

KPM's *Speelman* (1890) and Her Long Afterlife in China

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First posted 7 April 2021
This Update 23 December 2022

Ships built for tropical waters seldom ended up in northeast Asia. A remarkable exception was Speelman (1890), a small interisland steamer that comprised one of the famous KPM's original interisland fleet in Indonesia. Sold in 1923 to Indo-China, two years later it passed to owners in Manchuria, survived the Sino-Japanese War and in 1949 disappeared behind the 'bamboo curtain'. We have discovered photographic evidence to suggest that the ship survived in PRC service into the 1970s, thereby becoming the longest surviving unit of the original KPM fleet and in fact outlasting the KPM itself. This post was completed in early 2016 as an article for publication that never eventuated and has now been revised to include new detail that has since come to hand and to bring in many more images as a photo-story. Detailed coverage of the pre-1949 North China fleets can be found on this site under the Little Pohai list and subsequent PRC shipping under the Shanghai Bureau's 'Min Chu' series and Dalian Bureau lists. We are grateful to Martin Lindenborn for his advice on Speelman, as also for the use of the photos as acknowledged below.



Hai-Chang ex Speelman moored in the Liao River at Yingkou (Newchwang) in 1930s (postcard, SK colln).

Introduction

On 1 January 1891 the recently formed Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (Royal Packet Company) took over the mail contract for the Netherlands East Indies, now Indonesia. Until the 1950s this company, best known simply as the K.P.M., would be as vital an institution there as B.I. (British India Steam Navigation Company) was in India. As it happened the KPM's predecessor, the Nederlandsch Indies S.N. Co. (NISN), which held the mail contract from 1866 to 1890, was a Dutch-registered B.I. affiliate. When the new contract for the period from 1891 was put out to tender in 1886, principals of the two Dutch homeward lines, the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland (SMN) and Rotterdamsche Lloyd (RL) lobbied strenuously against the British firm, arguing that it was a Trojan horse for British interests in Singapore. Notwithstanding that they submitted the higher tender, in mid-1888 they won the contract and shortly afterwards formed the KPM. It would grow into a massive and well-run enterprise that not only monopolised shipping within the Indonesian archipelago but in due time would open deepsea lines to ports as far afield as Australia, Africa and South America.

Although the KPM's fleet and operations have been well documented, almost nothing has been written about the original fleet of thirteen ships and the origins of their design. This article begins with the configuration of this fleet and its pedigree before reviewing the fates and disposal of the ships and, in many cases, their remarkable longevity. It then resolves most the mystery of what happened to the last survivor, *Speelman*, the only unit of the original fleet not accounted for in any fleet history or database.

Origins of the KPM Fleet

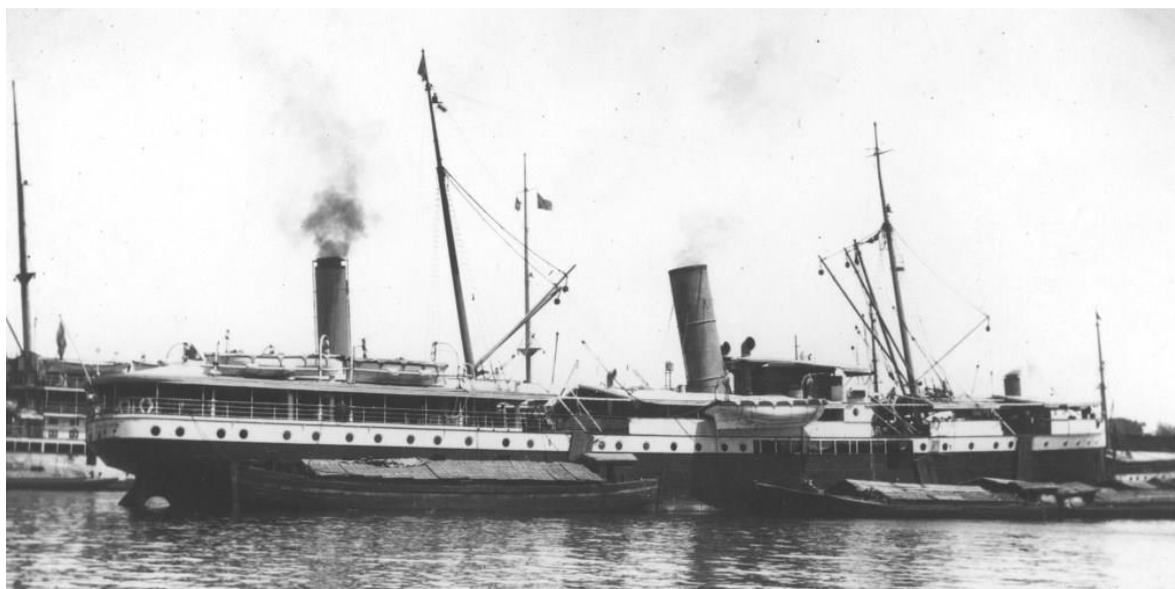
According to Joop à Campo's magisterial work on the early period of the KPM to 1914, in 1888 under the draft agreement with the Dutch government it was intended that 14 new steamers would be built: four A-type of 1200 gross tons, six B-type of 900 tons, three C-type of 500 tons and one composite steamer of 500 tons, all designed to carry both passengers and cargo. Agreement to take over most of the NISN fleet allowed one fewer vessel to be built, thus in non-nautical parlance a baker's dozen, and the configuration was adjusted to allow four types. All tenders were let to Dutch yards and construction began early in 1889 to a deadline that all ships should be delivered before the end of the following year to be ready for service in the archipelago by 1 January 1891.

The accompanying Table sets out the ships by class in the order by which they were delivered. As originally intended, there were four 'A'-type of 1300-1400 grt (990 dwt) with a speed of 12 knots, all built by 'de Schelde' at Vlissingen (Flushing); they were rated to carry about 30 cabin passengers in two classes plus around 800 deck passengers. From the Nederlandsche Stoomboot Mij at Rotterdam came two slightly smaller 'A' steamers of 1280 grt (830 dwt) but with an extra half knot in speed for the Batavia-Singapore mail line; this pair had more cabin accommodation (56) and less deck space (560). The Koninklijke Fabriek voor Stoomwezen (Royal Factory for Steam Machinery) in Amsterdam delivered three 1085 grt (700 dwt) 'B' steamers (39 cabin, 628 deck) of only 10 knot speed. Smallest were three two-hatch 'C' steamers of only around 650 grt (450 dwt, 19 cabin), one from the yard of J.& K. Smit at Kinderdijk and two from 'De Maas' at Rotterdam. The other ship and first to be delivered was the composite iron-framed steamer *Camphuys*, a pretty, clipper-bowed

yacht designed as the official flagship for use by the Director as required for inspection cruises. In total the 13 ships had a deadweight of 9,070 tons.

Table 1. The Original KPM Fleet: Builders, dimensions and disposal

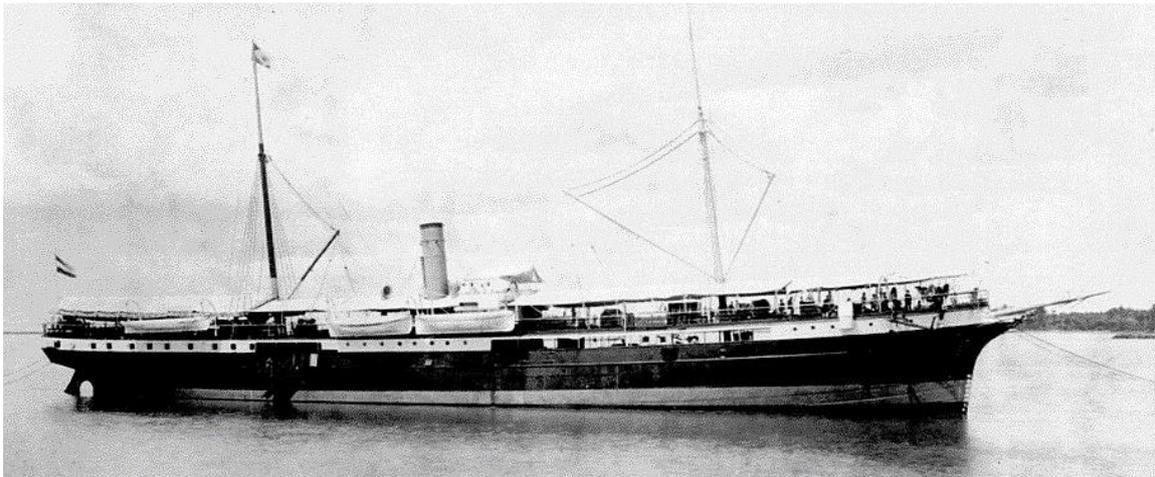
Ship	Year	Builder	Grt	Length (b.p.)	Disposal
Both	1890	De Schelde	1383	259	1931 hulked
Reael	1890	De Schelde	1383	258.5	1932 scrap
Maetsuijcker	1890	De Schelde	1390	258.5	1920 hulked, 1931 scrap
Coen	1890	De Schelde	1386	258.4	1933 scrap
De Carpentier	1890	NSM	1283	234.5	1924 hulked, 1932 scrap
Van Diemen	1890	NSM	1284	234.5	1924 sold; 1945 mined
Reijnst	1890	Kon. Fabriek	1085	220.8	1891 wrecked
Van Goens	1890	Kon. Fabriek	1085	220.1	1923 sold; 1936 scrap
Speelman	1890	Kon. Fabriek	1083	219.8	1923 sold; 1976? scrap
Camphuys	1890	Huygens	723	174.8	1902 wrecked
Van Riebeeck	1890	Smit	664	166.8	1901 sold; 1927/8 scrap
Reijniersz	1890	De Maas	642	169.3	1907 CTL, scrap
Swaerdecroon	1891	De Maas	661	169.2	1906 sold; 1945 mined



A late view of *De Carpentier*, sister of *Van Diemen* (both 1890)
[\(https://vanderworp.org/en/kpm-1903-1932/\)](https://vanderworp.org/en/kpm-1903-1932/).

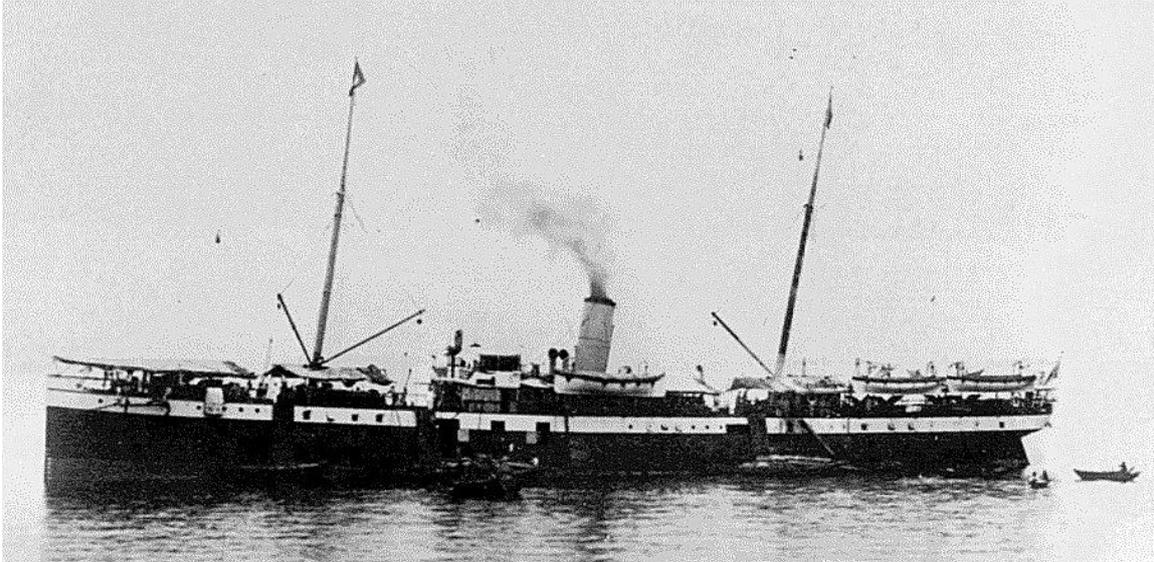
Except for the graceful *Camphuys*, the new ships were not new KPM designs but modifications of tried and proven designs of the NISN and its Scottish builders. When the NISN won the monopoly of the interisland mail routes in 1863, in somewhat similar circumstances to the KPM in 1888, its initial fleet was cobbled together from hastily acquired second-hand ships combined with still serviceable vessels from the former mail fleet of Willem Cores de Vries. The first ships to be designed and built for NISN and, perhaps surprisingly, not after any B.I. model, were *Gouverneur Generaal Mijer* (960/1871), *Prins Alexander* (1099/1872), the short-lived *Willem Kronprins der Nederlanden*

(959/1873) and *Amboina* (917/1874). All four were built in Glasgow, the first and third by Charles Connell and the second and fourth by Blackwood & Gordon. Despite small variations in dimensions, they were similar vessels. A light awning deck connected forecabin, the midships housing above the engine room and saloon cabins aft to create well ventilated spaces for deck passengers around the hatches. Above this there was no superstructure apart from flying bridge, skylights and boats but temporary canvas awnings could be rigged the full length of the ship to give protection from the tropical sun. With clipper bows and a good rake to the two masts and funnel, they were stylish as well as practical.



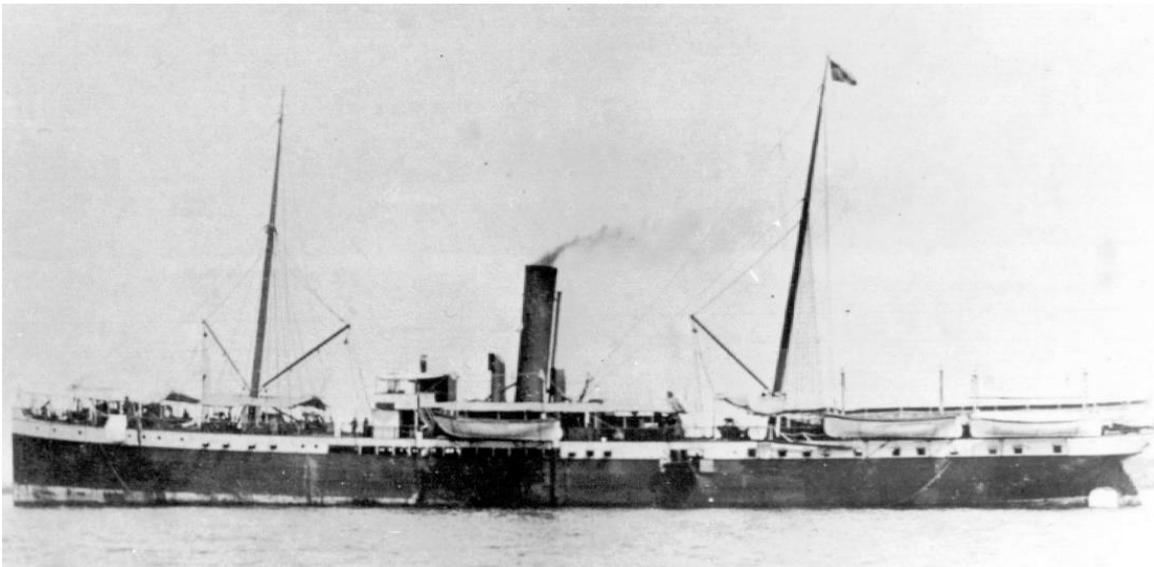
NISN's Scottish-built and clipper-bowed *Prins Alexander* (1872) (M. Lindenborn collection).

After the NISN had gained a 15-year extension of contract in 1873, it went to Clyde builders Caird & Co. of Greenock for a large batch of new ships. *Sindoro* (1134/1875) and *Salak* (1095/1875) were slightly larger versions of the two original pairs. Another five ships followed of similar dimensions: Yard Number 197 was *Bromo* (1213/1875), #198 *Gouverneur Generaal Loudon* (1206/1875), #203 *Japara* (1248/1876), #204 *Graaf van Bylandt* (1208/1876) and #206 *Tambora* (1266/1877). *Generaal Pel* (1310/1876) from William Denny on the other side of the Clyde made up a fine sextet. Yard numbers #193 and #194 were completed for B.I. as *Umballa* (840/1875) and *Puttialla* (839/1875) for the East African coast but in 1880-81 were transferred back to NISN as *Sumbawa* and *Gouverneur Generaal van Lansberge* respectively. Caird delivered a several smaller vessels but those mentioned here have valid claim to be the prototype of the KPM ships that would follow through to the 'Ka'-booten of 1948.

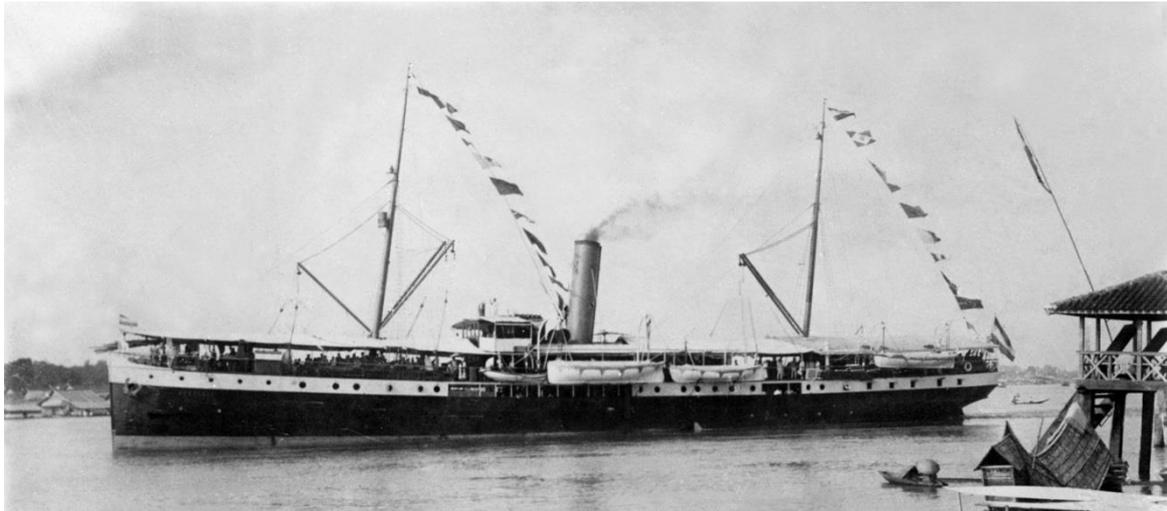


NISN's Caird-built *Japara* (1876) in KPM colours (M. Lindenborn collection).

The KPM ships were not identical to the NISN ones. Although the layout was very similar, even to the extent of the now almost outmoded iron hulls, the engines were not. The heavy compound engines of the Caird steamer were replaced by the more efficient triple-expansion engines that had been widely adopted since the mid-1880s. This allowed a similar speed with slightly higher horsepower for much less coal consumption, which in turn increased cargo capacity. *General Pel* had a deadweight of 800 tons with a bunker capacity of 300 tons, so that along with water and stores perhaps only 450 tons of freight could be loaded. More efficient engines increased the deadweight on the KPM's A-class to 990 tons, meaning that cargo capacity was probably about 75 per cent more or close to the nominal deadweight of the NISN equivalents. The last of the original KPM ships to be laid down, including *Speelman*, had steel hulls.



General Pel (1876) (M. Lindenborn collection).



Speelman (1890), crowded with passengers, arriving at an Indonesian river port with open tween-deck. Comparison with *General Pel* (above) reveals their similarities (M. Lindenborn collection).

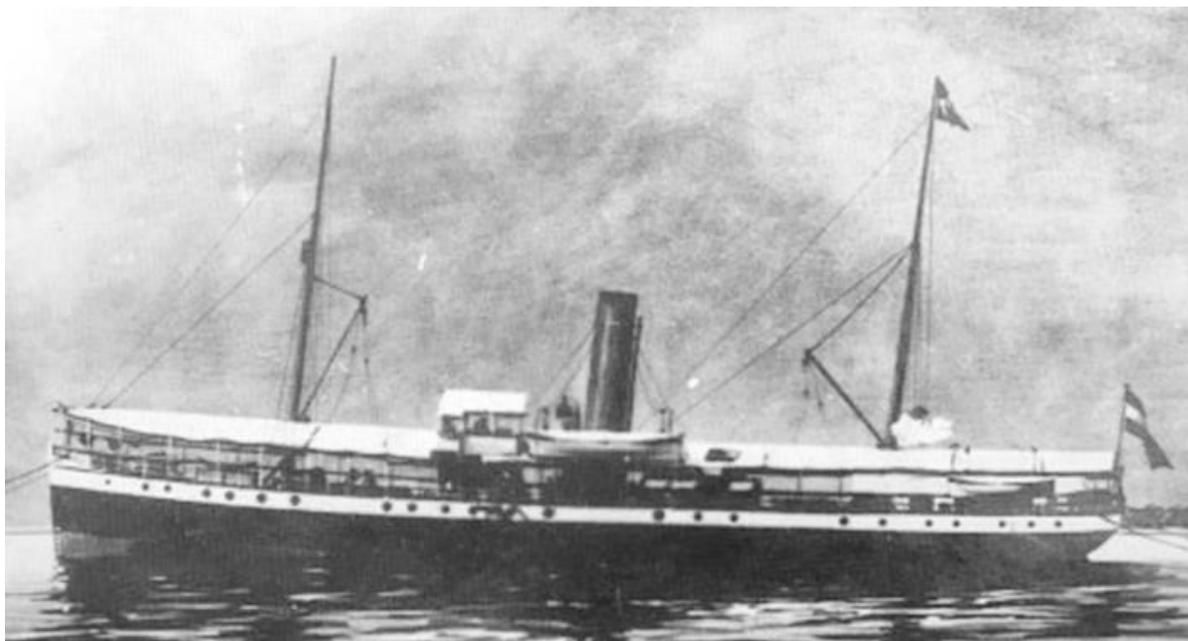
Like other ships in the original KPM fleet, *Speelman* was named after a former governor-general of the Netherlands Indies, in this case Cornelis Janzoon Speelman (1628-84, GG 1681-84), an infamous figure in Indonesian history because of his territorial conquests on behalf of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). According to marhsidata.nl (kronieken), the ship (and engines) were built in Amsterdam as the last of a trio by the Koninklijke Fabriek van Stoom- en andere Werktuigen (later better known as Werkspoor), launched on 25 May 1890, ran trials on 10 October (11.6 knots) and sailed on 25 October 1890 with just enough time to reach Batavia for the inauguration of KPM services at the beginning of January 1891. On 10 January 1891 she sailed from Singapore for Surabaya, Bawean Island (Java Sea), Banjarmasin (South Borneo/Kalimantan), Pulau Laut, Pasir and Cottei (Kutei), the last three ports on the East Coast of Kalimantan. This contractual Line 8/8a (fortnightly as far as Pulau Laut, monthly on to Kutei) was almost the same route as plied by Joseph Conrad as Master of the small Arab-owned trading steamer *Vidar* just a few years earlier in 1887-88, an experience that became a source for several of his novels. Subsequently *Speelman* served reliably many other routes across the KPM's archipelago-wide network without attracting any attention, with one notable exception. On voyage from Singapore to Batavia (Jakarta), at 0100 hours on 29 July 1897 with the Third Officer on watch, the ship was steaming out of Bangka Strait when struck below the bridge on the starboard quarter by the 1,554-ton French barque *Duguesclin* that had cleared Sunda Strait on voyage from Cardiff (2/5) to Hong Kong. The impact smashed the bridge and destroyed the chartroom, killing the sleeping master, Capt. Scherpbier, and also two crew (SFPMA, 24/8/97). Despite the damage, *Speelman* was able to reach Batavia, where repairs were estimated to cost f30,000. In May 1921 *Speelman* was switched from a weekly Singapore-Palembang run to a weekly/fortnightly run from Singapore to the outlying Anambas-Natuna Islands off NW Borneo in the southernmost part of the South China Sea. This would be the final phase of her KPM career.

Disposal

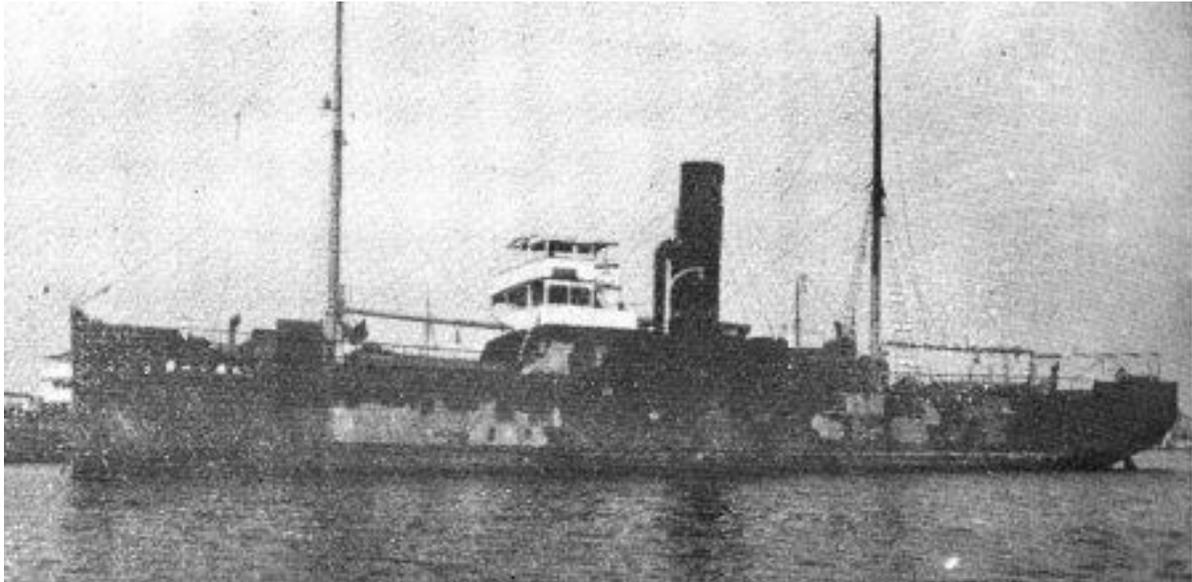
With robust iron hulls and reliable triple-expansion engines, the original KPM ships were designed to withstand the rigours of difficult operating conditions. Although the waters of the Indonesian archipelago are for the most part fairly calm and without the seasonal typhoons that plague the

Philippines and Chinese waters, there are other hazards. Coral reefs abound and as early as January 1891 were to claim *Reijnst* off the southwest Celebes on her first outward commercial voyage. In Sumatra and Kalimantan (Borneo), river entrances could be tricky and muddy channels untrustworthy, both during the monsoons and with the reduced flows of the dry season. In the early years passengers and cargo were mostly handled either in anchorages or at jetties. Yet apart from the ill-fated *Reijnst*, no other of these ships was lost to faulty navigation. The other two marine casualties were by fire: *Camphuys* off Ceram in October 1902, *Reijniersz* at Singapore in January 1907. The 'A' class all remained under the KPM flag for over forty years before being sold for scrap in the early 1930s, including *Maetsuijcker*, which after being gutted by fire in 1920 served another eleven years as a company hulk at Singapore. The somewhat smaller *De Carpentier* likewise served at Singapore as a quarantine hulk from 1924 until sold for breaking up in 1932.

The two surviving small 'C'-type ships saw the least time under the KPM flag but rendered long service elsewhere. *Van Riebeeck* was delivered to Compania Maritima of Manila at a good price in January 1901 before in 1918 being resold to Japanese owners and rebuilt as a freighter: as *Nissei Maru No. 1* she is recorded as broken up during 1927 or early 1928 (the 1927 Japanese register is lost so nothing more exact is known).

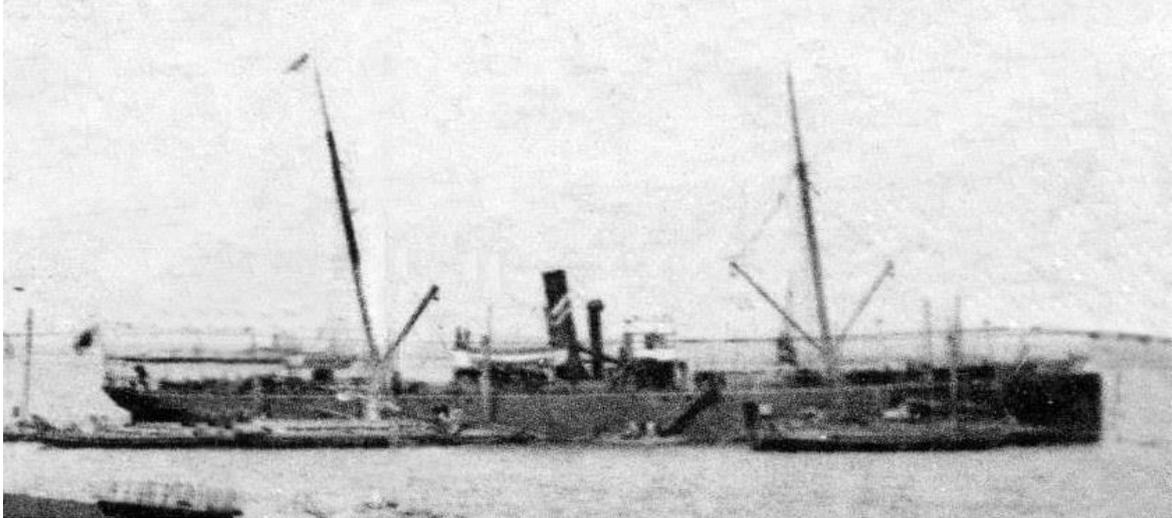


Sketch of KPM's little *Van Riebeeck* (Mulder, KPM).

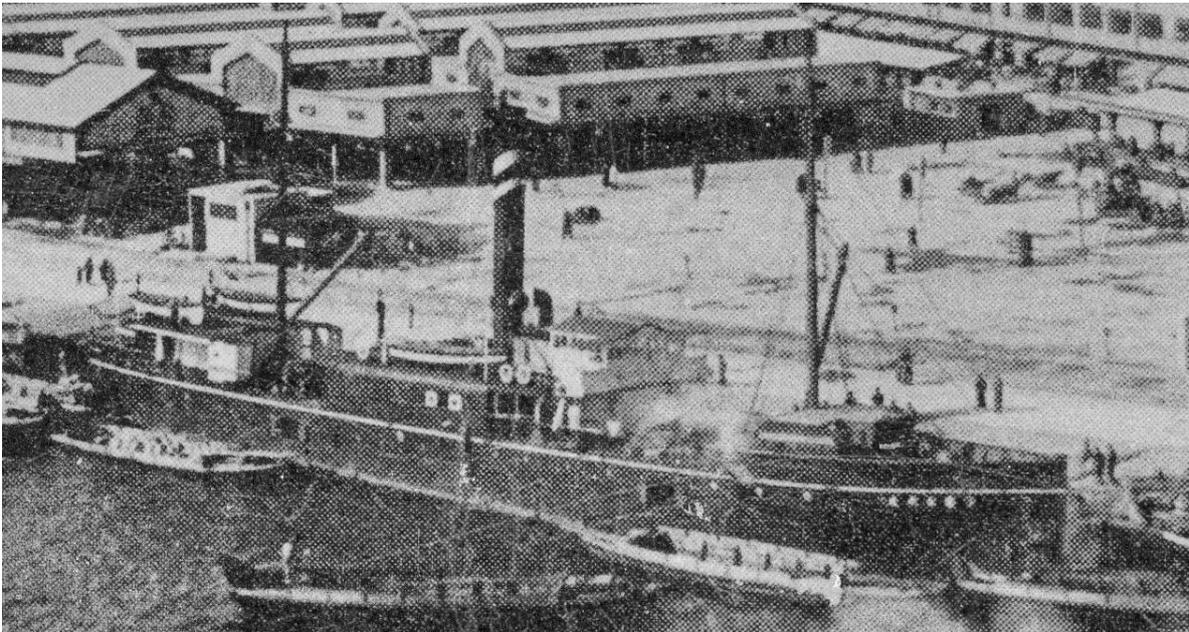


Nissei Maru No.1. Masts have been re-stepped. Removal of the awning deck now gives a 3-island appearance (Japan Steamship Register 1924).

Swaerdecroon went in the second half of 1906 to Osaka shipowner Isaburo Amagasaki (Amagasaki Kisen-bu), who two years earlier had bought from KPM the older *Gouverneur General van Lansberge* (renamed *Jindai Maru*) and obviously been well pleased. In March 1904 Amagasaki had opened a new shortsea line between Osaka and the Korean port of Inchon via Kobe, Shimonoseki and Pusan and it is likely that the two ex-KPM ships were intended for this trade. Much of the traffic was labour migration to the booming economy of Osaka-Kobe from the Korean Peninsula, including from the offshore volcanic island of Jeju (Cheju, also once known as Quelpart). Migrants from Jeju used to have to travel via the ports of Inchon or Pusan, until in 1924 *Kimigayo Maru* was transferred to a direct route. Known by Koreans as 'Kundaewan', the ship used to depart in the morning from the market wharf in Osaka, arriving at Jeju the following evening. Over the next two days, no fewer than 11 calls were made around the island, where the absence of wharfs meant anchoring and transferring passengers and cargo by boat. In September 1925 when the ship was in danger of being overwhelmed by a typhoon, the master beached her on Jeju; eventually refloated, she returned to service. The owners must have been impressed by this sturdy ship because in 1937 they installed more powerful machinery from the Imai Iron Works. After being transferred in May 1942 to the new entity Kansai Kisen for Inland Sea service, she was sunk by a mine on 23 March 1945 off Himeshima (Oita, Northeast Kyushu). *Jindai Maru/Jindai Maru* survived another ten weeks before striking a mine and sinking off Shimonoseki. Laxon & Perry note that her 70 years afloat, still with her original Caird compound engine, set an age record for a unit of the B.I. fleet. Was it also a record for the KPM?



Two successive views of *Gouverneur General van Lansberge* (1875) as Amagasaki's *Jindai Maru* (Nanamaru).



Swaerdecroon (1891) rebuilt as Amagasaki's steamer *Kimigayo Maru*, seen here berthed at the Central Market in Osaka (segment from a postcard, SK collection).



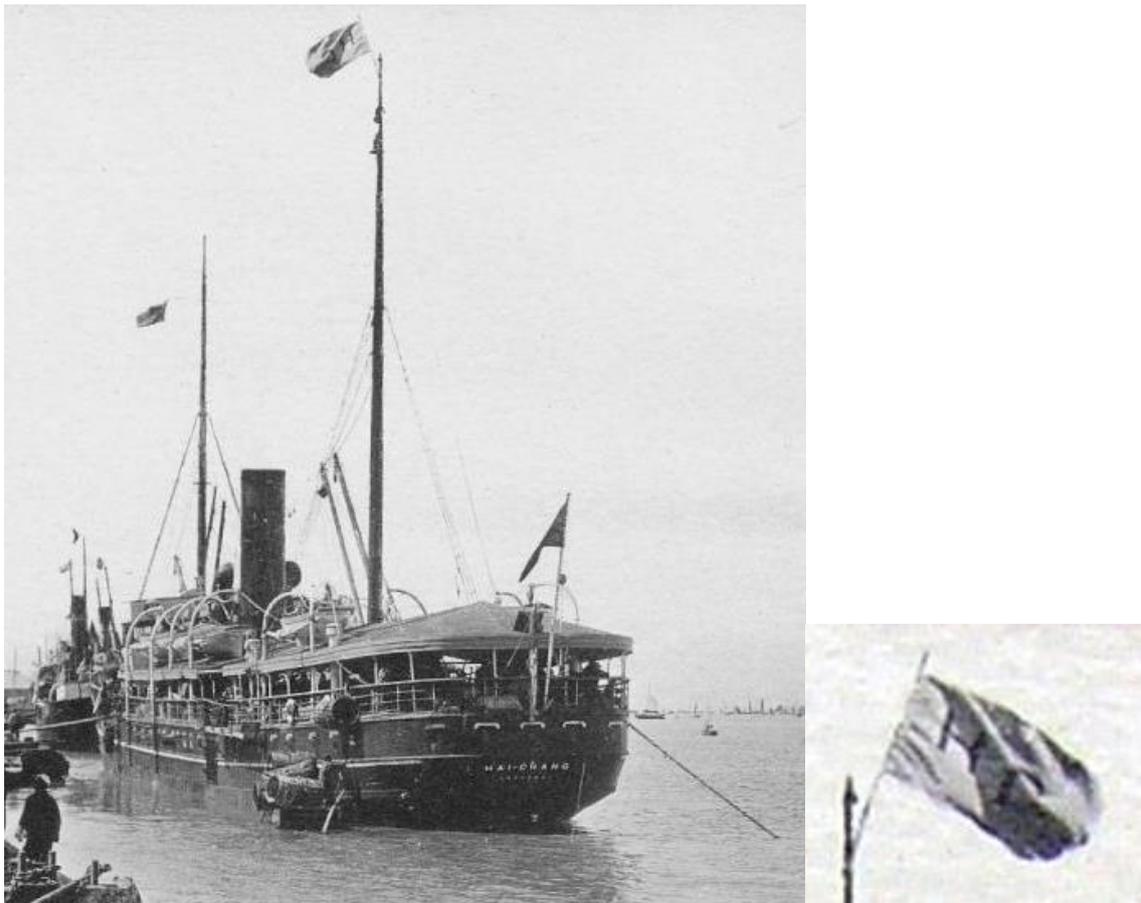
Kimigayo Maru survived this incident (Nanamaru).

The other three surviving KPM steamers were sold out of the fleet in the mid-1920s after more than thirty years under the KPM flag. *Speelman* went first in July 1923. The sale must have occurred suddenly because the ship had been advertised to sail from Singapore to the Anambas-Natuna Islands on 5 July 1923. Instead, on 7 July at Singapore she was handed over with some ceremony to French owners (SFPMA, 9/7/23). It transpired that she had been sold for £4,500 to Société des Affréteurs Indo-Chinois of Saigon, a recently formed subsidiary of Messageries Maritimes that operated coastal services from Saigon to Haiphong, also to Bangkok and Singapore. *Speelman* had been acquired to inaugurate a new contractual line between Saigon and Bangkok. Renamed *Bokor* after a recently opened hill resort near the small port of Kampot in southeast Cambodia, she sailed three days later for Saigon. There, after some further consideration, her name was changed to *Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long* to honour the former governor general (1866-1923, GG 1920-22) who had resigned in April 1922 on grounds of ill health and died at Colombo en route to France in January 1923. In effect, the ship swapped governors general – the name *Bokor* was not elsewhere recorded. The French buyers were obviously pleased with the ship because in October they paid Straits \$34,000 to buy the sistership *Van Goens* and in September 1924 another \$35,000 the somewhat larger *Van Diemen*, then in December 1925 the newer and larger *Van Outhoorn* (1571/1896). *Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long* (ex *Speelman*) thereby became surplus and was sold on to Chinese owners. *Ream* (ex *Van Diemen*) subsequently became *Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long II* before also passing to Chinese owners at Canton (Guangzhou) in 1932 as *Tin Seng*. By 1941 she had been seized by Japan as *Mikkazuki* (sic) *Maru* and survived until May 1945, when she was sunk by a mine off Woosung.

In Chinese waters

Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long (ex *Speelman*) is generally reported as sold in 1926 to the Hai Chang Steamship Company of Newchwang, the North China treaty port at the entrance of the Liao River, and renamed *Hai Chang* (also reported as *Haichang*). In fact none of these details are quite

accurate. The China Press of 21 October 1925 (not 1926) records a *Gov. Gen. Maurice Long* as having arrived at Shanghai the previous day, which was almost certainly the delivery voyage from Indo-China. At Shanghai the 35-year-old vessel would have been given a thorough refit before taking up service in spring of the following year. Through a stroke of good fortune, we have acquired a postcard identified as 'The lovely view of Yingkow Pier, Yingkow' that shows a steamer about to leave a wharf. At the stern is clearly legible the name *HAI-CHANG* [vide hyphen] and the port of registry, Shanghai. The stern angle is rather compressed but without doubt the ship is ex *Speelman*, little changed after more than forty years and transition from the Dutch to French to Republican Chinese flag. Yinkow or Yingkou (in the modern Pinyin spelling that we use hereafter with older spellings in parentheses), is the Chinese name for the treaty port known officially as Newchwang. Since the ship's registry was reportedly transferred to Shanghai in 1934, that detail also fits, though the date may in fact have been a year or two earlier. Japan invaded Manchuria in September 1931 and the Chinese flag would thereafter have become inconvenient. The final detail is the owners. Initially the owners were identified by Lloyds Register as Nei Hong Hing trading as the Hai Chang Steam Navigation Company under the agency of the nominally British firm of F.D. Farmer & Company of Yingkou. Nei Hong Hing was probably a syndicate ('hong'). Shanghai newspapers refer variously to Hai Chang Company (agents c.1930), Hai Chang S.S. Co. (agents 1931 onwards) and also Hai Chang S.N. Co. (legal case, June 1931).



Cropped view of *Hai-Chang* ex *Speelman* at Yingkou (Newchwang) in 1930s
 'HC' on the houseflag denotes Hai Chang S.S. Co. (postcard, SK colln).

To complicate matters, the 1933 China Yearbook citing data from a year or so previously gives the owners as Hai Cheng (sic) Steamship Co. Ltd of Yingkou with a capital of \$250,000 and two other ships, *Hai-Shun* (1696/1897) and *Hai-Ping* (1944/1897). The former had been built by the Neptun yard at the North German port of Rostock for the Chinese coast as *Tai-Yick* but in 1901 via Russian owners passed to NYK and later its shortsea subsidiary Kinkai Yusen as *Takasago Maru* before in 1927 being acquired by Nei Hong Hing; the latter had been built on the Clyde for Mitsui Bussan as *Fujisan Maru* and remained with that firm until sold to Nei Hong Hing at the end of 1928. During the 1930s these two larger ships plied between Yingkou or sometimes Dalian (Dairen) and Shanghai. *Hai-Ping* was lost by collision in the river at Yingkou in October 1934 and was not replaced.



L. *Takasago Maru* (Y. Yokoi collection). R. *Hai Shun* or sister *Ying Yuan* at Shanghai (from a postcard).

The staple trade of Yingkou and the Liao River was soybean products and especially pressed beancake, the residue of the milling that was valued as fertiliser for the ricefields of central and southern China. For centuries this trade had been carried by junk. John Swire, whose China Navigation Company had in 1873 pushed into the Yangtse river trade between Shanghai and Hankou (Hankow, now part of Wuhan), saw an opportunity to break into the beancake trade as well and the following year bought two coasters for the purpose and registered them to a separate Coast Boat Ownery. The Ownery was an immediate success and was duly absorbed into the rapidly expanding fleet of China Navigation, a company that still trades today. Jardines followed with the Indo-China Steam Navigation Company and both companies developed a specific type of 3-hatch (later 4-hatch) coaster known as a 'beancaker'. In due course syndicates of Chinese merchants who controlled the various beancake trades also invested in their own ships, one such being Nei Hong Hing.

F.D. Farmer first appeared in the early 1900s as Manager at Yingkou of Bandinel & Company, agents for Hamburg-Amerika Line, Norddeutscher Lloyd and Japanese-flag Nippon Yusen Kaisha. In 1907 the firm became F.D. Farmer & Co. Agencies for the two German lines lapsed in 1914 after the outbreak of World War I. By the time of The North China Hong List 1919 the firm was being managed by George F. and P. Farmer, probably sons, with steamship agencies besides NYK for Dodwell, Java-China-Japan Line plus eight insurance companies. Farmer & Co. were also wharf owners, having both the 375' Eastern (NYK) Wharf and the shorter 230' Western/Town Wharf. Under the Hong listing they were described as 'Steamship Owners and General Merchants', though no owned vessel can be identified between sale of the old beancaker *Chefoo* in 1914 and acquisition of *Hai-Chang* in 1925. The address of the Hai Chang S.S. Co. is given as c/- F.D. Farmer & Co. Given that the latter traded as 'Ch'i Chang', the link with 'Hai [=Sea] Chang' seems clear enough. As of 1919, Farmer & Co. also had branches at Lungko (Lungkou) and Teng-chow-foo on

the north coast of Shantung (Shandong) province. It may therefore be inferred that *Hai-Chang* was acquired to carry seasonal migrants and workers across the Gulf of Pohai (Bohai), probably as the similarly sized *Chefoo* had done previously and since 1922 the former British India Company's passenger steamer *Vita* (890/22), now *Lung Shun* of the Ta Tung Co. of Yinkow. The larger *Hai Shun* and *Hai Ping* are listed separately in Lloyd's Register to Hai Chang S.N. Co. under the syndicate Nei Hong Hing of Custom Street (presumably The Bund), Newchwang but their agency at Shanghai was Hai Chang Steamship. It may therefore be presumed that all three ships were part of the same operation, that is being owned and operated by Chinese principals and registered at Newchwang (or later Shanghai) under the Chinese flag but taking advantage of the Farmer connection to enjoy wharfage and other facilities in the foreign concession. This interpretation is consistent with background on the longstanding importance of the merchant guilds in Yinkow.

According to the China Yearbook, by the early 1930s Hai Chang's smaller steamer *Hai-Chang* was indeed plying within the sheltered waters of the Gulf of Bohai (Bohai). The Yearbook gives the route as between Lungkou (Lungkow), Dalian, Tianjin (Tientsin) and Yingkou but these ports would presumably have been alternative crossings, that is Yingkou/Dalian for Tianjin/Lungkou. Tianjin (or downstream Tangku) had rail connections to Beijing (Peking) and central China and, for beancake, by barge along the Grand Canal; Lungkou was a small, isolated port at the northwestern end of the mountainous Shantung (Shantung) Peninsula but important for the busy seasonal labour migration to and from Manchuria. *Hai-Chang* would have been well suited to this local passenger trade and almost certainly was purchased for this specific purpose. Speed hardly mattered over the short distances around the Gulf so a gentle 8 knots would have been sufficient. She had ample space for deck passengers (and/or livestock) in the sheltered main deck – more above deck in good weather – and a solid hull to withstand ice at the onset and end of winter – from December through to March the Gulf usually iced up and most vessels had to be laid up. In February 1936 after heavy winds, Gulf ports were closed by pack ice ten feet thick, trapping vessels that had tried to remain at sea. *Hai-Chang* only ever appeared in the Shanghai Press in May 1936, two weeks after seizure off Tangku by Chinese Customs on grounds of smuggling. The ship was held for almost a month until negotiations were concluded for payment of a fine of Tls 5,000. Curiously the ship was said to be sailing on both Chinese and Manchukuo papers. Japanese authorities pressed for the ship's release and succeeded in reducing the fine from Tls10,000 to Tls 5,000 (NCH, 6/5 and 16/6/36).

The Japanese connection is hardly surprising. After Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and the cession of Port Arthur, Dalian (Dairen) and the South Manchurian Railway, the foreign concession at Yingkou also became predominantly Japanese, including by 1919 control of all the utilities. In 1923 a reorganisation of Japanese shipping saw NYK's Manchurian interest transferred to an affiliated shortsea operator Kinkai Yusen while Dairen Kisen (DKK) was established to operate services between Japan, Manchuria and North China, initially from Osaka/Kobe to Yingkou and also Yingkou-Tianjin. In July 1929 DKK established an impressive Branch Office at Yingkou. After the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931, DKK's Yinkou traffic grew rapidly, not only to and from Japan but also to and from Taiwan and other ports in China. By 1935 the Yinkou office employed thirteen staff and by 1937 nine DKK ships were regularly calling there. Besides DKK, Okazaki Kisen offered 3-4 sailings per month between Yingkou and Japanese ports while a Kinkai Yusen/NYK cargo vessel served Yokohama-Yingkou twice a monthly. Hai Chang with just two ships

was now very much a niche operation and would have needed to comply with the demands of the Japanese authorities.

After a series of encroachments from Manchuria into North China, in July 1937 Japan launched a full-scale invasion of North and Central China and within weeks had occupied the port cities of Tianjin, Qingdao (Tsingtao) and Shanghai. The Gulf of Bohai now virtually became a Japanese lake. From 25 August a blockade was imposed upon all ports between Qinhuangdao (Chinwangtao) and Shantou (Swatow) such that any ship under the Republican Chinese flag became liable to seizure. Most Shanghai shipowners promptly transferred their ships to foreign nominees but those serving Shandong (Shantung), Tianjin and other ports around the Gulf faced a difficult choice. If they wanted to maintain operations to non-treaty ports, such as Lungkou, their best option was to hoist the flag of the Japanese vassal state of Manchukuo, but thereby would become collaborators and risk sanctions from the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-shek, albeit now in retreat up the Yangtse. The biggest of the Bohai companies, Ching Kee, split its fleet: five ships took refuge in Hong Kong, where they remained under blockade until December 1941, while the majority of the fleet transferred to Manchukuo registry. Around 1938 Hai Chang transferred *Hai-Shun*, which henceforth operated under the Japanese reading of the name *Kaijun Go* before being sold in 1941 to Manshu Kaiun (Manchuria Marine); she was mined and sunk off the port of Rajin (Rashin) at the northeast tip of Korea on 10 August, just days before the surrender on 14 August.

By 1940 *Hai-Chang* was trading under the Japanese reading of her name characters *Kaisho Go*. Through good fortune and the reality that the Bohai Gulf was often beyond the reach of Allied submarines and aircraft, the ship survived the war and in late 1945 reverted to the Chinese flag as *Hai-Chang*. Lloyds carried forward the prewar entry with no new information to confirm the resumption of peacetime trading. All that can be surmised is that in 1949 the ship passed under the control of the People's Republic of China with registration in Shanghai. The record is then silent until the ship is removed from the register in 1959 after ten years without report. Miramar records the ship as broken up in China about 1952. And so, until now, this last surviving ship of the original KPM fleet had just disappeared from history.

What happened next?

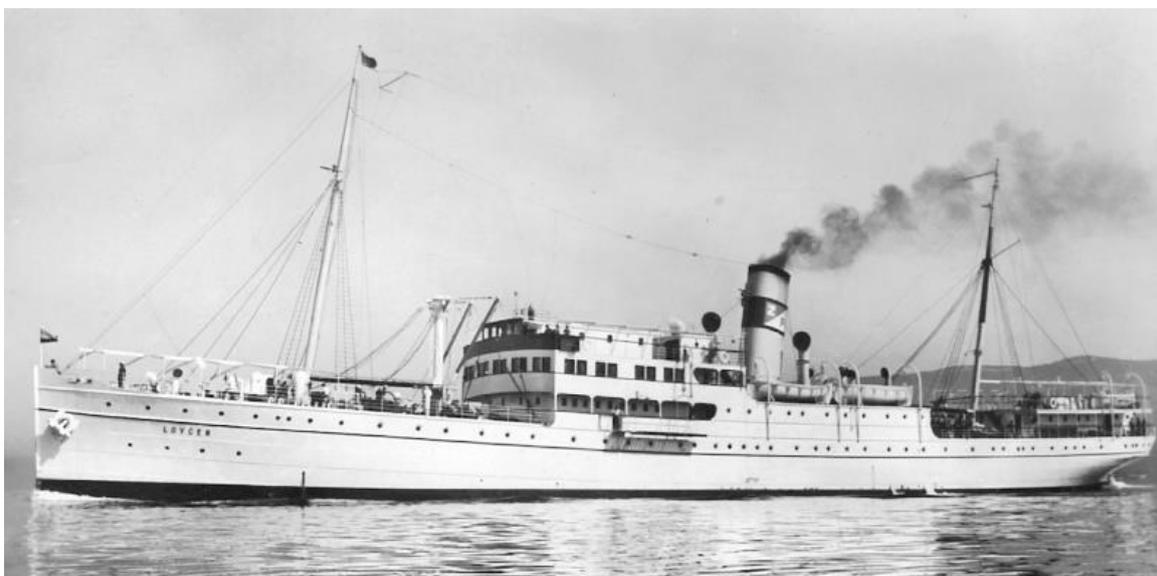
In recent years, however, we have come across evidence to a much more interesting fate and a fascinating coda to the KPM's fleet history. The Tianjin-based 'Bin Hai Times' of 4 December 2013 in a review of local shipping in the 1950s and 1960s mentioned a passenger ship 海盛 (HAI SHENG/CHENG) with capacity of 200 passengers operating between Tientsin, Dalian and Yantai. The first character Hai means 'sea' and the second character 'bountiful', together meaning something like 'Sea Bounty' or perhaps 'Prosperous Sea'. But in Western maritime sources there is no known *Hai Sheng* or *Hai Cheng*. Could the second character also be read as 'Chang', as in *Hai-Chang*? To the Western ear, the pronunciation of this character by a native speaker sounds like "Chong" suggesting a soft 'a' spelling rather than an 'e'. The immediate prewar Lloyd's Register used Hai Chang S.S. but, significantly, the concurrent China Yearbooks record the owner as Hai Cheng S.S., matching the ship's name in the postwar report. 'Chang' conflates with 'Cheng'. Further well-based evidence points to *Hai-Chang* surviving to become, as elaborated below, the hitherto unidentified Bohai Gulf steamer *Min Chu 2*.

Some background. By late 1948 Communist armies had conquered Manchuria and besieged the main cities of North China, including Beijing and Tianjin. Both cities fell in mid-winter in January 1949, after which the Communist armies marched on to the Yangtze. After Chiang Kai-shek had withdrawn his armies and anything of value that could be carried away to Taiwan, Shanghai fell late in May 1949. On 1 October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PRC). The new government controlled most of the territory and people of China but with a very small and ill-assorted fleet of coastal and river steamers. Apart from the state-owned China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company (restyled China People's Steam Navigation Company), these ships were all privately owned. Immediately after the revolution, of necessity, these private owners were allowed to continue to operate their ships under increasing state regulation. The same applied to owners who were persuaded to repatriate their ships to play a role in building the New China. The veteran *Hai-Chang* seemingly never left the Gulf of Bohai but continued to ply her accustomed route, now under state supervision of the Northern District Maritime Bureau.

According to 'Bin Hai Times' correspondent Wang Jian (published 4/12/13, reproduced at http://bhsb.tjbhnews.com/html/2013-12/04/content_7_2.htm), from 1951 *Hai-Chang* was for some time the only passenger vessel available to operate a regular service between Tianjin, Dalian and Yantai. Officially her passenger capacity was 200 in one class, much less than her designed capacity as *Speelman* (39 cabin, 628 deck), but at times actual carriage must have been closer to those original figures. As peacetime conditions were restored, outward passenger numbers from Tianjin rose to 20,000 in 1952 and 30,000 in 1953, with peaks during the spring festival and summer that required additional sailings. As *Hai Chang* struggled to cope, the port authority repeatedly sought larger passenger ships to be deployed. The problem was that such ships were not available – the state-owned shipping service was not allowed to raise capital - and official priority was being given to the even more urgent need of increasing the carriage of essential freight. Not until 1953 was a coastal passenger ship ordered from the Jiangnan (Kiangnan) Shipyard in Shanghai but it was an ambitious project for the new nation. Work proceeded slowly and delivery did not occur until late 1955.

An interim solution was found in a veteran 2390-grt passenger steamer with an even more remarkable career. *Teresa* had been built on the Clyde in 1911 as the graceful *Lady Gwendolen* for the British & Irish Steam Packet Company for service between London and Dublin via Channel ports. After wartime service in North Russian waters as *Lyudmila* in 1917-18, she passed briefly to the Dundee, Perth and London Shipping Company before being resold to Bowring's Red Cross Line for service between New York, Halifax and Newfoundland as *Rosalind*. In 1936 she was sold to Yugoslav owners, renamed *Lovcen* and refitted with a resplendent white hull for Adriatic service, later extending through to Istanbul, Black Sea and East Mediterranean ports. In October 1940 she escaped the Mediterranean to New York and weeks later was placed in service in the Caribbean. Taken over by the U.S. Army as first *Columbia* and then *Brigadier General Harry E. Rethers*, she continued to operate mostly around the Caribbean until laid up at Mobile in January 1946. Sold to Chan Kim Cheong of Canton as *Wah Chung* [Chung Wah/'China'], she arrived in Hong Kong near the end of 1946 and early the following year began running to Haiphong for the South China Steamship Company. By April 1949 was sailing under the Portuguese flag to Communist-controlled North China including Chefoo (now known as Yantai), then in November transferred to the Panamanian flag as *Teresa* and was last reported in Shanghai a month later, after which she disappeared behind

the 'bamboo curtain'. Lloyds (and Miramar) record her as broken up in China in 1953. Not so. In fact she had joined *Hai Chang* in the safe waters of the Gulf of Bohai.



Min Chu 1 before World War II as the graceful Yugoslav *Lovcen* (www.clydesite.co.uk, #15448)

In 1953 the parlous condition of North China's coastal shipping took a turn for the better. The timing is explained partly by the end of the Korean War and partly by the launch of the first Five Year Plan (1953-57) as the initial stage in the transition to Socialism. In May 1953 the more powerful and better equipped Eastern Region Maritime Bureau (Shanghai) took over the briefly independent Northern Region (Tianjin) to form the Shanghai Maritime Bureau. The new single agency exercised state control over passenger shipping both on the Yangtse and on the coast, which at that point was limited to two ships on the Shanghai-Ningpo run and *Hai Chang* in the Gulf because the Nationalist blockade meant that a direct connection was still too risky. *Teresa* would therefore have repositioned under a foreign flag. Sometime in late 1953 or early 1954, a passion for bureaucratic order caused the Bureau's ships to be renamed in a sequentially numbered 'Min Chu' ['Democracy'] series. *Teresa* became *Min Chu 1* and *Hai-Chang* is thought to have become the vessel named *Min Chu 2*. By second-hand, salvaged and new-built ships, the numbers would eventually run through to 19 (Refer to our separate Fleet List of Shanghai Bureau Passenger Ships, Part I). The story of numbers 3 and 4 in the Ningbo trade has been recounted by us in 'The Log' 48/2 (2015).

In April 1955, almost ten years after seizing control of the port city of Dalian from the Japanese, the Soviet Union formally restored sovereignty to the People's Republic and withdrew the last of its troops. Although the PRC had been exercising de facto local government for several years, the tempo of coastal passenger shipping now suddenly quickened. The long-awaited new passenger steamer *Min Chu 10* was delivered by Jiangnan in November and early in the New Year took up regular service between Tianjin and Dalian. In April she was joined by her sistership *Min Chu 11*. Of streamlined Russian-influenced design, they looked larger than their 2,700 gross tons and were rated for 500 passengers. Introduction of these two modern ships allowed the little *Min Chu 2* to be switched to the less busy Weihai (Weihaiwei)-Dalian run, while the larger *Min Chu 1* continued running between Yantai (Chefoo) and Dalian.



MIN CHU 10 in her original olive green paint scheme (Internet).

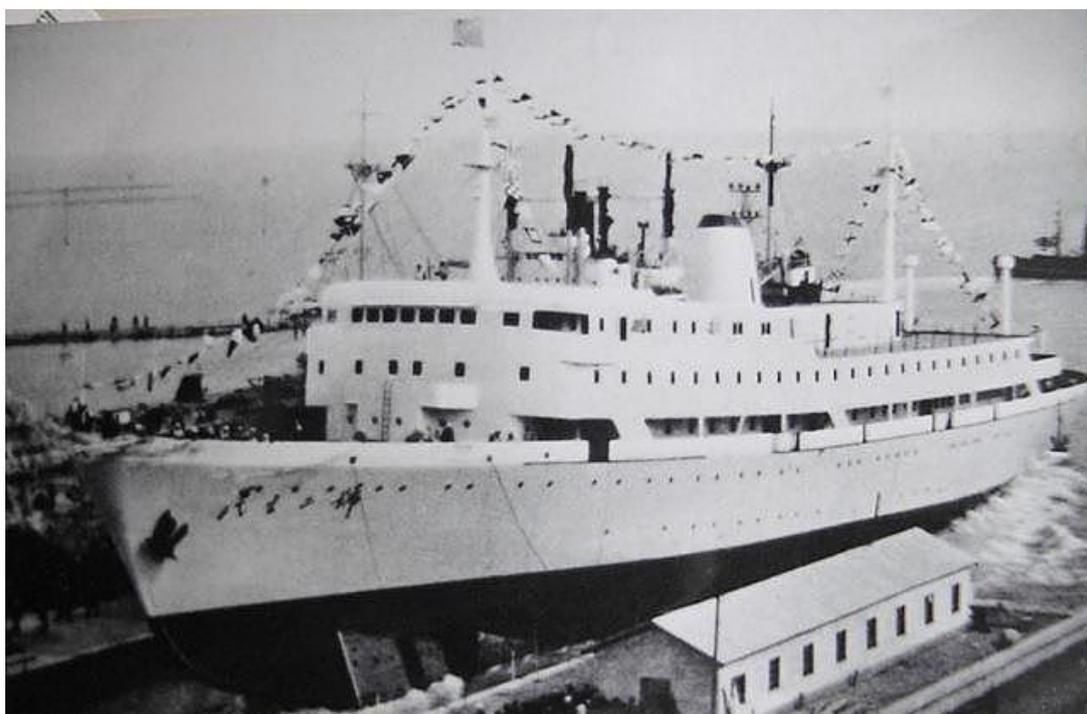
In June 1956 the Shanghai Bureau proceeded to inaugurate a direct passenger line between Shanghai, Qingdao (Tsingtao) and Dalian. First sailing was taken by *Min Chu 9* (2220/1948), a conventional 3-hatch coaster built by Jiangnan to a prewar design as *Pai Hsien* and refitted after being sunk by Nationalist bombing in Shanghai in February 1950. Her consort was the veteran *Chung Hsing 9* (3402/1899) managed by the Bureau in a partnership arrangement with her private owners – the intended renaming as *Min Chu 6* was never carried out (a point not known when her history was published in 'Marine News', April 2013). In November 1956 the former Jardine coaster *Min Chu 12* (3179/1923) came into service after extended refit, then in June 1957 the Japanese-built *Min Chu 13* (3232/1943), salvaged and refitted after more than a decade sunk in the Whangpu River. Another ex-Japanese salvage job was *Min Chu 5* (2318/1927), which from 1957 ran alongside the little *Min Chu 7* (1346/1946), a Canadian-built 'Ottawa' fitted with temporary passenger accommodation, in a shuttle between Shanghai and Qingdao. *Min Chu 8* (1946/1924), the former lighthouse tender *Hai Hsing*, seems to have been an extra ship deployed where most needed.

Thus by the end of 1957, by remarkable feats of improvisation, the Shanghai Bureau had been able to assemble a fleet of thirteen coastal passenger steamers to run as far south as Ningbo and Wenzhou and as far north as Tianjin and Dalian. [Detailed illustrated list on oldchinaships.com as 'Passenger Ships of the Shanghai Maritime Bureau (Part 1)'] To say the least, it was an ill-assorted fleet by age, size, speed and configuration. *Min Chu 2* as ex *Speelman*) would have been the oldest followed by *Chung Hsing 9* (1899) and *Min Chu 1* (1911). The only common feature was that they were all steamers. Nevertheless, they made a huge difference to the efficiency of travel and communications along the Chinese seaboard. By sea the distance travelled from Dalian to Shanghai was some 1200 kilometres shorter than the circuitous rail route via Tianjin and Nanjing. The same principle applied to travel from Qingdao. And shortsea ferry crossings around the Gulf of Bohai were also much improved.

From 1958 further new vessels were put in service, beginning with *Min Chu 14* as the first of a class of four 2,500-grt steamers. Timetables were improved by better matching of ships and routes with more consistency in size and speed. An October 1958 timetable shows the little old *Min Chu 2*, the

only ship in the fleet to be rated as fifth-class only, just went on shuttling to and fro. Obviously the Weihai-Dalian route was not considered high priority, perhaps because the movement of people for family and commercial reasons was not seen as intrinsic to the Great Leap Forward that Mao launched with great fanfare in 1958.

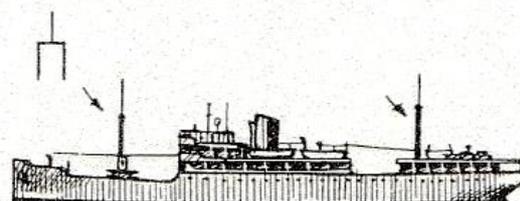
In 1959 the entry for *Hai-Chang* was deleted from Lloyd's Register as there had been no report for ten years. But we know that a vessel introduced in 1960 was named *Min Chu 4*, indicating that Number 2 was still in use at that time. However, on 5 April 1966 a new *Min Chu 2* was launched for the Shanghai Bureau passenger fleet so we can be sure *Speelman* was no longer operating at that point under the name *Min Chu 2*, and therefore was furthermore not given a 'Gong Nong Bing' name when the 'Min Chu' fleet was renamed en masse in 1967.



Launch of the new *Min Chu 2* at Tianjin on 5 April 1966.

Our vital clue in resolving the fate of *Speelman/Hai-Chang* was a Talbot Booth sketch that was later published showing a small PRC passenger ship, of old but indeterminate origin, named *Hung Yu*. The Talbot Booth sketches were part of a system instituted in the 1920s whereby observers (often crew members of British ships) provided simple sketches of vessels they had seen and identified, according to a predetermined format. It was very useful in the times before cameras became commonplace and was particularly useful in ports where photography was prohibited, as in China in the 1950s, 1960s and even into the 1970s. In the Talbot Booth updates published in 1977, sketch No. 2114 shows a refitted PRC vessel named *Hung Yu* featuring a squat funnel and two goalpost masts, commonly used in China and Japan, with the note that she was an estimated 240 feet in overall length (which may be compared with *Speelman's* registered length between perpendiculars of 219.8 feet). There were no other known details. *Hung Yu* has never appeared in register books, and was the only Shanghai- or Dalian-based PRC coastal passenger ship for which the prior history could not be traced. Over the years we surveyed all possible British, Japanese and other foreign vessels as well as local builds, not excluding war losses, until our Min Chu list (q.v.) led us to

seriously consider the hitherto seemingly impossible, being a rebuilt ex *Min Chu 2* ex *Hai-Chang* ex *Speelman* of 1890.



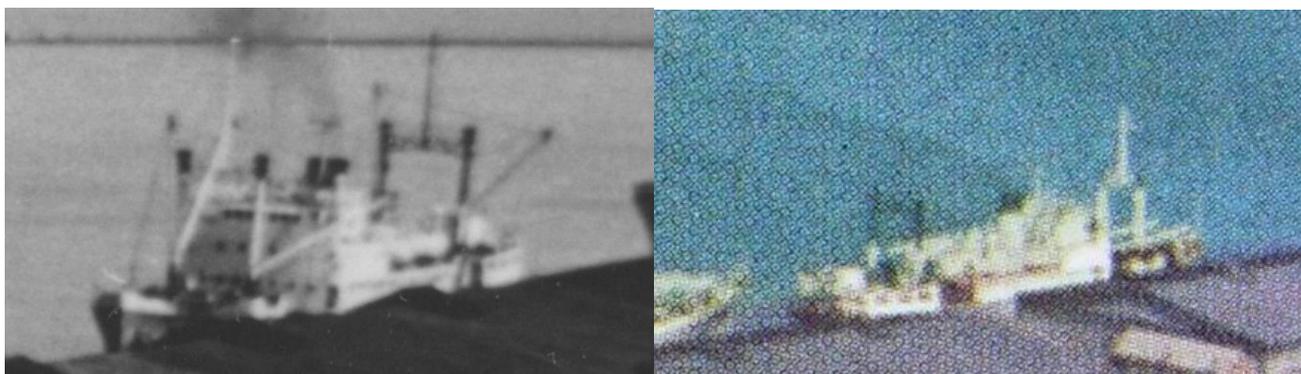
MFM H12
★ **2114. HUNG YU.** RC/ - ; CP; 2500; 73.2 x -
(240 x -).

Talbot Booth sketch published in 1977 of the hitherto unidentified *Hung Yu*.

Glimpses of the same ship, clearly a steamer, with a logical extension to the top of the squat funnel also appeared in the corners of various photographs of Dalian passenger ship terminal published in the early 1970s suggesting that *Hung Yu* was operating from that port after 1970. At around only 1,000 grt, she was much smaller than all the other 'Gong Nong Bings', especially the post-1959 vessels of 4,000 grt. The renaming as *Hung Yu* may reflect this, or perhaps that the ship was being operated by Dalian rather than Shanghai. The likely route was continuing from Dalian to Weihai, that being the shortest and least busy of the cross-Bohai runs out of Dalian.



Dalian passenger terminal. The estimated 240-ft o.a. (73.15m) *Hung Yu* (putative R.) may be compared with the 297-ft o.a. (90.534m) *Min Chu 15/16* (centre).



Smoke confirms a steamship (B&W photo at Dalian pub. Ross Terrell 1972; 1974 postcard SK collection).

Combined with the coincidence in size and general layout and the fitting together of the separate loose ends of the first *Min Chu 2*'s unclear demise and the sudden appearance of the mysterious *Hung Yu*, we believe the suggestion that *Speelman* was operating as *Hung Yu* into the 1970s is a photograph taken in Shanghai in 1973. The renowned former New York Times correspondent and photographer Harrison Forman (1904-78) had taken a series of photographs of Shanghai harbour and its ships in 1937 and thereabouts from the top of the Broadway Mansions, a hotel and entertainment centre which was by far the tallest building in the city at that time. Now, following President Nixon's visit to China and the US opening of diplomatic relations with the PRC the previous year, he received a visa to make a sentimental visit requesting, and was exceptionally allowed, given the known photography restrictions, again to visit the top of the Broadway Mansions to photograph modern versions of the exact same scenes that he had taken 35 years before, this time in colour.

Harrison Forman's photographs, donated in 1987 by Sandra Carlyle Forman to the American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries and viewable on the Internet, usually show a rich subject matter. Photograph No. 32539

[\[https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsphoto/id/32539/rec/81\]](https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsphoto/id/32539/rec/81) is no exception.

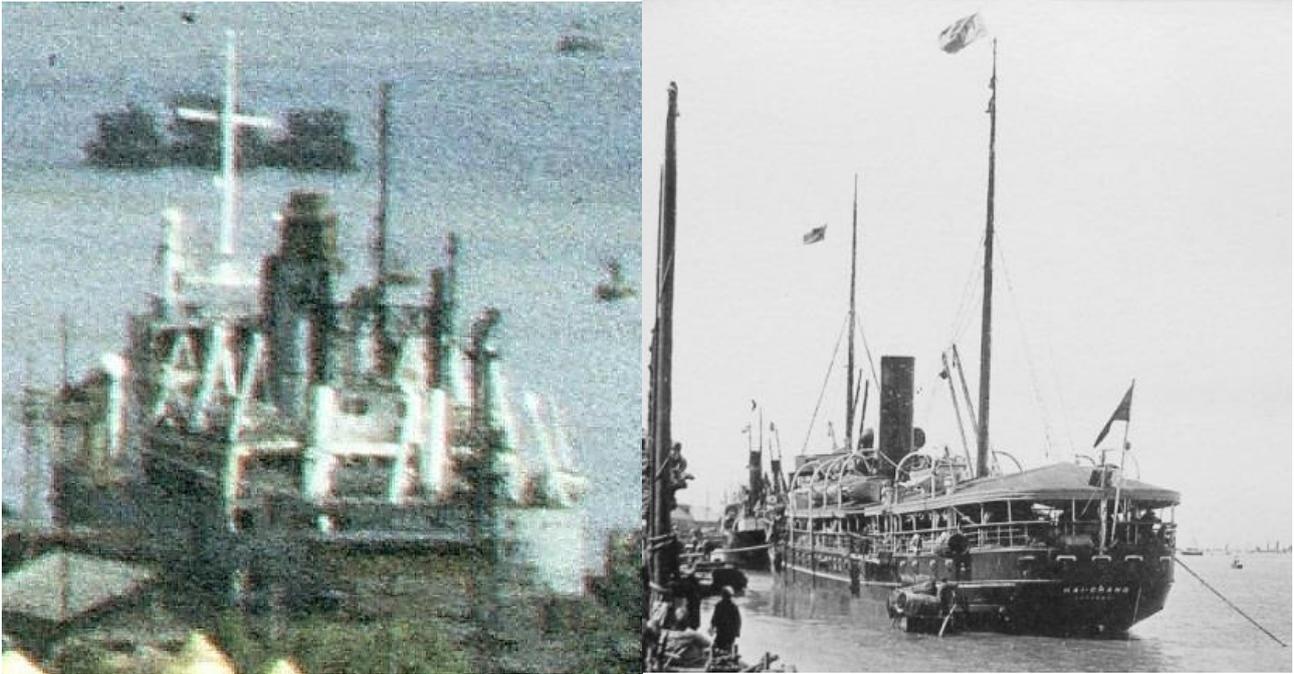
Facing south, at the right is the centre of Shanghai and the Bund, prominently featuring the Ningpo route steamer *Gong Nong Bing 3*, formerly the *Hsin Tai Maru* of 1940, and the Lower Yangtse river steamers *Dong Fang Hong 3* and *Dong Fang Hong 403*, formerly the *Kiang Hsin* and *Kiang An* of 1905 and 1921 respectively. On the opposite bank at left is Pudong, still dominated by the Shanghai Shipyard Co. Ltd, decorated with Mao slogans but founded in 1862 as Boyd & Co., later Farnham, Boyd & Co. Several ships may be identified there including the Shanghai Maritime Bureau's Dalian route passenger ship *Gong Nong Bing 12*, originally Jardines' *Yuen Sang* of 1923, and to its left, past a tanker, is '*Hung Yu*', which has been brought down from Dalian. Enlargement shows both ships to be intact (except for a '*Hung Yu*' ventilator which has been carefully placed alongside upright, for reconditioning) and evidently under extensive refit for further service. For '*Hung Yu*' the angle is instructive, being close to the pre-WWII view of *Hai-Chang* at Yingkou, and the correspondence of size and general layout as well as details of the hull and superstructure is so great as to put final identification beyond doubt.



Harrison Forman Photograph No. 32539 of the Huangpu River at Shanghai in 1973
[\[https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsphoto/id/32539/rec/81\]](https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsphoto/id/32539/rec/81).



Upper left shipyard segment of the above Harrison Forman photograph.



Harrison Forman's 1973 view compared with the postcard of *Hai-Chang* at Yingkou before WWII.

The Dalian fleet was strengthened by two newly built passenger ships, the 4,300gt *Tian Hua* in 1974 and a sister *Tian Shan* in 1976, followed by the 5,000gt *Tian Hu* in January 1981. *Gong Nong Bing 12*, is known to have been transferred to the ownership of the Dalian Maritime Bureau in 1974 and remained in service until 1980 when she was withdrawn and broken up, coinciding with the arrival of *Tian Hu*. A similar pattern can be assumed for *Hung Yu*, refitted in 1973 and at best guess, withdrawn in 1976 when *Tian Shan* was completed. Only Chinese records would confirm the exact date, but we know enough to be confident that the ship remained in commercial service for around 85 years and was, by 30 years, the last of the original KPM fleet.



Tian Shan or *Tian Hua* at Dalian 1986-87 (*Ships of the World*, May 1987).

In fact a *Speelman/Hung Yu* demise in the 1970s would have just about coincided with that of the KPM itself. In December 1947 Koninklijke Java-China Paketvaart Lijnen (Royal Interocean Lines, RIL) had come into being to operate the deepsea lines of the KPM and the associated Java-China-Japan

Line. This arrangement confined the KPM's operational sphere to what would soon become the new nation of Indonesia. When the KPM's local assets were seized by the Indonesian Government in December 1957 and its Dutch staff ordered to leave the country, the KPM all but lost its rationale. Over the next two years, most of the older ships were either broken up or sold to local owners. Three ships carried on a line from Singapore to Dutch New Guinea (now known as West Papua) until 1963, when the Dutch were obliged by international pressure to cede control, which left only the little *Musi* (987/1950) plying between Singapore and Dili (Portuguese Timor). Despite the deployment of a few other ships on non-RIL routes, the KPM's role was contracting to that of a passive shipowner. In view of this situation, from 1 January 1967 the KPM was absorbed into RIL, which ten years later disappeared into the great shipping combine Nedlloyd Lines.

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