

SPECIAL REPORT NO.

Shanghai, China, December 16, 1933.

(City) (Country) (Date)

Subject: CHINA, A NATION WITHOUT DOLLS.

JAN 16 1934

Submitted by: Julian Arnold, (Name)

Commercial Attache, SERVICE (Title)

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 11-9138

181057

While it is probably true that Asiatic peoples generally have not taken to the use of dolls in a manner comparable with the popularity which the doll occupies in the life of the peoples of the Occident, yet there is probably less evidence of the use of dolls in China than among other Asiatic peoples. In a sense this seems odd for the reason that the Chinese have accentuated family life more highly than have any other peoples. The Chinese are also very fond of children and children occupy a prominent place in the family life. The Chinese enjoy the heritage of a very rich civilization. Their literature, folk lore and art are suggestive of so much that might have figured in connection with the manufacture and use of dolls. Furthermore, the Chinese girl is probably even more maternally inclined than is her western sister for the reason that she is reared in a society impregnated with the idea that the primal function of woman is that of motherhood. On the other hand, the Chinese child has not been taught to play and receives comparatively little encouragement in this direction although the fact remains that Chinese children possess pretty much the same natural instincts for play as children elsewhere.

It is difficult to understand why through the long centuries of Chinese history the doll has not been developed as a popular toy for the girls of this nation. Upon making inquiries in regard to the

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subject, it is found that there are apparently no prejudices or superstitions which stand in the way of popularization of dolls among the children in this country. Furthermore, during the past two or three decades the Chinese people have become increasingly receptive to western ideas and things Occidental. Hence, the present is a more opportune time for launching upon the introduction of modernly made Chinese dolls than would have been the case in the past. We must bear in mind, however, that if the business is to be developed in a large way, the doll must be of Chinese type. While the Chinese children may show some interest in the foreign type doll, they would be more in the nature of a novelty than an object of affection. Thus it is necessary, if this business is to be developed in a large way, that the dolls be of distinctly Chinese type, dressed in Chinese style and made to appeal in every possible sense to the natural likes of the Chinese girl. Probably one of the most effective ways of development of the business would be to manufacture the dolls in China, importing from the United States such materials in this connection as would be necessary. As the Chinese invented chinaware and porcelain, undoubtedly the heads and such other parts of the anatomy of the dolls as is desirable to be made of porcelain could be advantageously manufactured in this country. However, it would seem that a non-breakable head would be much more acceptable. Thus it might be advisable to manufacture the heads in the United States so long as they were of distinctly Chinese types and construct the bodies and make the clothes here in this country.

Specimen Paper

With a proper advertising and educational campaign, I believe this business could be developed into one of very considerable proportions. What Chinese type dolls have thus far been placed on the market here in China, which have been comparatively few, are of very poor quality and have very little to offer by way of appeal to actual or potential lovers of dolls. Naturally, any one taking up the manufacture of dolls for the potential market existing here in China would find it to his advantage to make a number of different models in order to cater to the varying tastes and different standards of purchasing power among these people.

In connection with this subject, it may be well to proceed upon the basis of catering at first to the market possibilities in China for the higher priced quality dolls. There are considerable numbers of the wealthier Chinese who would undoubtedly be interested in the purchase of dolls with beautiful heads, hair, arms and feet and dressed stylishly, that is, miniature reproductions of models fashioned after the stylish modernly dressed Chinese girl. Furthermore, there should be a fairly good demand from tourist and from peoples abroad for Chinese dolls of good quality and artistically dressed. The middle and lower classes in any society are keenly interested in imitating the styles and fancies of the wealthier members of their communities. Thus, so soon as Chinese dolls become popular with the wealthier classes, it will then be a comparatively easy matter to put on the market cheaper likenesses of the better quality dolls in order to cater to the still larger numbers of lower purchasing power.

The American manufacturer of dolls may find it to his advantage to send a representative to China to survey the field at first hand with the object of investigating the conditions under which the business might best be inaugurated and to make note of interesting side lines may be involved in building up an industry of this character.

Julian Arnold,
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