

## 2 A well-versed Ningbo-savvy

“Traverse the whole wide earth and after all/What find you to compare with Ningpo’s river-hall?” is one of the many Ningbo proverbs translated by Moule.

As early as 1871, Moule published a collection titled *Four Hundred Millions: Chapters on China and the Chinese* when he lived in Ningbo for a decade. The seventh chapter of the book — “On Chinese Proverbs” — renders the earliest systematic introduction and translation of Ningbo proverbs known in Western literature.

Tian Li, associate professor from the School of Humanities and Communication at Ningbo University, notes that “At that time, Moule’s entire understanding of China was largely shaped by his experiences in Ningbo. In this book, Ningbo stands as a vivid microcosm of China.” Some of the proverbs in the work even include Ningbo dialect pronunciations transcribed in the Latin alphabet, which are “invaluable for comprehending and studying the popular idioms and dialects of Ningbo in late Qing era”

Moule categorized the proverbs into several sorts. Some are adapted from Confucian texts, translated as “Within the four seas all are brethren.” Others are common sayings, such as “One foot in this boat, one in that; They both push off, and you fall flat” and “Man and wife, In tranquil life, Sit like birds upon one bough; Trouble comes, They shake their plumes, ‘Sauve qui peut,’ their language now.” Additionally, some proverbs are identified as Ningbo dialect sayings, including “There are two good people; one dead, the other not yet born” “A rest-shed by the weary road, ’Tis good, while blows the cooling breeze; But call it not a dwelling-place, A life-long home for tranquil ease” and “You’re old and ought to die by right, You eat our rice from morn till night.”

Professor Tian further remarks that in 1872, American missionary and Sinologist Justus Doolittle published a bilingual dictionary in Shanghai, titled *Vocabulary and Handbook of the Chinese Language*. The appendix in its second volume includes over two hundred Ningbo proverbs compiled by Moule, with English and Chinese translations. Despite the fact that the Latin transcriptions of the Ningbo dialect pronunciations are omitted, this collection “remains the most comprehensive Western record of Ningbo proverbs available.”

Moule’s expertise extended far beyond mastering the Ningbo dialect. He was also well-versed in Ningbo’s rich history and legends. In his article *Ningpo: Ancient and Modern*, he vividly recounts the dragon-slaying legend of Peach-flower Ferry. The story goes:

“In ancient times a dragon used periodically to emerge from the river, and unless appeased by the yearly offering of a boy and a girl it would ravage the banks of the river and terrify the inhabitants ... In the year A.D. 618 a mandarin named 黄晟 [Huang Sheng] was on his way up to the city to assume office ... and they told him the sad and weird story. The magistrate’s heart (large as the proverbial heart of the Prime Minister himself, of capacity enough to float a ship), was stirred with compassion and fired with indignation: on his arrival at the spot he mounted a white horse, and armed with a sword made of rushes, he plunged into the river and was seen no more. Neither was the dragon seen from that day forward; only after a commotion of the waters they became dyed as by the colour of the peach-blossom, doubtless with the mingled blood of the dead dragon and of the victorious but dead champion. At nearly the same moment, caused by the dying throes of the dragon, a pool welled up within the bound of the present city, which still remains ...”

Moule was also intimately familiar with the names “Ningpo”, “Szming” [currently as Siming], and “Tinghai” [currently as Dinghai]. He shared local stories and expressions as though he were a native Ningbo insider.

## 3 The Moule Family: Bridging East and West

Arthur Evans Moule (1836-1918) was also keen on drawing parallels between Chinese literati associated with Ningbo and their English counterparts, weaving a bridge for the Western world to step into Chinese culture.

In his book *Ningpo, Ancient and Modern under the T’ ai-p’ ings: Confucius* (1909), Moule noted that William Frederick Meyers (a British sinologist) referred to He Zhizhang (659-744) as “the madcap of Szming (a metonymy for Ningbo, after its Siming (Szming) Mountain)”, in *The Chinese Reader’s Manual* (1874). Reflecting on this, he remarked that the life of this bold-styled poet was on a par with the honorable life of Cuthbert, the saint of Northumbria, as well as Caedmon, the Whitby Abbey poet distinguished by “chanting with a harp after a divine dream”. He also acknowledged Li Bai (699-762), a poet who rose from a commoner rooted in ‘extreme West (present-day Gansu Province)’ to become a court official in the highest academy, and who was once a patron of the Chinese poetry world. Undergoing an ill-fated life marked by repeated exiles, he was once relegated to Yunnan, then among the harshest outpost in SW China. His final days, unable to return, ended at Caishiji in Dangtu County of Anhui Province, far away from his hometown. For all the talent and turbulence in his worldly journey, he was honored by the people of Ningbo as “an Immortal banished to earth”.

In 1908, Moule also published a small, interesting book in London, *Young China*, which described the daily life of Chinese children and teenagers based on his experience in Ningbo. The 17 illustrations in the book are all “specially drawn by a Chinese artist” — “Matthew Tai” [Dai En’ quan] of Siming, who, along with his son, earned a living by playing the pipa in Ningbo’s teahouses and drinking establishments as well as selling paintings.

During his fifty years in China, Arthur Evans Moule was not alone in contributing to the intercultural communication between the East and the West. His elder brother, George Evans Moule (1828-1912) was sent to Ningbo by the Anglican Church in 1858. His second son, Walter Stephen Moule (1864-1949) managed the Ningbo Trinity College (the predecessor of Ningbo No. 3 High School) for 30 years, and during his tenure as superintendent of the school, he introduced subjects such as arithmetic and geography to the curriculum, to enable the students to acquire knowledge of modern sciences. His youngest son, Arthur Christopher Moule (1873-1957) was also a world-renowned sinologist, the third Professor of Sinology at the University of Cambridge, following Thomas Francis Wade (1818-1895) and Herbert Allen Giles (1845-1935). And even his wife, Eliza Agnes Bernau (1842-1925) once opened a girls’ Bible class in Ningbo and translated Walsham How’s (1823-1897) book, *Stories for Children* (1865), into the Ningbo dialect, which was

published in 1866.

Eight of Arthur Evans Moule’s twelve children were born in Ningbo, where the Moule family was cared for by a “Ningbo amah,” affectionately called SuLois. In 1879, at the age of 56, the woman accompanied the Moule family back to the UK to “look after our children and stay with us until we returned to China the following year.....” All of these pure and friendly Ningbo people have left wonderful memories for the Moule family.

Extensive writings of Arthur Evans Moule have also provoked positive reactions among his target audience. According to Ding Guang, an associate professor at the School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, magazines such as the long-established English-language journals *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* and *North China Herald* “have published a large number of book reviews by Western scholars on his writings such as *New China and Old: Personal Recollections of Thirty Years* (1891) and *Half a Century in China: Recollections and Observations* (1911) which have helped to spread his Chinese narratives and his impressions of China to Western societies more quickly and with greater impact”.

*North China Herald* commented, “Arthur Evans Moule and his wife, who accompanied him on his fifty years of missionary work, have left behind their good reputation in the beautiful Zhejiang Province, a dearly-loved place where they have worked so diligently. *Half a Century in China: Recollections and Observations* not only appeals to readers familiar with this region but also brings joy to those who are not.”

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), an English novelist and author of the masterpiece *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891), corresponded with Arthur Evans Moule several times and once commented, “If Moule hadn’t been a missionary, he would certainly have made a greater contribution to the cross-cultural communication between the East and the West.”

Another valuable aspect of Arthur Evans Moule’s work, as Ding Guang mentioned, was that he “conveyed his experience of China more through his unique personal experience and documentary description, bringing a sense of intimacy to his readers rather than condescendingly recounting the existence of the ‘Other’ with a sense of the superiority of Western culture.” This attitude of exploring the scene and experiencing diverse cultures actively and patiently still carries positive significance for today’s international communications.

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