Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies

Gao, Yiyang. *He Lu zhi si: 1831 nian zhenhan quanqiu de yiliao shijian* 何魯之死：1831 年震撼全球的醫療事件 by 高晞. *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies*, vol. 6.1 (2025): 149–153.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25365/jeacs.2025.6.1.gao

BOOK REVIEW

He Lu zhi si: 1831 nian zhenhan quanqiu de yiliao shijian 何魯之死：1831 年震撼全球的醫療事件

[The Death of Hoo Loo: The Medical Event in 1831 that Shocked the Globe]

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北京市：中華書局 [Beijing: Zhonghua Publishing House], 2024. 270 pp.
ISBN: 9787101166682

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Keywords: Hoo Loo, Sino-British relations, history of surgery, tropical medicine

關鍵詞： 何魯，中英關係，外科史，熱帶醫學

As its title suggests, *The Death of Hoo Loo: A Medical Event in 1831 that Shocked the Globe* aims to narrate an entangled history through a single medical event. It is neither a mere history of medicine nor a study of a particular medical case. It can rather be defined as a monograph centred on a polemical incident—one that not only sheds light on medical practices of the time but also reveals how different cultural, political, and social forces intertwined to shape public discourse and historical narratives on a global scale. In medical practice, the decision either to remove the tumour through Western surgery or to manage it with traditional Chinese treatment was highly contested. Traditional Chinese medicine warns against resorting to the use of knife and removing such tumours. The case of the Chinese patient Hoo Loo, and in particular, his death during the surgery to remove his tumour, exposes the tensions that arose from these cross-cultural encounters. The book consists of an introduction, six chapters, an epilogue, and a "resonance." The six chapters are presented in chronological order, and organized into three parts according to main themes. The death of Hoo Loo is presented as an event in itself, an event in the press, and a myth.

Part I outlines the journey of Hoo Loo to Britain and details the process of his surgery. Hoo Loo from Canton was an unremarkable figure, whose voyage to Britain for treatment was hardly known in the local Chinese community. In 1828, he initially sought treatment for a large tumour on his scrotum at the Ophthalmic Hospital in Macao, founded by Thomas Richardson Colledge (1797–1879). The tumour weighed more than 50 pounds, equivalent to one-third of an average person's body weight. Chinese doctors had indeed encountered giant tumours, but following the teachings of ancient practitioners, they would never use a knife to cut, fearing that it might lead to fatal bleeding. Thomas Richardson Colledge refused to operate on Hoo Loo himself, but insisted that the tumour needed to be cut off. He sent a small plaster statue of Hoo Loo with the tumour to Guy's Hospital, and then arranged for the patient's voyage to Britain in due course. Guy's hospital was a teaching hospital built with investments from philanthropists, and had certain business ties with the East India Company. The surgery was held in an anatomy theatre with a capacity of 680 people. After one hour and forty-four minutes, Hoo Loo died on the operation table. It was only after the surgery that the name of Hoo Loo's disease was identified as scrotal elephantiasis. Analysis of the cause of Hoo Loo's death followed.

Part II focuses on news coverage of the Hoo Loo case and the metaphor of tumour in British politics. Reports on "poor Hoo Loo," the unfortunate Chinese who died in the fatal surgery, began to appear in newspapers soon after the medical event. The press attributed Hoo Loo's cause of death to his Chinese constitution. The view that Eastern and Western people have different constitutions originates from the works of the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates, who mentioned it in his treatise "On Airs, Waters, and Places". The impression that Easterners are less robust than Westerners was deeply ingrained in British perceptions, leading them to attribute Hoo Loo's death to this perspective of the geography of diseases. In May, around twenty days after the death of Hoo Loo, a political cartoon entitled "Hoo-Loo-Choo, Alias John Bull and the Doctors" by John Doyle (1797–1868) started to circulate in Britain.

In Doyle's design, the bloated figure of Hoo Loo was portrayed as John Bull, symbolizing a problematic British society in need of reform, with his enormous belly symbolizing the "tumour" harming the nation's economy. The group of people surrounding Hoo Loo represents the doctors who hold his fate in their hands, that is, the politicians of Britain. In the cartoon, the three Whig politicians led by prime minister Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey (1764–1845), correspond with the three doctors who took charge of Hoo Loo's surgery, while the former prime minister Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769–1852) and leader of the Tory party, Sir Robert Peel (1788–1850), opposed the surgery. One of the demands made by politicians for reform was to strive to eliminate the "tumour" of economic monopoly.

The final part focuses on how the Hoo Loo case served to promote medical philanthropy and the missionary cause. Three years after the medical event, the press presented Hoo Loo as a "heroic" figure, who resolutely travelled to Britain for treatment, believing in science, trusting Western medicine, and fearing neither pain nor death. By bringing past events back into focus, the idea of medical philanthropy was promoted. This ultimately led to the establishment of the "Medical Missionary Society in China" in 1838 by Robert Morrison, Peter Parker and Thomas Richardson Colledge. The group was mainly composed of doctors, merchants and diplomats, all of whom were deeply involved in the network of the tense Sino-British relations on the eve of the Opium War. As Gao Xi argued, the goodwill of their medical philanthropy was beyond doubt, but it was also rooted in both national and commercial interests of Britain and the East India Company. By showcasing the advancements and achievements of modern medicine, they hoped to change the Chinese perception of them, thereby improving relations and facilitating smoother commercial activities.

The case of Hoo Loo demonstrates how seemingly unrelated aspects—such as social, political, medical, or cultural elements—interact, overlap, and influence each other, creating a multifaceted and intricate historical account. It also highlights the intersections of colonialism, public health and media sensationalism in the early nineteenth century. The Hoo Loo case has been studied within the paradigm of British imperial medicine, as it brings together a number of significant topics in the area, including "a disease of remarkable or unstoppable growth, a patient of an exotic race, a medical error, and the properly objective stance of a medical practitioner" (Kennedy 2008, p. 81). From this perspective, the narrative and visual portrayal of the case demonstrates a timely anxiety over problems of monstrous or uncontrollable growth at the edges of the British empire. *The Death of Hoo Loo* shifts the focus away from the nineteenth-century doctors' curious gaze on morbid oriental patients, and attempts to unearth Hoo Loo's own voice. Gao Xi points out that Hoo Loo's purpose for leaving China was quite different from the intentions of Thomas Richardson Colledge and the East India Company, who funded his journey to Britain. While Hoo Loo sought to improve his quality of life, their motivations were more complex: they aimed to enhance the image of Westerners in the eyes of the Chinese through charitable acts, use Western medical practices to demonstrate their superiority over traditional Chinese medicine, and gain the

respect of the Chinese to dispel the prejudice of Westerners as barbarians—all of which would benefit the East India Company's commercial interests in China.

This shift in research focus is in line with the conceptual and methodological change in the history of Eurasian diplomacies, which emphasizes the interpersonal nature of international relations over the traditional state-centred view. Hoo Loo, as well as his doctor Thomas Richardson Colledge, were both agents who pursued their own personal interests, or those of their family, friends and clientele. It was through these agents that different civilizations and power relations got into contact. If we examine Hoo Loo's journey to the Britain as an example of nineteenth-century cultural exchange between East and West, it demonstrates how Hoo Loo, as a "go-between", created spaces for both understanding and misunderstanding between the two cultures and influenced their mutual interaction and exchange. The micro-historical focus on Hoo Loo provides a global perspective that transcends narrow geographies of the Qing empire by bringing entangled histories of Britain and China together under one lens.

In *The Death of Hoo Loo*, Gao Xi also weaves together research approaches from both the history of emotions and the history of art. Surgery before anaesthesia often subjected patients to intense pain and fear, affecting their mental and emotional states (Brown 2018). Chinese patients in the nineteenth-century were stereotypically described by missionary surgeons as "insensitive to pain" or "stoic", and in the case of Hoo Loo, "heroic". The narrative of heroism shaped Hoo Loo into a model patient who complied with the doctor's advice. In later descriptions of the case, Hoo Loo's painful cries on the operating table fulfilled the reader's vision of a heroic figure, evoking an emotional resonance. In the last chapter, Gao Xi included a painting of Hoo Loo labelled "a modern painting in the style of Lam Qua, late twentieth century by M. F. Allen" from the collection in Gordon Museum of Pathology and Guy's and St. Thomas' Charity. Lam Qua (also known as Guan Qiaochang, ca. 1801–60) painted medical portraits of Chinese patients with disproportionately large tumours for Peter Parker (1804–88)'s hospital in Canton. He was one of the best-known and successful Cantonese commercial painters of his generation. In the 1980s, the modern painter M. F. Allen used the existing image of Hoo Loo from *The Lancet* as a base, and added a background of blue skies, white clouds, mountains, rivers, rocks, and trees, thus transforming it from a medical image of a patient's death into an artwork in the style of Lam Qua. Gao Xi shows how the newly commissioned portrait of Hoo Loo continued the story of medical missionary in the late twentieth century.

The literature review of *The Death of Hoo Loo* is in the epilogue, which is slightly odd. It is understandable that the author would like to tell an engaging story by focusing only on the event, however, removing the literature review from the introduction makes it difficult for the reader to situate the book in an academic context, and to distinguish the author's contribution at the initial stages of reading the book. The case of Hoo Loo, initially diagnosed as Scrotal Elephantiasis (thought to be caused by miasma) and later redefined as Lymphatic

Filariasis, also reminds us how disease classifications and hypothetical aetiologies can contribute to the formation of stereotypes and stigma, even though much need to be better understood—a reality that persists even today.

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