

---

DEATH IN BEIJING:  
ALMA M. KARLIN'S  
DESCRIPTION OF CHINESE  
FUNERARY RITUALS AND  
MOURNING PRACTICES

Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik

Introduction

Alma Maximiliane Karlin (1889–1950) was a traveller, writer, journalist, and collector from Slovenia who embarked on an eight-year journey around the world in November 1919. It is possible to reconstruct her journey from her watercolours of flowers and plants, which bear the date and place where they were painted, as well as from the postcards she sent to her mother and friends in Celje.<sup>1</sup> During her travels, which took her to at least 45 different countries, she supported herself mainly through work as an interpreter and journalist, but was often compelled to take on other jobs in order to make ends meet. Ultimately, she was to write about her travel experiences for more than thirty different newspapers and magazines across the globe, including the *Cillier Zeitung*, a local German-language newspaper in Slovenia. In her novels and other prose works she would continue to draw on her adventures and impressions from those years. Karlin's legacy is rich and varied. In addition to a large collection of artefacts that she brought back from her journey together with photographs, postcards, a herbarium, watercolours, sketches, and drawings, she also left behind both published and unpublished

---

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči: Življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin [Columbus's Daughter: The Life and Work of Alma M. Karlin]* (Celje: Pokrajinski muzej Celje, 2011), 30–46.

works of fiction, journalistic writings, and extensive correspondence, all of which testify to her keen interest in foreign lands and cultures.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper we present and analyse two accounts of Chinese funerary rituals and ancestor-related practices written by Alma Karlin. From these early accounts we are able to glean a great deal of information about the burial and mourning practices that prevailed in China at the time—information that is invaluable for studying continuity and changes in that area of Chinese culture. It is, moreover, instructive to engage with the author's interpretation of the religious and funerary rites she observed, for her attitude was coloured by a range of socio-political, cultural and personal factors. We subsequently compare her accounts with those penned by other Slovenian travellers (mostly missionaries) in the early twentieth century, and attempt to put these accounts into their proper historical context.

### Background to Alma Karlin's accounts of Chinese funerary rituals

During her journey around the world, Alma Karlin published, between the years 1920 and 1928, a total of 136 articles under the generic title "Reiseskizzen von Alma M. Karlin" (Travel Sketches of Alma M. Karlin) in the *Cillier Zeitung*, a local German-language newspaper based in her native town of Celje in present-day Slovenia, which at the time was known by its German name Cilli.<sup>3</sup> In these articles, spaced over four consecutive series, she recorded her travel impressions, describing the everyday life and customs of the people in the countries she visited, as well as writing about the flora and fauna of various places. Except for the first series, which remained untitled, the other three have geographical subheadings—"Im Südseeinselreich" (Among the South Sea

---

<sup>2</sup> For more on Alma's life and journey, see Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči: življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin*; see also Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, "A Lonely Odyssey: The Life and Legacy of Alma M. Karlin," *Orientations* 47/3 (April 2016): 50–55.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Šlibar, "Članki Alme K. Karlin v Cillier Zeitung 1920–1928," *Celjski zbornik* (1988): 191–198. Alma herself mentions that she published around 200 articles in that newspaper (Alma M. Karlin, *Urok južnega morja* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1996, 101).

Islands), “Im fernen Osten” (In the Far East), and “Durch Australasien” (Through Australasia)—that indicate where she was writing from.

Her first account of Chinese funerary rituals, entitled “Ein Trauerfall in China” (A Bereavement in China), appeared in the series “Im fernen Osten” and was published in two parts, on 6 and 13 April 1924, respectively. An abbreviated version is to be found in the chapter “Der Sterbefall” (A Death) in the first volume of her travelogue *Einsame Weltreise: Die Tragödie einer Frau* (*Around the World Alone: A Woman’s Tragedy*), published in 1929. For after returning home in January 1928 she set about compiling her notes into a three-volume book of travels, published between 1929 and 1933 by the Wilhelm Köhler Verlag, which was based in North Rhine-Westphalia. While she craved recognition as a novelist, it was in fact her travelogue that would bring her fame. The first edition sold out quickly; overall, close to 100,000 copies were sold of the German-language editions.<sup>4</sup> The first volume of her trilogy was translated into English in 1933, and into Finnish one year later.<sup>5</sup>

As already mentioned, Karlin’s second account of Chinese funeral practice was published five years after the first and was a condensed version. Before we proceed to analyse the two accounts, it is important to note that they were both written in German. Although her parents were of Slovenian descent—her father had served as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army, while her mother taught at the local German school in Celje for nearly forty years—she grew up speaking German and was to acquire only a limited knowledge of the Slovenian language. This has to be understood in terms of the socio-political situation at the turn of the twentieth century: Celje was then a provincial town in the Austro-Hungarian Empire with a large German-speaking population, which continued to predominate even after the town became part of the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918.

---

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči – Columbus’s daughter: Alma M. Karlin [kulturna, zgodovinska in antropološka razstava, 21. 9. 2017–14. 1. 2018]*. (Ljubljana: Cankarjev dom, kulturni in kongresni center; Celje: Pokrajinski muzej, 2017), 31.

<sup>5</sup> Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči: Življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin*, 55.

“Fortuitous coincidence” in Beijing:  
The article A Bereavement in China

Karlin herself tells us that her account was inspired by the funeral of the father of Mr. L., who had been her host during her stay in Beijing in the autumn of 1923. “It would be terrible to call it luck,” she admitted, “but for me it really was fortuitous coincidence (...) because I was able to witness a thousand customs and practices that would have remained hidden to me otherwise”.<sup>6</sup>

Despite her linguistic talent—she passed the English, French, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish language examinations at the prestigious Royal Society of Arts during her six-year stay in London (1908–1914), where she also began studying Japanese, Chinese, Sanskrit, Spanish, and Russian, and was later to compile a ten-language dictionary<sup>7</sup>—Karlin was not fluent in Chinese. Upon her arrival in Beijing, as she explained in her travelogue, she was able to say only two phrases in that language: “the unnecessary question ‘Are you Chinese?’ and the redundant answer (...) ‘I am Austrian’, which was not true anymore.”<sup>8</sup> Her conversation with the locals was conducted mostly in English, and she did not use Chinese written sources to put the rites that she observed into context. Whether she was familiar with the extensive writings on the Chinese religious system and funeral practices by the well-known Dutch scholar Jan Jakob Maria de Groot (1854–1921), is hard to say. Her description of Chinese funerary practice was based mainly on close observation of this particular funeral in northern China (Beijing) in 1923, though she must have enquired among her Chinese friends about the meaning of some of the ceremonies.

According to Alma Karlin’s two descriptions of a Chinese funeral, the preparations and rituals began immediately after a person’s death.

<sup>6</sup> Alma M. Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise: Die Tragödie einer Frau* (Minden, Berlin, Leipzig: Wilhelm Köhler Verlag, 1930), 244. “Es wäre zu grausam, es ein Glück zu nennen, aber es war für mich ein guter zufall (...) denn auf diese Weise konnte ich Einblick in die tausend Sitten und Gebräuche gewinnen, die dabei ans Tageslicht treten und die man nie erfahren, die man eben, vom Zufall begünstigt, sehen muß.”

<sup>7</sup> Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči: Življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 225. “die unnütze Frage „Sind Sie Chinese?“ und die überflüssige Antwort, (...) „Ich bin Oesterreicherin!“ , was gar nicht mehr richtig stimmte.”

She writes about the silken clothes of the deceased and the mourning garments, which were unhemmed and made of grass cloth, and explains how all silk garments would be packed away because the deceased's closest relatives could not wear them for three years. Such details are noted as the absence of any jewellery and other finery, the appearance of the mourners with their loosened hair and unwashed faces, and how the deceased's son would ruffle his hair before visitors came to pay their condolences. She further describes the arrangement of the room, with the coffin in the centre and a table set up nearby on which offerings to the spirit of the deceased were placed, including food, incense sticks, purple candles, and a green earthenware pot for the spirit paper money. A green curtain screened the coffin from general view. Referring to the custom of pulling the nails out of the walls of the room or wrapping them in purple silk in order to ward off evil spirits, Karlin explains that "when the deceased's soul returns to feast on the food on the offering table, it is accompanied by an evil spirit who, in the event of finding a free nail, would hang the soul on it and eat all the delicacies himself."<sup>9</sup> After describing how the body was sealed in an airtight coffin, she outlines the etiquette observed during condolence visits before turning her attention to the solemn ceremony of transferring the coffin to the temple, describing the cortège in detail. The coffin was carried out of the house and laid in a large chest, lined with red silk and gold embroidery. A Lamaist priest in a white robe led the procession, followed by boys in richly embroidered green cloaks with large paper lanterns and by attendants bearing paper money folded into various shapes. Men in picturesque ancient costumes carried an empty green sedan chair in which the deceased's soul was supposed to be reclining. Then came more lantern-bearers and, under a beautiful canopy, the deceased's son, hatless, wearing a grass-cloth dress, and supported by servants. Several pallbearers carried the large bier with the coffin on their shoulders. Close behind followed the deceased's daughter-in-law, his granddaughters, and other relatives in rickshaws and carriages with

---

<sup>9</sup> Alma M. Karlin, "Ein Trauerfall in China, II," *Cillier Zeitung* 30 (13 April 1924): 2. "Wenn nämlich die Seele des Verstorbenen zurückkehrt, um den Speisen auf dem Opfertisch zuzusprechen, wird sie von einem bösen Geiste begleitet und findet er einen Nagel frei, so hängt er die Seele daran und ißt selbst die Leckerbissen."

white venetian blinds. Karlin devotes several paragraphs to the coffin, which was made of catalpa wood and had to be large, dry, and comfortable. (An attentive son would give his parents a coffin, which they would keep as a piece of furniture in the house; they would buy a mortuary silk garment in advance and watch over the manufacture of the ten blankets and silk cover that would eventually be put in the coffin.) Various objects, such as jewellery, souvenirs, and clothes were placed inside, and the body was surrounded by silk rolls filled with plaster so that no movement was possible. Upon arrival at the temple, the coffin received several coatings of lacquer and porcelain powder.

Once the coffin was inside the temple, the funerary rituals continued: every day, the mourners would bring offerings of food as they waited for the diviner to determine an auspicious date for the burial. Karlin notes that coffins were sometimes not buried until after several months; if burial proved to be too expensive, they might simply be “left outside”.<sup>10</sup> She briefly describes the magnificent final funeral procession, which was accompanied by the burning of various objects and figures made of paper or bamboo representing the deceased’s house with all its furnishings, the women folk and servants, his horse and wagon, and favourite foods. She also gives details of the different mourning periods for the deceased’s relatives and of the rules that had to be observed during that time.

Although her narrative does not reflect the exact ritual sequence, one can recognize the following distinct stages: a) washing the corpse; b) the preparations for mourning; c) the condolence visits, accompanied by music and elaborate ceremonies; e) the offering of food and the burning of paper money; e) the encoffining ceremony, during which a silver nail is hammered into the coffin; f) the transfer of the coffin to the temple, where it is housed until the date for burial has been fixed; g) the hiring of professionals for the funeral service; h) the burial itself; and j) the mourning period. It is clear that Karlin was describing the funeral of an elderly parent as organized by a dutiful son. The funerary rites for those who died childless or unmarried were different. When infants died, the

---

<sup>10</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 227.

bodies might be buried in a shallow grave or simply abandoned to the elements.<sup>11</sup>

The sections on funerals and offerings in the local histories produced in northern China at the turn of the twentieth century yield many valuable insights. Drawing on Susan Naquin's survey of seventy such local histories from Hebei province, mostly written in the period 1870–1940,<sup>12</sup> we may trace the ritual sequence upon the death of an elderly parent as follows: a) the official wailing when the death occurred; b) washing and dressing the corpse; c) giving public notice of the death by pasting white paper streamers on the main gate of the house; d) hiring a diviner to help with most aspects of the funeral, such as protecting the family against the harmful influences of an unburied body, calculating the auspicious time for key events (encoffining, moving the coffin, burial), and determining the site of the grave according to geomantic laws; e) formal notification of the deceased's relatives and acquaintances, and also of the local gods by reporting the death at the nearest shrine; f) encoffining, followed by the ritual of "calling back the soul" so that it would remain with the body in the coffin, and the burning of paper replicas of objects that were to accompany the deceased into the afterworld; g) arranging for monks or priests to chant scriptures every seventh day for seven weeks to help the soul of the deceased travel through the dark underworld to its next rebirth; h) the receiving of condolences, which, like the rituals, involved considerable ceremony (all guests were expected to bring gifts, which usually included food or paper money offerings, ceremonial objects such as candles and incense, and money to help the bereaved family with the expenses); i) preparation of an ancestral or spirit tablet for the deceased; and j) moving the coffin from the home and the funeral procession. The funerary rites might vary in certain details, with striking differences observed between villages separated by only a few kilometres, but they were generally performed in this established sequence.

---

<sup>11</sup> Susan Naquin, "Funerals in North China: Uniformity and Variation," in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, eds. James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 46.

<sup>12</sup> Naquin, *Funerals in North China*, 37–70.

Although Karlin mentioned most of the above structural elements when describing the funeral ceremony, the highlights of her account are the encoffining, the condolence visits and associated rituals, and the removal of the coffin from the house. The encoffining and the removal of the coffin were indeed the most important ritual acts, in which guests, neighbours, and acquaintances were involved in addition to the deceased's family. It is understandable that Karlin focused on these two major moments, since she witnessed the proceedings as an outside observer. As already noted, her account was based on what she had seen of the funeral rituals following the death of the father of her host in Beijing. As an outsider to the family, she was, of course, not involved in the more intimate preparations. This explains why she only briefly mentions the washing and dressing of the corpse (*xiaolian* 小殮), which were carried out by the next of kin only. On the other hand, it is surprising that she does not refer to the so-called ancestral or spirit tablet (*lingpai* 靈牌), which was another key element of the funeral ritual. The wooden spirit tablet, intended to become a home for one aspect of the soul of the deceased, was a central ceremonial object in front of which offerings were performed and paper money was burned. It is unclear whether she attended the ritual of "completing the tablet" (*chengzhu* 成主), which symbolized the transfer of the deceased's spirit to the tablet, but we do know that she saw the altar table that would traditionally be set up near the body of a deceased person, and on which a temporary spirit tablet and lamp were placed. Thus, in her original account she wrote: "At the head [of the coffin] there is an altar table bearing two lit candles, an oil lamp in the middle, reminiscent of our sanctuary lamp, and also a bronze vessel with small votive candles. In the evening, as soon as food has been brought from the inn—some of which is offered to the guests—the deceased's favourite dishes are placed on the altar table inside porcelain ware of the finest quality."<sup>13</sup> A similar description of the altar table appears in the revised account

---

<sup>13</sup> Karlin, *Ein Trauerfall in China*, II, 1. "Da zu Häupten steht der Opfertisch mit zwei brennenden Wachskerzen und einer Öllampe in der Mitte, die an unser ewiges Licht erinnert. In einem Bronzegefäß liegen außerdem die Weihrauchopferkerzchen und abends, sobald aus dem Gasthaus die Speisen gebracht wurden, die auch den Gästen geboten werden, sucht man die Lieblingsgerichte des Toten aus und stellt sie im besten Porzellan vorne auf den Opfertisch."



of the funeral in her travelogue *Einsame Weltreise*, but she again only mentions the purple candles and incense sticks.<sup>14</sup> A reference to the “Ahnentafel” (ancestral tablet) in her unpublished manuscript “Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten” (Faith and Superstition in the Far East),<sup>15</sup> indicates that she was aware of this important ritual object, and so it is remarkable that she omitted the spirit tablet in her description of the funeral. Many of the funeral rites were performed with a view to settling the volatile spirit immediately after death and facilitating its journey through the netherworld. They included the ritual referred to as “calling back the soul” (*zhaohun* 招魂), designed to secure the soul to the encoffined body; the chanting of scriptures to accompany the soul on its journey; and the offering of food and spirit-world objects made of paper. There can be no doubt that a spirit tablet—or at least a temporary one—was also on the altar table next to the body of her host’s deceased father. It is difficult to say why Karlin did not consider it necessary to include a reference to such a significant feature of Chinese funerary ritual in her two accounts.

Admittedly, in the first volume of her travelogue she explained that there were many more things she would have liked to write about, but “for now I shall relate only the things that deeply touched my heart during this endless educational journey, and describe how people’s lives unfolded before me.”<sup>16</sup> In fact, she also did not mention any white paper streamers pasted on the main gate of the deceased’s house or any wailing by his female relatives to announce the death. As pointed out by James L. Watson, the formal high-pitched wailing by women of the household was always required, while pasting white streamers was optional in some parts of China.<sup>17</sup> It is possible that her host family in Beijing did not employ such streamers, though it does seem unlikely,

<sup>14</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 245.

<sup>15</sup> I should like to thank Maja Veselič for drawing my attention to this manuscript. Alma Karlin, “Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten”, unpublished incomplete manuscript, manuscript collection of the National and University Library, n.d., 1–92.

<sup>16</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 249. “Ich erzähle indessen nur von dem, was – auf dieser endlosen Studienreise – mein Herz stark berührt hat und wie sich das Leben der Menschen gerade mir gegenüber entrollte.”

<sup>17</sup> James L. Watson, “The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites: Elementary Forms, Ritual Sequences, and the Primacy of Performance,” in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*,

given that the descriptions of funerary practice in northern China in local histories from that period clearly refer to that custom.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps Karlin did not consider it sufficiently remarkable, since the custom of pasting strips of paper on doors is very common among the Chinese. At New Year's, in particular, people will paste auspicious couplets, written on strips of red paper, on both sides of the front door and affix above the lintel a horizontal scroll containing a four-character phrase to express wishes for health, happiness, good luck, and prosperity in the coming year. These red couplets are usually not removed until the next New Year, when new ones are put up; if a death occurs in the household, they are covered over with white paper. Karlin does mention the typical red banners decorated with gold characters when describing the alleys of Beijing in her travelogue, but pays little attention to them otherwise.<sup>19</sup> One might argue that restrictions of space led to her omitting the white paper streamers in her article for the *Cillier Zeitung*, but then again she did not mention the custom in her travelogue either, where she could write more freely and at greater length.

Alma Karlin was clearly more interested in how people felt and acted, as one may also infer from her description of the funeral rites. Thus, she failed to mention such important ritual objects as the spirit tablet and the white streamers, but, on the other hand, captured the characteristic appearance of Chinese mourners, who were supposed to keep their face unwashed and their hair uncombed, and to wear plain clothing without any ornaments, silk or fur. While the focus of her attention was on the bereaved family—particularly on the deceased's son, who during condolence visits had to remain kneeling beside the coffin behind the green curtain—she also registered the behaviour of the neighbours, close relatives, and other guests who came to pay their last respects. The arrival of each visitor, who was expected to bring gifts, was heralded by drumming. Visitors were expected to perform *koutou* 叩頭 both to the deceased and to his son; that is, to kneel and touch the ground with their forehead as a token of reverence. Close friends were

---

eds. James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Naquin, *Funerals in North China*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 230.

allowed behind the curtain so that they could offer their condolences to the son.<sup>20</sup>

We learn, moreover, that the family did not bury the coffin immediately after the funeral but, rather, left it in the temple for the time being: “The old gentleman’s corpse will later be transferred to Shanghai, and all his relatives from all parts of China are expected to come for that occasion. The funeral procession is then often several miles long and the poor son will have to walk for many hours before reaching the family graveyard.”<sup>21</sup> The practice of storing a coffin above ground, sometimes for months or years, until the auspicious date for burial had been determined, or until the deceased’s spouse had also died, was observed in northern China, but not in the south. Coffins were accommodated in temples, on vacant land or in remote spots.<sup>22</sup> The father of Karlin’s host must originally have been from Shanghai, since that is where the family graveyard was situated. This is further confirmed by her reference, in the later version of her account, to how the deceased’s widow had to be summoned from Shanghai before the family could begin organizing the funeral.<sup>23</sup> The fact that the grave site was in Shanghai explains why neither of Karlin’s accounts contains any information about the interment itself, the attendant rites, and the more elaborate follow-up ceremonies that the closest relatives of the deceased had to perform, such as returning the ancestral tablet to the family altar, “rounding off the grave” (*yuanfen* 圓墳) by piling up earth to make it a proper size and shape, and burning incense and spirit paper money on certain days and anniversaries.<sup>24</sup> She only makes the general comment that, no matter how lavish the coffin and the procession, the grave would always be very simple, consisting of a high mound of earth covered over with

---

<sup>20</sup> Karlin, *Ein Trauerfall in China*, II, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Karlin, *Ein Trauerfall in China*, II, 2. “Die Leiche des alten Herrn wird später nach Shanghai überführt werden und dazu müssen alle Verwandten aus allen Teilen Chinas kommen. Der Trauerzug ist da oft meilenlang und der arme Sohn muß oft viele Stunden lang laufen, ehe der Familiengrabplatz erreicht wird.”

<sup>22</sup> Naquin, *Funerals in North China*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 244.

<sup>24</sup> Naquin, *Funerals in North China*, 44.

cement for the wealthy and a smaller mound without a stone slab or flowers for the poor.<sup>25</sup>

Karlin's two accounts of funerary ritual in China were thus based on her observation of one particular funeral, that of her host's father, who died of a heart attack in Beijing in the autumn of 1923.<sup>26</sup> The deceased's son, Mr. L., who was married to a German woman, was the owner of a private guesthouse "Foo-Lai" near the Chuan Pan hutong, where she was staying.<sup>27</sup> It was not far from the Hadamen 哈達門 gate:<sup>28</sup> as she recalls in her travelogue, she would walk to Hadamen Street no less than three times a day to buy peaches.<sup>29</sup> Alma Karlin left Beijing in mid-November 1923 and travelled on to Taiwan, stopping at Tianjin, Dalian, Shanghai, and Fuzhou. She stayed in Shanghai for only a short period, though, and almost certainly was not there when the coffin of her host's father was finally buried.

### Ancestor worship and the burning of paper money

A central feature of Chinese funerary ritual and mortuary practice is the belief in a reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead, who could intercede with the deities on behalf of their living descendants. These were expected to care for the spirits of deceased family members and other ancestors, enabling them to continue to lead a comfortable life in the afterworld. If such worship was adequately performed, the ancestor would provide certain material benefits, such as wealth, good fortune, and health. This reciprocal obligation made the ties between living and dead family members even stronger. Immediately after a person's death, an elaborate ritual sequence would begin in order to settle the soul of the deceased and facilitate its transition from the corpse into spirit existence as an ancestor. All the funerary rites were in one way or another tied to this belief in ancestor worship and

---

<sup>25</sup> Karlin, *Ein Trauerfall in China*, II, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 244.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>28</sup> Hadamen, known also as *Chongwenmen* 崇文門, was a gate in Beijing's city wall in the south-eastern part of the inner city.

<sup>29</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 228.

served to demonstrate family reverence—a cardinal value in the family-oriented Confucian society. The proper observance of mourning rites was not only a token of family reverence but also an important element of Chinese national identity. As discussed by Watson, rituals associated with death “constituted a kind of ‘cultural cement’ that helped hold this vastly complex and diversified society together.”<sup>30</sup> The standardization of rituals was key to a unified Chinese culture, but it is worth emphasizing that while the sequence of funerary rites was relatively uniform, burial customs varied significantly in different regions.<sup>31</sup>

Although Alma Karlin, as we have seen, failed to mention certain acts and objects, her description of Chinese funerary ritual clearly tallies with the sequence outlined by Watson:<sup>32</sup> a) public notification of death by wailing; b) donning of white clothing by mourners; c) bathing of the corpse; d) sending of food, money, and other goods to the dead; e) preparation of a spirit tablet for the dead; f) ritualized use of money and employment of professionals for the conduct of funerary rites; g) music to accompany the corpse and settle the spirit; h) sealing the corpse in an airtight coffin; and i) expulsion of the coffin from the community. Her two accounts therefore serve as further evidence that in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China there was a uniform system of mortuary practices, which were centred on ancestor worship. Karlin does not specifically discuss ancestor worship or refer to the ancestral tablet (though they are mentioned in her unpublished manuscript), she does mention offerings of food and the burning of paper money and paper models of other everyday items to be transferred to the netherworld: this reflects her awareness of the importance of ancestors and their cult in China. Indeed, she observed how “(...) the desecration of the deceased body is quite unheard of. Fear of the [evil] spirit (...) and reverence for one’s ancestors make such a crime, which would surely be punished even more cruelly than parricide, impossible in the eyes of the Chinese.”<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Watson, “Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites,” 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–19.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–15.

<sup>33</sup> Karlin, *Ein Trauerfall in China*, II, 2. “(...) ist Leichenschändung völlig unbekannt. Angst vor dem Geiste (...) und Ehrfurcht vor den Ahnen überhaupt machen solch ein Verbrechen,



Figure 1: Wooden miniature sculpture showing ancestor worship, early 20th century, China (Alma M. Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum).

Among the wide range of objects that Alma Karlin collected on her travels<sup>34</sup> are a small wooden sculpture of a scene in which a son makes offerings to the spirit of the deceased, represented by an empty chair (Fig. 1), and a collection of paper money (34 pieces with red wax seals and imitation gold foil) together with her handwritten notes about the festivals during which the money was meant to be burned (Fig. 2).

Both the wooden miniature and the collection of paper money testify to Karlin's interest in ancestor worship. In her notes on the latter,

---

das wohl noch grausamer als Elternmord bestraft werden würde, unmöglich in den Augen der Chinesen."

<sup>34</sup> Alma Karlin bequeathed her collection of objects to the Regional Museum in Celje. It consists of 1,392 items (Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči: Življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin*, 57), most of them gathered during her journey round the world and including such diverse objects as seeds, tropical plants, wedding and funeral garments, jewellery, baskets, weapons, Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, lacquerwares, and statues. Of the 840 items that have been inventoried, 267 are of East Asian origin. See also Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, "Zbirateljska kultura in vzhodno-azijske zbirke v Sloveniji [Collecting Culture and East Asian Collections in Slovenia]," in *Procesi in odnosi v Vzhodni Aziji: Zbornik EARL*, eds. Andrej Bekeš, Jana S. Rošker and Zlatko Šabič (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani and Raziskovalno središče za Vzhodno Azijo, 2019), 122.



Figure 2: Paper money with handwritten notes by Alma Karlin, early 20th century, China (Alma M. Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum; photo: Sanela Kšela).

she explains that “Geisterpapiergeld” (spirit paper money) is burned on a large scale at funerals and during the following three festivals: Qingming 清明, Zhongyuan 中元, and Xiayuan 下元. These were festivals during which “Geister” (spirits) would be released (*fanggui* 放鬼), counted (*diangui* 點鬼), and collected (*shougui* 收鬼).<sup>35</sup> The entire family of a recently deceased person was expected to visit the family graveyard on Qingming (in the third or fourth lunar month), on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month (Zhongyuan, or Ghost Festival), and on the first day of the tenth month (Xiayuan) for the ceremony of “sending winter clothes”.<sup>36</sup> These were the three most important festivals during which dead ancestors were to be worshipped. Karlin’s notes therefore accurately reflect that practice.

Burning paper money (also referred to as spirit money) was an integral part of the funeral ceremony and of subsequent ancestor worship rites. Offerings were generally made before the wooden ancestral tablet at least twice a month, at major festivals, and on anniversaries of the ancestor’s birth and death. The descendants communicated with the departed souls in the netherworld by means of various material objects: mainly food, incense, and paper money, to which candles and firecrackers were sometimes added. C. Fred Blake’s in-depth study of the custom of burning paper money describes the sequence of the ceremony as follows: a) lighting candles to mark the beginning of the service; b) lighting incense sticks to establish communication with the spirits; c) offering food and burning paper money and other papermade objects in order to transmit these goods to the world of deceased family members; and d) setting off firecrackers to mark the end of the ceremony, thereby separating the living from any malevolent influences that might have arisen while they were communicating with their ancestors.<sup>37</sup> This ceremony was based on the belief that, via the medium of fire, paper could carry a precious metal (money) into the world of the dead, thereby securing the wellbeing of ancestors and ensuring that

---

<sup>35</sup> Handwritten notes in German on a sheet of paper with Chinese paper money attached to it (Alma M. Karlin Collection, Celje Regional Museum).

<sup>36</sup> Naquin, *Funerals in North China*, 45.

<sup>37</sup> C. Fred Blake, *Burning Money: The Material Spirit of the Chinese Lifeworld* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011), 78.



they were favourably disposed towards their descendants. There are countless variations of paper money,<sup>38</sup> but traditionally the most common types are: a) copper paper money, consisting of a rectangular sheet of coarse paper, modified with rows of perforations to imitate strings of ancient copper coins; b) silver paper money, in which silver foil (a tin and lead alloy) is pasted to the paper; and c) gold paper money, in which gold foil is used. The different types reflect a hierarchy in the world of spirits, the copper paper money being offered to common ghosts, including the spirits of recently deceased family members; the silver paper money to more distant ancestors and family members who have been dead for longer (large amounts may also be burned during vigils and on the anniversary of a person's death); and the gold paper money to even more distant spirits and higher divinities. The burning of copper, silver, and gold paper money symbolizes different phases of etherealization of the worldly body as it becomes a pure spirit.<sup>39</sup>

This hierarchy of the spiritual world was closely linked to the notion of a dual soul, which had already been conceived by the time of the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE). The Chinese believed that every person had a *hun* 魂 soul and a *po* 魄 soul.<sup>40</sup> While the *hun* soul was responsible for the spiritual life of a person and his or her perceptions, the *po* soul was associated with the physical body and its functions. Death occurred when both souls separated: the *hun* soul as a lighter and more ethereal aspect would move away from the body, travelling to the underworld to be judged and then released for rebirth or paradise. Most of the funerary rites were therefore performed under the guidance of Taoist priests or Buddhist monks, and were aimed at guiding the *hun* soul through the underworld to be purified of worldly blemishes so that it could emerge as a pure spirit. The *po* soul, on the contrary, would finally dwell with the body inside the grave or ancestral tablet. It was this soul that could affect the world of the living. When caring for

<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that the custom of burning paper money is also performed as part of the worship of various gods and deities. It is still widely practised in all parts of China and beyond.

<sup>39</sup> Blake, *Burning Money*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> On the *hun* and *po* souls, see Ying-Shih Yü, "‘O Soul, Come Back!’ A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47/2 (December 1987): 363–395.

a grave or ancestral tablet it was therefore crucial to observe the correct procedures, as otherwise the offended ancestor might inflict harm upon the living.<sup>41</sup>

The practice of burning paper money began to excite the curiosity of Europeans particularly in the nineteenth century, and it was later to become the subject of academic study. However, in early travellers' or missionaries' accounts it tends to be dealt with in almost perfunctory fashion. The authors usually did not find this custom remarkable; they were more surprised by the credulity of its devotees.<sup>42</sup> Karlin likewise mentions it in passing in several places, but never provides the level of detail that would have helped her readers to understand it better. Nevertheless, she was aware of the three most important festivals for reunion with, and worship of, dead ancestors, as evidenced by her notes on the paper money that she collected during her stay in China.

Alma Karlin's accounts versus those of Slovenian missionaries:  
Discussions of ancestral worship and funeral rites

Funerals and ancestor worship rites have long occupied a prominent place in Western accounts of China. European readers first encountered Chinese death rituals and religious practices in the Jesuit missionaries' descriptions from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. As Nicolas Standaert shows in his book *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe*, the missionaries were impressed by the elaborate burial practices and mourning rites they witnessed,<sup>43</sup> and recognized the relevance of such ceremonies for understanding Chinese social and cultural values. They provided the first of what Standaert calls "proto-ethnographic" descriptions of the funeral procession, mourning clothes, condolence rites, and burial methods. Some of the Chinese ritual elements were even incorporated into the funerals of Jesuit missionaries who died in China: the mourning proces-

---

<sup>41</sup> Naquin, *Funerals in North China*, 55–56.

<sup>42</sup> Blake, *Burning Money*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Nicolas Standaert, *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

sions and burials were often sponsored by the emperor in recognition of their outstanding work and achievements at the Qing court.

Such interactions between European Christian and Chinese funeral rites are also recorded in a letter written by Ferdinand Augustin Hallerstein (1703–1774), a Jesuit missionary from a small town near Ljubljana who served as the Head of the Imperial Board of Astronomy at the Qianlong court from 1746 until his death almost thirty years later.<sup>44</sup> In this letter, addressed to his brother Weichard and dated 6 October 1743, he explains that, during a funeral procession in which he and other Jesuit missionaries had taken part, they had worn white robes instead of black and had performed *koutou* 叩頭, the act of bowing the head to touch the ground.<sup>45</sup> He continues: “Then, partly because of local customs, partly due to the length of the path, we ride horses and accompany the funeral procession to the burial place (...) Four mandarins dressed in mourning attire, who have been invited to the funeral, accompany the wagon at its side. They are accompanied by, to tell the truth, Chinese music.”<sup>46</sup>

While an in-depth examination of the Jesuits’ accounts of Chinese funerary practice is beyond the scope of this paper, we may note that these give quite a good idea of the funeral ceremony in China. They also allow us to point out some important differences between Chinese and European funeral practice during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For the Chinese, the central feature of the ceremony was ancestor worship, reflecting the Confucian virtue of family reverence, and family members were the main actors during the funeral. For Europeans, on the other hand, the clergy played the leading role during the funeral ceremony, and the emphasis was on compliance with religious doctrine. One of the key questions that concerned the missionaries was whether Chinese who converted to Christianity might still be allowed

---

<sup>44</sup> On F. A. Hallerstein, see Mitja Saje, “The Importance of Ferdinand Augustin Hallerstein for Cultural and Political Relations with China and Korea,” *Asian Studies* 3/2 (June 2015): 13–32.

<sup>45</sup> Ferdinand Augustin Hallerstein, “Letter from Peking addressed to Brother Weichard, dated to 6 Oct 1743,” in A. Hallerstein, *Liu Songling* 刘松龄: *The Multicultural Legacy of Jesuit Wisdom and Piety at the Qing Dynasty Court*, ed. Mitja Saje (Maribor: Association for Culture and Education Kibla; Ljubljana: Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, 2009), 317–329.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

to continue their ritual practices for honouring their ancestors. A considerable dispute on this point erupted between the Jesuits, who found some of the ancestral rituals acceptable, and the Dominicans and Franciscans, who rejected any adaptation to Chinese local practices.

The accommodation policy of the Jesuits is reflected in the tone of Hallerstein's letters, which tend to be descriptive and less concerned with passing judgment. However, it is worth noting that he focuses mainly on the ruling religions and worshipping practices,<sup>47</sup> and fails to mention the custom of burning paper money, which was generally labelled as superstitious by the Jesuits. Similarly, the Chinese literati and governing elites for many centuries dismissed the popular tradition of offering money to spirits as vulgar and wasteful.<sup>48</sup> Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century would even adopt the European term "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信) to refer to it. Surprisingly, its devotees themselves accepted that label, as discussed by Blake.<sup>49</sup>

If early missionaries were willing to tolerate Chinese rituals as compatible to some extent with their own practices, later nineteenth-century missionaries tended to insist on strict adherence to Christian dogma. This should be understood in terms of changed political circumstances, as the balance of power had shifted to the Europeans after China's defeat in the Opium Wars in the mid-nineteenth century. The two most prominent missionaries from the Slovene ethnic territory who went to China in the early twentieth century, Peter Baptist Turk (1874–1944) and Jožef Keréc (1892–1974), also left accounts of Chinese religious, funeral rites and ancestor worship. Both of them emphasize the multitude of deities in Chinese religion. "I don't think there is any other country in which the gods multiply to such an extent as they do in far-away China," wrote Keréc in his article "Kitajski bogovi" (Chinese Deities). "Every house, every dwelling, every cottage is actually a temple in which superstitious locals piously worship their deceased, recording

---

<sup>47</sup> For Hallerstein's views on Chinese religion, see Zmago Šmitek, "Pogled Avguština Hallersteina na kitajska verstva [Augustin Hallerstein's view of the Chinese religions]," in *Mandarin: Hallerstein, Kranjec na kitajskem dvoru*, ed. Viljem Marjan Hribar (Radovljica: Didakta, 2003), 149–158.

<sup>48</sup> Blake, *Burning Money*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

their names on the so-called 'lin-paj' tablet, which is the abode of the spirit."<sup>50</sup> His manner becomes more descriptive when introducing the spirit tablet, but he then concludes with a dismissive observation: "In this vacuous religion, every Chinese man becomes a demigod after his death, to be worshiped by his relatives."<sup>51</sup>

Peter Baptist Turk published a series of articles entitled "S Kitajskega" (From China) in the Slovenian Catholic journal *Cvetje z vertov sv. Frančiška* (*Flowers from the Garden of St. Francis*) between the years 1906 and 1909. In the November 1906 issue, he described in detail the death of a Chinese and the associated rites.<sup>52</sup> His account focuses on the ritual of "calling back the soul" immediately after death, the storage of the coffin, mourning practices, and the funeral procession. Turk does not cover all the structural elements required by Chinese funerary ritual but highlights, instead, practices that differed from the Christian norms. As such, they met with little tolerance on his part, as is evident from his critical, almost sarcastic tone. Referring to the custom of storing a coffin for a longer period of time, he wrote: "They are not in a hurry to get on with the funeral. If they reckon that in a few months someone else in the family will die, they agree to wait for that to happen and then do both [funerals] at the same time (...) [The coffin] certainly does not spread a pleasant scent around it, even though it is nailed and smeared."<sup>53</sup> He attributes the "cause of this negligence"<sup>54</sup> to the costliness of a funeral. Similar disapproval is also manifest in his attitude to the ritual of "calling back the soul," which was prohibited to

<sup>50</sup> Jožef Keréc, "Kitajski bogovi [Chinese Deities]," in *Misijonarski koledar 1927* (Domžale: Misijonišče pri Domžalah, 1926), 61. "Mislim, da ni dežele, kjer bi se bogovi tako množili, kakor se množijo na daljnem Kitajskem. Vsaka hiša, vsako stanovanje, vsaka bajta je prav za prav tempelj, v katerem praznoverni domačini pobožno častijo svoje rajnike, katerih imena hranijo na tako zvani deščici lin-paj, t.j. bivališče duha."

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. "Po tej prazni veri postane vsak Kitajec po svoji smrti polbog, ki ga morajo častiti njegovi sorodniki."

<sup>52</sup> Padre Peter Baptist Turk, "S Kitajskega. Misijonska sporočila iz pisem p. Petra Baptista Turka [From China. Missionary messages from letters by p. Peter Baptist Turk]," *Cvetje z vertov sv. Frančiška* [*Flowers from the Garden of St. Francis*] 23, št. 11 (1906): 326–335.

<sup>53</sup> Turk, "S Kitajskega," 332. "Za pogreb se jim prav malo mudi. Če sodijo, da bo čez kakih par mesecev gdo umrl v družini, se pogovore, da bodo še tistega počakali in potem skupaj naredili (...) Gotovo ne razširjuje prijetne vonjave okrog sebe, čeravno je zabit in zamazan."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* "Vzrok te nemarnosti".

Chinese converts to Christianity: “Summoning a priest<sup>55</sup> to the dying and listening to his dirty jokes is strictly forbidden. So is calling the soul and forcing it to remain.”<sup>56</sup> The “wrong world”, in the sense of inappropriate behaviour, is how he refers to the sewing of white mourning garments, and he describes the funeral ceremony as “a procession of virgins in white clothing.”<sup>57</sup> His account is indeed peppered with phrases that have negative connotations, such as “pall-bearers in rags” and “dishevelled” sons and daughters “rolling on the floor”, “scuffling with one another, shouting and screaming in all directions.”<sup>58</sup>

These later missionaries approached Chinese religion and its rituals from the perspective of their primary task of converting pagans to the Christian faith. Theological categories such as “superstition,” “idolatry,” and “atheism”<sup>59</sup> thus often explicitly or implicitly inform their accounts. Their attitude towards Chinese religious practices tends to be critical and disapproving, sometimes even strongly sarcastic.

By contrast, Karlin’s description of Chinese funerary ritual and the associated practices of ancestor worship was founded on her interest in, and admiration for, East Asian cultures, and also on her spiritual bent. The many international students she met during her stay in London (1908–1914) stimulated her enthusiasm for foreign cultures, especially for those of the countries of Asia and South America. A key encounter was with a Japanese student, Nobuji G., who described his homeland in very vivid terms, instilling in her a strong desire to see not only Japan but all of Asia. When she began her journey around the world,

---

<sup>55</sup> Not only Turk but other Slovenian missionaries, too, often referred to Buddhist monks using the word “bonc,” which, according to Turk’s own explanation, derives from the Japanese “busso” (*bōsan* 坊 舎) (Peter Baptist Turk, “S Kitajskega. Misijonska sporočila iz pisem p. Petra Baptista Turka [From China. Missionary Messages from Letters by Padre Peter Baptist Turk],” *Cvetje z vertov sv. Frančiška* [Flowers from the Garden of St. Francis] 23, št. 7 (1906): 210).

<sup>56</sup> Turk, “S Kitajskega,” 334. “Bonca klicati k umirajočemu in poslušati njegove kvante, jim je strogo prepovedano. Isto tako ono klicanje in siljenje duše, naj še ostane.”

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 333. “Narobe svet!”, “procesijo belo oblečenih devic”.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 333. “Razterganih nosačev”, “razcapani” sinovi in hčere, “povaljajo po tleh”, “derviti eden čez drugega, kričati in vriščati vse vprek”.

<sup>59</sup> For more on this, see Eugenio Menegon, “European and Chinese Controversies over Rituals: A Seventeenth-Century Genealogy of Chinese Religion,” in *Devising Order: Socio-religious Models, Rituals, and the Performativity of Practice*, eds. Bruno Boute and Thomas Småberg (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013): 193–223.

Alma Karlin had originally intended to travel first to Japan, but various circumstances led her to Genoa instead, where she embarked on a ship bound for Peru in 1920. That she was travelling for study purposes, among other things, is clear from the way that she had arranged for the painter August Friedrich Seebacher (1887–1940) to give her lessons in drawing and painting while still in Celje.<sup>60</sup> With her trained hand and keen eye she wanted to record the flora of the places she was to visit. It is quite legitimate to describe her as an amateur anthropologist and ethnologist who yearned to gain a deeper understanding of other countries and their customs. The collection that she accumulated was intended to present the natural and cultural heritage of foreign lands to her fellow country men and women.

Even though some of the articles she wrote for the *Cillier Zeitung* betray the influence of the all-pervasive Eurocentric framework of her time and age, it is surprising to observe that her account of a Chinese funeral is very descriptive: she avoids using words that might be seen as expressing condescension. Her tone becomes more intimate in the travelogue, where she also gives more autobiographical details, but even there we can hardly find any passages suggesting bemusement at, or disapproval of, Chinese customs. On the contrary, we may even discern a critical attitude towards the “enlightened” and materialistic “West”, which was incapable of making sense of some of the funerary acts. She relates the circumstances of the death of her host’s father to illustrate the spirituality of the “East”.<sup>61</sup> The father of Mr. L. was a retired diplomat in his late seventies, but still healthy and vigorous. One morning, he walked past a temple where one could enquire about the dead and their situation in the afterlife. Just as he walked past the door, he felt a sudden cold shiver down his spine. He returned home and ordered his servant to summon his son at once, as he sensed that he was about to depart for the next world. When his son arrived the next day, he found his father in perfect health and laughed at his story. Two hours later, at ten in the morning, the old diplomat suffered a heart attack and passed away.

---

<sup>60</sup> Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči: Življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin*, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Karlin, *Einsame Weltreise*, 244.

As seen from material and textual sources, Alma Karlin was particularly interested in the spiritual and religious traditions, symbolism, and mythology of the places she visited. These inclinations would later manifest themselves in her literary works. Moreover, during her time in Norway in 1914 she had become acquainted with theosophy,<sup>62</sup> which may have contributed to her appreciation of Asian spirituality and thus to the neutral, descriptive (as opposed to evaluative) character of both her accounts of a Chinese funeral. Certainly, the genre of a travel sketch for a local newspaper would also have required a more detached attitude. The later version in her travelogue is less detached, but still free of any deprecatory personal judgments. Of course, it is not really possible to produce “pure” descriptions: even in the most detailed description the observer has to place certain elements in the foreground. Alma Karlin was drawing on her personal experience of the funeral ceremony for the father of her host in Beijing, and she focused on the behaviour of the people involved in that event. Since she could witness only the more public rites, it is understandable that she described these in greater detail.

### Conclusion

Socio-political developments forced the hitherto closed empires of China and Japan to open up and trade with Western countries at the end of the nineteenth century, accelerating the intensity of contacts between the Euro-American and East Asian regions. Not only missionaries, but also seamen, merchants, diplomats, and explorers often travelled to China, and returned with abundant stories, corroborated by various objects that they brought back. Accounts of the Far East were published more frequently, and the early romantic and fanciful notions of East Asian societies gave way to more sober assessments.

Among the many different religious and everyday practices of China, the funerary ritual and the burning of paper money attracted the attention of Europeans, eliciting accounts that ranged from summary descriptions to serious academic studies by anthropologists, historians,

---

<sup>62</sup> Trnovec, *Kolumbova hči: Življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin*, 22..



art historians, and theologians.<sup>63</sup> In most such writings from the late nineteenth century, one can perceive a tendency to compare the funerary customs of Europe and China. While in China the emphasis was on “orthopraxy”—that is, on getting the funeral procedure right, which was crucial both for the deceased and for surviving family members—Europeans laid stress on compliance with religious doctrine (“orthodoxy”). This led many of them, including various Slovenian missionaries to China, to express their disapproval and even condemnation of Chinese rituals.

Apart from the missionaries, Alma Karlin is almost certainly the only ethnic Slovenian to have written about Chinese funerary ritual and mourning practices in the press in the early twentieth century.<sup>64</sup> In this, she was guided by her profound interest in the spiritual traditions of Asia. The element of “fortuitous coincidence” also played a role of course, because it allowed her to gain first-hand experience of a Chinese funeral during her stay in Beijing. Unlike the missionaries, whose descriptions betray intolerance towards the rituals of their host country, Karlin produced two accounts that are remarkably objective—especially if we take into account the sociopolitical situation after the end of the First World War and, above all, the Eurocentric view that prevailed at the time.

### Acknowledgments

The research for this paper was carried out under both the project *East Asian Collections in Slovenia: Inclusion of Slovenia in the Global Exchanges of Objects and Ideas with East Asia* (2018–2021; no. J7-9429) and the core research funding programme *Asian Languages and Cultures* (no. P6-0243), both of which are funded by the Slovenian Research Agency. I am very grateful to Dr. Annette Kieser for helping me to

---

<sup>63</sup> In addition to the Jesuit missionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, among the pioneering European observers of Chinese funerary ritual were Justus Doolittle (1824–1880), an American missionary to China; Jan Jakob Maria de Groot (1854–1921), a Dutch historian of religion; Henri Doré (1859–1931), a French missionary to China; and William Joseph “Dard” Hunter (1883–1966), an American expert on papermaking.

<sup>64</sup> For the time being, no other is known to the author of this paper.

decipher Alma Karlin's handwritten notes in German about Chinese spirit paper money and for her helpful comments, to Dr. Maja Veselič for her valuable remarks, and to Luis Sundkvist for a thorough reading of the text.

## B i b l i o g r a p h y

Blake, C. Fred. *Burning Money: The Material Spirit of the Chinese Lifeworld*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.

Hallerstein, Ferdinand Augustin. "Letter from Peking addressed to Brother Weichard, dated to 6 Oct 1743." In *A. Hallerstein–Liu Songling 刘松龄: The Multicultural Legacy of Jesuit Wisdom and Piety at the Qing Dynasty Court*, edited by Mitja Saje, 317–329. Maribor: Association for Culture and Education Kibla; Ljubljana: Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, 2009.

Karlin, Alma M. "Ein Trauerfall in China, I." *Cillier Zeitung* 28 (6 April 1924): 2. Accessed August 31, 2019. [www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-BRTUHNXU](http://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-BRTUHNXU).

Karlin, Alma M. "Ein Trauerfall in China, II" *Cillier Zeitung* 30 (13 April 1924): 1–2. Accessed August 31, 2019. [www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-K9R5H29Y](http://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-K9R5H29Y).

Karlin, Alma M. *Einsame Weltreise: Die Tragödie einer Frau*. Minden, Berlin, Leipzig: Wilhelm Köhler Verlag, 1930.

Karlin, Alma M. *Urok južnega morja [In the Spell of the South Sea]*. Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1996.

Karlin, Alma M. "Glaube und Aberglaube im Fernen Osten," unpublished incomplete manuscript, manuscript collection of the National and University Library of Slovenia, n.d.

Keréc, Jožef. "Kitajski bogovi [Chinese Deities]." In *Misijonarski koledar 1927*, 61–65. Domžale: Misijonišče pri Domžalah, 1926.

Menegon, Eugenio. "European and Chinese Controversies over Rituals: A Seventeenth-Century Genealogy of Chinese Religion." In *Devising Order: Socio-religious Models, Rituals, and the Performativity of Practice*, edited by Bruno Boute and Thomas Småberg, 193–223. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004240032\\_011](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004240032_011).

Naquin, Susan. "Funerals in North China: Uniformity and Variation." In *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, edited by James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski, 37–70. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.

Saje, Mitja. "The Importance of Ferdinand Augustin Hallerstein for Cultural and Political Relations with China and Korea." *Asian Studies* 3/2 (June 2015): 13–32. <https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2015.3.2.13-32>.

Standaert, Nicolas. *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008.

Šlibar, Vladimir. "Članki Alme M. Karlin v Cillier Zeitung 1920–1928 [Alma M. Karlin's Articles in the 'Cillier Zeitung', 1920–1928]." In *Celjski zbornik* (1988): 191–198.

Šmitek, Zmago. "Pogled Avgušтина Hallersteina na kitajska verstva [Augustin Hallerstein's View of Chinese Religions]." In *Mandarin: Hallerstein, Kranjec na kitajskem dvoru*, edited by Viljem Marjan Hribar, 149–158. Radovljica: Didakta, 2003.

Trnovec, Barbara. *Kolumbova hči: Življenje in delo Alme M. Karlin [Columbus's Daughter: The Life and Work of Alma M. Karlin]*. Celje: Pokrajinski muzej Celje, 2011.

Trnovec, Barbara. *Kolumbova hči – Columbus's Daughter: Alma M. Karlin [kulturna, zgodovinska in antropološka razstava, 21. 9. 2017 –14.1.2018]*. Ljubljana: Cankarjev dom, kulturni in kongresni center; Celje: Pokrajinski muzej, 2017.

Turk, Peter Baptist. "S Kitajskega. Misijonska sporočila iz pisem p. Petra Baptista Turka [From China. Missionary Messages from Letters by Padre Peter Baptist Turk]." *Cvetje z vertov sv. Frančiška [Flowers from the Garden of St. Francis]* 23, št. 7 (1906): 206–211.

Turk, Peter Baptist. "S Kitajskega. Misijonska sporočila iz pisem p. Petra Baptista Turka" (From China. Missionary Messages from Letters by Padre Peter Baptist Turk). *Cvetje z vertov sv. Frančiška [Flowers from the Garden of St. Francis]* 23, št. 11 (1906): 326–335.

Vampelj Suhadolnik, Nataša. "A Lonely Odyssey: The Life and Legacy of Alma M. Karlin." *Orientations* 47/3 (April 2016): 50–55.

Vampelj Suhadolnik, Nataša. "Zbirateljska kultura in vzhodnoazijske zbirke v Sloveniji [Collecting Culture and East Asian Collections in Slovenia]." In *Procesi in odnosi v Vzhodni Aziji: Zbornik EARL*, edited by Andrej Bekeš, Jana S. Rošker and Zlatko Šabič, 93–137. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete and Raziskovalno središče za Vzhodno Azijo, 2019.

Watson, James L. "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites: Elementary Forms, Ritual Sequence, and the Primacy of Performance." In *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, edited by James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski, 3–19. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.

Yü, Ying-Shih. "'O Soul, Come Back!' A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47/2 (December 1987): 363–395. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2719187>.