

## = The Blue Lotus =

The Blue Lotus ( French : Le Lotus bleu ) is the fifth volume of The Adventures of Tintin , the comics series by Belgian cartoonist Hergé . Commissioned by the conservative Belgian newspaper Le Vingtième Siècle for its children 's supplement Le Petit Vingtième , it was serialised weekly from August 1934 to October 1935 before being published in a collected volume by Casterman in 1936 . Continuing where the plot of the previous story , Cigars of the Pharaoh , left off , the story tells of young Belgian reporter Tintin and his dog Snowy , who are invited to China in the midst of the 1931 Japanese invasion , where he reveals the machinations of Japanese spies and uncovers a drug @-@ smuggling ring .

In creating The Blue Lotus , Hergé exhibited a newfound emphasis on accuracy and documentation in his portrayal of foreign societies . He was heavily influenced by his close friend Zhang Chongren , a Chinese student studying in Belgium , and the work both satirises common European misconceptions about China as well as criticising the actions of the Japanese invaders . The Blue Lotus was a commercial success in Belgium and was soon serialised in France and Switzerland , while news of the book led to the Chinese political leader Chiang Kai @-@ shek inviting Hergé to visit China itself . Hergé continued The Adventures of Tintin with The Broken Ear , while the series itself became a defining part of the Franco @-@ Belgian comics tradition . In 1946 , The Blue Lotus was re @-@ drawn and coloured in Hergé 's distinctive ligne @-@ claire style by the cartoonist and his team of assistants ; during this process a number of minor plot elements were changed . The Adventure introduces the recurring characters J.M. Dawson and Chang Chong @-@ Chen . The story was adapted for a 1991 episode of the Ellipse / Nelvana animated series The Adventures of Tintin . Critical analysis of the story has been positive , with various commentators considering it to be one of Hergé 's finest works .

## = = Synopsis = =

Staying at the palace of the Maharaja of Gaipajama in India , Tintin is approached by a visitor from Shanghai in China . The visitor supplies him with the name of Mitsuhirato , a Japanese businessman based in Shanghai , but before finishing his message is hit by a dart dipped in Rajaijah , the " poison of madness . " Tintin and his fox terrier Snowy travel to Shanghai to meet Mitsuhirato , who warns them that the Maharajah is in danger and that they should return to India . Surviving several attempts on his life by mysterious assailants , Tintin attempts to leave for India by boat , but is kidnapped . His abductors reveal themselves as members of a secret society known as the Sons of the Dragon , who are devoted to combating the opium trade . Their spokesman , Wang Chen @-@ Yee , explains to Tintin that Mitsuhirato is both a Japanese spy and an opium smuggler , and enlist Tintin in their fight to stop him . Tintin agrees , and spies on Mitsuhirato at the Blue Lotus opium den . Following the spy , he discovers him blowing up a Chinese railway . The Japanese government use this as an excuse to invade Northern China , taking Shanghai under its control .

Tintin is captured by Mitsuhirato , who plans to poison him with Rajaijah ; however , a member of the Sons of the Dragon swaps the poison for coloured water , and Tintin escapes unscathed . When Mitsuhirato discovers the deception , he convinces J.M. Dawson , the corrupt Chief of Police at the Shanghai International Settlement , to put a warrant out for Tintin 's arrest . Meanwhile , Tintin enters the Settlement in search for Professor Fang Hsi @-@ ying , an expert in poisons whom he hopes can develop a cure for Rajaijah , but discovers that he has been kidnapped . Dawson 's police arrest Tintin and hand him over to the Japanese , who sentence him to death before he is rescued by Wang .

Travelling to Hukow with the ransom money for Fang , Tintin comes across a flood that has destroyed a village and rescues a young Chinese orphan , Chang Chong @-@ Chen . Chang accompanies Tintin to Hukow , where one of Mitsuhirato 's spies ambushes them ; they realise that it was a trap and that Fang was not there . Meanwhile , the detectives Thomson and Thompson are employed by Dawson to arrest Tintin , but fail on multiple occasions . Returning to Shanghai , Tintin intends to confront Mitsuhirato , and allows himself to be captured by him . Being held prisoner at

The Blue Lotus , it is revealed that Mitsuhirato is working with the film director Rastapopoulos , who is the head of the international opium smuggling organisation that Tintin had previously battled in Cigars of the Pharaoh . However , Tintin formulates a plan , with Chang and the Sons of the Dragon appearing to rescue Tintin and Fang ; Rastapopoulos is arrested while Mitsuhirato commits seppuku . Fang develops a cure for Rajaijah , while Wang adopts Chang as his son .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

Georges Remi ? best known under the pen name Hergé ? was employed as editor and illustrator of Le Petit Vingtième ( " The Little Twentieth " ) , a children 's supplement to Le Vingtième Siècle ( " The Twentieth Century " ) , a staunchly Roman Catholic , conservative Belgian newspaper based in Hergé 's native Brussels which was run by the Abbé Norbert Wallez . In 1929 , Hergé began The Adventures of Tintin comic strip for Le Petit Vingtième , about the exploits of fictional young Belgian reporter Tintin . Wallez ordered Hergé to set his first adventure in the Soviet Union to act as anti @-@ socialist propaganda for children ( Tintin in the Land of the Soviets ) , to set his second adventure in the Belgian Congo to encourage colonial sentiment ( Tintin in the Congo ) , and to set his third adventure in the United States to use the story as a denunciation of American capitalism ( Tintin in America ) . On 24 November 1932 , Le Petit Vingtième published a fictional interview with Tintin in which the reporter announced that he would travel to China via Egypt , India , Sri Lanka , and Indochina . This plotline resulted in Tintin in the Orient , the first part of which was an Adventure set in Egypt , Arabia , and India that Hergé later titled Cigars of the Pharaoh . Cigars ceased publication in Le Petit Vingtième in February 1934 , and Hergé next provided the standalone story Popol out West for the newspaper . The Blue Lotus was the second half of the Tintin in the Orient story that Hergé had begun with Cigars of the Pharaoh .

However , Hergé knew as little about China as he did about the Soviet Union or the Belgian Congo . At the time most Belgians held to a negative stereotype of China , viewing it as " a distant continent of a nation , barbaric , overpopulated , and inscrutable " , and Hergé had long believed this view . He had included Chinese characters in two previous Adventures , in both instances depicting them according to traditional European clichés . In Tintin in the Land of the Soviets , he included two pigtailed Chinese men hired by the Bolsheviks to torture Tintin , while in Tintin in America he featured two Chinese hoodlums who plotted to eat Snowy . Hergé learned a bit about the country from Albert Londres ' book China Madness , based on Londres ' experiences in the country . He was also influenced in his portrayal of China by the 1933 German film Flüchtlinge ( At the End of the World ) .

Learning of Hergé 's intention to set the next Adventure in China , Abbot Léon Gosset , a Roman Catholic chaplain to the Chinese students at the Catholic University of Louvain , contacted Hergé and asked him to be cautious in his depiction of the country . His students read Le Petit Vingtième and he thought it would be counterproductive if Hergé continued to propagate negative stereotypes about the Chinese people . Hergé was sensitive to Gosset 's ideas , and Gosset proceeded to put him in touch with two of his Chinese students , Arnold Chiao Ch 'eng @-@ Chih and his wife Susan Lin . He also gave him the address of a Chinese student a year Hergé 's junior , Zhang Chongren . The pair first met on 1 May 1934 , soon becoming close friends and spending every Sunday afternoon with each other for over a year . Zhang later commented that he and Hergé became akin to " two brothers " . A student of painting and sculpture at Brussels ' Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium , Zhang taught Hergé about Chinese artistic styles , giving him a set of traditional Chinese brushes and explaining to him the art of painting a tree and Chinese calligraphy , alongside explaining the tenets of Taoist philosophy . Both his artistic and philosophical training under Zhang would have a profound effect over Hergé .

Hergé had also gotten in contact with Father Édouard Neut , hosteller at the St. Andrew 's Abbey near Bruges . Neut had a special interest in China , and was excited by Hergé 's latest venture ,

commenting that it could contribute to " a work of inter @-@ racial understanding and true friendship between Orientals and whites " . He sent him two books , Father Thadée 's *Aux origines du conflit mandchou* ( *On the Origins of the Manchu Conflict* ) and Zheng Zheng 's *Ma Mère* ( *My Mother* ) , a first @-@ hand account of Chinese family life . He also sent Hergé a 1932 article discussing the differences between Chinese and Japanese cultures . At the time , Neut worked as the assistant of Lou Tseng @-@ tsiang , a Chinese Catholic who had moved to Belgium , where he published a book on the Japanese invasion and occupation of Manchuria , an area of northern China . Mainstream Western press was broadly sympathetic to the Japanese cause , viewing them as a bulwark against the Soviet Union , a view that Hergé was to eschew .

= = = Original publication , 1934 ? 1935 = = =

The comic strip began serialisation in *Le Petit Vingtième* on 9 August 1934 as *Les Aventures De Tintin Reporter En Extrême @-@ Orient* ( *The Adventures of Tintin in the Far East* ) . It began serialisation in France in *Cœurs Vaillants* from 29 December 1935 , and later in the Swiss magazine *L'Écho Illustré* . Alongside protagonists Tintin and Snowy , Hergé also included the detectives Thomson and Thompson in the story , who had been introduced in the previous story . He also alluded to the movie that Tintin had witnessed being filmed in *Cigar , Rastapopoulos ' The Sheik 's House* , having characters enter a cinema where it was being screened .

Hergé actively satirised typical European opinions of China in *The Blue Lotus* . He had Thomson and Thompson dress in what they perceived as traditional Chinese costume , as Mandarins , only to stand out in stark contrast to the actual clothing worn in China . He also had Gibbons , one of the story 's antagonists , express racist attitudes toward the Chinese , and made Tintin give a speech to Chang explaining western misunderstandings of the Chinese . He took " a radical view " by expressing a criticism of Western activity in China 's International Settlement , depicting it as extremely corrupt and only interested in its own commercial interests . He gained much of his information on such issues from Zhang , who informed him of the political events occurring in China from a Chinese perspective . Building on this information , Hergé 's depiction of the Japanese invasion was largely accurate , although it served as an outright attack on Japanese imperialism . Hergé depicted fictionalised versions of both the real @-@ life Mukden Incident , although he shifted its location nearer to Shanghai , and Japan 's walking out of the League of Nations . However , *The Blue Lotus* contained no mention of one of the central historical events of the period , the Long March of communist Mao Zedong .

Further devoting himself to greater accuracy , Hergé also made increasing use of photographs to draw from , such as of Chinese clothing , street scenes , and landscape . Hergé 's newfound emphasis on accuracy and documentation imbued the rest of the *Adventures* . While Hergé relied on nonsensical Arabic for the backgrounds in *Cigars* , for *The Blue Lotus* Zhang drew the many ideograms that appeared as street signs and advertisements throughout the story . Among these ideograms were those of a political nature , proclaiming slogans such as " Down with Imperialism " , " Abolish unfair treaties " , and " Down with Japanese merchandise " . Zhang also sketched out a number of images for Hergé , such as the outline of Wang 's house . Zhang 's signature was also included twice throughout the comic , reflecting his artistic contribution ; Hergé wanted to include Zhang 's name as co @-@ author . In gratitude , Hergé created the character of Chang in honour of his friend Zhang .

Upon realising the anti @-@ Japanese tone of the story , Japan 's diplomats stationed in Belgium issued an official complaint , conveyed to Hergé by Lieutenant @-@ General Raoul Pontus , president of the Sino @-@ Belgian Friendship Association . The diplomats threatened to take their complaint to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague . In learning of this , Zhang congratulated Hergé , stating that it would only further expose the actions of Japan in China to further international scrutiny and would make Hergé " world @-@ famous " . Hergé 's strip also came under criticism from a Belgian general , who commented , " This is not a story for children ... It 's just a problem for Asia ! " The story was nevertheless a commercial success , and *Le Petit Vingtième* organised a celebration to commemorate the return of Tintin from the Far East ,

sponsored by the L 'Innovation and Bon Marché department stores . Taking place at the Cirque Royal , it was attended by 3000 fans of the series , many of whom were Scouts , and involved an actor portraying Tintin who accompanied Hergé , the newspaper 's staff , a contortionist and a clown .

In September 1935 , Zhang returned to China at his family 's request . Hergé meanwhile set about preparing the strip for publication in book form through Casterman . Proud of this Adventure , he encouraged them to increase the level of marketing and advertising for the work . At their advice , he renamed the story from The Adventures of Tintin in the Far East to The Blue Lotus , commenting of this new title : " It is short , it sounds Chinese and it is mysterious . " At Casterman 's prompting , he also inserted a number of coloured plates throughout the work , and devised a new design for the front cover . The book was finally published in October 1936 . Hergé was pleased with the product , commenting , " I was just bowled over ! It is the height of luxury and my first thought was ' It 's much too good for children ! ' ... I was far from expecting that . " He sent a copy to Zhang , who replied to thank him . After news of its publication reached China , in 1939 political leader Chiang Kai @-@ shek , who had enjoyed The Blue Lotus , asked his wife Soong Mei @-@ ling to invite Hergé to visit them there , although he was unable to do so due to the impending Second World War . He finally took up her offer in 1973 , visiting her on the island of Taiwan .

= = = Second version , 1946 = = =

In the 1940s and 1950s , when Hergé 's popularity had increased , he and his team at Studios Hergé redrew many of the original black @-@ and @-@ white Tintin adventures in colour using the ligne claire ( " clear line " ) drawing style he had developed so that they visually fitted in with the new Tintin stories being created . The Studios reformatted and coloured The Blue Lotus in 1946 . Little was actually changed for the 1946 edition , although many of the backgrounds were embellished . Minor alterations included replacing three highland Scotsman who briefly featured in the story with three Sikhs . The map that appears on the opening page was made smaller , while a reference to Sir Malcolm Campbell was removed . The European Palace Hotel was renamed The Continental , while Gibbons ' company was also renamed from the Americano @-@ Anglo Chinese Stell [ sic ] Company Limited to American and Chinese Steel Incorporated , and the drug smuggling ship known as the S.S. City of Doodlecastle was renamed the S.S. Harika Maru .

= = = Later publications = = =

Both Rastapopoulos and Dawson reappeared in the series 20 years later in The Red Sea Sharks . Casterman republished the original black @-@ and @-@ white version in 1979 in a French @-@ language collected volume with Cigars of the Pharaoh and The Broken Ear , the second part of the Archives Hergé collection . In 1985 , Casterman published a facsimile version of the original . Meanwhile , Methuen , the British publisher of The Adventures of Tintin , felt that the story was dated , and only published The Blue Lotus in 1983 , the year of Hergé 's death . The translation into English was undertaken by Michael Turner and Leslie Lonsdale @-@ Cooper , although it lost the English accent of the British troops which was conveyed in the original French . The Adventures of Tintin also became popular in Japan , something Michael Farr thought indicated that the Japanese had not taken offence to Hergé 's portrayal of them in The Blue Lotus . After Hergé 's death , the original illustrated manuscript of The Blue Lotus was discovered at Studio Hergé , and was subsequently exhibited as the centrepiece of an exhibit commemorating the 60th anniversary of The Adventures of Tintin .

= = Critical analysis = =

Jean @-@ Marc and Randy Lofficier commented that The Blue Lotus was " unarguably Hergé 's first masterpiece " . They felt that for the first time in the series , " one senses that the story has become important " as Tintin first expresses " a purpose , a mission " to his adventure . Commenting

on the character Chang , they thought that he was an " endearing personality " despite having little relevance the plot , also believing that Dawson and Gibbons were the most loathsome characters in the Adventure . They compared the scene in which the Japanese invaded China with that in Tintin in America where the U.S. army force Native Americans off of their land , and praised the linear illustrations of the story , although also opined that the original black @-@ and @-@ white version was better than its colour counterpart . Overall , they awarded The Blue Lotus four stars out of five .

Harry Thompson noted that some people believed that Hergé 's depiction of the Japanese as buck @-@ toothed and inherently violent in The Blue Lotus was racist . He nevertheless thought that these accusations " stupidly " missed " the point of the story " , which was to counter widespread racist attitudes toward East Asians among Belgians . Due to the inclusion of actual historical events , he thought that the comic lacked the " timelessness " of other Adventures but that for 1934 it was " a marvelous piece of comic strip art " . Hergé biographer Pierre Assouline thought that the book combined " social realism " with the spirit present in the work of Charles Dickens and Alexandre Dumas .

Hergé biographer Benoît Peeters thought that there was an obvious difference in The Adventures of Tintin before and after The Blue Lotus , and that it represented " an essential turning point both graphically and ideologically " as Hergé shifted from his former " classically right @-@ wing " ideas . Also feeling that the work was " exceptionally moving , " he noted that The Blue Lotus was far from Tintin in the Congo in its attitude to non @-@ Europeans , while other Belgian comic strips like Blake and Mortimer and Buck Danny would continue to perpetuate negative stereotypes of East Asians for decades . Elsewhere , he stated that it was the first Adventure where Hergé " really took control " of the story , also opining that it was the " most politically involved " entity in the series .

Michael Farr stated that there was a " general agreement " that The Blue Lotus was Hergé 's first masterpiece , being " better planned " than its predecessors and for the first time having " a carefully devised structure " . At the same time he thought that it retained the best qualities of the earlier works . Thinking it " much more serious " than Tintin 's prior Adventures , he nevertheless thought it " no less enjoyable " , being the first story to bring " emotion and tragedy " to the series . Farr thought that Hergé 's " total absorption " in his subject resulted in him gaining an " extraordinary feel " for it and allowed him to foresee future political events in China much like a " finely tuned " political commentator . He singled out the depiction of the Mukden Incident for particular praise , thinking it " a marvellous example of political satire " . Philippe Goddin thought that this depiction of the build @-@ up to invasion was " brilliantly " done , also comparing it to the scene of ethnic cleansing in Tintin in America .

Literary critic Tom McCarthy thought that The Blue Lotus showed evidence of Hergé 's " left @-@ wing counter @-@ tendency " that rejected his earlier right @-@ wing worldview . He believed that this was partly due to the influence of Zhang , who had destroyed Hergé 's " European absolutism " , and overall thought of it as " the most visually rich of all the Tintin books " . Literary critic Jean @-@ Marie Apostolidès of Stanford University thought that Wang signified the forces of good in the story while Rastapopoulos represented evil , and that the character Didi ? who was poisoned with Rajjajah ? inverted " the model of justice ruling the world of the Good " . He saw a similarity between Didi and Tintin , who both have " feline suppleness , a devotion to good causes , and the patience of an animal stalking its prey " . He furthermore argued that Didi 's desire to behead people when under the poison 's influence expressed his Oedipus complex and was a substitute for castration .

= = Adaptations = =

The Blue Lotus was adapted into a 1991 episode of The Adventures of Tintin television series by French studio Ellipse and Canadian animation company Nelvana . Directed by Stéphane Bernasconi , Thierry Wermuth voiced the character of Tintin . In March 2013 , Steven Spielberg said that The Blue Lotus might be the basis for the third Tintin film in his film series that began with The Adventures of Tintin ( 2011 ) .

= = Cultural Influence = =

In the cult classic The Avengers ( TV Series ) in the final moments of the December 4 , 1968 episode " Look- ( stop me if you 've heard this one ) But There Were These Two Fellers ... " John Steed is seen reading " Le Lotus Bleu " . In three other episodes of The Avengers Steed is seen reading three other The Adventures of TinTin books .