

**For Immediate release**

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## **A Belgian Footnote in China's Relation to the West**

The Belgian orphan who rose from handyman for Catholic missionaries in Mongolia to becoming a top-ranking mandarin in the *Qing* government in the nineteenth century is virtually unknown in the States, and not much better known in Europe. However, in China, where he lived for 41 years, Paul Splingaerd has been honored with a statue, and a one-hour television documentary.

Paul is given credit for bringing modernization and technology to Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province, and was known for his personal efforts to better relations between China and the "marauding invaders from the West." Until now, there have not been many lines about his accomplishments, beyond being featured in a 1929 "Ripley's Believe It or Not!" column.

The reason Paul Splingaerd is not as well known as some of his illustrious associates, like influential viceroy Li Hongzhang and geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen, goes back to Paul's humble origins. Abandoned as an infant in Brussels, he was taken in as a foster child by a farming family in Ottenburg, Belgium. He received no more than an elementary education, and did not write about himself or his accomplishments.

Nearly a century after Paul's death, his great granddaughter undertook the task of researching the life of the red-bearded mandarin in the portrait that hung in her family home. Why was he made a mandarin, and why he was knighted by his king, Leopold II? Her thirteen years of research resulted in her recently released biography, *The Belgian Mandarin*. Since the publication of the book, more information and fellow descendants with tales, have surfaced in all corners of the planet, so the book is merely an introduction to the continuing story of Paul Splingaerd.

Anne will be signing copies of her book at the 2009 LA Times Festival of Books on April 25 and 26. For more information, please visit <http://www.splingaerd.net>.

### **About the Author**

Anne was born in Tientsin, China, to Scottish-Eurasian Mary Anderson, and Joseph Splingaerd, the only surviving grandson of the subject of her book. After leaving China, she lived in Hong Kong, Japan and Mexico, and currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, Michael. They have three grown children. In the early 1980's she edited and published a children's newspaper, *The Treasure Chest*.

### **The Belgian Mandarin \* Paul Splingaerd**

*by Anne Splingaerd Megowan*

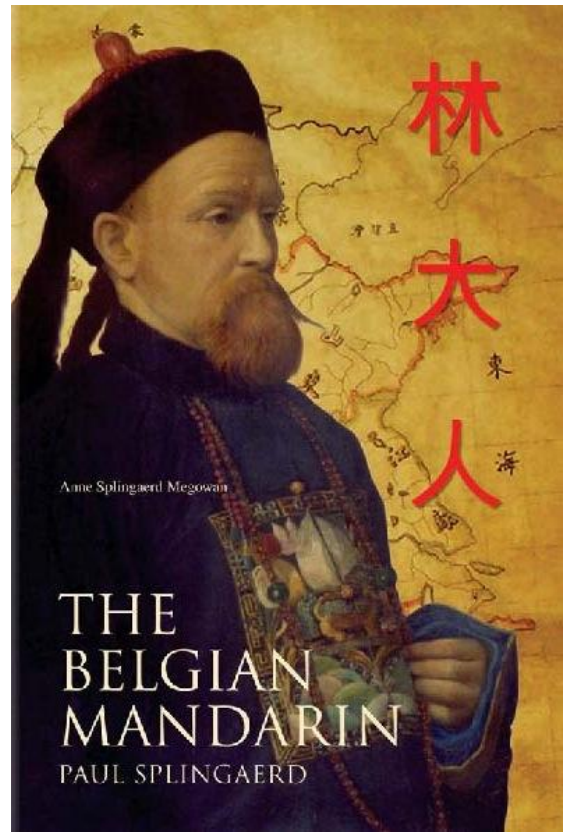
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# Book cover and images from *The Belgian Mandarin*



Cover of *The Belgian Mandarin* by Anne splingaerd Megowan



Mandarin Paul wearing *Chevalier de la Couronne* medal from King Leopold II



The family of Paul and Catherine Splingaerd in Shanghai, 1896