



Servants and workers  
in 19th-century China

## Edw'd. B. Drew,

Edward Bangs Drew received his BA and MA degrees from Harvard. He joined the Chinese Maritime Customs Service in 1864 and was appointed commissioner in 1868. He was later appointed by the Kuang-hsü emperor (光緒) to serve as secretary of the Chinese embassy on Special Ambassador Li Hung-chang's (李鴻章) visit to the U.S. in 1896. Drew retired from the Customs Service in 1908 and returned to live in Massachusetts where he died in 1924. He was married to Anna Davis and five of their six children were born in China.

During that time he worked as a commissioner in China, Drew collected photos that document clothing, customs, and daily life in 19th-century China. All photos in this booklet are part of online photo collections of Edwards Bangs Drew Chinese Maritime Customs Service Photographs at the Harvard-Yenching Library.

COMMISSIONERS,





REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

I<sup>o</sup>.—IN-DOOR STAFF.

內 班

杜 德 維



American,

*Mrs. Drew*

Born in 1851 in Medfield, Massachusetts, Anna Davis married Edward Bangs Drew in 1865. That same year they went to China, where her husband became commissioner of customs in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service from 1868-1908. They had six children.



*Mr. & Mrs. E. B. Drew  
Commissioner of Customs at Ningpo  
1878 - 1880*





Charlie Drew

Hudson.  
 Willie Goodland  
 Wilfred Whittley  
 Alon Cooper  
 George Barshel.  
 Charlie Drew  
 Katie Goodland  
 Doris Barshel.

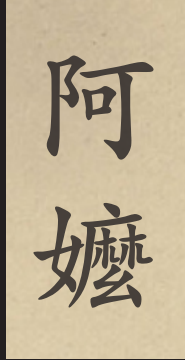


Dora Drew

Mrs. Drew & daughter Dora

## Domestic workers

Marginal groups, such as domestic servants, are part of the photograph collection, but with limited information about the individuals. They were included in the documentation for their functions within the imperial and Western families, such as caregivers, and cultural values, such as the traditional clothing they were wearing.



## Amah

Amah (阿嬤) in Fujian dialects, also called Min Chinese, means nanny or a senior woman. It is also an informal name for grandmothers, like granny.

阿  
嬈

Charlie's amah

福  
州

costume

domestic

a foochow women



**Title:** Charlie's amah, a Foochow woman

**Place:** Fuzhou, Fujian Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** 187-?

The woman was the nanny of Edward Drew's son, Charlie Drew, while the Drew family resided in Fuzhou, Fujian, China. Edward Drew possibly planned for this photo shoot and let Charlie's Amah know beforehand as the woman was seated in a photography studio, dressing up, wearing hair accessories and holding a fan as a prop.



assu

nanny

阿  
嫲

阿  
蘇

foreign trade

Migrant worker



**Title:** Assu, the Drew family's  
Chinese amah

**Description:** Edward Bangs Drew  
family amah (domestic servant),  
Assu, who came with the family  
when Drew retired from the Chinese  
Maritime Customs Service and  
returned to the U.S.

**Place:** China

**Creation Date:** 1891

In the Edward Bangs Drew collection, Assu  
was presented with the most photos, a total of  
three, and with the most personal information  
among all the workers.

# 北京



**Title:** Assu, amah, [holding] Lionel, 6 weeks old

**Description:** Edward Bangs Drew family amah (domestic servant), Assu, who came with the family when Drew retired from the Chinese Maritime Customs Service and returned to the U.S.

**Place:** Beijing, China

**Creation Date:** 1890 March 9

Assu's photos were presumably all taken in Beijing since the creation dates were between 1890 and 1891. In addition, the interior design of the house remained the same, and Assu dressed in similar layers in March 1890 and April 1891.



Unidentified

Chinese



traditional

**Title:** Unidentified Chinese woman in traditional clothing posing on porch near potted bamboo plant

**Place:** China

**Creation Date:** 1891 April

Assu became unidentified here, labelled by her gender, ethnicity, clothing and surroundings. She was possibly photographed quickly without much time for preparation.



**Title:** Left to right: two unidentified men, Edward Bangs Drew, Mr. and Mrs. Husson, Mr. and Mrs. Flayelle and their three children, and a Chinese servant woman

**Place:** China

**Creation Date:** 1906 April 22

The Chinese woman was likely Mr Flayelle's family servant since the entire family were in the photo. She stood right next to the family, but with some distance. Unlike the rest of the group, she stood in a natural position without any poses and wore a practical outfit. It seems like it was a last-minute decision of the Flayelle family to stop her from her domestic work and include her in this photo.



Servant

Chinese



woman

Chinese

阿  
嬈

小  
苏  
苏



foot binding

**Title:** Little sew-sew amah

**Place:** China

**Creation Date:** 1891

Little sew-sew could be the name of this female domestic servant or the name of the child whom the woman was caring for. Sew-sew appears to be the phonetic spelling of the name, and it sounds like a typical Chinese last name, Su (苏). She seemed to be going somewhere with a letter but got stopped for a photo. She possibly felt uncertain about being photographed based on her facial expressions and the gesture of raising one hand in front of her body. She had bound feet.





**Title:** Wealthy merchant and family, Ningpo.  
The old mother [is] sitting in the center of  
picture on his right

**Place:** Ningbo, Zhejiang Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** between 1878 and 1880

Domestic Chinese workers were common not only in Western households but also in wealthy Chinese families. These servants often had a lower socio-economic status. In this photo, the woman with a toddler in her arms was likely a nursemaid. She was only the person who sat on the top step rather than a chair and dressed in plain clothes. She was not foot-bound, unlike the rest of the female family members. (Foot binding is more typical in the upper class than in the working class.)

Chinese household



寧波

domestic



# Domestic Servants



**Title:** Sup Kem and family

**Description:** Sup Kem, head of household staff for the Edward Bangs Drew family, pictured in back row (second from right), with his wife (second from left), daughter (far right), adopted son (far left), and, in front row, two nephews and another adopted son (center).

**Place:** Fuzhou, Fujian Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** 1906

While the adults managed to pose for the camera with some neutral facial expressions, the children disclosed some genuine emotions. They looked concerned and even a bit frightened about the situation.



**Title:** Sup Kem and his family

**Description:** Sup Kem, head of household staff for the Edward Bangs Drew family, pictured standing in back row, fourth from left. Portrait includes his nephews and nieces with their children.

**Place:** Fuzhou, Fujian Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** 1906

Sup Kem's wife is pictured in the second row (fourth from left), with Sup Kem's daughter (third from left), daughter (far right), and adopted son in the front row (fourth from left).

Unidentified

water pipe

traditional



foot binding

**Title:** Three unidentified Chinese women in traditional dress, sitting in chairs

**Place:** China

**Creation Date:** 190-?

- Sup Kem's wife is unidentified here, sitting beside two other women, who were likely in a close relationship with Sup Kem's family. The creation time of this photo should be 1906 since Sup Kem's wife seemed to be the same age as her in the other two family photos. They were labelled for the traditional Chinese clothing they were wearing. Presumably, the centre woman held the highest socio-economic status among the three, and she was also posing with a delicate water pipe used for smoking opium.





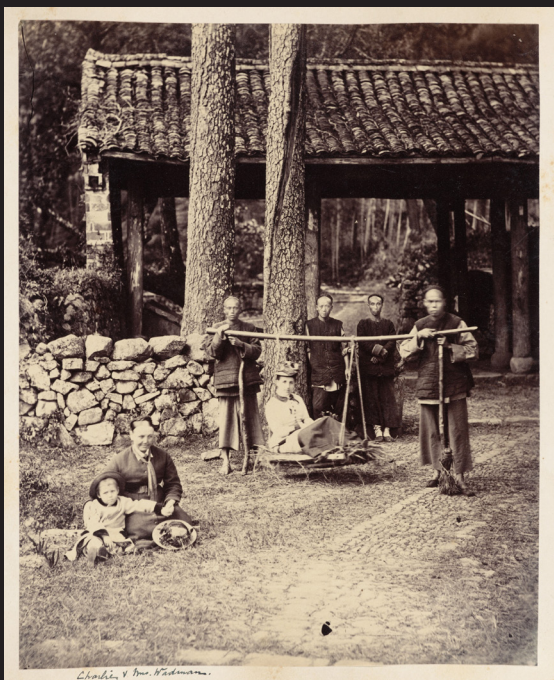
**Title:** Wadmans and the  
Drews, temple near Ningpo

**Description:** Edward Bangs  
Drew pictured in front  
(right) holding his  
daughter Dora, with his  
son Charles and wife Anna  
sitting behind him to the  
left.

**Place:** Ningbo, Zhejiang  
Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** between  
1878 and 1880





**Title:** Rusticating in country, near Ningpo  
**Description:** Edward Bangs Drew's son Charles sitting on the ground with Mrs. Wadman (left), and his wife Anna sitting in a wooden litter carried by two Chinese men.  
**Place:** Ningbo, Zhejiang Sheng, China  
**Creation Date:** between 1878 and 1880



**Title:** Chinese servants

**Place:** Ningbo, Zhejiang Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** between 1878 and 1880

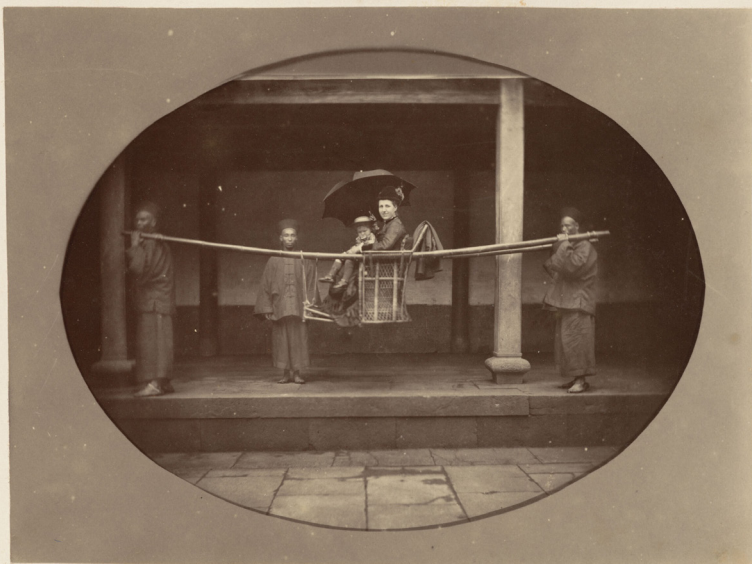
The servants arranged their standing positions likely based on traditional Chinese family values. For example, the most senior female servants sat on the front chair while the young men stood at the back out of respect for the elderly. Their facial expressions seemed either unsettled or tense as they were captured by the camera. This photo is one of the rare occasions when servants were gathered for a group photo dedicated to them though little description was documented.

轎  
夫

馬  
夫

Sedan Chair Bearers  
and Grooms





**Title:** Ordinary sedan chair, Ningpo

**Description:** Anna Drew sitting in sedan chair with son Charles.

**Place:** Ningbo, Zhejiang Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** between 1878 and 1880

The carrier dressed in the government's official uniform. Two of them were carrying the sedan while one stood on the side to provide any support or protection for Anna Drew and her son, Charles Drew. All three of them were facing towards the camera, posing together with Anna and Charles.



**Title:** Unidentified man standing in front of woman sitting in sedan chair with two Chinese bearers, Canton

**Place:** Guangzhou, Guangdong Sheng, China

**Creation Date:** between 1878 and 1880

The carriers dressed in a clean, white summer uniform, barefooted. The front carrier looked ahead while the back carrier curiously peaked at the camera.

horse grooms



**Title:** Mr. & Mrs. Cartwright

**Description:** William Cartwright, Chinese Maritime Customs Service commissioner; his wife, sitting on a horse; and an unidentified Chinese groom.

**Place:** Beijing, China

**Creation Date:** 1892 June

The groom was dressed in a professional outfit with one hand on the horse leash and the other holding a whip. Looking towards the camera, he seemed focused and assertive.

