

George Findlay Andrew
1887–1971
Collector and Missionary



Andrew (right) in Swatow, 1934

First and foremost, George Findlay Andrew was a Christian missionary who worked for most of his life in western China, particularly in Gansu province. He was also something of an adventurer and businessman, active in war-torn China during the 1920s and 1930s by assisting those who were victims of earthquake, floods, or famine. In the process he became a specialist on the minority Islamic population of western China.

Andrew was born to missionary parents in Guiyang, Guizhou province, in southwest China. His mother and father worked for the China Inland Mission (CIM) and so he was schooled first

at the mission school in Yantai (then Chefoo). After he completed his education in Manchester, England, Andrew returned to China under the auspices of the CIM in 1908. He was sent to Lanzhou in Gansu province, a garrison town on the Silk Road that had a large Muslim population. Trusted and respected by both the local Han Chinese and Muslims, Andrew took on a semipolitical role in the region by providing intelligence to the British legation in Beijing during World War I and by leading disaster relief efforts when drought, famine, and flood hit the area in 1929, 1930, and 1931, respectively. In 1931 he joined the National Flood Relief Commission, and two years later he was offered a position within the Butterfield and Swire Company as head of a newly formed Department of Chinese Affairs. At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Andrew became involved with the Chinese Red Cross and the International Relief Committee in Shanghai, bringing thousands of refugees into the relative safety of the international settlement there. From 1941 until the end of World War II, Andrew was appointed by the British government to the Special Operations Executive as Sino-British liaison officer at Chongqing. He retired to Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1957, where he died in 1971.

Andrew is credited with bringing examples of Neolithic Yangshao culture burial urns to the attention of J. G. Andersson (1874–1960), a Swedish mining engineer and palaeontologist working for the Geological Survey of China. (Andersson excavated the first Neolithic sites in the Xining area of Qinghai and the Tao Valley, south of Lanzhou, in 1921.) Andrew not only obtained more pottery urns for Andersson, but he also made a preliminary reconnaissance of the Tao Valley, which led to the discovery of an intact burial site complete with its pottery hoard. In addition, Andrew continued to act as an intermediary with local dealers and Western collectors. In 1934 Neilage Sharp Brown, head of Butterfield and Swire's office in Shanghai, visited the area with Andrew, who negotiated purchases with local dealers and collectors on Brown's behalf. As a result, Brown formed one of the largest collections of Yangshao pottery then in existence.

Literature

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Arthur de Carle Sowerby, “The Neolithic Pottery of Kansu, Burial Urns and Other Vessels in the N. S. Brown Collection,” *China Journal* 22, no. 6 (June 1935), pp. 300–303.

Nicholas Pearce, personal communication with Charlotte Bleasdale, archivist to John Swire and Sons Ltd, for information on George Findlay Andrew, 2008.

Photograph: On the right is George Findlay Andrew, head of the Department of Chinese Affairs, Butterfield and Swire. F. D. Roberts, Swire’s Swatow agent in 1934, might be on the left. © 2008 John Swire & Sons Ltd.

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