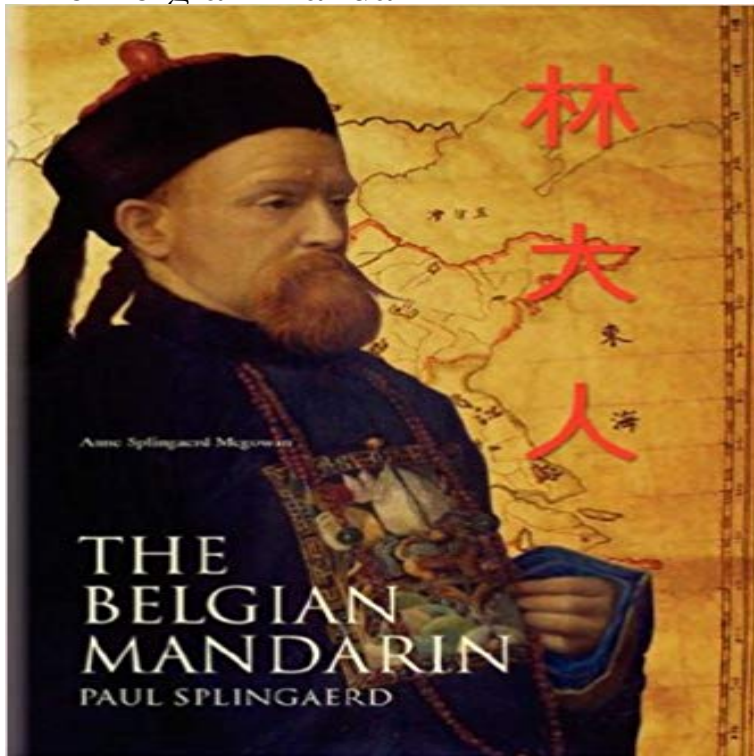


The Belgian Mandarin



There was nothing ordinary about Paul Spilingaerd's life after he left Brussels for China in 1865. Paul's adventures over the 41 years he spent in his adopted land read more like fiction than fact, but he really did exist. His great-granddaughter relates the story of his youth, his travels throughout the Middle Kingdom with explorer/geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen, his years as a fur trader in Mongolia, and his fourteen years in China's far west after being made a mandarin by legendary viceroy Li Hongzhang. On behalf of his native Belgium, Paul negotiated the rights to build the major railroad between Beijing to Hankou. For this service, Leopold II knighted him a Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Couronne. Reading about Paul's life and activities during a pivotal period of China's history can provide insights into her post-Opium War interaction with the West, and offer an understanding of what is happening in the dynamic China of the twenty-first century.

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