



Citizen of the World:

The Multiple Lives of Madame Wellington Koo

Charles Julian Theodore Tharp (1878 – 1951). *Mme. Wellington Koo*, 1921, Oil on canvas. Gift of Lim and Tan Securities Pte Ltd in memory of Johnny and Nancy Lim
Peranakan Museum. 2013-00575

1943 (with Mary Van Rensselaer Thayer)

1975 (with Isabella Taves)

“An honest self-portrait is extremely rare because a man who has reached the degree of self-consciousness presupposed by the desire to paint his own portrait has almost always also developed an ego-consciousness which paints himself painting himself, and introduces artificial highlights and dramatic shadows.”

W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*

“Is it any wonder that the Chinese are sometimes – often – misunderstood? ... This lack of understanding first developed when we began trading with the West, when the sea captains regarded us as backward fools and we looked upon the intruders as barbarians. **And it still goes on, this strange misunderstanding between people of different cultures.**

The Dutch... Did not really want Java to thrive. They were frightened by progress. Some were the *treppers*, people who came out for a limited time and wanted only to take what they could from the land and return home. Even the older Dutch, the *blijvers*, who considered Java home, saw no reason for the booming prosperity. They wanted the natives – and the Chinese if possible – kept in their place – uneducated and a source of cheap labour.”

(Koo, 1975)

“Papa kept bales of handsome batik sarongs stacked in his office, and when an important Dutchman came to call he was sure to be given one to take home to his wife. On New Year's and other special occasions Papa distributed them to the plump Dutch *mevrouws*, who because of the heat had adopted the comfortable native garment as their own. **These gifts especially enhanced Papa's popularity**, as good batik sarongs were expensive and cost around fifty guilders or twenty-five dollars each.”

(Koo, 1943)

“To my grandfather, China was the world. But my father, now the head of the Oei family, was of a different mind. **He visited China, but it held no particular pull for him. The world did, and as he reached out toward it he took me with him.**”

(Koo, 1975)



(Right): J. P. Tydoman, *Portrait of Oei Tiong Ham*, 1931. Oil on canvas. Collection of Dr Hervey Oei Tjong Bo and Mr Stephen Lim

“... He said, “You cannot appear like that. You shall wear diamonds.” He disappeared indoors and came back with a handful of jewelry he put in my lap: a pair of huge diamond earrings, a necklace made of diamonds that were at least 25 carats each, and a large cufflike bracelet. I didn't ask where they had come from. **I put them on and I was ablaze.** Despite my simple evening dress, I made a gala entrance.”

“... Later, when we lived in London, people used to tease her [Goei Bing Nio], saying she **bought diamonds by the kilo instead of by the karat.**”

(Koo, 1975)

Sister's Chinese wedding robes:

"They were ordered from Amoy, China, the family seat. The royal Manchurian coats and headdresses seen in Chinese paintings were supposed to be worn only by Manchu rulers. But on a wedding day, the bride is queen and the groom is king, so they are allowed to put on the royal garb. My sister's outfit was extremely heavy and unsuitable for our hot climate, but it was beautiful. Underneath she wore red satin pants, a red satin pleated skirt, and a fitted red satin jacket which fell to her knees. (Anything scarlet means good fortune in China.) Over these she put on the greatly anticipated empress robe, made especially for her. It was voluminous, with huge wide sleeves, of scarlet satin heavily lined and so richly embroidered in gold thread that it could stand alone. On the border was a phoenix (sign of the female) design of pearls. The cloak covered her from neck to toe, and over it went the imperial girdle of red satin, encrusted with semi-precious stones and stiffened with bamboo. Her bridal headdress consisted of the traditional fan-shaped hat of red satin, enameled with mother-of-pearl, topped with kingfisher feathers and red pompons, from which fell heavy ropes of pearls over a red veil. She could hardly move once she was dressed."

(Koo, 1975)

Indonesian Peranakan Chinese bride, c. 1895.
Red tunic for Peranakan bride, early-mid 20th century, Jakarta, Indonesia.
Peranakan Museum



“We went everywhere, I in my jewels and couturier clothes and full-length mink or ermine coats, Wellington in his British-made white tie and tails. We had our Rolls, with a chauffeur, a wedding present from Mamma. **I was able, because Mamma had trained me to be a woman of the world, equal to Europeans, to mingle in society as few Chinese women could have.**”

“But I owed Mamma a debt. **My clothes were correct** and my French and English, easily fluent, I dared, **with my sense of history sharpened**, to go out and buy a guest book, which I had these famous people to sign.”

(Koo, 1975)

“I was allowed to wear my favorite dinner dress, an amazing creation with full Turkish trousers made of green chiffon, a gold lame bodice and a brief yellow jacket. I tucked gold and green flowers in my hair and wore a triple strand of pearls which Papa had bought me at Cartier's.”

“The opening party of my first London social season was an evening reception given by Lord and Lady Astor in honor of the Crown Prince of Japan, who is now emperor. The occasion was especially exciting to me, because I wore **my new tiara which Papa had bought at Cartier's.**”

(Koo, 1943)

The Wedding Gown (1921)

“Partly out of affectation, partly to annoy Mama and my sister, I refused to choose my wedding gown. So they selected a conventional white satin creation fashioned in European style. The dress was made by **Callot**, then one of the smartest Parisian couturiers, who also persuaded Mama to buy a fabulously expensive lace veil.”

(Koo, 1943)

“Mamma was planning to wear traditional Chinese ceremonial clothes for the wedding, but my sister decided to wear a European dress and I shrugged and said that would be fine for me, too. There was no time to have a Chinese mandarin coat and headdress sent from China and the idea of borrowing my sister's filled me with revulsion. Mamma selected a white lace floor-length gown from **Callot** for me, and an antique lace veil that fell to the floor from all around.”

(Koo, 1975)

ROMANCE OF JAVA BEAUTY.

The Story of Countess Hoey Stoker.

Lively interest was aroused by the announcement that the wife of the new Chinese Minister is no other than the Countess Hoey Stoker, says the Daily Express.

Dr. Wellington Koo could have made no happier choice. No dance or other social function is complete without the countess and her popular sister, Countess Kan.

Mrs. Wellington Koo is the daughter of Count Vei Ham, a Java sugar king, who is one of the richest men in the East. She was once lady-in-waiting to the late Dowager-Empress of China.

The new chatelaine of the Chinese Legation is Western to her finger-tips, and always dresses in the latest Paris gowns, in which she looks, if anything, more charming than in her gorgeous native robes.

Both sisters drive their own motor cars about London, and the little gray two-seaters are often to be seen threading their way rapidly through the traffic.

Mrs. Koo is a famous beauty. Her wonderful complexion is well set off by dark eyes and jet-black hair. She has an alluring personality, and is a great art collector and ardent theatre-goer.

Her keen interest in world politics, which often took her into the Ladies' Gallery at the House of Commons should be of great assistance to her husband.

"My life as a party girl started after Mamma took me to England. If we had stayed in Java, my life as an unmarried Chinese girl would have been restricted with no opportunities for gaiety. But England was another story...

I bought clothes from London's most popular dressmaker, calf-length skirts by day, long dresses by night...

We were on the brink of the flapper era and I fitted in like a charm. I had the figure for it, tiny and small bosomed, and the vitality. If you can imagine a **Chinese flapper**, it was I...

... At seventeen, I was still child enough to find the attention exciting. **And there as a certain style, a cachet, about being Chinese – and rich."**

(Koo, 1975)

Countess Hoey Stoker, says the "World" is an interesting and cosmopolitan little personage, oriental in appearance, with the quaint charm of a figure off a piece of lacquer, but occidental in her ways and ideas. She is the gayest of social butterflies, and gives frequent and highly amusing parties, sometimes in London, sometimes with her sister, Countess Kan, at her "fascinatingly ugly" house at Wimbledon. She is a picturesque feature in processions and fancy dress dances, with her Chinese costume and pearl headdress. It is problem with many people how to address her. She likes to be called Lady Stoker. Her English husband, Captain Stoker, who has served throughout the war with the R A S C, is a great traveller, and make a fortune in sugar out East.

The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser
(1884-1942), 4 October 1919, Page 12

““Countess Hoey Stoker, who is a member of **London's smartest set**, is a daughter of Count Oei Tyong Han, one of the richest men in China and known here as the Rockefeller of that country. She occupies a **big house in fashionable Grosvenor street and entertains lavishly**... In society the countess is a great favorite. She speaks French, English, German and Italian almost as easily as she does her own language, and is also a brilliant pianist. Her great chum is Lady Drogheda, who is so keenly interested in aviation... Countess Hoey Stoker is almost as “keen” on aviation as **Lady Drogheda**. She was one of the first society women to avail herself of the permission for civilian flying after the war, and has made several ascents from the Handley-Page aerodrome at Cricklewood, London.”

- ‘Chinese Countess Divorces Briton’, Hayden Church, May 15, 1920, London

...usually lived apart. The countess then wrote to her husband saying that she was very unhappy about the future and begged him to return to her and their boy. He replied: “My Dear Hoey—No doubt you will consider I am cruel in not returning to you * * * but my lives and ideas are so far apart it makes it impossible for me to do so. Wishing you the very best of luck. Yours, H.”

In the following November, he wrote: “Dear Hoey—Herewith proof of misconduct which is only fair I should give you, having decided never to return to you. I enclose bill. Yours, H.”

She Is Society Favorite.

With this letter was a bill which showed that the respondent had stayed the night at the Cavendish hotel, St. James's, with a woman other than his wife. The president of the divorce court pronounced a decree nisi with costs and gave Countess Hoey-Stoker the custody of her child.

In society the countess is a great favorite. She speaks French, English, German and Italian almost as easily as she does her own language, and is also a brilliant pianist. Her great chum is Lady Drogheda, who is so keenly interested in aviation and had planned to take to America the big exhibition of aircraft, illustrating the history of flying that she organized during the war.

Countess Hoey Stoker is almost as “keen” on aviation as Lady Drogheda. She was one of the first society women to avail herself of the permission for civilian flying after the war, and has made several ascents from the Handley-Page aerodrome at Cricklewood, London. (Copyright, 1920, by Edward Marshall.)

Pills That Give Youth to Aged Shown in London

London, May 15.—Youth-giving pills known as “thyroxine” are on show at the Chemists' Exhibition in London. The reconstituting elixir, derived from the glands of sheep, not monkeys, is served up with a sprinkling of sugar. It is asserted the pills rejuvenate old men in a startling manner.

Chinese Countess Wins British Divorce



adway

COUNTRESS HOEY-STOKER
Sted Daughter of "China's R

Beautiful Chinese Countess Divorces Her British Husband

London, May 15.—General comment is being made here upon the points of striking resemblance between the unhappy marriage story of Countess Hoey Stoker, the rich and beautiful Chinese woman who has just divorced her British husband, and the plot of an American novel recently published in England. The novel is Joseph Hergesheimer's “Java Head,” the theme of which is the bringing home by an American of a Chinese wife of noble family and their gradual alienation because of the lack of understanding between the two.

Countess Hoey Stoker, who is a member of London's smartest set, is a daughter of Count Oei Tyong Han, one of the richest men in China and known here as the Rockefeller of that country. She occupies a big house in fashionable Grosvenor street and entertains lavishly.

The countess was married at Semarang, Java, in 1909, to Beauchamp Caulfield-Stoker, against whom she obtained a decree of divorce this week, on the ground of his desertion. Mr. Caulfield-Stoker then represented a Manchester firm in Java, and was in the consular service in the year following their marriage the pair came to England. The countess

father bought them a house in Wandsworth, one of the suburbs of London. Her husband, it was stated in the divorce court, refused to introduce the countess to his friends. Later on Count Oei Tyong Han bought a larger house for his daughter and son-in-law at Wimbledon. At time passed, the countess had more and more reason to complain of her husband's neglect.

In February, 1916, Mr. Caulfield-Stoker obtained a commission in the army and was sent to Devonport. His wife wished to join him there, but he declined, making a number of excuses. That Christmas he spent a short leave at Graylands, their house in Wimbledon, but insisted, the countess said, in occupying a separate room. From that time until June, 1919, they virtually lived apart.

In society the countess is a great favorite. She speaks French, English, German and Italian almost as easily as she does her own language, and is also a brilliant pianist. Her great chum is Lady Drogheda, who is so keenly interested in aviation and has planned to take to America the big exhibition of aircraft, illustrating the history of flying that she organized during the war.

(Copyright, 1920.)

Detroit Free Press, 16 May
1920, Sun, Page 69

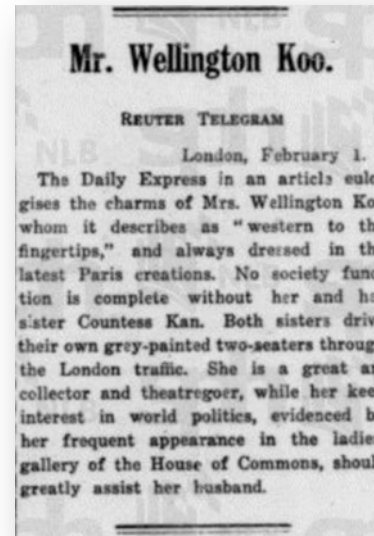
Washington Post, 16 May 1920, Sun, Page 1

"The new chatelaine of the Chinese Legation is **Western to her finger tips** (says the Daily Express), and **always dresses in the latest Paris gowns, in which she looks, if anything, more charming than in her gorgeous native robes.**

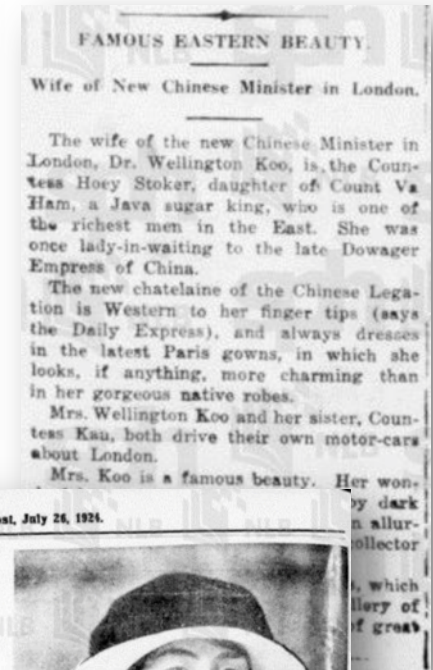
Mrs. Wellington Koo and her sister, Countess Kau, both drive their own motor-cars about London.

Mrs. Koo is a **famous beauty**. Her wonderful complexion is well set off by dark eyes and jet-black hair. She has an alluring personality, and is a **great art collector** and ardent theatre-goer."

'Famous Eastern Beauty', The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942), 14 March 1921



The Straits Times, 4 Feb 1921, Page 9



Malayan Saturday Post, 26 Jul 1924, Page 6

“Madame Koo, like her husband, is very highly educated, not only in the finely intellectual sense of China, where knowledge has meant honour, but in the larger womanly sense of America and England. If you have ever been to America, you will know how well American ladies dress, and to see a picture of Madame Koo, much more to see herself, is to realise that she has nothing in the **gracious art of costume** to learn from them. She is **probably one of the best-dressed ladies in London** – that is when she follows the western mode, and it goes without saying when she wears Chinese raiment – for **she not only has exquisite taste in colours and eyes for graceful lines, but she knows**, as the Americans say, and as our own women folk are learning to say, **“how to put on her clothes.”**

The Graphic, The New Chinese Minister at Home in London, 4 Jun 1921

Sir Francis Rose (1909 – 1979), *L'Ensemble*, 1938. Oil on canvas

“When she entered the room I realized at once that she was to be for all of my life, **the most beautiful woman I had ever seen**. She was a radiance; it was as though all the magic of grace and divinity were mixed in perfection. She seemed younger than I could ever be. Her tiny feet and long, small hands moved with a rhythm which only a great dancer could interpret, but which were just her ordinary gestures. **Her beauty was so great that one could give her no nationality as she shone like the sun.**”

Sir Francis Rose, *Saying Life* (1961)
on Madame Wellington Koo

"If you should see Edmund Dulac's show would you tell me about his portrait of Mrs. Wellington Koo. **She is a woman whose appearance I admire tremendously.** I've only seen bad newspaper photographs of her but she looks exquisite, even then. I should imagine it would be perfect joy to paint her as she should be painted. Couldn't you get to know her? **I am sure she is as rare a little being as one can find.** But its true I've only seen her on the back page of the Daily Mail! Her babies are the greatest loves possible. M. & I nearly swooned over their picture."

Katherine Mansfield, letter to Dorothy Brett
(11 Nov 1921)

"It was through her so successful portrait of Madame Wellington Koo wife of the Chinese ambassador to Great Britain that Leonebel Jacobs received her official invitation into China and the Forbidden City.

Of this she says, "Madame Koo was her own **exotic** self. She was like a magnolia blossom, poised, sophisticated. Educated in Europe, a **cosmopolitan** to the finger tips, familiar with the details of American tea table, she was the last word in Oriental advance. "Intellectually she is more mature than most women of her age. Her small inscrutable little head is placed on a tiny stem of a neck. It baffled me, so unbelievable was its construction. Her eyes were so delicate that I was afraid to put them on canvas, her mouth no mouth but a red flower; her eyebrows two lines in harmony with the rest of her features." Ms. Jacobs' portrait of Madame Wellington Koo was an instant success."

October 5, 1924
Morning Register from Eugene, Oregon,
Page 10

"...cream brocaded velvet, with a narrow train edged with trails of flame-coloured tulle. Her closely fitting draped corsage of gold tissue was ornamented with diamanté trimming, and a cluster of green and crystal was fastened at the waist"

The Times, 8 July 1921

It was 1921 and no court balls had been given since the World War, so the announcement that Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians were to be honored at Buckingham Palace caused a furore of excitement in social London. I ordered instantly a magnificent [gold lamé] ball gown from **Worth...**"

(Koo, 1943)

*The Lafayette Studio, Mme. Wellington Koo on the occasion of the The State Ball, Buckingham Palace, 7 July 1921.
Victoria & Albert Museum, London*

“...what France – and other nations – thought of China depended to a large extent on how Wellington and I behaved. **We were the showcase.**”

“It is also possible that we were sometimes noticed and talked about in not so kind a way. For I began to sense after a time that something was bothering my husband. **Had someone not quite friendly to China criticized my appearance?**”

... I said, “I never knew much about politics until I married you. But I’m not stupid. I know how other countries are looking at China today, as an area for economic exploitation. I’ve lived in Java. There the Dutch look down on Chinese unless you have money enough so you can ignore them. Why shouldn’t we ride in good cars so long as my father can afford to give them to us? I have jewels. Why should I put them away when other diplomats’ wives dress themselves up in everything they own for grand occasions? **When we act as they do, it will help them realize China cannot be ignored, that we aren’t the backward country they suppose. We are important in our own right.**”

... I was ignorant about many things. But I learnt from a master, my father, what money can do... Wellington and I lived in a style far beyond that of other Chinese in government. **It did not hurt China’s cause, nor the status of my husband. In fact, I am sure that it helped and for a few years the world was my oyster.**”

(Koo, 1975)

“My patriotism for China was uncomplicated by politics; **I was Chinese, so of course I loved China.**”

(Koo, 1975)

“The China which I had once accepted so passively had blossomed since my marriage into a more personal land, a land which already possessed my husband body and soul, and was slowly claiming my devotion. I was returning to my country, not as a heedless young girl, but **as a woman who had an assured position of her own to maintain.**”

(Koo, 1943)

“Socially, we were at a disadvantage in the countries we visited... two things were against us: **First, we were Overseas Chinese, which to people from the mainland, marks one as provincial.** It is rather the way British snobs regard their Canadian or Australian compatriots – tolerated but not really accepted. **Second, we were so very rich.** Mamma and my sister would go about innocently loaded down with diamonds and rubies and emeralds, jewels the legation people envied but pretended to scorn. And in addition, our usual shopping habits, placing gigantic orders without dreaming of asking prices, must have seemed preposterous to them...

Years later, **when I married Wellington Koo and was automatically accepted into the top circles of mainland China,** I looked back and smiled at how unsophisticated and naive we must have seemed in Europe.”

(Koo, 1975)

Beijing vs. Shanghai:

"...I knew that Shanghai, that bustling modern city, would never be for me. Peking is my city, where I once belonged and where I hope someday, if things ever change in my lifetime, to return."

(Koo, 1975)

First Meeting with Mother-in-Law:

"She surveyed my smart French frock and my permanent wave intently. My coiffure was arranged in a fashionable mass of curls, it was warm for early June and my thin dress had the briefest sleeves. She patted my bare arms and asked anxiously, "Aren't you cold in that tight dress and with those bare arms?" She touched my hair as if to reassure herself it was not a wig and wondered aloud if it was difficult to dress in so complicated a manner. **I was quite beyond her understanding. In the generation which separated us time had been accelerated a thousand-fold in China; our habits, our minds, even our bodies were as different as if we had been born several hundred years apart.**"

(Koo, 1943)

"Because it was warm and humid, I had put on a French frock with short sleeves, and my hair was waved and in curls on the back of my neck, very **un-Chinese**. I was also wearing high heels. When I caught sight of my mother-in-law and of my sister-in-law, I was almost as shocked as when I realized we could not communicate, even in Chinese. They spoke only the Shanghai dialect, which I had never learned. I spoke only Fukien and Mandarin. Although Peking was only a thousand miles from Shanghai, none of the women had ever gone there, nor intended to go there. It was strange to realize that I, **a child of Overseas Chinese**, had twice visited Peking with my mother and there had learned Mandarin, while to them it was another world in which they really had no interest."

(Koo, 1975)

Shanghai: (Earlier View)

"Though Shanghai is only a thousand miles from Peking, I found it another world... I found Shanghai **under an American spell... Motion pictures made a deep impression on Chinese women...**

I was impressed by the chic of Shanghai's modern young women. They had inaugurated a successful revolution against China's traditional costume, substituting long, slim gowns, becomingly moulded to the figure, for the cumbersome pleated skirt and bulky jacket. Though I had been wearing European clothes for years, the new gowns appealed to me. They were comfortable as well as smart and, requiring little material, were relatively inexpensive. **I started a Chinese wardrobe and in the process accidentally made several adaptations which, because they were widely copied, set me up as a fashion leader.** The new dresses reached to the ankle and were slit only a few inches up each side. Any impatient step tripped me so I ripped the original slits recklessly to the knee, then, abashed by the show of leg, designed lace pantalettes which were decorative yet concealing. I also found the gowns too austere for my taste, so I carried the fancy braid edging the slits up to the waist and sewed trimming from the under-arm opening to the upstanding collar. I altered the length of the sleeve to suit the occasion and **revived an interest in Chinese silks** by insisting all my gowns be made of local stuffs. This upset the Shanghai fashion plates, who thought anything desirable and considered imported materials the ultimate chic."

(Koo, 1943)

Shanghai: (Revisionist View)

“I did not like Shanghai. It was big, pretentious, jazzy, filled with White Russians and British shipping people who were nobodies at home but put on upper-class airs in China. Today we would call them **phonies**; they were so insular, **so middle-class... and looked down their noses at everything really beautiful and indigenous to our culture: jade, porcelain, antiques.** And the poor foolish Shanghai Chinese were so impressed with these upstarts that they copied their manners and filled their houses with “Western” furniture (the so-called smart Shanghai furniture all came from Grand Rapids and was heavy and ugly) and insisted on speaking English, although their accents were so awful I couldn’t understand them.”

“The **so-called chic** Chinese women often wore smartly cut jackets and trousers,” but their tastes are **vulgar** and their pretensions to patriotic wear laughable. Their Chinese-style garments were cut from imported fabrics, and they “wore their hair in the Western fashion, going to the French beauty shops.”

(Koo, 1975)

Delegates of the League of Nations at the Great Wall, on a visit to China to see the effects of the Sino-Japanese War. From left: Marshall Zhang Xueliang, Dr. Heinrich Schnee, Count Aldrovandi, Mrs. Zhang Xueliang, Lord Lytton, Koo and General Claudel (Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

Koo with Yu Fengzhi (Mrs. Zhang Xueliang) at a diplomatic function in 1932, with representatives from the USA (right) and Italy

“It amused me to see the smart Chinese ladies in Shanghai looking at the Young Marshall’s wife and me as though they were looking at creatures from Mars, and then try to imitate what we wore. It was all as ridiculous and phony – if I may use that modern word again – as their British accents. **They never understood the importance and value of their own beautiful silks and the exquisite workmanship that was so typically Chinese.** I had a favourite belt made of tiny beads with a silver buckle; the beading was so fine the effect was almost like fabric. I have tried in vain to have it copied in Spain, France, Hong Kong, and Israel. No one does that kind of work anymore.

(Koo, 1975)

Cross-Cultural Fashion: Blending the Modern & Antique

“When I first arrived in China, I wore Western clothes, dresses and coats I had brought from Paris and London. Then I remembered how lovely the wife of **Viscount Ishii of Japan** had looked in Geneva in her Japanese robes, putting the rest of us in eclipse. The so-called chic Chinese women often wore smartly cut jackets and trousers, but they looked down on the beautiful Chinese silks, preferring French fabrics, and they wore their hair Western fashion, going to the French beauty shops. I began choosing **beautiful old embroideries and fine pleatings and wonderful Chinese silks, many of them antique**, and having them made into costumes for me, **not copies but adaptations of traditional Chinese clothes**.

...wore over gold satin pantalets, encrusted with imitation pearls... **These were marvellously becoming, done to my special pattern...** With these outfits, I would wear my sapphire and diamond necklace from Boucheron, and my huge earrings to match.”

(Koo, 1975)

“One day in Washington, when we were posted there after London, a group of Chinese officials were praising Wellington Koo for the role he had played in the recognition of China abroad. **Madame Chiang Kai-shek said, “Don’t forget that the ambassador’s wife played a great role, too.”**

(Koo, 1975)

“With keen intelligence, a large personal fortune, youth and beauty, she became one of the most successful hostesses in London, and Englishmen were made aware that the Chinese no longer wore pigtails and could speak without trace of pidgin English.”

New York Times, 5 Feb 1939

“As wife of an outstanding Chinese diplomat, **she has used her intelligence, looks and fortune to advance China...** Mme. Koo, a leading lady in an uneasy age, brought two hemispheres together with her persuasive personality, and served as charming link between old China and the new. **Sophisticated from the rims of her inch-long nails to the toe of her jeweled sandal, she is true Chinese, with the added finesse of an extraordinary European education.**”

Mary Van Rensselaer Thayer
Vogue, Jan 1943

“...being the wife of an ambassador is heady wine, indeed. People toady to you until you begin to expect it. And our position, with Wellington now representing the fifth great power among the Allies, was enough to give anyone delusions of grandeur.

... I confess that it is hard to maintain one's balance, even if you are an adult. When you are deferred to and given privileges, when you mingle with the top men in the world, the men who are making headlines and changing the fate of nations, you can't help having an inflated idea of your own worth.”

(Koo, 1975)

"I am **not a believer of women's liberation**, as I understand it. I think every woman should have an education (would that I had been sent to a good school instead of being tutored at home in arts like sword dancing and riding side-saddle!) and be able to work at something in case she needs to support herself...

I am still old-fashioned enough to believe that **a man must be allowed to be head of the house, to occupy center stage**. No matter how clever and able a woman is, she must never seem to dominate her husband, because if she does she castrates him and fails herself as a woman. He must feel he is the boss; only then is she loved and respected by him..."

(Koo, 1975)