

Kang Youwei's Visit to Serbia

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Abstract

Kang Youwei was one of the most prominent intellectuals, reformers and politicians of the 20th century China. After he left China and went to exile, he traveled to numerous countries, including Serbia. He visited Serbia in 1908 and wrote a unique and detailed travelogue about his trip. This article aims to examine Kang's perception of the Serbian capital, and his thoughts on the political, historical and economic situation of the country.

Keywords: Kang Youwei, Serbia, China, travelogue, Sino-Serbia Relations

Kang Youwei'in Sırbistan Seyahati

Öz

Kang Youwei Çin'in yirminci yüzyılda yetiştirdiği en önemli entellektüel, reformcu ve siyasetçilerinden biridir. Çin'i terketmek zorunda kalması ve sürgüne gitmesinin ardından aralarında Sırbistan'ın da bulunduğu birçok ülkeye seyahat etmiştir. Sırbistan'ı 1908 yılında ziyaret etmiş, ayrıntılı ve bir benzeri daha olmayan bir seyahatname kaleme almıştır. Bu makalede, Kang Youwei'in Sırp başkentini algılayışının yanısıra onun dönemin Sırp siyasi hayatına, tarihine ve ekonomik durumuna ilişkin fikirleri ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kang Youwei, Sırbistan, Çin, Seyahatname, Çin-Sırp ilişkileri

I. Introduction

Serbia was one of the countries Kang Youwei visited during his travels around Europe. His description of Serbia is not a lengthy one, as his visit was

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also very short. Given that he went to Romania via Bulgarian capital, Sofia, which he left sometime around July 26th 1908 and arrived to Istanbul on July 27th 1908¹, we can conclude that he might have stayed in Serbia only three to four days and that he stayed only in the capital city of Belgrade. In a short text of only four pages he describes what he saw in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, and what he learnt about the country during his stay. In this article, the authors will try to give an analysis of Kang Youwei's view on Serbia, while, at the same time, offering some additional information about actual historical circumstances in the country at the wake of the 20th century. Section One of this article gives a short overview of Kang Youwei's life and his political role in China and the circumstances that surrounded his numerous travels abroad. In Section Two we start with the analysis of his travelogue, focusing primarily on his description of the capital, the architecture and the institutions he visited. In Section Three we will talk about his understanding of Serbian political system, history and the economy. Section Four is the conclusion. In the Appendix we offer a full-length English translation of his Serbia travelogue.

II. Kang Youwei and His Political Role in China

Kang Youwei was an exceptional philosopher, politician and a prominent revolutionary of his time. He was born in Guangdong province in 1858. At the age of five he was already able to recite hundreds of Tang poems. A few years later he started with the regular curriculum of the time, i.e. the Confucian Classics, such as *Da Xue* (The Great Learning) and *Lun Yu* (Analects). At the age of seventeen, he read the famous geography book compiled by Xu Jiyu, called the *Ying Huan Zhi Lue* (*The Brief Description of the World*) and started learning the geography and history of other nations. This must have been the first time he actually began to study the affairs of the outer world.²

His first visit abroad was in 1879, when he went to Hong Kong, which was, at that time, a British Colony. There he was introduced to the "Western learning". After his teacher passed away in 1882 he went to the capital city of Beijing for triennial imperial exams which he, unfortunately, was not able to pass. Before he moved back to Guangdong, he went to Shanghai and purchased books featuring the Western civilization. A year later he initiated his first serious reform attempt by establishing an "Anti-Foot Binding Society" at the age of 25. In 1889, he took the imperial exam once again, which he successfully passed. Next year he started to teach students in Guangdong, among which was his famous disciple Liang Qichao. In 1891 he published his

¹ Kang Youwei, *Lieguo youji- Kang Youwei yigao*. Shanghaishi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui bian. Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe. 1995, pp. 535 – 536.

² Laurance G. Thompson, *Ta T'ung Shu: The One World Philosophy of K'ang Yu Wei*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958, pp. 11-12.

first book titled *Forged Classics of the Xin Period*. While it ignited discussions in intellectual circles of China, his book and thoughts were heavily criticized by the conservative high officials. In 1894-1895 the Sino-Japanese war broke out. China was, as Kang asserted, caught by surprise and totally unprepared. Just as Kang had foreseen it, the result of that war was a total disaster for the country.³

Kang Youwei appeared as an outstanding historical figure in the reform movement of 1898. After the war defeats, the young emperor Guang Xu was keen on implementing some reforms in Chinese state system. The reforms, which are known in China as the "Wu Xu Bian Fa" (usually translated as the "Hundred Days Reform"), took place from June 11th to September 20th, 1898. For the first time in this period, Kang had a chance to persuade the emperor and start reforming the state. Kang was in favor of establishing a Japanese Meiji style constitutional monarchy and conducting reforms in various fields, starting with the structural reform of the state, and stretching forward to education and industrialization of China.

The reform movement was challenged with a coup-d'état by empress dowager Ci Xi and conservative officials which resulted in the emperor being imprisoned and reformists, including Kang, forced to leave the country or being sentenced to death⁴. Luckily, Kang was urged by the emperor and left for Shanghai where he obtained protection from the British Consulate.⁵ That is how his sixteen years long exile had begun. He traveled to many countries including Serbia.⁶ In 1898 After the coup he went to Japan, a year later he went to Canada and established the "Bao Huang Hui" (the Society to preserve the Emperor). Thanks to the funding he received from that society, he was on the move for the next few years, traveling around the world although constantly in danger of being assassinated. In 1902, at the age of forty five, while still in India, he completed his masterpiece titled *Da Tong Shu* (*The One World*). The Republic of China was established in 1911. He was appointed an overseas Chinese member of the new Parliament in 1912. In 1913, he started the publication of a monthly magazine named the *Bu Ren Za Zhi*, or

³ Laurance G. Thompson, *Ta T'ung Shu: The One World Philosophy of K'ang Yu Wei*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958, pp. 13-15.

⁴ Young Tsu Wong, "Revisionism Reconsidered: Kang Youwei and the Reform Movement of 1898", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51, No: 3, 1992, pp. 538 – 539.

⁵ J.O.P. Bland, E. Backhouse, *China under the Empress Dowager*, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910, pp. 214.

⁶ Zhi Zhang, "Kang Youwei Hai Wai You Ji Yan Jiu" (A Study on Kang Youwei's Notes on Overseas Travel), *Journal of School of Chinese Language and Culture* Nanjing Normal University, No. 1, 2007, pp. 42.

Compassion.⁷ In this magazine, he published not only his thoughts, but also his travel notes on foreign countries, including the *Saiwei Youji*, i.e. the *Serbia Travelogue* we deal with in this article. Kang passed away at the age of sixty-seven in Qingdao.

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III. Kang Youwei's View of the Serbian Capital Belgrade

As we have mentioned earlier, most of the descriptions Kang gave in this travelogue were the descriptions of the Serbian capital, as he probably stayed only in Belgrade, although he had to pass through some portion of the country on his further journey to Sofia. However, in his travelogue, he does not mention anything about other parts of Serbia. From his travelogue it is clear that this was his first visit to Belgrade, yet that he was to a certain degree familiar with the circumstances in the country before and during his stay, which were, presumably supplied by the local guide or an interpreter.

The first thing we encounter in his Serbia travelogue is his explanation of how Belgrade got its name:

*The (Serbian) capital, Belgrade (Beograd), takes its name from a nearby hill.*⁸

At this very beginning we are confronted with a dilemma whether Kang received a proper information about the origin of the name of this city or misunderstood the information he was given. As far as it is recorded in history, the settlement that is now known as the city of Belgrade was built by the Celtic tribe of Skordisk, in the 4th century B.C, when it was known under the name of Singidunum⁹. This name was actually a Celtic word for "fortress"¹⁰. The significance of this settlement rose in Roman times. Slavic people settled in these areas in the 9th century A.D., after which time the name of this settlement changed into Бѣлградъ¹¹, which is, in the form of Beograd, used even today. The collocation "Beo-grad" literary means "White city", in Serbian language. During its long history, the city changed masters several times, from the Byzantine empire, to Hungary, Serbia, Austria and Turkey,

⁷ Laurance G. Thompson, *Ta T'ung Shu: The One World Philosophy of K'ang Yu Wei*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958, pp. 18-20.

⁸ Kang Youwei, *Lieguo youji- Kang Youwei yigao*. Shanghaishi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui bian. Shanghai Ren Min Chu Ban She. 1995, pp. 527.

⁹ V. Ćorović, *Kratka historija Beograda*. (Ed. D. Lakićević), Mali zabavnik, Beograd, 2007, pp. 8.

¹⁰ *Mala Enciklopedija Prosveta*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1968, pp. 145.

¹¹ V. Ćorović, *Kratka historija Beograda*. (Ed. D. Lakićević), Mali zabavnik, Beograd, 2007, pp. 8, 10, 18.

only to become a Serbian capital in 1842¹², when the prince's court was moved from Kragujevac, a city situated in the central parts of Serbia, to the well-fortified and strategically important city of Belgrade located on the confluence of the rivers Danube and Sava. The Kalemegdan fortress was the most conspicuous part of the settlement. It was built from white stone, and that is believed to be the reason why the city itself was thus named. Apart from the fortress, there was the inner-city which was, in Turkish times, stationed by the Turkish garrisons and Turkish ruler of the city. Around it there was the outer-city, inhabited by common people, mostly locals. However, by the time Kang visited Serbia, these parts merged into one. In the above cited paragraph, we believe that Kang Youwei might be referring to the hill on which Old town Belgrade is situated, dominated by the abovementioned Kalemegdan fortress. As far as our knowledge extends and according to some (yet not exhaustive) research, no name of the hill is mentioned as the origin of the name of the city itself. It is always stated that it originates from the white color of the stone the fortress was built from. We therefore believe that Kang's statement is not precise, and that the word "hill", must be changed into a "fort", or "fortress" in order to be true to the facts.

The geostrategic position of Belgrade was the next thing Kang writes about, as it was, even at first glance, an obvious fact. The city is positioned on the last hill stretching from the Rudnik mountains in the north-western part of Serbia, further to the Danubial plane.¹³ Further north there is the vast Pannonia plane, which was at that time Hungarian territory. Kang writes:

For hundreds of kilometers from Hungary to the west, there is not a single inch of a mountain, only a plain terrain. Here, all of a sudden, hills arise, overlooking the river Danube and its several bends. In the middle there are four islands. Borcha, on the Northwest (river) bend, is Hungarian territory, while Zemun, on the Southwest bend, is already a small Austrian town. The rivers constitute borders with three countries, (and these borders are) all stationed by armies¹⁴.

Turing the center, Kang got a general impression of the city, which he, then noted in his travelogue. The buildings especially attracted his attention, as he named them, one by one, in the order he saw them. But, it seems that very few of them made an impression on him. He described the King's palace

¹² Ćorović V. *Kratka historija Beograda*. (Ed. D. Lakićević), Mali zabavnik, Beograd, 2007, pp. 64.

¹³ Ćorović V. *Kratka historija Beograda*. (Ed. D. Lakićević), Mali zabavnik, Beograd, 2007, pp. 7.

¹⁴ Kang Youwei, *Lieguo youji- Kang Youwei yigao*. Shanghaishi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui bian. Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe. 1995, pp. 527

as “a three-storied building, yellow and considerably beautiful, but it is built right by the street, and it looks (nothing more than like) a mansion of a rich household.”¹⁵. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was situated “on the left side of the palace”¹⁶ he described as “very small, (with) blue (facade) and clean”¹⁷. The Bank and the Insurance Company he saw next made a slightly stronger impression, as he said that they were “the biggest and most beautiful buildings”¹⁸. Kang also saw the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of War and the Parliament, for which he, at first, thought was a small teahouse.¹⁹ But, he seemed to have been acquainted with the plan to build a bigger Parliament, as he mentions this project in his travelogue together with its overall costs.²⁰ The new Parliament building he mentions is one of the landmarks in today’s Belgrade. The blueprints for that magnificent building were made in 1906, by the architect Ilkich, but the building was finished later, after his death.²¹ Kang also visited a Museum, which, looking from the outside, did not make an impression on him, but it seems that he was interested in the items he saw in it, as those were the things from which he could learn something more about Serbia and its people. He says:

*The Museum, also a muddy rectangular rented building, is an extremely a plain one. But it doesn’t matter, as long as the items inside can satisfy the need for research and broadening the knowledge of the people.*²²

Some of the items he saw in it reminded him of things he had seen elsewhere, while some customs and life habits reminded him of some other nations. There is, however, a part in his description of the museum items that is quite peculiar, and possibly, again, a result of some sort of misunderstanding:

*The most peculiar thing is the ability to make all sorts of utensils out of dough, in which they store tea and wine, and (also) using dough to write and prescribe medicine.*²³

¹⁵ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528

¹⁶ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528.

¹⁷ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528.

¹⁸ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528.

¹⁹ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528.

²⁰ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528, 530.

²¹ Balkanološki Institut SANU. *Istorija Beograda* (ed. Z. AntoniĆ), “Draganić”, Beograd, 1995, pp. 268.

²² Kang Youwei, *Lieguo youji- Kang Youwei yigao*. Shanghaishi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui bian. Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe. 1995, pp. 528.

²³ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 529.

Although he uses the word “dough”, we believe it is rather a “clay”, but that would not be such a peculiar thing as he concludes it to be. So, we came to believe that the word 面 *miàn* (dough) in his original writing must be a result of some misunderstanding of the explanation that was given to him.

One institution especially attracted his attention. It was the University. The first Serbian University was formally established in 1905, in Belgrade, although it existed in earlier times, since the 19th century, under the name of Grand School or Lyceum. At first, it had three departments, philosophy, law and technical department, but not so long afterwards, Medicine and Divinity were established too.²⁴ Of the University, he says the following:

*I visited the University which was established forty eight years ago. Its three-storied building could be considered magnificent (given Serbian standards). (It) is located in the city center. There are six hundred students and seventy professors (there). Usually there are (classes) in three fields (of study), law, philosophy and engineering, and, as I understand, (you) can choose (which ones you want to attend). (The fact that) in a small country such as Serbia, with slightly more than a million inhabitants, which equals to (the population of) just one county in my country, there is a university established, (makes you ask yourself) why would China, a big country of four hundred million people, only have also just one university. Isn't it quite ridiculous!*²⁵

IV. Kang Youwei's understanding of Serbian history, political system and its economy

Scattered around the whole article, we can find some information about Serbian history and its political establishment. Kang did not write about it systematically, but rather as an additional information inlaid between his descriptions of the city of Belgrade. He says:

*When Serbia first gained its independence, it was just a principality, today it is a kingdom.*²⁶

Serbia was a vassal state under the rule of Ottoman sultan in Istanbul, until the Berlin Congress in 1878, when it gained full independence. However, due to the two popular uprisings and the growing tensions between the Turkish rulers and the locals, the sultan gave Milosh Obrenovic, the leader of

²⁴ Balkanološki Institut SANU. *Istorija Beograda* (ed. Z. AntoniĆ), “Draganić”, Beograd, 1995, pp. 279, 282, 287.

²⁵ Kang Youwei, *Lieguo youji- Kang Youwei yigao*. Shanghaishi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui bian. Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe. 1995, pp. 529.

²⁶ *Ibid*, Kang, 1995, pp. 527.

the Second Serbian Uprising, the title of Duke in 1830.²⁷ It was a hereditary title, later on passed to his son Milan and his grandson Mihailo. Serbia became a kingdom in 1882. The first Serbian ruler that had a title of King was Milan Obrenovic, the grandson of Milosh Obrenovic's brother, Jevrem.²⁸

In his travelogue Kang also mentions another Serbian ruler, namely Karadjordje (or Black Djordje, as he was called by the locals), which means that he was acquainted with the fact that there were two royal families in Serbia at that time, who struggled for power throughout the nineteen and the beginning of the twentieth century. These two ruling families originated from the two leaders of the popular uprisings, namely, the Obrenovic dynasty, whose originator was the abovementioned Milosh Obrenovic, the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising (1815), and the Karadjordjevic dynasty, which originated from Karadjordje Petrovic, the leader of the First Serbian Uprising (1804). Both dynasties had many supporters and the struggle between them continued throughout the 19th century. By the time Kang visited Belgrade, the Obrenovic were substituted by the Karadjordjevic, and the current ruler was Peter Karadjordjevic, who came into power after the assassination of Aleksandar Obrenovic, the son of the above- mentioned first Serbian king, Milan. Obviously, Kang was acquainted with these events of dynastic change. He writes the following:

*The current king Peter, a great general, coveted the king's position, and was hoping for his assassination. Peter, who lived in Switzerland, gave secret instructions to the members of his party to assassinate the king. When he came back, he did nothing to find the felon, which is proof enough (of his involvement in the assassination). The English knew that, so they did not want to recognize (him as a king). But Peter, who treated (both) the officials and soldiers well, had his position secured, and therefore the people were not able to do anything about it. After a while, the English didn't have any other option but to acknowledge him as king. (That's how) Serbia got its third king. The first king, Milan, was dethroned, next was the one who was assassinated. It seems that if a king is chosen from the same nation, there is a tendency to fight among each other.*²⁹

²⁷ Ćorović, V. *Istorija srpskog naroda*. (internet edition). Novo doba: VIII. Tehnologije, izdavaštvo i agencija Janus, Beograd, Available at: http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/corovic/istorija/7_8_1.html.

²⁸ Ćorović, V. *Istorija srpskog naroda*. (internet edition). Novo doba: XVI, XIV. Tehnologije, izdavaštvo i agencija Janus, Beograd 2001. Available at: http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/corovic/istorija/7_16_1.html and http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/corovic/istorija/7_14_1.html.

²⁹ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 529.

As we have said earlier, the last king from the Obrenovic dynasty was Alexander, who succeeded his father Milan (first ruler of Serbia that held the title of King). Alexander was underage, when his father abdicated, but through a coup-d'état, he proclaimed himself a king in 1893, when he was only seventeen. His rule ended in the bloody assassination of him and his wife, Queen Draga Mashin, by the rebelled officers, during the night between 28th and 29th May, 1903.³⁰ Kang knows about this event, as he makes a comment about it, when describing King's palace, a few paragraphs earlier:

Before, when I heard that in the past a civil uprising had happened and the monarch had been killed, I was surprised how that could have happened so easily. When I look at it today, (I realize that) if rebels rushed into the building, they could kill a sovereign, the same way (as) rich households in my country are robbed. It should not be such a difficult task, compared with the possibility of killing the emperor in the Chinese Forbidden City³¹.

Kang was to a certain degree acquainted with the fact that Serbia at that time was a parliamentary monarchy. He writes:

Serbia has unicameral parliament system, without the Upper house. (...) The priest parliamentarians, who observe the people entering, all speak French. (...) There are eight ministers in total, as well as one hundred and sixty parliamentarians. (...) There are many political parties, (but only) three of them are big, and the reason is probably because (the Parliament) was established not long ago³².

Kang admired the fact that, unlike neighboring countries such as Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, which appointed a foreign national as a ruler, Serbia had its own ruler, and the fact that the power of ascendance to the throne went not only from father to son, but also from brother to brother.³³ Judging from his comments, he was in favor of such an establishment.

The power of the Serbian king has been established through the succession from brother to brother, and it is the biggest among all newly established

³⁰ Ćorović, V. *Istorija srpskog naroda*. (internet edition). Novo doba: : XVII, XVIII . Tehnologije, izdavaštvo i agencija Janus, Beograd, 2001. Available at: http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/corovic/istorija/7_17_1.html and http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/istorija/corovic/istorija/7_18_1.html.

³¹ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528.

³² Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528.

³³ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 529.

*countries, which is something that people from my country can learn from (Serbians) too!*³⁴

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Kang described Serbia as a military country³⁵, with one sixth of the population being soldiers³⁶, with agriculture being the most developed branch of the country's economy, and not a single factory in the whole country.³⁷ This last one is, we believe, quite an unfair statement. Given that at the time of his visit, in Belgrade alone, there existed a couple of textile factories, as well as tobacco and sugar factories which had been using steam engines from 1897³⁸, it is clear that Kang did not have a clear picture of the Serbian economy. Although agriculture was, by far, the most important branch of the economy, it was quite unjust to make such a general statement, without getting familiar with the actual situation.

The taxation system was to him surprisingly high, for which reason he concludes:

*Such a small country, with only a million people, to have such a tax, means that people must be suffering quite a lot!*³⁹

V. Conclusion

In his short description, Kang gave an overall picture of Serbia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although mistaken in some conclusions he drew according to the information he was given, this travelogue is still a good overview of the general circumstances of the country, at the wake of its constitution as an independent monarchy. What is important is that Kang obviously saw the geostrategic importance of the capital city, and the country itself, which is something that has been an integral part of Serbian history since the very beginning until today.

The visit of a Chinese scholar must have been something quite unusual in Serbia at the time of Kang's visit. Very limited research that we have conducted showed that *Politika (The Politics)*, which was and still is one of the most influential newspapers in Serbia, which was established in 1904, did not give any account of his visit. What remains to be a task for some further

³⁴ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 529.

³⁵ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 528.

³⁶ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 530.

³⁷ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 530.

³⁸ Balkanološki Institut SANU. *Istorija Beograda* (ed. Z. AntoniĆ), "Draganić", Beograd, 1995, pp. 239.

³⁹ Ibid, Kang, 1995, pp. 530.

research is a comprehensive analysis of all the articles published in the year of 1908, in Serbia, and especially in Belgrade, in order to see how his visit was received and interpreted by the locals. This is a shortage of the present article, and a task for future research.

In the Appendix below, we give a full translation of Kang Youwei's Serbia travelogue.

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Özet

Bu makalede Çin'in yakın döneminin önemli entellektüel reformcu ve devlet adamlarından Kang Youwei'in 1908 yılında Sırbistan'a gerçekleştirdiği ziyaretini konu alan seyahatnamesi incelenmiştir. Seyahatname birçok açıdan önem taşımaktadır. Çin'den ve Uzak Doğu'dan söz konusu dönemde Sırbistanla ilgili yazılmış elimizde bulunan tek seyahatname olması söz konusu metnin önemini artırmaktadır.

Çin'in son yıllarda her alanda hızlı bir gelişme göstermesi genel anlamda Çin'e olan ilgiyi arttırmıştır. Çin çalışmaları da bu gelişmeden olumlu yönde etkilenmiştir. Dünyada ve Çin'de son derece önemli gelişmelerin yaşandığı 20. Yüzyılın ilk yarısı ve yakın dönem Çin çalışmaları alanın önemli araştırma konuları arasındadır. Çin'in yakın tarihinde dünyayı nasıl gördüğü ise önemli araştırma sorunlarından biri olmasına rağmen yapılan çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu anlamda makale bilimsel literatüre katkı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Appendixes

Serbia Travelogue* **1908**

Kang Youwei

I arrived at the Serbian capital at 11PM, July 21st 1908. It takes about ten hours by automobile to get here from the Hungarian capital. The (Serbian) capital, Belgrade (Beograd), takes its name from a nearby hill. I traveled to almost every country on the globe, (but) I have never seen a capital that is built in such a way (as this one). The fortress is built on the Belgrade hill. For hundreds of kilometers from Hungary to the west, there is not a single inch of a mountain, only a plain terrain. Here, all of a sudden, hills arise, overlooking the river Danube and its several bends. In the middle there are four islands. Borch, on the Northwest (river) bend, is Hungarian territory, while Zemun, on the Southwest bend, is already a small Austrian town. The rivers constitute borders with three countries, (and these borders are) all stationed by armies. So, if

* We hereby wish to extend our special thanks to Ms. Jin Xiaolei and Ms. Zhu Lin, who offered us their advice and help in the process of translating this travelogue from the Classical Chinese.

Austrian and Hungarian border battalions started tiding towards the East, the Serbian capital would already be shaken, and it would not be long until it falls. It seems that if it falls, Serbia will not be a country anymore. It seems that, if Serbians offended the Austro-Hungarians somewhere very far away (from Vienna), the fires of war would not affect the inland, so the Austro-Hungarian Empire would still be at peace. If so, why would they build a capital in this place? The city is on the top of the hill, with military barracks (very) similar to (the cities) in China. I entered the city by the hilly paths and stepped onto the top of the hill. The city streets are very clean, there is green grass and flowers everywhere. An Arsenal and General's Office (are also there), (and both of them are) magnificent. Many old cannons stand in front of the Office. Some of the Austrian cannons date back to 1657 and (there are also) many Turkish ones. Leaning against the railings and looking into the distance, I understood something. (From here you can see) hills and rivers, although (it is all) a bit hazy, it seems like a country (on its own), but alas, it is just a capital. But, the most magnificent, peculiar and dangerous scenery is all here. In the past it (Belgrade) was a Roman territory, there still exists an ancient underground water tunnel, with 540 steps. I went down. It is a gloomy and creepy place, but Romans sure knew how to build big projects to defend the city walls. There is nothing in China which can be compared with it.

There are many tiny rooms in the Arsenal, in which some of the country's antiques are stored, in order to inspire the future generations. (Those antiquities are) worth being proud of! When Serbia first gained its independence, it was just a principality, today it is a kingdom. A prince's position is lower than the king's (in the vassal state). Nowadays, the ruler of Bulgaria is only a prince, the best translation for it (i.e. his title) in Chinese would be jun. The first feudal lord (in Serbia) was Milosh, whose flags with the coat of arms still exist. There are more than a hundred of them. Some of the cannons which were locally produced, at the time of gaining independence, are longer than one third of a meter and are extremely thick. They used them to fight against the Turks in the 9th year of Emperor Jia Qing's reign (1804). In today's King's church, there is a sculpture of (the current king's ancestor) Karadjordje. It is short and yellow. This is a sculpture that the former ruler erected for himself. There is (also) an eagle carved from wood and the stand is good. It's the only fine piece of art.

The total population of the capital is more than one hundred thousand. The roads are muddy, houses are filthy, and also very scanty. The only street that is more or less worth seeing is the one where the Palace is. The Palace is a three-storied building, yellow and considerably beautiful, but it is built right by the street, and it looks (nothing more than like) a mansion of a rich household. Before, when I heard that in the past a civil uprising had happened and the monarch had been killed, I was surprised how that could have happened so

easily. When I look at it today, (I realize that) if rebels rushed into the building, they could kill a sovereign, the same way (as) rich households in my country are robbed. It should not be such a difficult task, compared with the possibility of killing the emperor in the Chinese Forbidden City. So, to make inferences about (things in) foreign countries, is not right. The forest right by the palace is the imperial garden, (but) it (also) only looks like a garden owned by a rich household. (When I was there) the prince in his white military uniform walked out of the palace, accompanied by a general. He saw my carriage, and waved his hand towards me. He was very relaxed (and behaved as he pleased). He was once sent as an ambassador to Russia, similar to his royal highness, a prince of Zeng⁴⁰, who came to the imperial court. The situation in small countries is like that! On the left side of the Palace there is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is very small, (with) blue (facade) and clean. Next to it there is a Bank and an Insurance Company, and these are the biggest and most beautiful buildings. In front of the Bank there is a beautiful statue of the founding monarch, Milan. Apart from the places where people live, there are only two slightly bigger buildings, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of War. Serbia is a military country, that is why the Ministry of War has the biggest power, (and its building) is also magnificent. Not only in front of the Ministry of War, but in every street you can see people wearing uniforms and carrying their swords. It seems that the capital of Serbia has no industry or commerce, but only military. No wonder that the life of the ordinary people is extremely difficult! I heard about their Parliament and wanted to visit it. It is right by the Ministry of War, but looks just like a small teahouse. The flag flying high (on top of it), I mistook for the teahouse banner. Serbia has a unicameral parliament system, without the Upper house. The height (of the building) is approximately seven meters, (it looks) just like a plain place for village gatherings, and honestly I have traveled the world but have never seen such a thing. The priest parliamentarians, who observe the people entering, all speak French. It seems that scholars learn French in all Serbian schools. The photo of the current king, Peter, is hanging right in the middle. The three seats situated in the center are the king's throne, the seat for the Minister of Agriculture and the (seat for the) Patriarch. There are five more seats on the left and right sides which are prepared for ministers. There are eight Ministries in total, as well as one hundred and sixty parliamentarians. (There are only) some simple tables, and no carpets on the floor. (That's probably because) this Parliament was established only four years ago, (so) for now they are renting this building, but there are plans for building (a new one). It is presumed that the cost of it would be ten million. The style (of that new building) will be beautiful and magnificent, (but it is hard to guess) how many years will pass until it can be finished. (When) I got in and out, the soldiers saluted with their guns, probably (because) (people in) such small countries rarely see a foreigner

⁴⁰曾卞, the State of Zeng in the Xia, Shang, Zhou ancient dynasties era. (TN)

from afar. There are many political parties, (but only) three of them are big, and the reason is probably because (the Parliament) was established not long ago.

The Museum, also a small, muddy rectangular rented building, is an extremely a plain one. But it doesn't matter, as long as the items inside can satisfy the need for research and broadening the knowledge of the people. My country lately implemented political reforms. Every province established a parliament and a museum, so they can maybe take this as an example of how to do it. All items displayed (here) belong to the Serbian nation, mostly tiled and wooden items, extremely coarse, as if made in uncivilized times. The carpets are (also) coarse. Only the golden and silver cups and plates are slightly better, (for which reason I believe that) they must be (used for religious purposes). Gold and silver wire embroidery are worth seeing, and they make the women's clothes look gorgeous. Brides wear green peacock feathers and necklaces made of silver coins around their necks. The more of these (items), the richer the family is. Valuable or heavy pieces can be worth (up) to fifty pounds. Those worn around the waist are thirteen centimeters (long) and (made of) a lot of coins. The only thing is that they wear shoes made of cloth or leather, which are very coarse. It seems that two hundred years ago they wore their hair bundled on the top of the head with coins tied up to it. The people (of Serbia) tie up a red cloth around their heads, and fasten their waist and drape their shoulders with a felt rug, the same as Mexicans and Montenegrins do today. Long, blue garments, much like the Chinese gowns, have slits. Sometimes (they) use plain white cloth to wrap their faces and necks, (while) children wear purplish blue (clothes) just like the Lilans⁴¹. The most peculiar thing is the ability to make all sorts of utensils out of dough, in which they store tea and wine, and (also) using dough to write and prescribe medicine. There are Turkish instruments of torture, impalements, which are very cruel. It could be said (that the museum is) similar to the Cambodian and Javanese ones. There is only one old-style church, called Lasha⁴², (which is) extremely majestic and was built in 1404. In those days, Serbians had an independent state, and were not under the Turkish rule, (which is) why they made it quite beautifully. That church was destroyed by the Turks.

I visited the University which was established forty eight years ago. Its three-storied building could be considered magnificent (given Serbian standards). (It) is located in the city center. There are six hundred students and seventy professors (there). Usually there are (classes) in three fields (of study), law, philosophy and engineering, and, as I understand, (you) can choose (which

⁴¹ Due to his transcription we are not quite sure which nationality is Kang referring to. (TN)

⁴² It is impossible to infer to which old church Kang Youwei is referring to, due to his transcription to Chinese. (TN)

ones you want to attend). (The fact that) in a small country such as Serbia, with slightly more than a million inhabitants, which equals to (the population of) just one county in my country, there is a university established, (makes you ask yourself) why would China, a big country of four hundred million people, only have also just one university. Isn't it quite ridiculous!

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I visited a church in the park where the assassinated king Alexander and his wife⁴³ were buried. It is quite small. On the right side (of the wall), there are various images of saints lined up, which is in the Greek orthodox style. There is a white stone tablet in the burial spot, with the portrait of the deceased. The guide said that the king was very benevolent, and that all the people respected him. The current king Peter, a great general, coveted the king's position, and was hoping for his assassination. Peter, who lived in Switzerland, gave secret instructions to the members of his party to assassinate the king. When he came back, he did nothing to find the felon, which is proof enough (of his involvement in the assassination). The English knew that, so they did not want to recognize (him as a king). But Peter, who treated (both) the officials and soldiers well, had his position secured, and therefore the people were not able to do anything about it. After a while, the English didn't have any other option but to acknowledge him as king. (That's how) Serbia got its third king. The first king, Milan, was dethroned, next was the one who was assassinated. It seems that if a king is chosen from the same nation, there is a tendency to fight among each other. That is why Romania and Bulgaria both welcomed kings from abroad. The king of Romania was the son of German duke, while Bulgaria had a German grand marquis from the house of Coburg as a king. They were not just natives who went to live abroad, and then came back, but were really foreign nationals. Greece welcomed the prince of Denmark as a king, also from a foreign country and of foreign ethnicity. Recently, Norway also appointed the grandson of Denmark's king (as a ruler). Why is it so that their own countrymen cannot be kings, but they have to import kings from abroad? Isn't it because the fights between the (members of the) same nation are going to be more severe? The purpose of appointing the monarch is to pacify the people, (if however) designating a monarch means frequent wars and killings, (which create) chaos that harms people, then it is better to invite a foreigner and appoint him as a ruler. Being without power and political allegiances, it is sufficient if he can just put down the rebellions. This peculiar kind of understanding was obtained after a lot of experience. Chinese scholars have never seen such a thing before. The Serbian nation has a strong sense of their nationality. Although the king is Serbian, he has the support of the army. The power of the Serbian king has been established through the succession from brother to brother, and it is the biggest

⁴³ Refers to Aleksandar Obrenović and his wife Draga Mashin. (TN)

among all newly established countries, which is something that people from my country can learn from (Serbians) too!

The King's church is in Greek (orthodox) style, which cannot be compared with the Roman (catholic) style churches in the first place, not to mention in such a small country as this. It is like an ancestral hall in some rural areas in my country. Upon entering, there are portraits of the former sovereigns Milan and Stefan. There are three side-seats in the middle of the hall, with gold ornaments, for the king, queen and lower priests to sit. In the front part of the hall, a black kneeling pad is placed for the king. In the main hall there are rows of screens (i.e. the altar), with a huge number of saints, while two chandeliers hang vertically down to the floor. All orthodox churches are more or less like this.

There is a big park situated on the ridge of the hill, with green flowerbeds and forest paths, with a lot of people gathering around the steel benches next to a fountain. Because it is mid-summer, there are a lot of people strolling around.

The roads are all made of rough stone and are particularly muddy. The market consists of small lanes covered with awning, just like in China. That is why most of the people's clothing is quite simple, not in European style. The shoes are soft and knitted.

The tax here is eighty-six million Dinars that is francs, which equals to thirty million Liang in China. Such a small country, with only a million people, to have such tax, means that people must be suffering quite a lot! A personal tax for those extremely poor is 4 francs and 6 centimes.

Although this country is extremely poor, the cost of building a palace is one million and forty thousands, while the university fee is a million and ninety thousand, a sum by far less in my country. The cost of the new Parliament building is presumably going to be seven million.

Serbia has a standing army of forty five thousand soldiers, two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers during wartime, which is nearly one sixth of the country's population. Women and children occupy three fifths, which means that put aside the old and the weak, almost all of the strong men are soldiers. That is why you can see armed men everywhere in the streets. There is not a single factory or store in the whole country, only agriculture is developed. Melons and vegetables are the most common foods, (and) watermelons are very beautiful. What would such a small country that gained autonomy rely upon without soldiers? Recently a clash with Austria took place, and the war was almost wished for, which is a rather peculiar thing, (if we consider) that people in a big

country such as China fear the strength of other countries and are reluctant to declare war?!

The distance between the capital of Serbia and Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, is 380 kilometers. It takes twelve hours to get there by automobile, the ticket price is fifty dinars.⁴⁴

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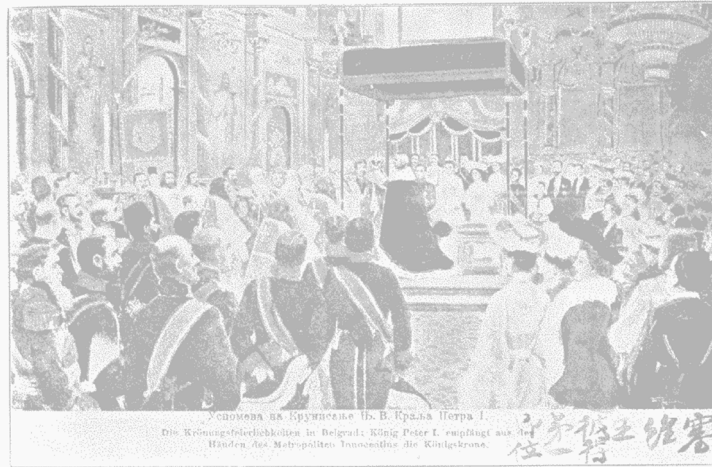
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Picture 1: Serbian Palace⁴⁵

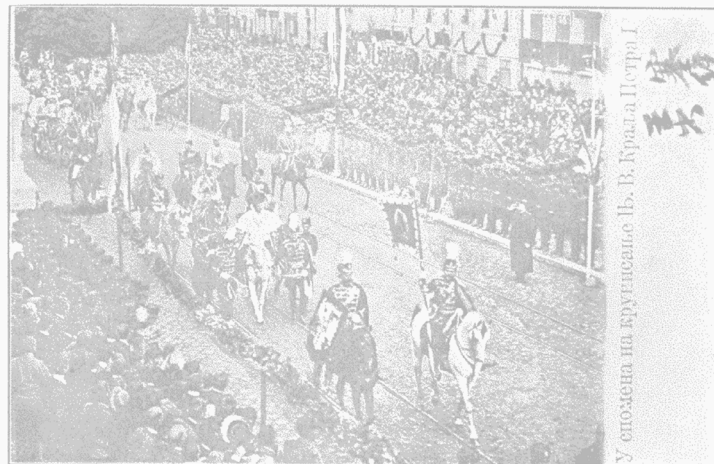
⁴⁴ Translated from Classical Chinese by Giray Fidan and Ana Jovanović. The name of the original: 康有为《塞维游记》列国游记- 康有为遗稿. 上海市文物保管委员会编. 上海人民出版社. 上海, 1995, pp. 527-530.

⁴⁵ All of the photographs are taken from the Appendix of the *Bu Ren Za Zhi*, Vol. 4. 1913. (pages unmarked)

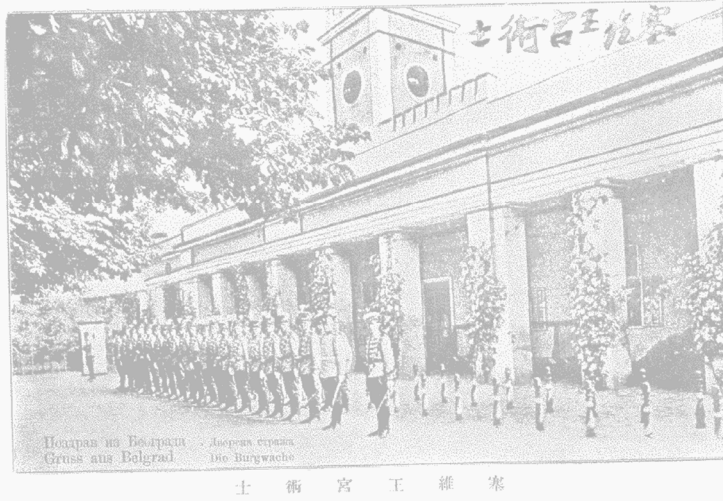


塞 維 王 得 第 一 位

Picture 2: Serbian King



Picture 3: Serbian King's Parade



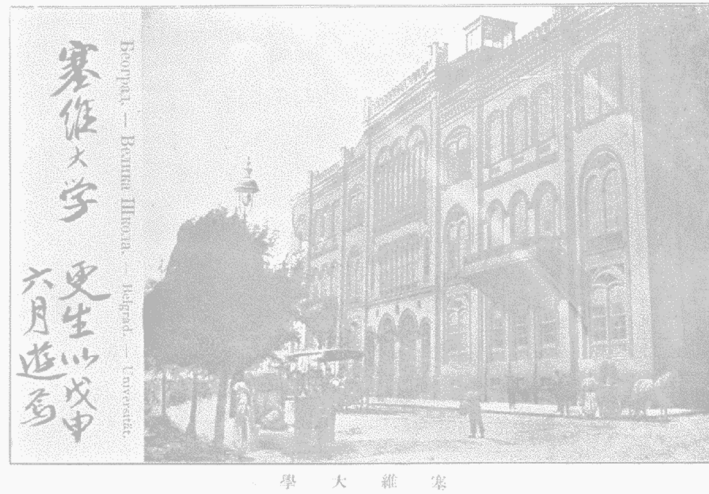
Picture 4: Serbian soldiers in front of the Palace



Picture 5: Serbian Cavalry



Picture 6: Serbian Barracks



Picture 7: Serbian University



Picture 8: New Park in Belgrade



Поздрав Из Србије. — Gruss aus Serbien.
Српска Нонша. — Serbische Nationaltracht.

怡和堂

俗 維 塞

Picture 9: Common People in Serbia