hokkien community, founding the Yongchun Huiguan 永春會館 and using the native-place organization to promote welfare and cultural activities. The warm reception of the Zhangquan Huiguan in Shanghai might be still in their mind when they reorganized their own *huiguan* in Singapore a few years later.

I think it is not an exaggeration to say that their memories were not just memories from a trip of pleasure; they were not isolated from actions. In the case of both Lis, their impressions of the distant city became a frame of reference in their social and political actions in the following years. Remembering, to them, was a path to the past as well as a force for shaping the future.

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42 See Li’s biography in *Qingdai renwu zhuangao*, op.cit., pp. 177-178.
43 Li donated only $12 to the Chwee Ying in 1861, but in 1896, the Chen Yu contribution was $800, the second largest sum only next to Chen Xianzhang 陳憲章, son of Chen Jinheng 陳金聲 (Tan Kim Seng) who donated $1,400. Li Qinghui also donated in his own name twice more, $120 and $100 respectively, and his brother Qingyuan donated another $200. See Chen Jinghe and Chen Yusong, *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu*, op.cit., pp. 294-296.
凝觀與反照：十九世紀八十年代
兩本上海、新加坡互訪遊記的解讀

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摘要

本文所討論的是十九世紀八十年代寫成的兩部旅遊紀錄。一本是上海人李鍾華於 1887 年遊歷新加坡之後所寫的《新嘉坡風土記》，另一本是新加坡華人李清輝在 1888 年訪問上海及一些中國沿海城市時的紀錄，名為《東遊紀略》。前書多為治新加坡史者所熟悉及運用，自 1895 年首刊以來，曾數次重印出版，流傳頗廣。

至於另外一本遊記的作者李清輝，則為早期新加坡之富商望族，出生於馬六甲，父執輩皆新馬兩地之華族名人。其岳丈即人所皆知的陳金輝，而其弟清洲及姪兒慶炎亦為世紀之交之新華社會領袖，事記於宋旺相之《新加坡華人百年史》中。可是，李氏家族與上海之關係，以及李氏遊歷上海之紀錄，卻鮮為人知。李清輝《東遊紀略》隱沒多年，至 1980 年代始為本文作者重新發現，並曾為文於報章及《南洋學報》作一簡介。

本文擬從「凝觀」與「反照」兩個角度對這兩部遊記作一解讀。所謂「凝觀」或「凝視」，即英文所用的 gaze 一詞，意指有意地集中地凝神地觀察。李鍾華和李清輝這兩位飄洋過海的訪客，對陌生城市中新事物和新風尚，都有深刻的感受及仔細的考察，所以他們的旅遊紀錄並非一般的遊記，寫山水勝景，述奇風異俗，而是選擇性地對一些事物加以報導，並且有所評論。又在其評述之間，往往會與自己出身的城市作出比較。這種比較和反省，實際是來自新城市及新環境之衝擊，由此而生的對自身城市的反思，在這裏謂之「反照」。本文認為：兩位李姓訪客在新城市所得到的經驗和衝擊，不但引起其

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對自身城市的反思，而且引起他們回到本身城市後的一些行動，如對市政、社會之改革，文化、教育之努力，具有一定的誘發作用。

關鍵詞：上海、新加坡、李鍾珏、李清輝、華僑