

# CHINA NAVIGATION'S *CHANGSHA* & *TAIYUAN* (1949), later PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL'S *KOTA PANJANG* & *KOTA SAHABAT*

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Delivered in 1886, China Navigation Company Ltd. (CNCo)'s first *Changsha* and *Taiyuan* were with sisters *Chingtu* and *Tsinan* half of a 2270-grt clipper-bowed quartette which was designed especially for the China-Australia trade. They operated reliably for 23 years, but the latter pair were sold to Chinese owners for other services in July 1909. By then the trade had become very competitive with newer or larger ships operated by other British, Japanese and German owners, and CNCo looked instead to consolidate and strengthen its pride of place in operations on the China coast and from there the emigrant trade to Bangkok and the Straits. Thus three years later *Changsha* and *Taiyuan* were divested to Sydney agent G.S. Yuill's Australian-flag Australian-Oriental Line (AOL, see separate history and illustrated fleet list accessed via 'Overseas' page on [oldchinaships.com](http://oldchinaships.com)), for which they served until 1925, when replaced by that company's new 4324-grt Hong Kong-registered *Changte* and *Taiping*. Meanwhile CNCo had reused the names, taking delivery of *Changsha* (II) (1922), a 2482-grt river steamer and in 1929 *Taiyuan* (II), a 2994-grt coastal passenger-cargo steamer, both of which later became war losses.



CHANGSHA of 1886, sold to AOL in 1912. Here reduced from original rig.  
The crossed yard was later removed (A.C. Green/SLV).

CNCo had had briefly considered a return to the Australia trade some years before the Second World War when the P&O group had been seeking a buyer for the Eastern & Australian S.S. Co., Ltd, but no sale eventuated. After 1945 and no longer able to engage in domestic China coast and Yangtse operations, CNCo had to reposition as a matter of urgency. An Australian line now became a much more appealing proposition and there was now a good opening for additional passenger tonnage on the route. Of the two main prewar operators, E&A was heavily constrained by lack of capital and had replaced its three lost passenger-cargo liners (*Nankin*, *Nellore* and *Tanda*) with war-built standard cargo vessels. Japanese companies were still handicapped by prohibitions on overseas services and travel and were not investing in new passenger tonnage. Australian vessels such as *Kanimbla* and Burns Philp's Hong Kong-flag *Merkur*, still under government requisition, carried some commercial passengers to and from Japan on several voyages and *Merkur* subsequently continued for her owners Burns Philp with voyages to Hong Kong in 1949 and 1950.

In this setting, CNCo's decision to re-enter in its own right was an obvious one. In September 1946 and July 1947 orders were placed with Scott's Engineering & Shipbuilding Co. Ltd for two new ships. A stumbling block was that membership of the Australia Far East Shipping conference was refused. Nevertheless, CNCo's smaller *Shansi* had been chartered in May to AOL which with *Changte* and *Taiping* gave that company three ships. The Conference finally agreed to CNCo participation on condition that the service be a joint one with AOL.

CNCo needed much careful thought to design of the new pair, to be named *Changsha* and *Taiyuan*. AOL's *Changte* and *Taiping* were essentially China coasters with enlarged superstructures, only 368 feet in length and with four hatches. But ship design had moved on considerably and the warbuilt standard scale of 440 feet length with five hatches was now

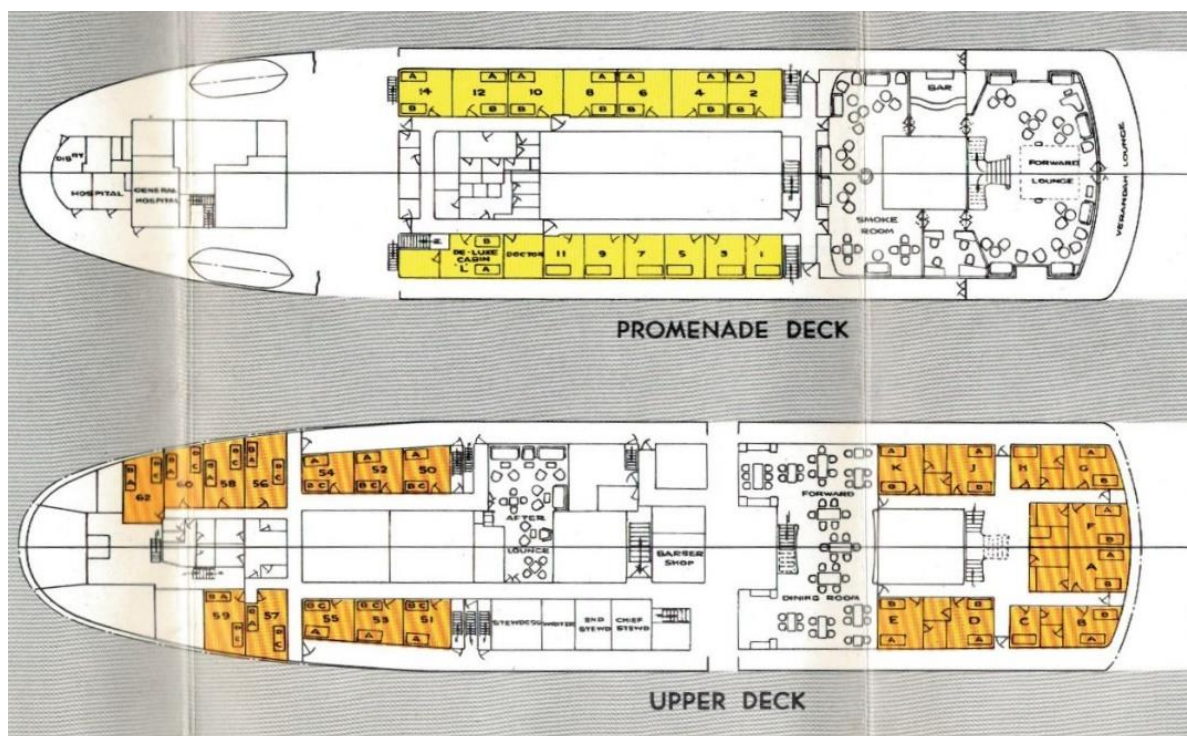
commonplace on international routes. What was decided upon was 440 foot motorships, five hatches, with a modestly sized but attention-getting passenger accommodation in the then standard mix of three classes – advertised as saloon class (40), tourist class (42), and a bunked third class (70), the latter principally for groups such as Russian refugees leaving China, and occasionally ship crews going to Australia or New Zealand to collect vessels which had been ‘sold East’. Both vessels were entrusted to affiliated builders Scotts at Greenock, which ensured a high standard of construction to match the extensive design work.

Thus the new ships did not look much like *Changte/Taiping* or the most recent CNCo passenger ships, the “S” class, which had not been designed around a First- class passenger clientele. Of quite built-up appearance, *Changsha* and *Taiyuan* had a large forecastle and prominent curved superstructure front plating and windows enclosing the main public rooms. Behind were open stanchions as part of a lengthy superstructure covering Nos 3, 4 and 5 hatches. There was a heavy 30-ton derrick at No.2 hatch that was stowed vertically, as were the after derricks.



Profile shown by TAIYUAN arriving at Hong Kong (undated company pamphlet).

In saloon class the layout was logical and spacious with a vestibule, lounge, smoke room verandah lounge on the promenade deck. Saloon class cabins for 40 passengers were located immediately aft of these public rooms. Below, the main deck housed the saloon dining room, a smaller lounge and the tourist class cabins, with the tourist dining room located a deck below. The dining rooms were air-conditioned, while the passenger and crew accommodation and public rooms were heated and ventilated by a Punkah Louvre System. On the ships’ maiden arrival at Hong Kong, a swimming pool was fitted adjacent to No.4 hatch.



Unlike the "A" class of 1925-30, the space for the 70 third class including a lounge and mess hall was tucked away out of sight in the forecastle.

*Changsha* and *Taiyuan* were also built as revenue-earning cargo carriers. Their 6,000 dwt gave them more than twice the cargo capacity of the prewar China coasters and the postwar 'S' class (1946-47) and 60% greater than the 3,850 tons of the more recent 'F'-class freighters *Funing* (1950) and *Fengning* (1951). Cargo space included a continuous tweendeck of standard type and height. Former officer David Walker recalls that it was continuous from No. 1 through to No. 3 hatch, and aft between Nos 4 and 5 hatches, with these two sections divided by watertight bulkheads. He also recalled that Nos 3 and 4 four tweendeck were refrigerated lockers and that No. 4 lower hold was also refrigerated, the total refrigerated space, as above, being almost 60,000 cubic feet.

The vessels were equipped with Doxford diesels built by the shipyard, which delivered trials speeds of 16.26 knots for Yard No.645 (*Changsha*) and 16.21 knots for No.646 (*Taiyuan*), though the engines were not being pushed to the full designed 6500 bhp. Further details of dimensions and layout are given at the end of this article.

*Changsha* was launched first, on 2 November 1948 by Lady Masson, wife of director Sir John Masson, and was handed over on 3 May 1949, immediately becoming the company's flagship. On 17 May she sailed from Liverpool on her maiden voyage under Commodore C.P. Miller on a Blue Funnel Line berth to Australia but, after developing a defect in an engine part, had to be towed into Gibraltar, where she was under repair until the 28th. Proceeding via Suez, she arrived at Adelaide on 27 June, then discharged through to Brisbane before returning to Melbourne on 18 July to begin loading cargo for China and Japan on her first AOL-CNCo sailing.





CHANGSHA arriving at Hobart (undated) with the plain black funnel marking as built (Reg Wilson/NAA)

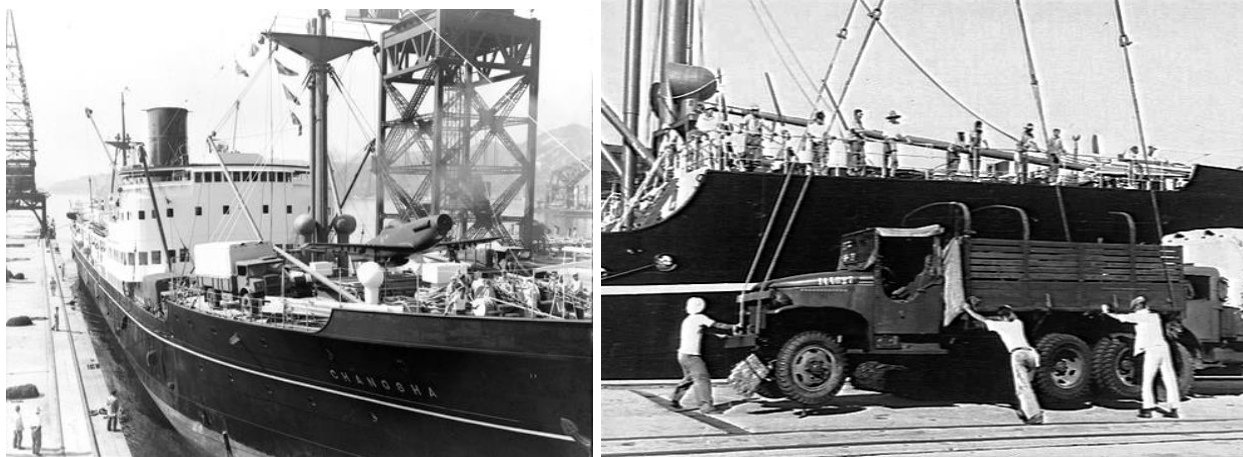
*Taiyuan* was launched on 12 May 1949 by Mrs J.K. Swire and delivered on 4 November 1949. Like *Changsha*, she loaded at Liverpool for Blue Funnel Line and sailed on 15 November with passengers via Las Palmas and Cape Town (bunkers) for Melbourne, where she arrived on 26 December for discharge and northbound loading. She wore a blue line around the hull instead of a white one, a fleet-wide sign of mourning instituted for one month following the death of Director G. Warren Swire.



TAIYUAN departing Cape Town, 2 December 1949, after a brief call for bunkers on maiden voyage to Australia. Cabin passengers at the rails and blue mourning band on the hull (R.M. Scott/Trevor Jones).

From late-1950 the two ships were able to facilitate Australia's contributions to the United Nations forces in the Korean War, transporting troops, weapons, aircraft, vehicles and food. Both vessels are mentioned in the press as carrying troops to Kure (for example in December 1950 *Taiyuan* was carrying 125 volunteers) in passenger cabins, enjoying the novelty of having

their cabins cleaned and beds made up by stewards. There was some resistance by waterside workers to the loading of weapons, but the authorities responded firmly. Given China's partiality and eventual participation in the war, presumably these voyages were not made via Hong Kong. But there was reporting that members of the crew assisted troops with Chinese language lessons.



CHANGSHA delivering Mustang fighter aircraft and trucks at Kure 2 September 1950 (AWM)



TAIYUAN at Kure December 1950 with troops from Australia and evident grey-painted hull (AWM).

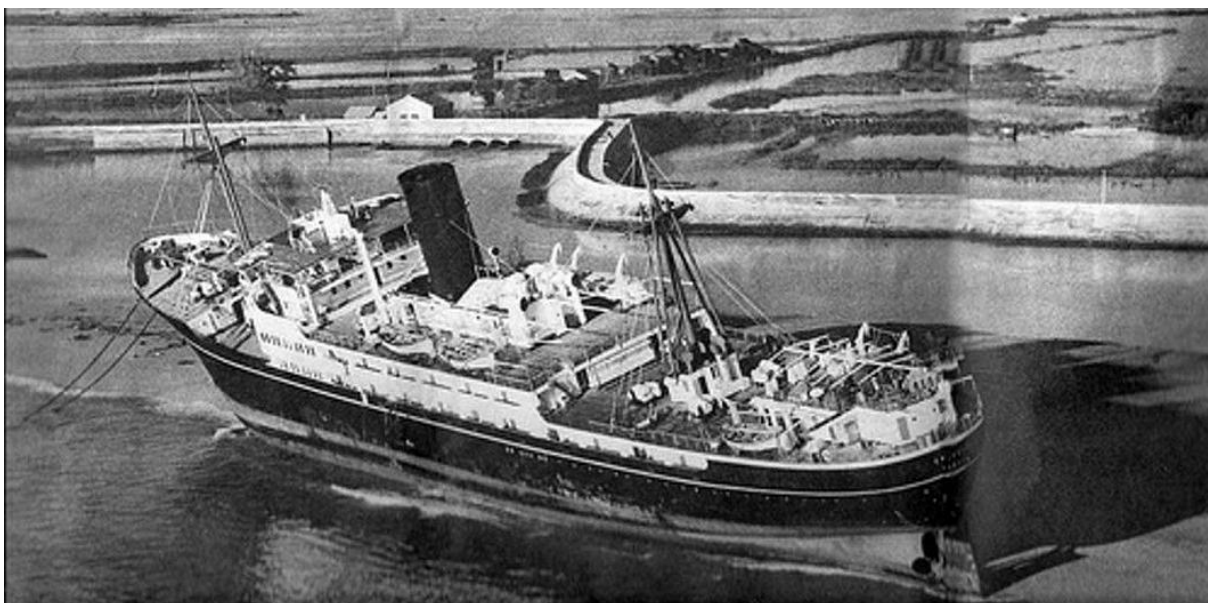
The AOL-CNCo service soon became an institution for Australian passengers travelling to and from the Far East and remained so throughout the 1950s. The ships sailed at approximately two-weekly intervals on the traditional clockwise run from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to Manila, Hong Kong and Japanese ports, then usually direct back to Australia. The only alternatives were passage in Jardines' *Eastern Queen* (26 first plus steerage), cargo ships carrying up to 12 passengers, or the much higher fare Qantas propellor aircraft which travelled to and from Japan via Hong Kong and intermediate stops for refueling. *Changsha* and *Taiyuan* thus virtually had the market to themselves until RIL (*Tjiwangi* and *Tjiluwah*, counter-clockwise) and Dominion Line (*Francis Drake* and *George Anson*, clockwise) started similar services at the beginning of the 1960s and then in 1964 E&A with the ex-Cunard intermediate *Aramac* (see

below). It was not just one-way passages. From the early years, Australians booked what were, in effect, a round trip cruise from Melbourne, the voyage taking ten or eleven weeks.

The ships turned around in Melbourne before loading northbound in Sydney and Brisbane but on inducement called at other Australian ports such as Hobart (seasonal fruit), Newcastle (wool) and Townsville (frozen meat) on inducement. From October 1959 Hobart became the southern terminus for a monthly northbound service. Rex Cox observes in 'Ships of Hobart Harbour (2014) that 'The pair became well known in Hobart...Their smart black and white colouring, combined with a tall black funnel, have (them) a certain elegance amongst the other cargo ships in port; though they were also passenger vessels, cargo was their main reason for being here'. Export manifests reveal that northbound cargo in the early years was very much small consignments of general cargo but wool to Japan increasingly became a staple, with stowage in the tweendeck. However, Charlotte Bleasdale, who made a voyage on *Taiyuan* with her family, recalls that the tweendeck below the bridge and trunked No. 3 hatch was empty and used for recreation, such as table tennis.

From time to time incidents happened. There were inevitably press reports of smuggling into Australia of contraband, not so much drugs as transistor radios, which in one case were found hidden in the crosstree of the mast. In September 1957 there was an attempt on *Taiyuan* to smuggle several Chinese into Sydney, although two of them passed away when crammed into in a small locker.

On 28 March 1956 *Changsha* went aground in Tokyo Bay in clear weather but was refloated shortly afterwards. A more serious casualty on 26 September 1959 involved the ship being blown high and dry onto a beach near Yokkaichi during the Ise Bay typhoon 'Vera'. Salvage operations by Nippon Salvage commenced on 1 October but, because a channel had to be dug from the beach to deep water, it was not until 11 December that the ship was finally refloated, and was then towed to a shipyard in Yokohama, arriving on 20 December. While still at Yokkaichi on 17 December, a 90-minute engine-room fire caused extensive damage to wiring and insulation. After consultation with a feng shui expert it was found that a Buddha statue in the lounge was a land Buddha always wanting the ship to go to land, so it was replaced by a sea Buddha and the ship's fortunes thereafter markedly improved. A description with photos including the CNCo salvage report is at [http://wikiswire.com/wiki/Changsha III](http://wikiswire.com/wiki/Changsha_III).



CHANGSHA aground at Yokkaichi, 18 degree list (Wikiswire).

On 18-19 September 1960 when bound for Melbourne, *Changsha* drifted for fourteen hours off the coast Victorian coast after a shaft bearing had failed. Engineers were able to make a temporary repair that allowed the ship to proceed unaided from Cape Liptrap to Melbourne, berthing there on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

In 1961 *Taiyuan* suffered an engine breakdown when attempting to depart Sydney for Hong Kong. One of the cylinder lubricator quills had leaked, allowing cooling water to accumulate in the cylinder. Once the problem had been identified, provisional repairs were made in Sydney, but as a precaution it was decided to replace key components, including the crankshaft and web, at Taikoo Dockyard.

Around 1961, changes were made by Taikoo Dockyard to the passenger accommodation, which was rearranged as 82, First Class. The now redundant Second Class dining room was converted to a cocktail lounge and air-conditioning was extended to a number of the staterooms. Extra ports of call were introduced, some regular, some on inducement, including (northbound) Tarakan (Indonesian Borneo), Kaohsiung and/or Keelung (Taiwan), Naha (Okinawa) and Pusan (Korea). The service became 16 sailings per year, then being reduced to eight per year after the withdrawal of *Changte* and *Taiping* in 1961. Following E&A's introduction of the larger and faster *Aramac* on the clockwise service in the second half of 1964, in early 1965 the CNCo line was abbreviated to Australia/ Port Moresby/ Manila/ Keelung/ Hong Kong.

In June 1969 *Changsha* was sold to Pacific International Lines of Singapore (see below). CNCo's increasing prominence in South Pacific trades led to *Taiyuan* being refitted by Taikoo Dockyard for a 'cruise' service between Eastern Australian ports and Fiji which lasted from 1970 until around the middle of 1972, after which the ship also was sold to Pacific International Lines.





TAIYUAN in the revised Swire colours at Hobart 5 June 1967, two rows of portholes indicating the extensive forecastle accommodation (Noel Brown/R. Cox).



TAIYUAN at Brisbane in later years (John Wilson).

While both ships were never very profitable for CNCo, having perhaps too much passenger space and their schedules often not allowing enough time for optimal loading of cargo, they did

provide a comfortable, reliable and much-needed service for Australians in an age when sea travel was still necessary, carrying on from those such as E&A dating from the 1860s and NYK from the late-1890s. They certainly helped to re-establish China Navigation's recognition and reputation in Australia, and the company has since gone from strength to strength.

## The PIL era

Now one of the world's top-10 container shipping companies, Pacific International Lines (PIL) was established in Singapore in March 1967 by Y.C. Chang (1918-2020) – Zhang Yun Chung in Mandarin or Teo Woo Tiong in Hokkien – who had grown up on the small offshore Chinese island of Quemoy (Kinmen/Jinmen) before in late 1937 fleeing with his physician father from the Japanese occupation to Malacca. At the end of the war he moved to Singapore and tried several ventures before in the 1950s becoming General Manager of Singapore-based Kie Hock Shipping Co. Ltd, which he developed it into a substantial regional operation. By 1967 he was an experienced and very astute shipping manager and his timing in founding his own business was opportune. Singapore had become independent from Malaysia in August 1965 and shipping had resumed between Singapore and Indonesia in mid-1966 after its suppression during Sukarno's campaign of Confrontation against Malaysia. Chang had big ambitions and, as he approached fifty years of age, was a man in a hurry. He started out with the 2800-dwt ex-KPM freighters *Siberoet* (*Kota Singa*) and *Sinabang* (*Kota Naga*), China Navigation's Australia-Papua New Guinea traders *Soochow* (*Kota Ratu*) and *Shansi* (*Kota Rajah*), two warbuilt FS-type (*Kota Intan* and *Kota Jade*) for the Jakarta line, and the 8,700-dwt ex-RIL *Straat Malakka* (*Kota Timur*). During 1968 he added the 'Si'-class sisterships *Sibigo* (*Kota Machan*) and *Sigli* (*Kota Eagle*), the slightly smaller ex-KPM *Sanana* (*Kota Bintang*) and the 12,280-dwt ex Rotterdam Lloyd freighter *Slamat* (*Kota Makmur*) with her sister *Mataram* (*Kota Jaya*) following a few months later. The smaller ships traded mainly with Bangkok and Indonesia, while the larger ones were used to open freight lines from the Straits to Karachi and the Persian Gulf and to East Africa and the Red Sea.

In April 1969 PIL registered Pacific International Lines (Hong Kong) Ltd and in mid-1969 bought *Changsha* for service between Penang/Singapore and Hong Kong/Whampoa, a line he had opened the previous year with the much smaller ex CNCo *Kota Ratu* (*ex Soochow*) and *Kota Rajah* (*ex Shansi*). On 1 July PIL advertised that *Changsha* was to be registered in Singapore as *Kota Panjang*. After delivery in August, she was refitted to increase her passenger capacity from around 150 to as many as 500. This involved stripping out the refrigerated compartments from the after tweendeck and fitting rows of double bunks along with extra toilets, wash-places and galley/mess stations, and fitting two extra lifeboats. Such accommodation suited those who wished to travel cheaply and/or with a significant quantity of goods or luggage.

As a point of nomenclature, it may be noted that PIL ships used the Malay prefix 'Kota' ('city') combined with an eclectic mix of Malay and English words that did not necessarily denote actual cities. *Kota Panjang* ('Long City') and *Kota Sahabat* ('Friendly City') were such examples. *Kota Panjang* was represented by the Chinese characters 長城 which were painted on either side below the bridge and read as 'Chang Cheng' ('Long City') but also, more literally, as 'Long

Castle' with the specific and auspicious meaning of The Great Wall. PIL's name itself was also not quite the same in English and Chinese because Pacific International Lines was rendered in Chinese as 太平船务有限公司, which actually translated as Pacific [Tai Ping/Peng] Shipping Co. Ltd without the word 'International'. Notwithstanding, the contraction PIL, which was painted in big letters on the funnels and used in all advertising, and in the cable address as PILSHIP, soon became a well recognised trade-name.

*Kota Panjang* took up the running in September 1969 in a three-weekly service. Now resplendent with a gleaming white hull and superstructure, the ship had never looked more impressive. Compared with PIL's main opposition of Hong Kong-based Shun Cheong S.N. Co., *Kota Panjang* was bigger and better than their newer 4625-grt *Taipoosek* (1962), though rather shaded by the 11,651-grt *Taipooshan* (1948), formerly Elder Dempster's UK-West Africa liner *Apapa*, which in late January 1969 had inaugurated a 'fortnightly express service' (actually two sailings per month) from Hong Kong to Singapore and Penang, then a loading call at Singapore and back to Hong Kong. *Taipooshan* was fully air-conditioned for first-class passengers (245 as built plus 24 second-class and 150 deck) with pool and cinema. Whampoa calls were not advertised but apparently were made inbound from Singapore. PIL did not advertise *Kota Panjang* at all in the English-language press, reflecting the fact that the status of the People's Republic was still a sensitive matter and Singapore was holding off granting recognition pending Indonesia's deciding to do so, which did not happen until 1989. PIL probably did not want complications with its Indonesian business, so the Straits-China service was kept 'below the radar'. It is said that *Kota Panjang* made several voyages from China to Dar-es-Salaam with railway workers to build the Chinese-funded railway to Zambia. If so, this would probably have been during 1973 while *Kota Singapura* (ex *Tjiluwah*) was blacklisted in Fremantle and temporarily transferred to the Singapore-China run.



KOTA PANJANG ('Great Wall') ex CHANGSHA at Singapore (Chris Howell@shipspotting.com).





KOTA PANJANG in Singapore Roads. The only evidence of the new third-class passenger accommodation in the after tweendeck is the extra pair of lifeboats (R. Priest/NAA).

By advertisement dated 15 July 1972 PIL announced that it had become the owner of *Taiyuan* as well and intended to register her under the Singaporean flag as *Kota Sahabat*. Just why Chang decided to purchase *Taiyuan* is unknown. Logically she would have become a consort for *Kota Panjang* between the Straits and Hong Kong/Whampoa but that did not happen, perhaps because some understanding was reached with rival Shun Cheong S.N. Co. Consequently she did not undergo a similar conversion to increase her passenger capacity, though PIL probably did strip out the refrigeration chambers from the after tweendeck. Instead, her first reported movement was an advertised sailing in late November in PIL's regular line to Karachi and the Persian Gulf. On return she sailed through to Tianjin, then in April sailed again for Karachi and the Gulf. In September she took a sailing from Hong Kong (probably also Whampoa) for Mombasa (13 October), then via Port Sudan back to Singapore (23 November). That November PIL purchased *Tjiwangi*, sistership to *Kota Singapura* ex *Tjiluwah*, to become the cruise liner *Kota Bali*. The option of increasing *Kota Sahabat*'s passenger capacity thereby seems to have lapsed. Her subsequent employment in cargo trades suggests it was unlikely that sufficient crew were engaged to utilise even her existing passenger cabins.

After the end of 1973, *Kota Sahabat* seems to have been deployed more or less a tramp. Movements reported in Lloyd's Shipping Index show frequent loadings from Bangkok and Rangoon, which would be bagged rice, often for Hong Kong or Singapore, sometimes for Persian Gulf ports. In mid-December 1975 she sailed from Rangoon for Padang, West Sumatra, then in February 1976 loaded salt at Tuticorin. By mid-year she was back in the Persian Gulf (Basra), in August loaded again at Tuticorin for Singapore, then on 26 October arrived in Dar-es-Salaam from Indonesia (and China?). Her return voyage via Aden would be her last as a general cargo ship, although her passenger ship structure remained intact.

Although Shun Cheong's *Taipooshan* made her last sailing from Singapore to Hong Kong in mid-February 1975, PIL did not seize the opportunity to bring in *Kota Sahabat* as a second passenger



liner. However, in the following year PIL decided to enter the growing market for livestock shipment to the Middle East, now in the midst of the OPEC oil boom. No longer being required as a back-up passenger liner, *Kota Sahabat* was the obvious candidate for conversion because of her capacious tweendeck, so after arriving at Singapore from Aden on 14 December 1976, she was put in the hands of Keppel Dockyard. Unlike the multi-deck vessels that emerged from later conversions, not much structural work was done but, as the author later sadly observed, the fine passenger accommodation was gutted. The most complicated and slowest part of the fit-out was the installation of ventilation, lighting and plumbing along with the associated electricals and fire systems. Externally *Kota Sahabat* was not much changed apart from the many prominent tall ventilators. The ship emerged about two months later with capacity for around 13,000 head of sheep on three decks plus hold space for feed.

After storing and crewing, *Kota Sahabat* sailed from Singapore in late February 1977 for the port of Bunbury, south of Fremantle, Western Australia, and departed from there on 11 March with a first loading for Abu Dhabi. The concept was for a monthly service from Western Australian loading ports for the Middle East but on occasions *Kota Sahabat* also loaded from the East Coast. In November 1978 she loaded from Newcastle (NSW), then in September 1979 from Hobart. Rex Cox records that she arrived a day late and after being out of radio contact after passing Cape Leeuwin in a gale, necessitated an aerial search. Generator problems then delayed her departure, a further sign of worsening unreliability.



KOTA SAHABAT looking smart at Singapore on 1 March 1978. Livestock pens on the after hatches and poop and even on the Boat Deck. The tall ventilators are new additions, as are the similarly buff-painted, square fodder lifts (Chris Gee).



KOTA SAHABAT approaching the berth at Hobart, 16 September 1979 (Kingsley Barr).



KOTA SAHABAT at Hobart on her second last voyage, 17 September 1979, the hull but not the upper works showing obvious signs of neglect (R. Cox)



Last known view of KOTA SAHABAT, on final departure from Fremantle 4 December 1979 (Chris Gee).

On 22 November 1979 *Kota Sahabat* returned to Hobart for a second loading, but this would be her last trip from that port. After return to Singapore, she made one final loading from Fremantle, departing on 4 December, and then was briefly laid up in the roads until sold to breakers for the very good price of US\$193 per light ton and departing on 20 February 1980 for Kaohsiung, where she arrived on 10 March. Demolition began ten days later by Chin Shew Hwa Enterprise Co. Ltd. It would have been a smelly job, a rather ignominious end.

*Kota Panjang* did not last much longer. By the end of 1980 passenger ship owners were on notice that revised Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO, subsequently IMO) rules would come into force in a year's time and mandate higher standards for what hitherto had been known as 'deck passengers'. Rather than upgrade the 31-year-old *Kota Panjang*, in February 1981 PIL instead bought from Compania Trasmediterranea for US\$1,170,000 the 7760-grt Spanish-flag liner *Ciudad de Pamplona* (1964), which had been built for its line between northern Spain and Spanish Guinea via the Canary Islands. Delivered at Las Palmas on 30 March 1981 and renamed *Kota Singapura* (II). After a quick docking, she took over the China service in May 1981, operating to a fairly leisurely monthly frequency. *Kota Panjang* was briefly laid up in Singapore Roads before being sold to Pakistani breakers and arriving at Karachi on 16 June for delivery to Gadani Beach, where demolition began promptly on the 22<sup>nd</sup> by Dilawar & Son Ltd.

By mid-1981 the *Kota Panjang* ex *Changsha* was 32 years old. Of a leading design when delivered in 1949 for the Australia-China-Japan trade, by the time of her passing she represented a bygone era. Coincidentally, the year PIL sent her to the breakers was also the year that Y.C. Chang decided to switch to containerships, beginning in March 1981 with charter of the 6200-grt *Kota Sahabat* (II) ex *Strathkeith* (1977) for the Red Sea line. Nine years later her sister *Chengtu* ex *Strathkeith* (1978) would join the PIL fleet as *Kota Panjang* (II).

*Kota Singapura* (II) ex *Ciudad de Pamplona* was of almost the same size and speed as *Kota Panjang* ex *Changsha* but considerably more modern, carrying only 200 berthed passengers in fully air-conditioned accommodation. Nevertheless, after a couple of years it was apparent that a passenger line was no longer commercially viable. On 24 January 1984, after less than three



years, the twenty-year old vessel was laid up in Singapore Roads and lay there for almost two years before being delivered to breakers at Whampoa on 23 December 1985.



PIL's KOTA SINGAPURA (II) ex CIUDAD de PAMPLONA in Singapore Roads, June 1981, still being repainted topsides after her first roundtrip to Hong Kong. The old name has barely been painted out (Chris Gee).

### Dimensions and Interior details

The 'Commercial Australia' supplement to the 'Daily Commercial News and Shipping List' of 20 July 1949 carried a very full description of *Changsha* and her fit-out. This is transcribed below with the cabin plan and related images, in colour from a 1960s company pamphlet 'M.S. CHANGSHA M.S. TAIYUAN // FIRST CLASS SERVICE BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND THE FAR EAST' and in black-and-white from the State Library of NSW, taken by professional photographer R. Wolfe on the maiden voyage of *Changsha*.

### NEW MOTOR VESSEL CHANGSHA FOR AUSTRALIA-CHINA TRADE

Now in Australia on her maiden voyage is the latest addition to the China Navigation Co's. fleet m.s. Changsha, which is now loading for China and Japan for the joint service of the Australian-Oriental Line and the China Navigation Co.

Built by Scotts Shipbuilding and Engineering Co., Ltd., of Greenock, the Changsha, a passenger, general and refrigerated cargo liner, is of the following dimensions:

Length B.P. 414 ft.  
Moulded breadth 57 ft.  
Moulded depth 33 ft. to upper deck.  
Gross tonnage 7413.62.  
Nett tonnage 4104.43.



Light draft 11 ft. 9 ins.  
Traded draft 23 ft. 63 ins.  
Deadweight capacity 6065 ton of 20 cwt.  
Fuel capacity 769 tons  
Cargo space — general cargo bale capacity 6235 tons of 40 cu. ft.  
Chilled or frozen cargo 57,346 cu. ft.  
Cargo quick-freeze 692 cu. ft.  
Saloon class passengers 40  
Tourist class passengers 42  
Third class passengers 70  
Officers and crew 116.

There is a boat deck, promenade deck— running aft to the stern, upper deck, upper and lower 'tween decks and lower holds. The captain's quarters and deck and wireless officers' accommodation are in a house at forward end of the bridge deck, with wheelhouse, chartroom and wireless room above. Saloon passengers are on the promenade and upper deck, tourist class passengers on upper deck further aft, and engineers on upper deck portside. Crew accommodation is on upper deck and upper 'tween deck aft. Third class passengers' lounge, mess room, and sleeping quarters are in the forecastle.

**Vestibule.** Panelled in pigmented birch with a staircase in teak, leading to the lounge on the promenade deck. The illumination is by flush fitting ceiling lights with silver bronze frames and tinted unsplinterable glass.

**Dining Saloon.** The passages leading from the vestibule to the Dining Saloon are also panelled in pigmented birch, and one enters the Dining Saloon through walnut swing doors with full length glazed panels decorated by sandblasted vertical lines. The saloon is panelled in finely figured weathered sycamore, whilst the sideboards, serving tables, dining tables, and chairs are of walnut. The ceiling is panelled in pigmented white birch, as are all the 1st. class Public Rooms. Great attention has been paid to the lighting of the Dining Saloon. Fluorescent tubes in the natural colour are used, being contained in large circular fittings which have been specially designed to fit around and incorporate the air-conditioning distributors, thus reducing the number of projections from the ceiling, at the same time giving good light and air distribution. The saloon is designed to seat 56 persons at tables seating groups of 6, 4 and 2. Particular attention has been paid to the accessibility around the tables for easiness of service.



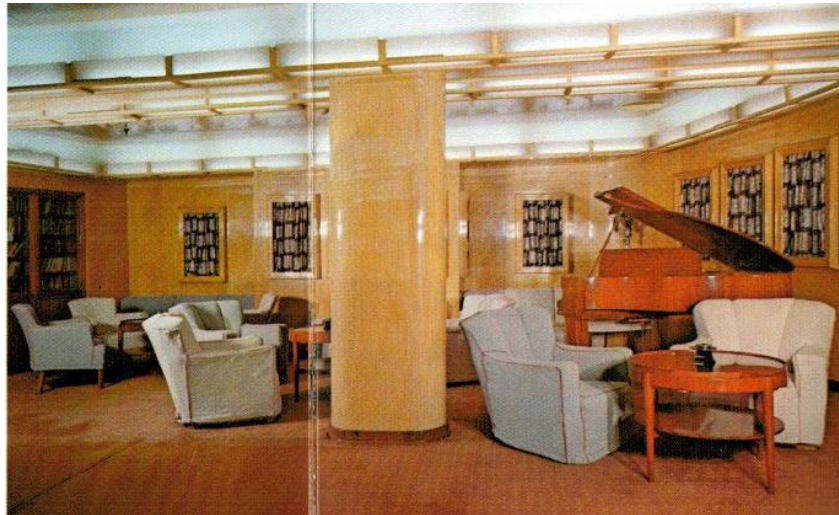
**Smoke Room.** The Smoke Room is entered by teak swing doors, with glazed panels similar to the Dining Room doors. The furniture and panelling is in weathered oak with pigmented birch ceiling. Lighting is by fluorescent tubes contained in a frame with satin nickle finish and ply glass.



**The Bar** is panelled in walnut, with walnut counter, top covered in beige 'Korkoid'. Front and canopy of bar is constructed with fluted walnut panels, inset with vertical contrasting lines of sycamore. Panelling behind the barcounter is pigmented birch, the light colour of which gives a more spacious feeling

**The Lounge.** Panelled in pigmented birch-walls, ceiling and column casings — this gives an air of spaciousness and coolness. Each window has fitted sycamore surrounds to tone, which frames the curtains and gives a tidy and clean finish to the rooms. There is a large teak bookcase, the doors of which have glazed panels with sandblasted design to match the entrance doors. Occasional tables in teak have concealed fittings to hold glasses as well as a raised surround. The chairs and settees are covered in tapestry to tone with the general colour scheme. A cinema screen is ingeniously concealed

in the culling and, when required, can be pulled down like a roller blind. A feature of the lounge is the illuminated ceiling. This is designed in three bays, incorporating fluorescent, lighting in a glazed cornice treatment. Independent switches enable control to be exercised of the amount of light required.



**The staircase** from the vestibule below leads into the aft end of the lounge. The aft bulkhead is panelled with mirror glass, the centre of which is an electric clock of special design. A glazed teak screen on the starboard side separates the lounge from the writing alcove. The writing alcove, panelled to match the lounge with the same carpet treatment, is fitted with four built-in writing desks with teak tops. Each desk has a fitment on the lefthand side, which forms a combined stationery rack and trough for concealed desk lamp. All carpets are fixed by press studs for quick removal for cleaning purposes, when ship is in dock. All the curtain fabrics used are Heal's private design.

**A spacious verandah lounge** across the forepart of the promenade deck, with large, fixed and sliding brass framed windows, is furnished with woven cane and plastic chairs and tables.

There are eight two- berth and two one-berth **cabins** with private bathroom, at the forward end of the upper deck, and nine two-berth cabins and six one-berth cabins on the promenade deck. The furniture, in light oak, includes wardrobe and compactum for each passenger, cot beds, a dressing table and bedside tables in one unit, with Warerite Splashback and Roanoid fittings, a dressing stool and armchair. Portable cots for babies are available, if required.



CHANGSHA: Verandah deck, maiden voyage (R. Wolfe/SLNSW).

**The barber's shop**, elegantly panelled in black and white Warerite, is air-conditioned.

**The nursery** on the promenade deck, is painted in blue and cream with 'Walt Disney' motives and red patterned chintz curtains; there is also a playpen on the deck outside.

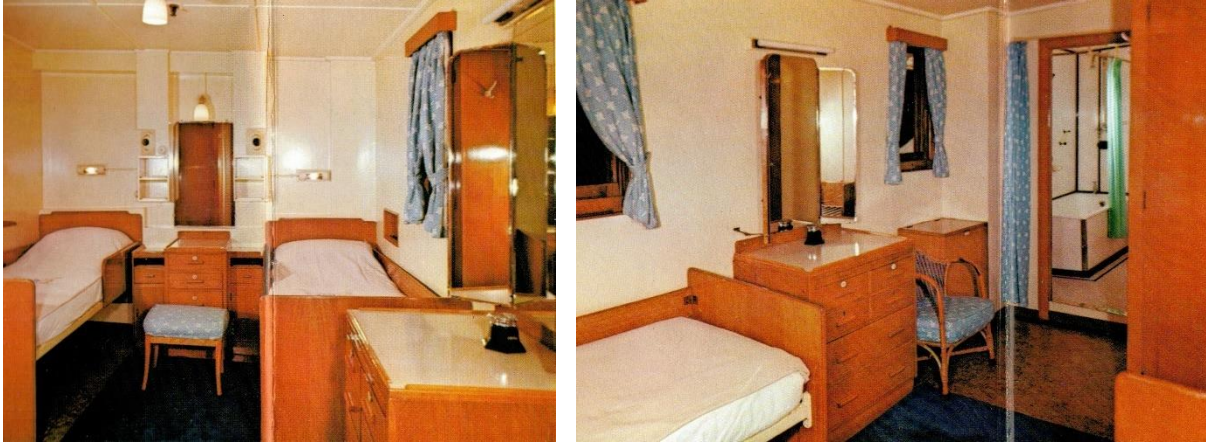
**The tourist class** passengers are accommodated on the upper deck aft with their dining-room on the main deck below. The accommodation is entered from the external side alleyways, both port and starboard, and comprises six two-berth state-rooms, each with an extra pulman berth over, six four-berth state-rooms, and internal alleyways port and starboard, giving access to tourist class lounge and on the starboard side to the stairway leading down to the dining saloon.

**Seating** for 42 persons is arranged in the dining saloon at tables to accommodate four, six and eight persons. The walls are painted light cream, stipple-finished, divided into panels by Slavonian oak strips, and the panelled ceiling flat white stipple finished. A sideboard and dumb waiters, provided to facilitate the service of meals, are of Slavonian oak, as is also the fully panelled stairway from the upper deck.

**The lounge** is served by a bar and service pantry and is furnished with occasional table and tub chairs, also a waiting table fitted in an alcove. The walls are panelled in figured sycamore relieved by Australian walnut strips and the panelled ceiling is white painted stippled finish.

**In the cabins**, furniture, includes double compactum wardrobe, double and single dressing chests, wash basin with splash back and toilet fittings, and two berth-chairs per room.





L: Saloon class double cabin (no en suite) and (R) with en suite.

**Mechanical ventilation** is arranged to all state-rooms, public rooms and lavatories, the temperature of the incoming air being capable of being raised as required. The dining-saloon is connected to the air-conditioning plant.

**Cinema equipment** can be provided in saloon class lounge, boat deck and tourist class sports deck.

**Broadcast equipment** for wireless or gramophone programmes and public address system is installed through out the passenger accommodation.

**A swimming tank** will be fitted at No. 4 hatch on vessel's arrival in Hong Kong.

The passengers, officers, engineers, and crew's accommodation and public rooms, with exclusion of the first and second dining saloons, are **heated** and **ventilated** by the Thermotank Punkah Louvre and Distributor System, all to the M.O.T. requirements. The air is finally delivered in the cabins and public rooms by punkah louvres and air distributors, while in the crew's galleys, hospital, crew's baths, w.c's. and wash-places, non-return typo louvres distribute the air, all fitted on trunks at ceiling level.

**The cargo spaces**, eight in all, are arranged in the No. 2 upper- 'tween-deck, No. 3 lower 'tweendeck, and No. 3 hold, and total 58,038 cubic feet. With the exception of No. 3 hold, which is arranged for the carriage of frozen meat, the cargo spaces are designed for maintaining temperatures of 12/11 deg. F. to 38/40 dog. F. There is also a quick-frozen cargo room of 1300 cubic feet maintained at minus 5 deg. P., dealt with by a 3 BHP Freon compressor working in conjunction with a direct expansion type air cooler.'

**All weather decks** are sheathed. There are five hatches, Nos. 3, 4 and 5 having hardwood flush-deck covers, giving ample deck space for games.

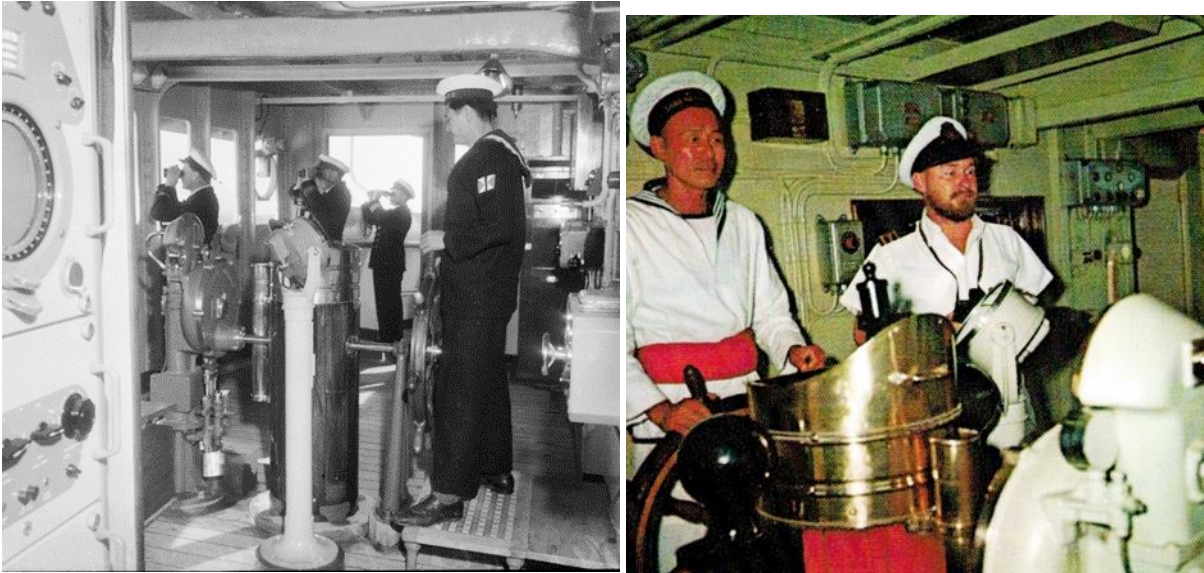
**Stewarts and Lloyd's** five or 10 tons tubular steel derricks, with electric winches by Carron, are fitted at all hatches. There is a 30-ton derrick at No. 2 hatch.

**The radio station** consists of a main - emergency sender, normally running from the ship's mains; main receiver for medium and high frequencies and auto alarm with electrical selector. Under emergency

conditions, the sender and receiver act as emergency equipment and are run from the accumulator battery.

**Navigational radio aids** include direction-finder and radar. The direction-finder and radar. The radio rotating loop aerial type and associated receiver installed in the radio room.

**The 'Seascan' radar** equipment has been a type approved by the Ministry of Transport, and the installation consists of completely enclosed rotating aerial mounted, on a relatively low house situated on the centre line of the vessel, in the middle of the monkey island.



R: CHANGSHA, wheelhouse (R. Wolfe/SLNSW). L : European 1<sup>st</sup> Officer, Chinese quartermaster.



CHANGSHA, maiden voyage. R: Boat drill (R. Wolfe/SLNSW), L: engine controls (R.Wolfe/SLNSW).





Lounge and cocktail room on TAIYUAN, converted from Second Class dining room in late 1961 (Wikiswire).

## Sources

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