

Document 11.4: Interview with Hsu King-Ming, May 2007

Hsu King-Ming was born in 1930 in Shanghai. He lived in the French Concession when the Japanese invaded Shanghai. He and his family walked to Xi'an to escape the fighting.

Despite the war, those were our happiest times. We were children. We played despite the Japanese bombing every night. A lot of things didn't seem unbearable. [To escape the Japanese occupation,] we walked from Shanghai to Xi'an, the four of us, (uncles and dad) and hired a person to pull a two-wheeler to pull bedding, no clothes. China still had floods then. Some places we would walk on high ground; sometimes we would take boats. We would eat where we could. Once at an inn after the meal, my father inquired about the meat, and they told us we had eaten human flesh. That is what they told me; I really do not know. Mostly it was steamed buns made of sorghum flour, not white. We stayed in inns. Not many others were traveling because we were supposed to stay in a small group to not gather attention. My family was eight children. We left the youngest three behind in Shanghai to be sent for later.

Before we left, my uncle had to consult a fortune-teller; he was told not to go. But he was a recent college graduate who did not or was not supposed to believe such things.

“If you do go,” he was told, “if you do break your rice bowl, that means that it is irreversible, be very careful.”

Of course, to break one's rice bowl means to lose one's life. One day while traveling, he [my uncle] came to a mud hut. It was so dark, and while having dinner he went to get his rice and broke his rice bowl. Because of this, we split in two groups. This uncle and another employee took the southern route and my mother with another uncle took the northern route. We asked when we arrived in Xi'an where the uncle was, and found out that he had died. While traveling he had dug a hole to hide his wealth in a mud hut. There were bandits who had discovered their hiding place. The bandits beat the

employee and my uncle tried to prevent it, so got shot in the head. Believe in fortune-tellers if you will or will not, but this is what it is.

We walked through the front lines. Walking back and forth in the no man's land, it was all bandits. One of my uncles was killed that way. Everywhere you went it was all mud huts, all muddy, the only light was oil. All along the journey the Japanese had sentries at every major intersection. We had to bow to them. I still have negative feelings towards them. The Japanese came into Shanghai in 1937 and stayed outside until the Second World War began in China. We stayed for two years [in Shanghai]. But my father, who was a lawyer, left because the Japanese asked something of him that he could not do. He was forty-four years old when we finally reached free interior China and I was thirteen. He was always a reserved traditional person, but he was jumping around screaming "free China!" when we were near Xi'an.

Source: Hsu King-Ming, Interview with Rachel Zucker, May 2007.