

Giants of the Chinese Press — Wong Shing and Wang Tao

Hong Kong's printing and news media industry owe a great deal to Wong Shing's pioneering works. Wong Shing talked about his early days: how he went to the US for studies, came back to Hong Kong to work at the Anglo-Chinese College Press which made the world-famous "Hong Kong Type", and how he later founded the Chinese Printing Company and the *Universal Circulating Herald*.

Wong Shing's many important achievements were made with Wang Tao who would rise to be the thought-leader of modern China. His editorial pieces in *Universal*

Circulating Herald laid the theoretical foundations of political reform, which inspired the entire generation of reformers and revolutionaries.

The two devoted themselves to build and promote newspaper and publishing businesses, as they understood printing's strategic importance in political reforms. In their later days, they both chose to retire to their respective hometowns: Wong Shing stayed in Hong Kong, and Wang Tao returned to Shanghai.

Scene 1

Characters: A group of kids, a Westerner

(A group of kids singing The Lord's Prayer. A Westerner's voice slowly fading in on top of the kids' voices.)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen

Scene 2

Character: Wong Shing

(Prayer voice from last scene fades out. Wong Shing's monologue fades in.)

Wong Shing: I'm Wong Shing, born in Heungshan in 1827. I went to the Morrison Memorial School. When the school moved to Hong Kong, I followed. Later I went to the US for further study. I felt ill soon after and had to return to Hong Kong before finishing high school. I decided to follow Jesus while in the US.

In 1848, I was 21. Having just returned to Hong Kong, I got a job at *The China Mail*, first as a printing technician, and later as an editor. Meanwhile there's this gentleman Wang Tao in Shanghai. Fate would also set him on a course that would make history. Wang Tao was a well-learned scholar. This year he was offered a job at the London Missionary Society Press, helping the British missionary make a new translation of the Bible into Chinese.

Wang Tao: I'm Wang Tao. It's a scholar's duty to make the world a better place. I keep writing to the government about my plan to modernise China. For the most part, my advocacy fell on deaf ears.

Scene 3

Characters: A group of kids, a Westerner

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Scene 4

Characters: Wong Shing, Wong Tao

Wong Shing: In 1853, I became the manager at the Anglo-Chinese College Press, helping the London Missionary Society print and do translation for the Chinese newspaper *Chinese Serial*. I also assisted the college principal Rev. James Legge in his translation of *The Chinese Classics*. The Anglo-Chinese College Press was renowned for its production of the "Hong Kong Type" which was widely sold around the world.

Wang Tao: By 1854, my wife had already passed away for a few years. I decided then to receive baptism and became a bonafide Christian.

Wong Shing: I am Tung Wah Hospitals' Founding Director, and I'm the first Chinese to be appointed as a juror. My role as a manager in the Anglo-Chinese College has me constantly liaising between Chinese and the British people. Hong Kong is after all run by the Brits. Getting more Chinese into the higher circles allows us to have more say and help more Hong Kong people.

Wang Tao: It's a turbulent world out there, and I'm in the middle of it all—Shanghai. I keep writing to lobby for government policy changes. Not getting anywhere with the Qing government, I wrote to the Taiping Rebellion leaders! I'm just a lowly scholar but I must let my voice be heard! Anything it takes to save my fellow countrymen.

(A group of kids singing The Lord's Prayer.)

Wong Shing /

Wang Tao: In 1862, I made a new friend.

Wong Shing: The college principal Rev. James Legge hired a scholar from Shanghai called Wang Tao.

Wang Tao: Together with Wong Shing, we translated *A Brief Introduction to Firearms*, a book that gives an overview of Western firearms, covering such aspects as how to build them, the proper alloy to use, and how to check ammos. When we sent a copy to General Tseng Kuo-fan's aide, the Qing government finally took us seriously.

Scene 5

(Ocean liner foghorn sound, crowd noise.)

Wong Shing: It's 1876. I'm back in Hong Kong again. A couple years back, Wang Tao and I founded the Chinese Printing Company and the *Universal Circulating Herald*. Borrowing the tradition of editorials in Western newspapers like *The Times*, Wang Tao wrote numerous editorials for the *Universal Circulating Herald* to express his pioneering views towards political reform. A lot more than what he bargained for, Wang Tao's writings inspired a whole generation of intellectuals.

Wang Tao: Business was flourishing but Wong Shing left it all behind to take 30 young scholarship awardees abroad to seek further education in the US. I asked him if he's honestly willing to give up so much for the kids.

Wang Tao: Are you sure?

Wong Shing: Yes, I've made up my mind.

Wong Shing: I don't have what it takes to change the world the way Wang Tao does, but I can nurture our future leaders to greatness, and through them, make the world a better place. When my work in the US was done, I came back to Hong Kong and was appointed the first Chinese Justice of Peace, and later the Chinese unofficial member of the Legislative Council.

Wang Tao: While Wong Shing was in the US, he was appointed a member of the Qing legation staff in Washington, DC. Funny how in my young days I aspired to be a Qing government official. My best friend ended up living my young dream.

Scene 6

(Banquet noise, wind blows noisily outside, tram noise.)

Wong Shing: Tonight we raise our glasses in a toast to Wang Tao, who will soon retire to his hometown Shanghai. Having lived more than half a century, we aren't getting no younger. It's only proper that we put our retirement plans in motion. As for me, I've spent time in lots of different places, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Peking, the US, and so on. And yet, Hong Kong is the only place I call "home". Run by the Brits, yes, but they pay me due respect and allow me the opportunities to make contributions to the society. I am after all, a Hongkonger, through and through.

Wang Tao: Hey bro, leaving so soon?

Wong Shing: Ah, well, I'm not a big drinker.

Wang Tao: I brought some fine wine with me. Let's drink up before we say goodbye!

Wong Shing: Sure!

(The sound of pouring wine.)

Wong Shing: Alright bro, may your retired life be filled with health and happiness.

Wang Tao: Cheers!

(The sound of the two drinking.)

Wong Shing: Hey bro, it's an interesting time out there. In all the days to come I wish you all the best in God's grace. Before we part, let me sing you a prayer.

Wang Tao: (a long sigh) Sure, why not?

Wong Shing: Our father in Heaven, brother Wang Tao and I were born in a time of chaos. Graced by your mercy we've made ourselves useful to society.

Wang Tao: If we shall go through turmoil and challenges, oh Lord, lend us the strength to carry on so we might help those in need.

Wang Tao /

Wong Shing: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

(Crossfade into kids singing The Lord's Prayer.)

Producer | Director | Writer: LAM Suk-ching, Sharon
Translation: Albert HUI
Researcher: Lanlan YU
Sound Production: Cinedigit Sound Limited
Dialogue Director: Jack MURPHY
Acknowledgements: Tommy NG

Wong Shing by Jamie ANDERSON
Wang Tao by Dave BRIDGES
Kids by Michael FUNG Adrian LAM MAK Sze-chit
Mak Sze-hang Theodore NG YANG Sipei YANG Sijun

Concept | Coordination: Hong Kong Open Printshop