

Figuratively Speaking

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HISTORICAL FIGURES FOUNDATION

Double Empress Dowagers, The Emperor Has Two Mothers

By G. S. Stuart

Imperial China was in chaos. Foreign armies were invading. The Manchu Emperor Hsien-feng (Xianfeng) was dying. He and the court had fled north to refuge in Manchuria.

His empress Tzu An had borne him no sons. If the Emperor died without an heir, the Ch'ing (Qing)* dynasty would fly apart. In the winter of 1862 the Emperor died.

Back in 1856 one of his second wives, or concubines, had borne him a son! She is known to history as Yehenara. At the last moment, Yehenara, seeing the significance of her situation, forced the dying Emperor to recognize her son as the heir. He did so with his dying breath, and he announced Yehenara as regent for the boy.

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Emperor Hsien-feng (Xianfeng) & Concubine Yehenara, later Empress Dowager Cixi

World Expert Gem Replicator Scott Sucher Joins Team for Historical Figures & Diamonds Exhibit



The best replicas of precious gems are created in New Mexico. High in the mountains east of Albuquerque, the Scott Sucher family built their dream home, and a high tech lab for engineering replicas of the world's famous diamonds.

Like Stuart's Figures, Sucher's gems are historically accurate, full-size replicas only. He travels the world documenting the size, shape and composition of historically significant gems. In his most famous exploit, Sucher and French authorities proved that the Hope diamond was made from the French Blue (*see National Geographic DVD.*)

Last April, we visited his aerie to see his marvelous

work, including his master collection of replicas valued at more than \$250,000. Would he care to exhibit his stones with the Historical Figures through whose hands many historical diamonds had passed? *"Of course!"* Would he create several quarter life-size historical diamonds to adorn selected Figures? *"Certainly!"*

The rest will be history. Already Scott has produced a half dozen precise quarter life-size replicas of famous diamonds for jewelry that will adorn the Historical Figures who wore them. Several more are in production.



Tavernier, the French Blue and the Hope.

Life-size replicas of history's most famous diamond will be exhibited in Ventura along with the Koh-I-Noor, the Cullinans, Florentine, Orlov, Great Mogul, Regent, Beau Sancy, Bazu and many others.

See more online at <http://www.museumdiamonds.com>

Two Dowagers

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However, there was a group of reactionary war-mongers, including the dead Emperor's younger brother Prince Chun (Yixuan), who were preparing to seize the baby emperor so they could control the government. They also planned to do away with Yehenara!

Their plan was foiled when Prince Kung (Gong), the middle brother, and the smartest of all the line of imperial brothers, arranged to hurry the widow and little Tung Chih back to Beijing. The funeral procession bearing the body of the Emperor would shortly follow. Time was of the essence. Kung quickly gathered support for Tung Chih and his mother Yehenara.



Prince Kung (Gong)

Prince Chun was easily bullied into complete cooperation with the Dowagers and Prince Kung. The Dowagers, were also now joint regents of their "mutual" son Tung Chih.

Prince Kung was to remain the principal manipulator of the central government for many years: he had the support of General Jung Lu (Ronglu), a close friend of Yehenara, now Tzu Hsi (Cixi). Furthermore, he had the assistance of the insidious Li Hung Chang (Li Hongzhang). Li was to become the major figure pulling the strings behind the scenes of the Manchu court for decades to come. The foreigners



Baron Jung-Lu (Ronglu)



Empress Tzu An (Ci'an)

The imperial council was pressured into declaring Yehenara and Tzu An Co-Dowager Empresses as well as co-mothers of five-year-old Tung Chih! They had gained control of the imperial seals before leaving Manchuria, so the coup d'état had an air of legality.

When the reactionaries (referred to as the "Iron Hats") arrived for the funeral, they were confronted

by a *fait accompli*. At the direction of the wily Prince Kung, the Dowagers issued a decree condemning the Iron Hats for attempting treason by going against the will of the dead emperor. With the exception of the weak-willed Prince Chun (Yixuan), the ringleaders were all executed within hours of the decree accusing them.



Li Hung-Chang (Li Hongzhang)

loved him, by the way!

The idea that the former concubine Tzu Hsi was controlling the affairs of state is, of course, a myth created by British and American journalists. She sold many more newspapers as a monster. We now know that she and her sister Dowager Tzu An were little more than pawns in the vast scheme of things.

While it is true that Tzu Hsi and Tzu An managed to get along most of the time, there is an understanding that there were many contentious moments over the young emperor Tung Chih. One rumor claims that Tzu Hsi played the disciplinarian and occasional punisher, and little Tung Chih would run to his "other" mother Tzu An, who would comfort him and spoil him with treats. Even this lacks credibility, because Prince Kung was the primary dictator of the Emperor's education and upbringing, not the Dowagers.

Historical Figures News



*Tung Chih
(Tongzhi Emperor)*

As Tung Chih grew to his teenage years, he became a willful degenerate just like his father. The Dowagers had to step aside when Tung Chih became sixteen. However, they did help select a wife for him. In 1875, his weakened physique succumbed to disease and he died – apparently childless.

Tzu Hsi was always the more assertive of the two Empress Dowagers. With the death of her emperor son, she now promoted the succession of her own nephew, Prince Kung and the

council agreed to this, and the two dowagers were again Co-Dowagers, Co-Mothers, and Co-Regents.



Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi (Cixi)

it! Tzu An was never belittled or pushed aside. Regardless of how they felt about each other, they always manifested an air of mutual respect and courtesy. When Tzu An died in 1881, she was accorded all the honors due her – and Tzu Hsi wept, suitably.

All through the 1870s, 80s and 90s, the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi gradually became the more assertive of the two women.

The nephew was just three years old. Tzu Hsi thus embarked on her second regency. Tzu An was likely bullied into cooperation, as she usually went along with Prince Kung and Tzu Hsi.

It should be pointed out that at the beginning of their joint rule, the Dowagers were given equally lavish apartments in all royal residences, equal servants, honors and incomes to go with

She was pushed forward by Prince Kung, and later by Li Hung Chang. The public came to see her as their ruler, even though she was ruling as regent for the Emperor.

When her nephew came of age as the Kuang-Hsu (Guangxu) Emperor, Tzu Hsi continued to be the central figure at the Manchu court.

The real controllers of China's destiny in this era were the European Powers. Li Hung Chang was the negotiator-in-chief between Beijing and the foreigners. While he was telling the Empress Dowager of his undying loyalty to the Manchus, he was allowing the foreign press to believe the very worst of her.

By the time of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, Tzu Hsi was perceived an absolute monster by the western press. Although the perception was false, she indeed did loathe the

Europeans and Christians for understandable reasons. The only exposure she had to westerners was of foreign armies raping, pillaging and destroying everything they could get their hands on in China. What else could she think?

By the time of her death in 1908, Tzu Hsi had named the child Pu Yi, son of Prince Chun as Xuantong Emperor, and the last emperor of imperial China.



Hsuan Tung Emperor (Pu Yi)

At the end, public opinion in the west had changed somewhat. The Chinese subjects of the Manchus were calling her “Old Buddha,” and looked upon her as their ruler. During the last decade of her life, Tzu Hsi had done her utmost to change the miserable image she had been given by western reporters around 1900.

Nevertheless, it is only in our time that the truth of her life and times has been told with any accuracy. The real story is every bit as thrilling and dramatic as the sordid tales of yesteryear. The Dowager Empress of China has become an icon for all time to come.

- G. S. Stuart

For more information see the Chinese Group on our website - www.galleryhistoricalfigures.com



Kuang-Hsu Emperor

Foundation News

Ten Years of Historical Figure Advocacy. It's time for a party!

In April, the Foundation will celebrate a major milestone in its quest to document the work and art of George Stuart. Stay tuned for details!

For some, the Foundation is just the latest effort to bring Mr. Stuart's excellent body of work to public attention. We can all thank Pat Bergen for connecting Mr. Stuart to the Ventura museum and the Smith Family for giving the Figures a permanent gallery in the '70s.

Then there are supporters like Khaled Al Awar and Robin Sim who have promoted the Figures in the art collector's world, Peter D'Aprix who records the Figures with magical photography, Carole McCartney, who videotaped many early monologs, then produced the documentaries and sponsored, informative cassettes and DVDs.

This year our Board welcomed attorney Joseph Rund, a talent in the law with a fine eye for art.

In this decade, an extensive archive of new digital photography by Peter D'Aprix is used daily by the Foundation and Museum. Ria and Leroy Becker have produced and shipped thousands of DVDs and newsletters. Our special thanks to Donna and Gene Langley, whose on-target cartoons brighten up our Newsletter. Kathy Henri has edited scores of documents and newsletters and has assisted

Mr. Stuart with restorations, and his personal archives.

Barbara Topping has scrubbed all of the website pages, and suggested dozens of improvements and corrections. Our ability to publish blogs more often is thanks to Margaret de la M, who edits many articles.

Mary Harrsch and Leroy Becker have continually expanded our highly successful Historical Figures website. You can be rightfully proud of supporting the largest website about a single artist's work.

Of course, none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the generous donations and grants from our members and the Smith Hobson Foundation.

Ariane Karakalos and other Museum staff have given unending support to the Figures and monologs.

Of course, we all are continually inspired by Mr. Stuart, who continues to create new and exciting Figures; while writing and performing monologs.

Thanks to everyone for participating in this noble effort to preserve an American treasure.


Leroy Becker, Executive Director

"All that Glitters" Monologs on October 22 & 23

The High Fashion of the George Stuart Historical Figures



George Stuart will elaborate on the evolution and impact of high fashion styles as well as court formalities and other reasons for fashion choices.

"'Monsieur,' Louis XIV's brother carried the idiotic fashions of the time to the highest folly."

"In all the Americas, the Maya achieved the highest, most lavish culture."

"Boris Godunov in his coronation suit, ushered in Russia's Time of Troubles."

"Catherine II continued the Europeanization of Russia started by Peter I."

— G. S. Stuart

The Pavilion Museum of Ventura County

Tuesday, October 22 • 7:30pm

Wednesday, October 23 • 2:00pm

\$15 general public; \$10 MVC members

For reservations call 805.653.0323 x7