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*Helene van Rossum, "Capturing China, 1913-1929: Photographs, Films, and Letters of American Diplomat John Van Antwerp MacMurray", The East Asian Library Journal 13, no. 1 (2008): xviii-6, accessed January 14, 2017, [https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/rossum\\_helene\\_van.EALJ.v13.n01.pxviii.pdf](https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/rossum_helene_van.EALJ.v13.n01.pxviii.pdf)*



1. MacMurray on an outing near Beijing, sitting on a donkey and holding his beloved dog Ting. Black and white photograph, probably taken ca. 1915 by Lois Goodnow, his future wife. 13 x 7.7 cm. John van Antwerp MacMurray Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

# Capturing China, 1913–1929

## Photographs, Films, and Letters of American Diplomat John Van Antwerp MacMurray

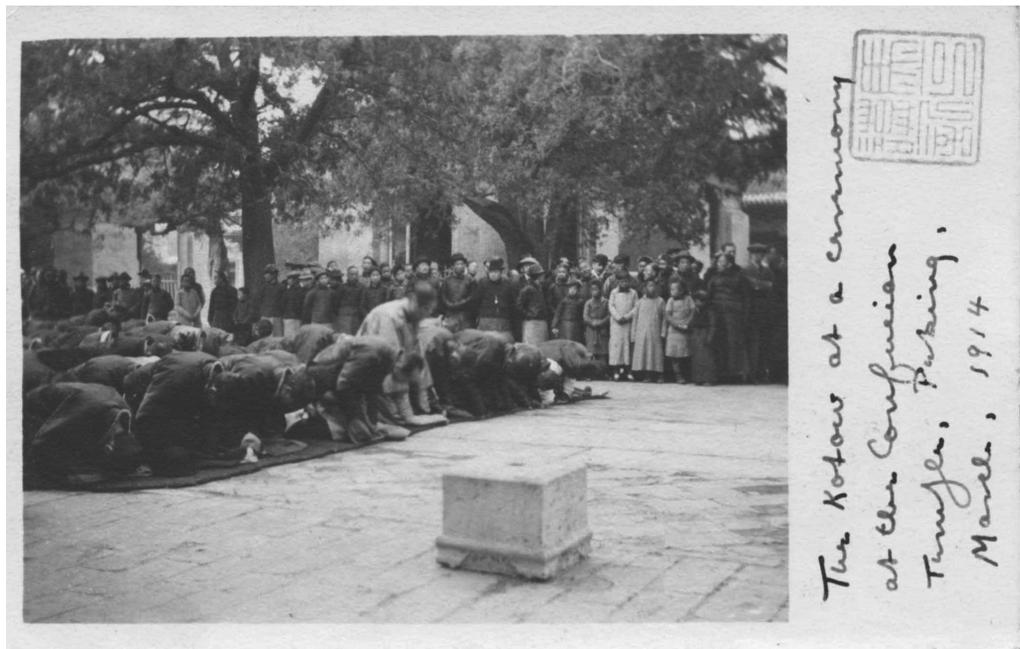
HELENE VAN ROSSUM

**D**rawing from over one thousand six hundred photographs taken in China between 1913 and 1917, the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University hosts an exhibition based on the collection of the American diplomat John Van Antwerp MacMurray (1881–1960). (See figure 1, opposite.) In addition, the exhibit features 8mm films shot by MacMurray in 1928. The exhibit, curated by Helene van Rossum and Daniel J. Linke, will be on public view from 28 September 2007 to 18 January 2008 in the Weiss Lounge at Mudd Library. A lecture by Arthur Waldron, University of Pennsylvania professor of history, will be held on Saturday, 20 October 2007 at 3 pm in the Computer Science Building (directly opposite Mudd Library), Room 104, followed by a reception in Mudd Library. Lois MacMurray Starkey, MacMurray's youngest child will offer additional remarks about her father's career and photography. Lecture and reception are open to the public.

MacMurray, Princeton Class of 1902, was secretary to the American Legation in Peking from 1913 to 1917 and served as minister to China from 1925 to 1929. In between, he was counselor of the embassy

in Japan (1917–1919) and chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department (1919–1924). He also was a member of the American Commission to the International Conference on Limitation of Armaments in Washington, serving as principal adviser on Pacific and Far Eastern Affairs (1921–1922). MacMurray was a strong believer in international law, and in 1922 the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace published his compilation of all treaties and agreements concerning China made between 1894 and 1919. His recommendations to enforce existing treaties rather than make concessions to the Chinese Nationalists, however, alienated him from his superiors and ultimately led to his resignation in 1929.

The revolutionary turmoil of the young Chinese republic sharply contrasts with MacMurray's photographs of timeless landscapes, noted sites, and rural scenes taken between 1913 and 1917 and, as well, with his films of 1928–1929. (See figure 2, 3, and 4.) Letters, diaries, and other



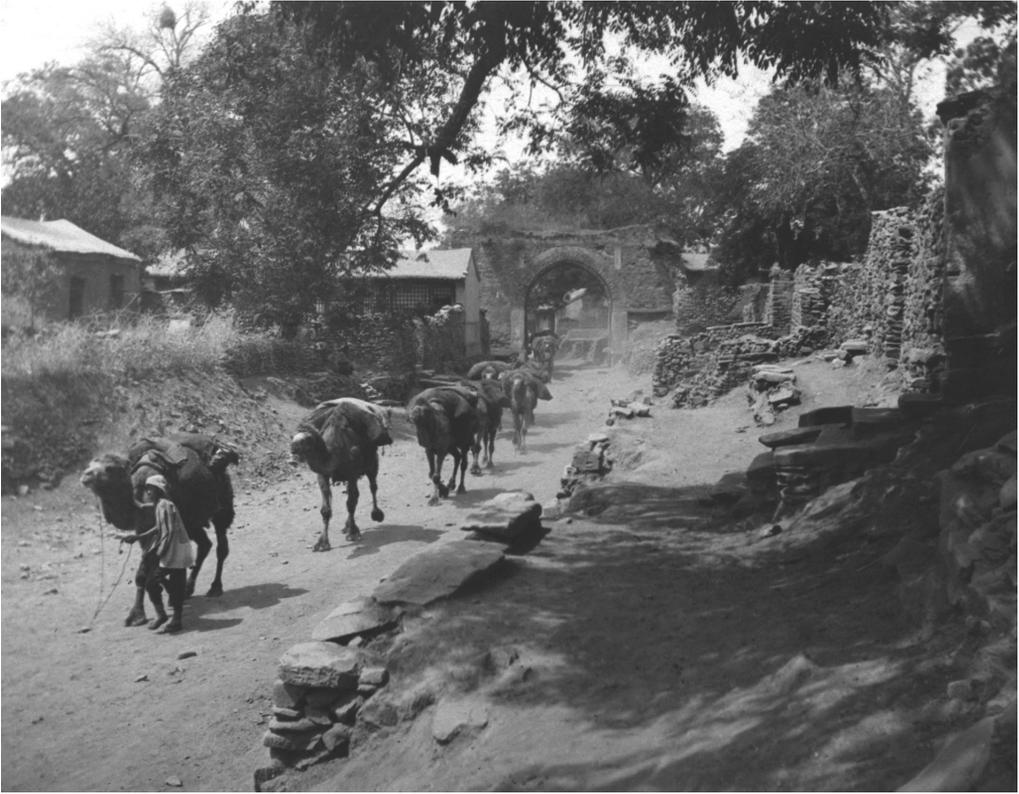
2. "The Kowtow at a ceremony at the Confucian Temple, Peking, March, 1914." Note on the front of a sepia-toned postcard printed from one of John van Antwerp MacMurray's photographs. MacMurray stamped his personal seal on postcards bearing photographs he himself had taken. 8.7 x 13.7 cm. John van Antwerp MacMurray Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.



3. "Nine-dragon mountain from near T'an Che Ssu." Note on the front of a sepia-toned postcard, postmarked October 1914, made from MacMurray's photograph of a scenic spot near Tanzhesi in the hills west of Beijing on a visit there the preceding month. 8.7 x 13.7 cm. John van Antwerp MacMurray Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

documents from the MacMurray Papers provide a context for the photographs and films on display. Topics include Yuan Shikai, president (1913–1915) and later self-declared emperor (1915–1916), whose American advisor, Frank Goodnow, taught MacMurray when he studied international law at Columbia University. In 1915 when Goodnow visited Yuan in China, he brought his family with him. MacMurray was smitten with Goodnow's daughter Lois and the following spring while on home leave married this Bryn Mawr senior, who returned with him to Peking.

In addition, the exhibit documents issues MacMurray addressed during his second stay in Peking while serving as diplomatic minister to China. Topics include contacts with warlords, the outbreak of the civil war in 1927, and the disagreements with his superiors at the State Department. During this time he frequently consulted with the ministers



4. “Camel Train at Mo-shih-k’ou” reads MacMurray’s own caption for his sepia-toned photograph of a camel train carrying coal taken in May 1914 near Moshikou in the hills west of Beijing. 16.8 x 22 cm. John van Antwerp MacMurray Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

of Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Japan, who, like MacMurray, had served in Peking a decade before and who were known informally, according to the memoirs of the Italian minister Daniele Varè, as “Ye Olde Firme.” The exhibition concludes with a notable memorandum that MacMurray wrote in 1935 concerning the situation in the Far East. Suppressed at the time, but later applauded for its analysis and insight, it was published in 1992 with an introduction by University of Pennsylvania historian Arthur Waldron.

Included in the exhibit are photographs and correspondence documenting MacMurray’s relationship with I. V. Gillis (1875–1948), the naval attaché at the United States Legation in Peking when MacMurray met him late in 1913. (See figure 5.) After leaving the Navy, Gillis remained in China



5. MacMurray's black and white photograph of Irvin Van Gorder Gillis's garden in Beijing. May 1915. 8.5 x 13.7 cm. John van Antwerp MacMurray Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

and became a consultant for the American engineer Guion M. Gest for whom he purchased old and rare Chinese books and manuscripts that would be the genesis of Princeton University's Gest Oriental Library. Visitors can also view the films that MacMurray shot in 1928 and 1929 which include a trip along the Yangtze river in January and February 1928, as well as various street scenes in Peking and Kalgan. The Kalgan footage contains the departure of Roy Chapman Andrews's expedition into Mongolia in April 1928, which included a crew of thirty-seven people, eight jeeps, and one hundred fifty camels, all escorted by Chinese cavalry. MacMurray, who had arranged passage with local warlord Chang Tso-lin (Zhang Zuolin), accompanied the expedition on its way out of Kalgan.

After his resignation from the Foreign Service in 1929, MacMurray became director of the Walter Hines Page School of International Relations at Johns Hopkins University, but in 1933 he re-entered the Foreign Service as minister to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, followed by an ambassadorship to Turkey (1936–1942). After an additional two years at the State Department in Washington, MacMurray retired in 1944.

The John Van Antwerp MacMurray papers at the Seeley G. Mudd Library document his career in the Foreign Service and the State Department as well as his personal life and views, as expressed in his diaries and letters to family and friends. The collection, which includes the papers of his father Junius Wilson MacMurray (1844–1898), a Civil War veteran and later professor of military history at Cornell and Union College, was given to Princeton University in 1965 by his children. This spring, his surviving children, Lois MacMurray Starkey and Frank G. MacMurray, Princeton Class of 1940, donated the photographs and films on which much of this exhibition is based. A finding aid to the 1965 donation can be found among the Public Policy Papers at the Seeley G. Mudd Library at <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/wh246s13m>.