

# **“American Patrick Manson” Goes to China: Ernest Faust’s Career Path to Peking Union Medical College**

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## **Abstract**

Based on primary sources from the Rockefeller Archive Center, this research report examines the leading American tropical medicine specialist Ernest Carroll Faust's initial career choice to go to Rockefeller-sponsored Peking Union Medical College in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It argues that Faust accepted the position and introduced a medical-zoological-based tropical medicine to China mainly because of his own career ambitions and his mentor Henry Ward's ardent promotion of this new field, within the Rockefeller Foundation's expanding global network. With this case study, my report also challenges the current dominant model which treats tropical medicine as colonial medicine.

Tropical medicine, according to *The Oxford Companion to Medicine*, is “a specialty defined by the part of the world where the illness was acquired... For the first half of the 20th century tropical medicine and parasitology were closely intertwined and almost synonymous.”<sup>1</sup> British physician Patrick Manson (1844-1922) established tropical medicine, based on his early career experience in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

After Manson left for Britain, it was not reinvigorated until 1919, when an American scientist, Ernest Carroll Faust (1890-1978), established a division of parasitology at the Peking Union Medical School (PUMC) and introduced American-zoology-based tropical medicine into China, “the cradle of tropical medicine.”<sup>2</sup> In one decade, from 1919 to 1928, Faust had successfully built an international network of tropical medicine at PUMC. With his professional reputation made in China, Faust was later appointed as the chair of the Division of Parasitology at Tulane University, where over the course of his remaining career, he significantly advanced the development of tropical medicine in the United States.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, historian John Z. Bowers regarded Faust as “the great pioneer of American parasitology, in a mold comparable to that of Manson for British science.”<sup>4</sup>

As a new medical specialty emerged during the 1880s and 1890s, tropical medicine was believed to be closely related to Euro-American imperial expansions. Many historians of colonial medicine claim that tropical medicine was developed by Western imperialists as a “tool of empire” to enable colonial settlers to survive and to profit politically and economically in the “dangerous” tropics.<sup>5</sup> Some post-colonial historians working in this vein treat tropical medicine as a form of cultural imperialism or a sign of “colonial modernity,” and emphasize the power relations and violence behind the imperialists’ mission of “civilizing” and “curing” indigenous peoples through the introduction of tropical medicine.<sup>6</sup> However, as the present short research report shows, Ernest Faust’s career path to PUMC revises or even challenges such a dominant paradigm of colonial medicine in the history of tropical medicine.

Ernest Carroll Faust was born in Carthage, Missouri in 1890. After graduating from Oberlin College in 1912, he served for two years as a research assistant for Professor Henry B. Ward (1865-1945), head of the Department of Zoology at the University of Illinois. Under Ward's direction, Faust studied medical zoology/parasitology, and received his Ph.D. in 1917 with a dissertation on agamic trematodes (flukes) in the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana. He then worked as an instructor of zoology at the same university for another two years.<sup>7</sup> When he was offered a position in parasitology at the newly opened PUMC in 1919, Faust was still young with relatively little in the way of significant scientific contributions. How could this inexperienced scientist be appointed to this position? And, why did the future "American Patrick Manson" make a decision to sail across the Pacific Ocean to work in China, an "uncivilized" country far away home, which was severely suffering chaos after the 1911 Revolution? The answers lie within the specific context of the historical development of tropical medicine in the US at the time.

In 1913, the newly chartered Rockefeller Foundation (RF) organized the International Health Commission (later, the International Health Board) to launch its international health campaigns against tropical diseases, such as hookworm, yellow fever, and malaria. And then, the RF started to engage in the global enterprise of promoting tropical medicine. One of the RF's major decisions in this respect was to sponsor the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) to establish a School of Hygiene and Public Health for medical research and training public health workers in 1916. In 1918, William Henry Welch (1850-1934), dean of this new school (and also dean of the Johns Hopkins Medical School), directed zoologist and parasitologist Robert Hegner (1880-1942) to establish the Department of Medical Zoology, which was of "the most immediate link with tropical medicine."<sup>8</sup> In 1919, Hegner recruited his friend William W. Cort (1887-1971), who was Ward's doctoral student from the University of Illinois, and together they helped the Department of Medical Zoology develop as an important center for the study of tropical medicine in the US.<sup>9</sup>

In 1915, the RF's China Medical Board set out to rebuild the Union Medical College in Beijing, which had originally been established by American-British missionaries in 1906. William Henry Welch went to Beijing to investigate medical education in China, and he subsequently advised that the new medical school should be modeled on the JHU's Medical School. Re-organized as "the Johns Hopkins of China" in 1917, the PUMC embarked on setting up its college structure following the JHU's example.<sup>10</sup> Given the centrality of tropical medicine in the JHU curriculum, in 1919, the PUMC decided to hire a tropical medicine specialist to build a division of parasitology within the Department of Pathology.

There were two major factions of tropical medicine specialists in early twentieth-century America. One was associated with US military medicine, as Warwick Anderson has discussed in his historical work on American tropical medicine.<sup>11</sup> Initially based in Philadelphia, this group focused on diseases that afflicted US troops overseas; these specialists were mainly members of the American Society of Tropical Medicine (founded in 1903), with the *Journal of American Tropical Medicine* as their official journal. The other group, which was supported by the RF and Welch at the Johns Hopkins University, consisted of parasitologists trained in medical-zoological-based tropical medicine.<sup>12</sup> These specialists were close to Ward and were associated with *The Journal of Parasitology* (founded in 1914). They would establish the American Society of Parasitologists in 1924, to which Ward would be elected the society's first president.<sup>13</sup>

As Faust's mentor, Henry B. Ward played a key role in the establishment of parasitology in China. He also was instrumental for shaping the field in the US. Born in Troy, New York in 1865, he studied in Germany with Rudolph Leuckart (1822-1898), the founder of modern parasitology, after receiving his A.B. from Williams College in 1885. In 1892, he obtained his doctoral degree from Harvard University. Ward had taught zoology at the University of Nebraska for nearly sixteen years before he moved to the University of Illinois in 1909. At Urbana, he established the first parasitology graduate program in the US. Until his retirement in 1933, Ward continued to train Ph.D. students in parasitology

at the University of Illinois.<sup>14</sup> As the “father of American parasitology,” Ward avidly promoted his medical-zoological-based tropical medicine, which was not always easy. His field was still considered by many to be “out of the mainstream of medicine,” and it had to compete with those tropical medical specialists who focused on the military. To spread his knowledge of parasitology and tropical medicine, Ward tried very hard to promote his students’ careers in the American medical sciences. William W. Cort’s appointment to the Department of Medical Zoology at the JHU was one of the most successful examples of his efforts in this regard.<sup>15</sup> It was also through Ward’s personal and professional networks that Faust was granted the position at the PUMC.

In early 1919, upon receiving the PUMC’s position advertisement, Ward had a talk immediately with Faust “at some length with reference to the opening,”<sup>16</sup> and encouraged Faust to apply for this RF-supported position. In the meantime, he also wrote to Ralph G. Mills, head of the Department of Pathology at the PUMC, to recommend Faust: “If I might be free to make a suggestion, it is that Dr. Faust...is the ideal man for the position... I am confident that Faust will do more research than anyone else of whom I know.”<sup>17</sup> Although he praised Faust highly, he nonetheless suggested that Faust should begin as an associate in parasitology rather than “advance to the associate professorship,” since Ward was afraid that his pupil might “allow his natural tendencies to carry him so fast that he might stumble.”<sup>18</sup> Ward also recommended Faust to Simon Flexner, trustee of the China Medical Board, “if I could possibly prevent it I would not let Faust leave us...He is altogether the best man in my opinion of anything like his age in the country for the work in China.”<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps as a result of Ward’s efforts on his behalf, on May 27, 1919, Faust was officially appointed as associate in parasitology for a term of four years at the PUMC.<sup>20</sup> Even before Faust left for China in late December 1919, Ward laid plans to promote his journal while doing what he could to further Faust’s future career. In October, he put Faust’s name on the list of foreign collaborators of *The Journal of Parasitology*, knowing that Faust would be of service to the journal “in various ways.”<sup>21</sup> In early December, Ward wrote a letter to Henry

Houghton, acting president of the PUMC and a specialist of tropical medicine, asking him to support Faust's work in China:

I know you are interested in this field and will welcome an opportunity to meet him and discuss various biological problems with him. I think that his knowledge of the zoological field will be helpful to workers there who have not been trained in that territory and on the other hand, I am equally sure that your own acquaintance with other aspects of the questions and with the local situation will be of great value to him.<sup>22</sup>

Faust's decision to accept the position at the PUMC was clearly influenced by Ward, who convinced him that the post would provide "future opportunities for service and advancement,"<sup>23</sup> since there were a lot of unknown parasitic diseases in China for further research. Several weeks after Faust reached China, Ward would also write to remind him that, "it is evident that you are going to have a marvelous opportunity, and I hope will proceed with such caution that you build permanent foundations."<sup>24</sup> Faust later on observed that "since the days when Sir Patrick Manson carried on his investigations in Amoy and Hong Kong, China has been known as a country of unusual interest and opportunity to the student of parasitology and tropical medicine."<sup>25</sup> As Deborah J. Neill has shown, in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, many young European students of tropical medicine went to colonies in the tropics to hunt for new microbes and parasites, attempting to establish their expertise as well as to "save the world from deadly diseases."<sup>26</sup> Driven by similar motives to build his own professional reputation and to make "China a healthy place to live in,"<sup>27</sup> Faust accepted this job offer, and arrived in China with his newlywed wife in January 1920.

In short, the introduction into China of the strand of American tropical medicine that focused on parasitology resulted from Henry Ward's ardent promotion of this new field and Ernest Faust's own career ambitions, within the context of the expanding global network of the RF. In this respect, Faust indeed resembled Patrick Manson to some extent. Manson's early career as a medical officer in the British-dominated Imperial Chinese Maritime Custom Service started with the expansion of the British imperial network in the Far East in the

late nineteenth century. What is more, as Douglas M. Haynes has demonstrated, the initial drive that forced Manson to leave for China was the overcrowded domestic medical market in Britain. Manson, along with many of his fellow Scottish countrymen who looked to “the empire to pursue their career ambitions,” also went to China in search of professional opportunities.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, there was a noticeable difference between the two men. As a practitioner of medicine, Manson did not expect to establish a new medical specialty during his stay in China, while Faust already had certain ambitions in this regard as he began his work at the PUMC.

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<sup>1</sup> David J. Bradley, “Tropical Medicine,” in John Walton, Paul B. Beeson, and Ronald Bodley Scott, eds, *The Oxford Companion to Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 1393.

<sup>2</sup> Rodrigo Fernós, *Medicine and International Relations in the Caribbean: Some Historical Variants* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2006), 164-165.

<sup>3</sup> For example, he published *Human Helminthology*, the first English textbook on this subject in 1929, and in 1937, together with Charles Craig, he published *Craig and Fausts’s Clinical Parasitology* which would become one of the most influential textbooks on parasitology. See John Duffy, *Tulane University Medical Center: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Medical Education* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 174-175.

<sup>4</sup> John Z. Bowers, *Western Medicine in a Chinese Palace: Peking Union Medical College, 1917-1951* (New York: Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, 1972), 106.

<sup>5</sup> The “tool of empire” was first addressed in the early 1980s by Daniel Headrick in his book *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press 1981); also, see Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> “Fifty Years in Service: Profile of a Preeminent Scientist in the Class of 1912,” *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* 59, no.2 (1963): 4-6, from “Ernest Carroll Faust Papers, 1918-1966,” The US National Library of Medicine, MS C 170.

<sup>8</sup> John Farley, *Bilharzia: A History of Imperial Tropical Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 81.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Fee, *Disease and Discovery: A History of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, 1916-1939* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 65, 96-121.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Brown Bullock, “A Case Study of Transnational Flows of Chinese Medical Professionals: China Medical Board and Rockefeller Foundation Fellows,” Bridie Andrews and Mary Brown Bullock ed., *Medical Transitions in Twentieth-Century China* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 291-292.



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- <sup>11</sup> Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 2006).
- <sup>12</sup> John Farley, "Parasites and the Germ Theory of Disease," in Charles E. Rosenberg and Janet Golden eds., *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 33-49.
- <sup>13</sup> Joseph C. Kiger, "The American Society of Parasitologists: A Short History," *The Journal of Parasitology* 48, no.5 (1962): 641-650.
- <sup>14</sup> W.W. Cort, "Obituary: Henry Baldwin Ward," *Science* 102, no.2661 (1945): 658-660.
- <sup>15</sup> Calvin W. Schwabe, "A Brief History of American Parasitology: The Veterinary Connection Between Medicine and Zoology," in Kenneth S. Warren and Elizabeth F. Purcell eds., *The Current Status and Future of Parasitology* (New York: Josiah Mary, Jr. Foundation), 21-43.
- <sup>16</sup> "Faust to Ralph G. Mills, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919," in "Parasitology-Staff-Faust EC (1919-1961)," Rockefeller Archive Center, China Medical Board Inc., Box 113, Folder 820.
- <sup>17</sup> "Ward to Mills, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1919," cited by Mill in his letter to Franklin C. McLean, *ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> "Mills to Edwin R. Embree, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919," "Parasitology-Staff-Faust EC (1919-1961)," Rockefeller Archive Center, China Medical Board Inc., Box 113, Folder 820.
- <sup>19</sup> "Ward to Simon Flexner, May 19<sup>th</sup>," "Parasitology-Staff-Faust EC (1919-1961)," Rockefeller Archive Center, China Medical Board Inc., Box 113, Folder 820.
- <sup>20</sup> "McLean to Faust, May 27, 1919," "Parasitology-Staff-Faust EC (1919-1961)," Rockefeller Archive Center, China Medical Board Inc., Box 113, Folder 820.
- <sup>21</sup> "Ward to Faust, October 31, 1919," in "Ernest C. Faust Papers, 1919-1922," University of Illinois Archives, Series Number: 26/20/1. I want to thank Chen Jing (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) for photocopying this collection of Faust's papers for me.
- <sup>22</sup> "Ward to Henry Houghton, December 2, 1919," The PUMC Archives (*Beijing xiehe yixue yuan dang an guan*), Personnel Archive, no.153, "Ernest Faust."
- <sup>23</sup> "Faust to Ralph G. Mills, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919," in "Parasitology-Staff-Faust EC (1919-1961)," Rockefeller Archive Center, China Medical Board Inc., Box 113, Folder 820.
- <sup>24</sup> "Ward to Faust, March 4, 1920," in "Ernest C. Faust Papers, 1919-1922," University of Illinois Archives, Series Number: 26/20/1.
- <sup>25</sup> Ernest Faust, "Parasitic Infections and Human Disease in China," *Contribution no. 71, the Parasitology Laboratory, PUMC, 1926*: 1, from "Ernest Carroll Faust Papers, 1918-1966," The US National Library of Medicine, MS C 170.
- <sup>26</sup> Deborah J. Neill, *Networks in Tropical Medicine*, 8.
- <sup>27</sup> "Faust to R.S. Greene, March 26, 1923," in "Parasitology-Staff-Faust EC (1919-1961)," Rockefeller Archive Center, China Medical Board Inc., Box 113, Folder 820.
- <sup>28</sup> Douglas M. Haynes, *Imperial Medicine: Patrick Manson and the Conquest of Tropical Medicine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 13-27; Douglas M. Haynes, "Social Status and Imperial Service: Tropical Medicine and the British Medical Profession in the Nineteenth Century," in David Arnold, ed., *Warm Climates and Western Medicine: The Emergence of Tropical Medicine, 1500-1900* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 208-226. On the overcrowded medical market in nineteenth-century Britain, also see M. Jeanne Peterson, *The Medical Profession in*

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*Mid-Victorian London* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 124-125; On the British imperial medical network, see Li Shang-jen, “*British Imperial Medicine in Late 19th-century China and the Early Career of Patrick Manson*,” Ph.D. dissertation, Imperial College, University of London, 1999.