

# CHINA NAVIGATION'S ANKING (1950) and ANSHUN (1951)

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In August 1914 the suspension of Norddeutscher Lloyd's intra-Asian feeder services gave China Navigation Co. (CNCo) entry to the South China-Straits trade, as also South China to Haiphong, Saigon and Bangkok. To provide tonnage, CNCo commissioned six 2,550-2,600-ton 'S'-class (1915-20), eight similar 2,600-ton 'K'-class (1921-22), three prestigious 3,500-ton 'A'-class (1925) and the similar 3,200-ton 'A'-class motorship *Anshun* (1930). Of these eighteen ships, *Sunning*, *Kwangchow* and *Antung* became marine casualties in the 1930s and only *Shantung* (1915), *Suiyang* (1917), *Kweiyang* (1921) and *Anhui* (1925) remained in the CNCo fleet at the end of World War II. *Shantung* was lost at Bangkok in April 1946 and *Shantung* was sold to breakers two years later. Although the loss of tonnage would have been felt more acutely had not CNCo been obliged by treaty to relinquish most of its China Coast trade, replacement tonnage was still much needed.

CNCo's thinking was to retonnage the South China-Straits trade with fewer ships but larger, faster and more comfortably fitted out for the passenger trade. So emerged the postwar 'A' class, two 6,200-grt, 15-knot motorships with accommodation for around 1,000 passengers, thus almost twice the size and three knots faster than the prewar quartette. The £668,294 order for the first ship was placed on 21 March 1947 with Scotts' of Greenock, several months after the orders for *Changsha* (30 September 1946) and *Taiyuan* (22 October 1946) but with an immediately sequential yard number, implying that a building berth had been reserved at the same time. An even larger pair for the South China-Straits-Indonesia run were then ordered, eventuating as *Chungking* and *Changchow* [see separate PDF file]. It would be almost three years before the first 'A' class was launched on 23 August 1949 by Miss Janet Scott as *Anking* with delivery soon afterwards on 20 December, about six weeks after *Taiyuan* – Lloyd's would record completion as January 1950. The almost identical sister *Anshun* was laid down by Taikoo and delivered a year later on 28 December 1950 – Lloyd's would record her completion as January 1951.

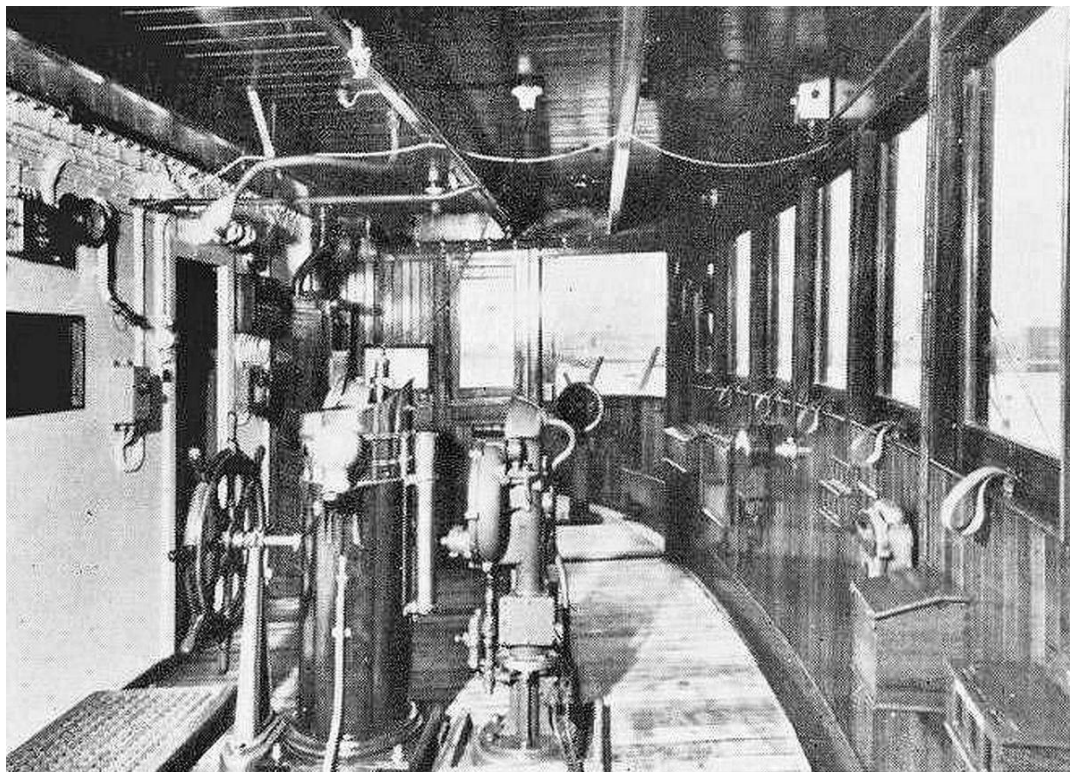


ANSHUN's launch at Taikoo Dockyard, Hong Kong, 12 September 1950 (Wikiswire).



Official CNCo postcard of ANKING on trials in the Clyde, December 1949. The wide plating at either end of the central accommodation block is part of the anti-piracy grilles (coll. H. Dick).

As their profile shows, the two new 'A' class were primarily passenger ships. The builder's General Arrangement (GA) plan shows *Anking's* initial passenger numbers as 38 first in 18 twin-berth and two single-berth (with settee) cabins, 96 'berthed steerage' in twelve 8-berth cabins and 904 deck passengers. First-class passengers in the Upper Deck block enjoyed a spacious lounge forward overlooking the forecabin and a dining saloon aft facing No. 4 hatch, both marked as 'Chinese First Class', implying that European passengers were not envisaged, nor any shared dining with the European officers. Photos posted by Reuben Goossens at <http://ssmaritime.com/CN-Anking-Anshun.htm> show the public rooms and cabins to have been well fitted out, comfortable but plain by comparison with *Changsha* and *Taiyuan* [see separate PDF file]. Steerage cabins were abaft the Chinese galley in No. 4 upper tweendeck space with their own galley and facilities above in the mast housing – no eating space is marked but most likely trestle tables and seating were set up abaft the cabins and beneath the galley in way of No. 5 Upper Tween, thus leaving it free when required for cargo. Unberthed deck passengers were accommodated around the hatches in the tweendecks, forward in Nos 2-3 Upper (304) and Lower (372) and aft in Nos 4 and 5 Lower (228) - the narrower Nos 1 and 5 tweendecks were reserved for cargo. The passenger-carrying tweendecks were sheathed in 5" x 2½" Oregon pine while the exposed Upper Deck and Forecabin were sheathed in teak.



ANSHUN's wood-paneled bridge (Wikiswire).

European deck and engine officers (including a cabin for the Superintendent Engineer) and the second W/T (Radio) Officer were berthed in single cabins forward to midships on that the GA rather curiously



Except for No. 2 (27½ x 20'), the hatches were all trunked through the accommodation decks and were fairly small, 20 x 17' for Nos 3, 4 and 5 and just 18¾ x 15' for No. 1. Hatch covers were rolling steel on deck, wooden boards in the tweendecks. Derricks were two 10-ton (No. 2) and two 5-ton (No 1) at the foremast, four 5-ton (Nos 4 and 5) at the mainmast, two 3-ton (No. 3) and two 2-ton (No. 2 at the bridge front) driven by 12 winches in all. There were deep tanks athwartships for latex or vegetable oil at the bottom of No. 3 and three refrigerated compartments at No. 4 intended for fresh fruit and vegetables from Swatow to the Straits. A Special Cargo Room and Mail Room were amidships in the Lower Tween forward of No. 5 hatchway.

Engines were 4-cylinder (670 x 2320mm) single-acting Doxfords, *Anking's* made by Vickers-Armstrong for a service speed of 15 knots at 115rpm but achieving 16.49 knots at 118.6rpm on trials. *Anshun's* engines were manufactured by Scotts' but no trials data are available. As usual for CNCo ships, registry was at London.

### **In service**

*Anking* made her maiden voyage from Liverpool via Suez to Singapore and Hong Kong on a Blue Funnel Line berth, arriving in Singapore on 20 March 1950 with fifteen Butterfield & Swire staff and their families as saloon passengers. By this time, three years since placement of the order, circumstances in China had changed beyond imagining. The corrupt Nationalist regime of Chiang Kai-shek had imploded. Shanghai had been occupied by Communist forces in May 1949 and five months later, after most of the rest of the country had also come under control, Mao Tse-tung had proclaimed the People's Republic of China. Ports were gradually reopened to some foreign trade and restricted passenger movement but shipowners had to contend with the risks of a Nationalist naval blockade that was being enforced with American support. News reports of *Anking's* maiden arrival in Singapore speculated that she might see no more of the China Coast than Hong Kong. Her maiden CNCo arrival at Singapore was advertised for 16/17 April. In the interim, on the afternoon of Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> she boarded 95 passengers in Hong Kong for Shanghai with the further intention to evacuate 900 foreigners from that port. In light of uncertainty as to PRC permission and safe passage through the blockade, she anchored just outside Hong Kong. Two days later, in light of intelligence of an expected Nationalist assault on the Yangtse estuary, British authorities cancelled the mission and *Anking* returned to port on what 'Straits Times' described as 'the shortest maiden voyage on record'.

*Anking's* maiden CNCo voyage to the Straits was then also cancelled and the ship despatched instead to load at Kobe (3 May) on an Australian Oriental Line berth for eastern Australian ports, turning around in Melbourne on 24 June via Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane and Cairns (14 July) for Japan. From there she proceeded to Hong Kong and finally arrived in Singapore on 30 August en route to Penang, where a party was hosted on board, and Belawan (North Sumatra), then back to Singapore on the 10<sup>th</sup> for what was hailed as her maiden arrival, notwithstanding that it was actually her third but good

publicity all the same. On her next northbound sailing in early October *Anking* was reported as loading 4,000 tons of rubber for Hong Kong, Tsingtao and Yokohama along with 6 first-class and 110 deck passengers, implying that her accommodation was hardly being used but her cargo capacity was full to Hong Kong and on to Japan in substitution for South China ports, which were suspended after *Anhui* had been mined on the bar at Swatow on 16 June while inbound from Hong Kong with 700 passengers and become a constructive total loss. The new *Anking* could not be risked. When calls at Swatow were restored a few months later it was by the smaller *Szechuen* or the old *Kweiyang*.

The new *Anshun* came onto the run in January 1951 with her maiden arrival at Singapore on 8 January. Thereafter the two sisters began to provide something like a fortnightly frequency between Japan, Hong Kong and the Straits but the results were disappointing. With little outward movement, the passenger traffic was now skewed heavily towards returnees to Mainland China while cargo liftings were undercut by the British Government's restriction on rubber shipments to 'Red' China because of the Korean War. Then in March repatriation to China was suspended altogether because of new PRC entry requirements. By early May when the traffic resumed there was a queue of some 11,000 repatriates, of whom the first contingent embarked on *Anshun*, *Kweiyang*, BI's *Santhia* and the Norwegian-flag *Hoi Houw*. *Anshun's* bottom cargo consisted of 3,000 tons of scrap, the product of clearance from the harbour of wartime wrecks. The trade was over-tonnaged and the two 'A's were probably the most expensive ships. Accordingly, the old *Kweiyang* was replaced in the Bangkok trade by an 'S'-class ship and switched to the Straits run to replace *Anking*, which after a mid-June sailing to Saigon and Bangkok, on 25 July 1951 was despatched from Hong Kong to Sydney and Melbourne and for the time being became an extra ship on the Australian Oriental Line berth to and from Japan, though her return voyage to Sydney from Japan and Hong Kong (2 October) was via Nauru and Ocean Island with Chinese labour. *Anshun* remained on the Japan-Hong Kong-Straits run but in early December made a labour and supply voyage from Singapore and Christmas Island and on return sailed to Cocos Island, then administered from Singapore, to embark 650 Malay islanders en route to agricultural resettlement in North Borneo, it having been decided on high that it was too expensive to go on supporting that small subsistence economy – the islanders were landed with 300 tons of belongings and 20 fishing canoes. *Anshun* then sailed to Hong Kong for docking before proceeding to Japan to load a cargo of steel for Auckland, where her surprise arrival on 4 March created a good deal of interest. New Zealand Customs kept a close eye on the ship and before her departure seized from the crew a thousand pounds of butter, which was listed as a prohibited export item.

At the end of July 1952 *Anshun* sailed from Hong Kong to join *Anking* in the Australian Oriental Line. Their extensive deck passenger spaces were now redundant but the first-class accommodation could be used and lighter cargo such as wool could be stowed in the capacious tweendecks, thereby making them good running mates for *Changsha* and *Taiyuan* and the older *Changte* and *Taiping*. In early December 1952 *Anshun* featured in the Sydney news as disembarking 140 soldiers returning from a tour of duty in Korea.



ANSHUN on an early visit to Melbourne. Characters 順安 (read R to L as AN-SHUN) painted forward end of Promenade Deck (A.C. Green/State Library of Victoria).

In the course of 1952 a better, albeit partial, solution presented itself for deployment of the two sisters. Postwar the associated firm of Alfred Holt & Co. had served both the Indonesian and Straits pilgrim trades by the specially converted *Tyndareus* (11,361/1916) supplemented by prewar tonnage with temporary tweendeck accommodation. As the older tonnage was retired, the prospect loomed that by the 1953 season Holts would be unable to meet their commitments to carry all the Straits and their one-third share of the Indonesian pilgrimage. Accordingly, in May 1952 Holts entered into negotiation with CNCo for the latter to take over the business and goodwill of the Malayan pilgrim carriage. The logic was that CNCo could redeploy *Anking* and *Anshun*. At 900 pilgrims per voyage over three voyages, the two ships between them could carry 5,400 pilgrims in a season, the normal requirement of the Malayan trade, thereby freeing the *Tyndareus* to carry Holts' share of the Indonesian trade. In July 1952 it was agreed that for the following season Holts and CMCo would go into partnership, with the two 'A's sailing under Blue Funnel colours and being assisted as necessary by *Tyndareus*. CNCo personnel joined *Tyndareus* in September 1952 to learn the ropes. *Anking* took her last sailing from Australia in November 1952, *Anshun* in March 1953.

Original plans for both 'A's to make three voyages with *Tyndareus* available to carry up to another 2,000 pilgrims were thrown into disarray at the end of October 1952 when it was learned that *Tyndareus* would be fully occupied in the Indonesian trade. The two 'A's, which both commenced their first voyage from Singapore in mid-May 1953 in Blue funnel colours, were therefore left to carry the entire trade. In the event, the number of pilgrims fell short of expectations and *Anking's* third voyage of was cancelled. Instead, from 5 July to 31 August she was chartered to BI, with delivery and

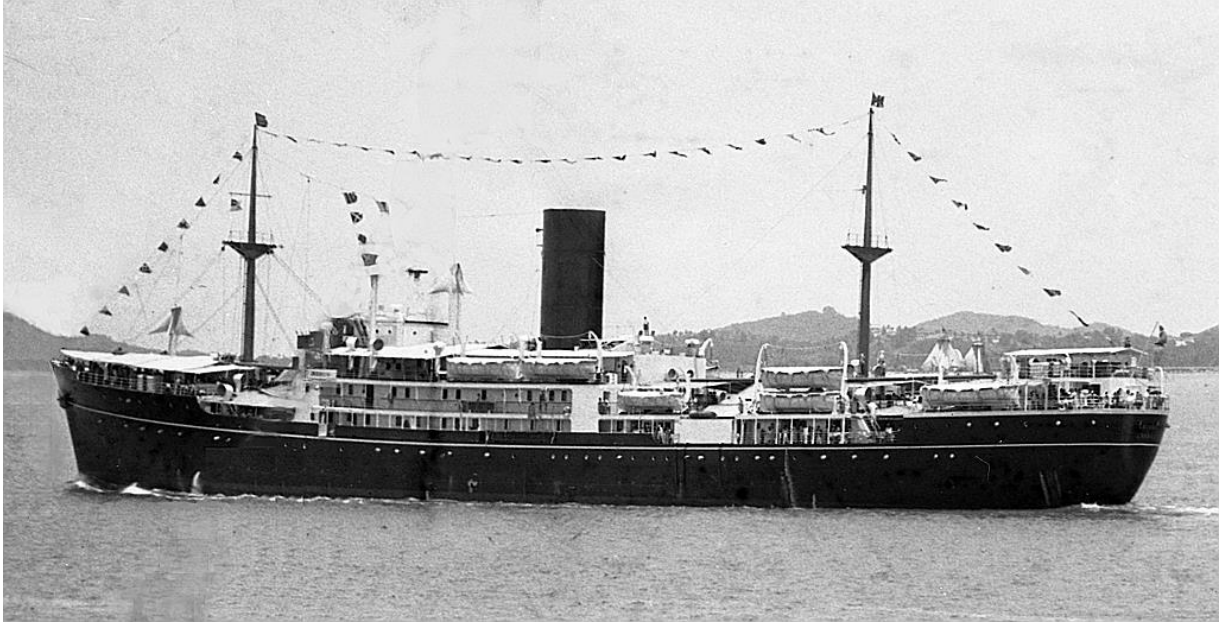
redelivery in Jeddah, to relieve *Rajula* (8478/26) in the Madras-Straits trade while the latter was docking — as it transpired, BI found it more convenient to use *Anking* between Karachi and the Persian Gulf. Instead of laying up at Suez during the eight-day period between the last voyage into Jeddah and the first return voyage, *Anshun* was also able to pick up some by-employment by making two short voyages to Akaba to bring pilgrims who had travelled from Damascus by the Hedjaz Railway.



Postcard of ANKING/ANSHUN issued for the 1953 pilgrim season under Alfred Holt & Co. management. The Malay caption reads 'Blue Funnel Pilgrim Ship' (coll. SK).

For the 1954 season, CNCo insisted upon sole responsibility for the Malayan trade. It seemed unreasonable that the company should carry most, if not all, of the trade yet appear merely to be chartering ships to Holts, who thereby enjoyed all the goodwill. This was agreed to by both parties. The wisdom of CNCo's taking control of the trade was borne out in November 1953 when it became clear that *Tyndareus* would again be unavailable for the 1954 season. To avoid any likelihood of the two 'A's being unable to handle the trade on their own, their unberthed accommodation was increased by a third from 750 (originally 906) to 1,025 by reclaiming Tweendeck space, most likely No. 5 Upper Tweendeck, at an allowance of 18 square feet per pilgrim. With the 35 first-class cabin berths and 100 steerage and bunk berths (previously 116), this gave a total passenger complement of 1,160, which was rounded down to 1,100 pending the installation of three extra latrines. An essential part of the pilgrimage was prayer, five times each day, but the location of the prayer space is not known, possibly under canvas in the forward well around No. 2 hatch.





ANSHUN departing Penang for Jeddah, 15 October 1959, shade awnings above forecastle, No. 2 and Nos 4-5 hatches, canvas windsails rigged fore to aft for tweendeck circulation. Hull not yet painted white (c.f. ANKING) and still plain funnel (Dr. George Wilson).

The pattern established in 1954 lasted with little change for the next few years. The only significant variation occurred in the employment of the two 'A's in the fortnight or so between the completion of the outward and commencement of the homeward voyages. Initially the 'A's had continued to tranship pilgrims from Akaba, where on 3 July 1955 *Anshun* was holed up by Egyptian shore batteries for allegedly straying into territorial waters. In 1958 the two ships were used to make a ten-day roundtrip between Jeddah and the Syrian port of Latakia, but this was found to be not much more profitable than laying up. In the following year the ships were chartered to the Pan Islamic Steamship Company of Pakistan for this period, then in 1960 laid up at Suez.

The more awkward problem for CNCo, however, and the reason why the pilgrimage was only a partial solution, was that they still needed work during the off-season. Typically they were used to relieve ships for docking in other services, most notably in the Far East-Australia service. On 31 July 1958 *Anshun* arrived in Fremantle to inaugurate a new joint service between CNCo and Blue Funnel to Jakarta, the Straits, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Japan. On some of these voyages they still wore their white hulls. Another useful off-season employment was the carriage of labourers to and from Ocean Island for the British Phosphate Commission. In August 1960 on their repositioning voyage to Hong Kong, *Anshun* and *Anking* repatriated full shiploads of ethnic Chinese from the Indonesian ports of Palembang and Tanjung Pandan (Billiton Is.) respectively to Whampoa (Canton).



ANKING freshly painted in pilgrim white at North Elizabeth Pier, Hobart, 15 October 1959,  
Her first visit had been in mid-March 1952 (Reg. Wilson/NAA).



ANKING alongside at Hobart, 15 October 1959. The poop housing is the hospital,  
lifterafts on top (Alan Botten/R. Cox).

Malaya's independence on 31 August 1957 as an Islamic state led to enhanced official concern with the pilgrimage and, in particular, the standard of pilgrim accommodation. CNCo had no reason to be defensive. *Anking* and *Anshun* were not only the two newest ships serving the pilgrim trade from Southeast Asia but also, apart from the veteran *Tyndareus* and until the appearance in 1959 of the ex-German *Gunung Djati* (1936) and the chartered Japanese-flag *Koan Maru* (1936), the only dedicated pilgrim ships. Nevertheless, although the two 'A's made only four round voyages in 1959 and five in 1960, so that in the latter year only 5364 pilgrims were carried compared with a maximum capacity over six voyages of about 7000, there was little excess capacity to cater to the periodic peak year or to the expected growth in numbers over time. Moreover, Holts' introduction to the Indonesian run of *Gunung Djati* with much improved accommodation naturally created an expectation that matching improvements would be made in the trade from the Straits. CNCo therefore began to look around for another ship to protect what had become a worthwhile business.

The outcome of this search was the purchase in the latter half of 1960 of the BI troopship *Dilwara* (12,555/36). When built she had been notable as the lead ship of a quartette of specially designed troopships that were the first to be purpose built for commercial operation under the British flag. Following an extensive postwar refit, she had accommodation for 125 first, 96 second and 104 third class passengers plus 790 troops in dormitories. CNCo reckoned to convert her to a dual role of pilgrim ship and cruise ship, able to carry 274 first-class and 2026 third-class pilgrims or just 200 passengers on luxury cruises. *Kuala Lumpur*, as she was renamed, sailed from Southampton on 7 October 1960 for Hong Kong, still in troopship colours, and there was taken in hand for three months by Taikoo Dockyard. Internally she was virtually gutted. The first-class accommodation was completely rebuilt, former troop dormitories were fitted out with two tier bunks, and some former cabins, administration, dining and recreation areas were similarly converted. To serve the religious needs of pilgrims a large mushollah (mosque) was installed, which for cruising could be converted to a ballroom! Externally, the only obvious change was in the colour scheme. In the 1960 season the 'A's had introduced a new 'livery' of white hull and the Malayan flag painted on a gold band on the funnel. *Kuala Lumpur* was given a green band around a white hull and the background of the funnel was altered from the company's traditional black to an Islamic green. The work was completed to schedule and on 28 April 1961 she took her first sailing from Penang. *Kuala Lumpur* was well received and the only criticism of her seems to have been her lack of speed. Compared with the two 'A's, which could manage 15 knots in good weather and were usually good for 14 knots, the 'new' *Kuala Lumpur's* aging Doxford diesels could do little better than 13 knots. Malayan pilgrims were not impressed when they were overhauled and passed by Indonesian pilgrim ships such as the 17-knot *Gunung Djati*, the 16-knot *Koan Maru* or Jakarta Lloyd's 16-knot *M.H. Thamrin* class freighters.



ANSHUN departing Penang (c.1961) in full pilgrim rig, now with white hull and Malayan flag on funnel, shade awnings in No. 2 well for open deck space and probably also mosque (Wikiswire).



KUALA LUMPUR seen here in her other role as a cruise ship (Bruce Nicol/coll. Keith Wood & Chris Howell).

CNCo now had excess capacity for the pilgrim trade because *Kuala Lumpur* could carry as many pilgrims as the two 'A's combined. Accordingly, only one 'A' was now required as a back-up vessel. In

the 1961 season *Anshun* made one pilgrim voyage from Malaya, but from 9 March to 4 May and again from 2 July to 25 August was chartered to Pan Islamic for two roundtrips between Chittagong and Jeddah. *Anking*, which in September 1960 had taken up off-season employment in the Far East-Australia line, remained in that trade. After end-of-season refit, *Anshun* joined her in October 1961 and the two 'A's then settled into a monthly service between Japan, Hong Kong, Manila, Sydney and Melbourne, replacing the old *Changte* and *Taiping*, which were sold to breakers in the last quarter of that year. For the next three seasons, *Kuala Lumpur* was left to handle the pilgrim trade on her own.

The Far-East-Australia trade was roughly a three-month rotation (four roundtrips per annum) with some variation in the ports of call according to inducement or revised scheduling. Southbound it was usually Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe and Hong Kong for Sydney and Melbourne (discharge and loading), then Hobart, (on inducement Burnie), Sydney, (Port Kembla or Newcastle), Brisbane, (Townsville) for (Cebu), Manila, Hong Kong, (Yawata), Kobe, Yokkaichi/Nagoya and Yokohama. From May 1961 northbound calls were added at Pusan and Okinawa, then from around mid-1962 at Rabaul as part of the New Guinea Australia Line before proceeding to Manila, Keelung and Hong Kong. By 1962, when the two 'A'-class were both in service in place of *Changte* and *Taiping*, they were turned around in Hongkong, northbound via Port Moresby and Manila, in a monthly shuttle. Return fares (1964) were A£276/496 one way/return in First Class or A£142/256 in Third Class.

The first-class accommodation was well used, though Radio Officer John A some recalls that the amenities were much inferior to *Changsha* and *Taiyuan*, just a saloon, lounge and a small area of the Boat Deck. There were no films and no piped music or news in the lounge. Overall, the atmosphere seemed to be less convivial. Sometimes third-class/steerage passengers were also carried. On at least one occasion *Anking* carried White Russian families from Hong Kong to Sydney: they had a free run of the after deck and could share with first-class passengers the canvas pool that was rigged on No 4 hatch as the weather warmed up. He also remembers that there was still a coffin strapped on top of the after house, presumably left over from pilgrim service. A memorable voyage was in May 1961 when on 22-23<sup>rd</sup> *Anking* encountered typhoon 'Betty' between Yokohama and Pusan (22-23/5/61). He recalls being on the bridge and watching brave crew trying to secure drums of scrap metal that were swashing about the deck by No. 2 hatch. The radio aerials blew away and he had the scary task of going up onto the flying bridge to re-attach them.



ANSHUN in CNCo colours nearing the floating bridge, 15 January 1962, and approaching Risdon (Hobart), 17 November 1961, to commence northbound loading (Noel Brown/R. Cox).

At the beginning of 1965, as part of a fleet-wide reshuffle of tonnage, *Changsha* and *Taiyuan* took over the Australia-Hong Kong shuttle. In March 1965, *Anking* was switched to replace the much smaller 3,000-ton *Szechuen* (1946) in the weekly Hong Kong-Keelung shuttle and proved well-suited to the purpose, having much more and better twin-berth cabin accommodation (now 40 passengers) than *Szechuen* (12 passengers only) and also being more comfortable in the heavy swells of Taiwan Strait. John Asome recalls that the voyage of 470 nautical miles involved a Saturday evening departure from Hong Kong with arrival at Keelung early on Monday morning, then a Tuesday evening departure to arrive back in Hong Kong early on Thursday morning. Being some three knots faster, *Anking* was able to cut several hours off the voyage but it made little difference to the comfortable schedule. The trickiest part of the voyage was the entry to Keelung harbour with breakwaters between the shoals on both sides of the entrance. Capt. Chris Coy points out that the port was still controlled by the military and permission to enter had to be requested from the military control centre. On occasion, clearance was granted but then countermanded as the ship was lining up the approach between the breakwaters. This situation arose on the morning of 11 August 1965, when *Anking* was barely six months in the service. Instead of carrying on and subsequently writing a letter of apology, the Master tried to abort, put the wheel hard over, but struck one of the breakwaters, causing considerable bottom damage that required docking on return to Hong Kong.



ANKING arriving at Keelung in 1969 with new dark-blue funnel with houseflag (Wikiswire).

After her early-1965 refit, *Anshun* had resumed her role as second pilgrim ship with a first sailing from Singapore (8/2), Port Kelang (9/2) and Penang (10/2) with in all 1,130 pilgrims to arrive in Jeddah on 23 February; both ships would commence the return voyage on 20 May, *Anshun* arriving first at Penang (2 June), Port Kelang (3<sup>rd</sup>) and Singapore (4<sup>th</sup>) followed a day later at each port by the slower *Kuala Lumpur*. In the following year, the faster *Anshun* commenced her outward voyage from the East Malaysian ports of Kota Kinabalu, Labuan and Kuching before proceeding to Singapore, Port Kelang and Penang. She continued to operate alongside *Kuala Lumpur* until the end of the 1970/71 season, when both ships made three roundtrips: *Kuala Lumpur* carried 6,120 pilgrims and *Anshun* 3,402, in all a record 9,522 pilgrims.

By 1969/70, however, the future of the pilgrim carriage by sea from Malaysia was in a state of flux. *Kuala Lumpur* was now 34 years old and showing her age, at least as far as her engines were concerned. If CNCo were to retain control of the trade, it would need to take the gamble of investing in a new ship, but nationalist pressures suggested that there would be little security for a shipping line identified with the former colonial power. In August 1969 the Malaysian government had moved to take on a much more active role in the administration of the pilgrimage by incorporating the Pilgrimage Control Board as the Muslim Pilgrimage Management and Savings Corporation with enhanced powers. Besides facilitating savings for the pilgrimage and other purposes, the Corporation could now channel savings into approved investments and provide a wide range of services such as banking, arrangement of visas, transportation to and from the ports of embarkation, accommodation in Mecca, medical care (previously provided by the medical mission), and the provision of information and education.

Under these circumstances, Hong Kong businessman Eddie Wong [see PDF file in 'New Wave' section], who had already assumed a major role in the Indonesian pilgrim trade, began to lobby intensively to gain the franchise for the Malaysian pilgrim trade. To this end, in July 1970 he established Great Malaysia Line, which subsequently won the franchise, commencing from the 1971/2 season. The 1970/1 season was therefore the last for China Navigation. In September 1971 *Anshun* was sold to Pan-Islamic Steamship Company. The older *Kuala Lumpur* proceeded to the breaker's yard, being delivered at Kaohsiung on 2 December 1971.



A rare view of ANSHUN and ANKING berthed together at Hongkong & Kowloon Wharf, c. 1968  
(Geoffrey Havilland, CNCo floating staff manager/C. Bleasdale-Swire).

### ***Klias* ex *Anking* in Straits Steamship service**

In April 1970 *Anking* had been replaced in the Hong Kong-Keelung shuttle by the smart ex-Danish 4,551-ton passenger ferry *Taiwan* (1961), purchased by CNCo in October 1969 converted by Taikoo Dockyard to sideport loading. *Anking* was delivered in May to Straits Steamship Company of Singapore for service between Singapore and East Malaysian ports as *Klias* as a consort to the somewhat smaller ex-KPM sisterships *Keningau* (ex *Reyniersz* (4135/1948) and *Kunak* ex *Baud* (4513/1949), both of about 4,000 dwt with accommodation for 60 cabin and 100 deck passengers. *Klias* took her maiden sailing on 22 June. Ports of call were Labuan, Kota Kinabalu, Kudat, Sandakan, Lahad Datu and Tawau (adjacent to the border with Indonesia), the round voyage taking just over 2 weeks with 5-6 days in between alongside in Singapore for discharge and loading – in October 1971 the service would be accelerated to



allow the ships to turn around in Port Kelang (formerly Port Swettenham) with shorter discharge and loading calls at Singapore in both directions. Three ships allowed passenger sailings to be increased to a weekly frequency and enhanced their popularity as short local cruises.



KLIAS anchored off Port Kelang, 6 March 1975, in Straits Steamship's passenger-cargo line between West and East Malaysia via Singapore (V.H. Young & L.A. Sawyer).

*Klias* became a familiar sight in Singapore until just before midnight on 7 September 1976 when, on departing for Sabah under control of a PSA pilot, she somehow 'hung up' on the wharf at No. 21 Empire Dock. 'Straits Times' (9/9/76) reported that the wharf was barely damaged but the collision had ripped a 2 x 3-metre hole in the ship's stern, fractured the sternpost and 'smashed' the propeller blades. Temporary repairs were carried out but *Klias* did not return to service, instead laying up until departing Singapore in tow for Hong Kong in December 1976 and going under the breaker's hammer the following month, just 27 years after commissioning as a new ship. *Kunak* went to Pakistani breakers in May 1978 and *Keningau* to Hong Kong breakers in September 1978, thereby marking the end of the longstanding Singapore-Borneo passenger trade, so it can be presumed that *Klias*' misadventure shortened her career by only a year or two.



*Klias'* consorts were the smaller Dutch-built *Kunak* and sister *Keningau* (P. Foxley).



KLIAS laid up at Singapore with damaged stern, November 1976. Last known view before tow to breakers. All but two port-side lifeboats have been removed (Ian Edwards).

### ***Safina-e-Abid ex Anshun* in Pan-Islamic Steamship service**

Pan-Islamic Steamship Co. Ltd had been founded as a private company in Karachi in 1950, three years after the separation and independence of Pakistan, to carry Muslim pilgrims to the Holy Land under the Pakistani flag. In April 1951 it took delivery on the Clyde and in Birkenhead of two old hospital/troop ships, respectively the German-built *Safina-e-Murad*, formerly the Egyptian pilgrim ship *El Nil* (ex *Tjerimai* '33, ex *Wadai* '20, 7342/1920) and the four-master *Safina-e-Arab*, formerly the Bibby liner *Oxfordshire* (8624/1912), which were rushed into the outward pilgrimage in June of that year. In 1953 there followed the 8,135-ton *Safina-e-Millat*, built for OSK's Dairen line as *Tsukushi Maru* (1943) but on completion commissioned as a submarine depot ship: she would serve only one season before being lost by fire at Karachi on 16 March 1953. *Safina-e-Murad* was replaced in 1953 by *Safina-e-Nusrat*, formerly the migrant ship *Florentia* and before that Henderson's *Burma* (7470/1914). *Safina-e-Nusrat* lasted only until 1957 and *Safina-e-Arab* followed her to Pakistani breakers in 1958. Pan-Islamic then chartered tonnage until in May 1960 it gained funds from the Pakistani Government to buy the British Government's 17,528-ton troopship *Empire Fowey*, formerly the German *Potsdam* (1935). She needed little modification to be able to carry around 2,600 pilgrims at a speed of 18 knots and immediately became the company's flagship as *Safina-e-Hujjaj* [Pilgrims Ship]. Around the same time, the 8,477-ton motorship *Safina-e-Arab* (II) was ordered from Spanish shipbuilders with delivery in January 1962 for the pilgrim carriage from Chittagong (then East Pakistan). The fleet was then expanded with cargo tonnage until in 1969 the 9,499-ton French liner *General Leclerc* (1951) was purchased to become *Safina-e-Arafat*, then almost immediately *Safina-e-Siahat*. She was a smart 16-knot motorship built with cabin accommodation in three classes for 250 plus another 380 unberthed, which was hardly enough for the pilgrim run. On 17 October 1970 she arrived at Karachi from Chittagong with fire damage suffered four months previously.

When the well-known *Anshun* came onto the market some months later with almost double the tweendeck capacity, Pan-Islamic seized the opportunity. They were already familiar with the ship from previous charters and promptly bought her as a replacement for the damaged 20-year-old *Safina-e-Siahat*, which was delivered to local breakers. *Anshun* hoisted the Pakistani flag with registry at Karachi as *Safina-e-Abid* ('Safina' means 'ship', 'Abid' may be translated appropriately as devout').

By the end of 1973 Pan-Islamic had a fleet of three pilgrim liners and five good-size tramps of 10-12,000 dwt, which may have been enough to incite the envy of the state-owned Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PSNC), which as of 1 January 1974 took control by nationalisation. This move was fiercely contested by the private owners, notably the founding Ahmed family, who at least were able to keep Pan-Islamic's separate identity. Six years later, as of 18 September 1980, they succeeded in reversing the nationalisation by disposing of a 49% shareholding to Saudi interests associated with banker Prince Moh. Al-Faisal Al-Saud, brother of the King, and Prince Saud Al-Abdullah Al-Faisal, both of whom joined the Board with the former becoming Chairman. The 41-year-old and, post-OPEC, uneconomical turbine steamer *Safina-e-Hujjaj* had been delivered to breakers at Gadani Beach in

October 1976 but *Safina-e-Abid* ex *Anshun* and the newbuild *Safina-e-Arab* carried on the pilgrim trade between Karachi and Jeddah with clockwork regularity.



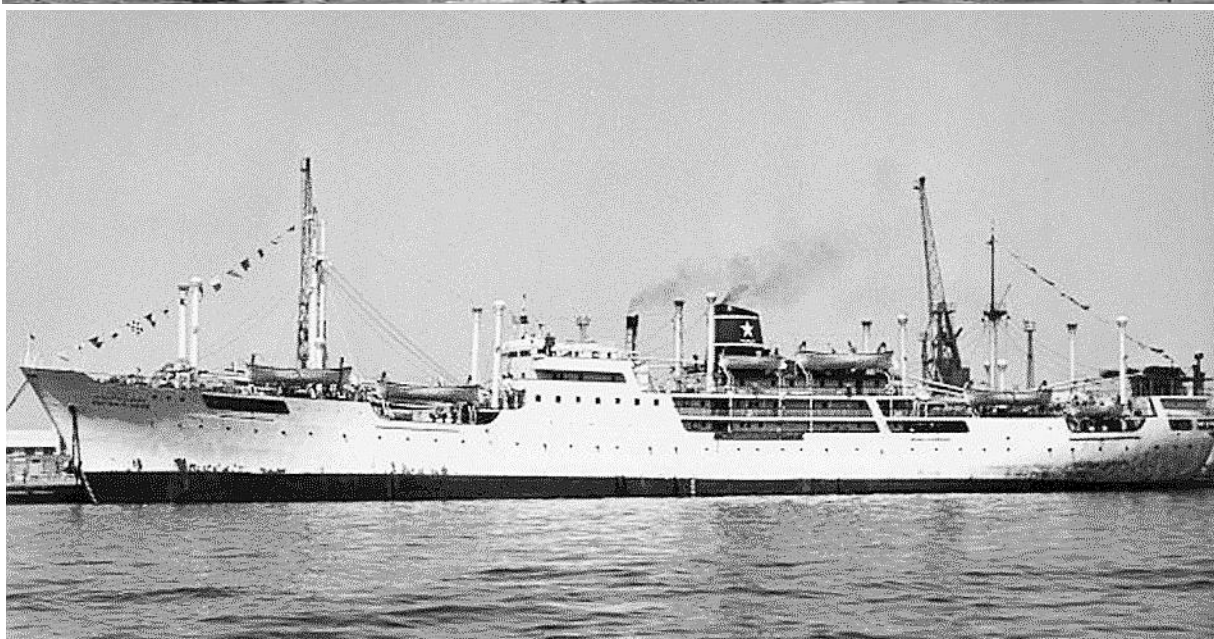
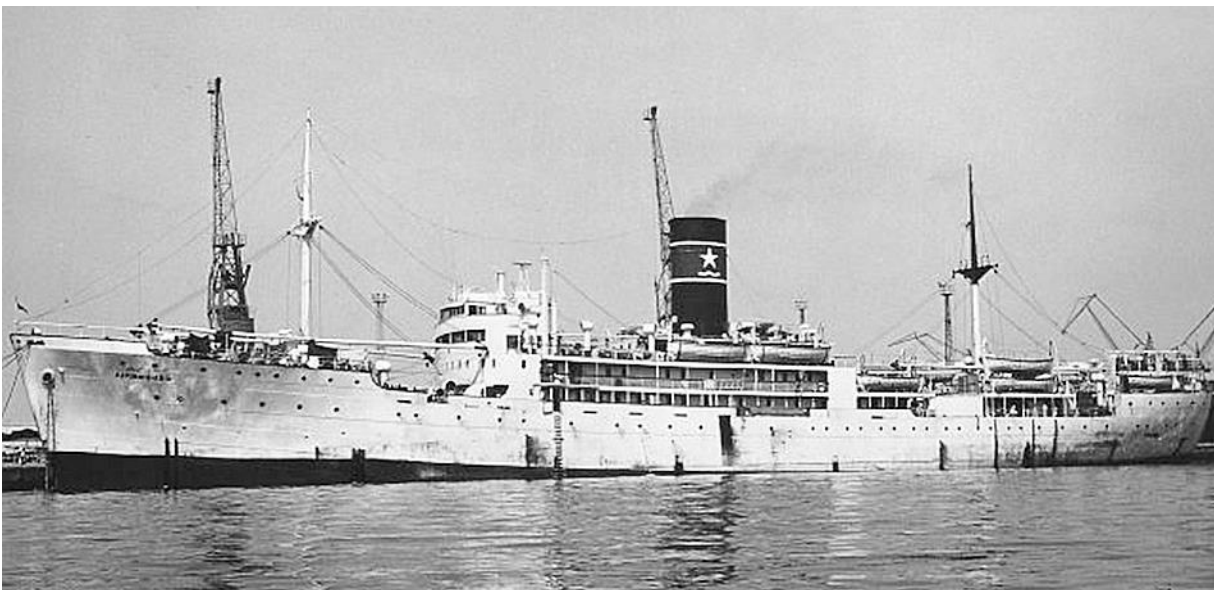
SAFINA-E-ABID outbound from Muscat, July 1976 (Jim Shaw). Pan-Islamic funnel (B. Donne).



Smart, purpose-built SAFINA-E-ARAB (1962) at Chittagong in 1971 (coll. M. Cranfield).

Despite *Safina-e-Arab* being somewhat larger and more streamlined, the two ships were not dissimilar in layout, passenger capacity and speed: *Safina-e-Abid* (14½ knots) could carry up to 1,200 pilgrims, *Safina-e-Arab* (15 knots) about 1,300, which may not have been entirely coincidence. Both ships were able to cover the 2,150 nautical miles between Karachi and Jeddah in around 6 days, thus under a fortnight for the roundtrip. In the off-season, the former plied between Karachi and the Persian Gulf,

the latter between Karachi and Red Sea ports. They were kept in class and in good working order. Nevertheless, the economy of wide-bodied jets ultimately prevailed. On 21 February 1991 *Safina-e-Abid* arrived at Karachi and laid up. Lloyd's Shipping Index of 22 April noted that she was under repair but instead, on 26 May 1991, she was delivered to Dewan Sons at Gadani Beach for breaking up. Her latest Special Survey had been in February 1987, suggesting that the next survey had been falling due and the cost of immediately necessary repairs on a 40-year-old ship could no longer be justified. *Safina-e-Arab* followed to breakers five years later, marking the end not only of Pan-Islamic Steamship but also of private shipowning in Pakistan.



Comparison of SAFINA-E-ABID (5578 grt, 391' bp) and SAFINA-E-ARAB (8477 grt/420' bp) berthed at Karachi c.1979 in in state-owned PNSC colours (Pan-Islamic SS/J Shaw).

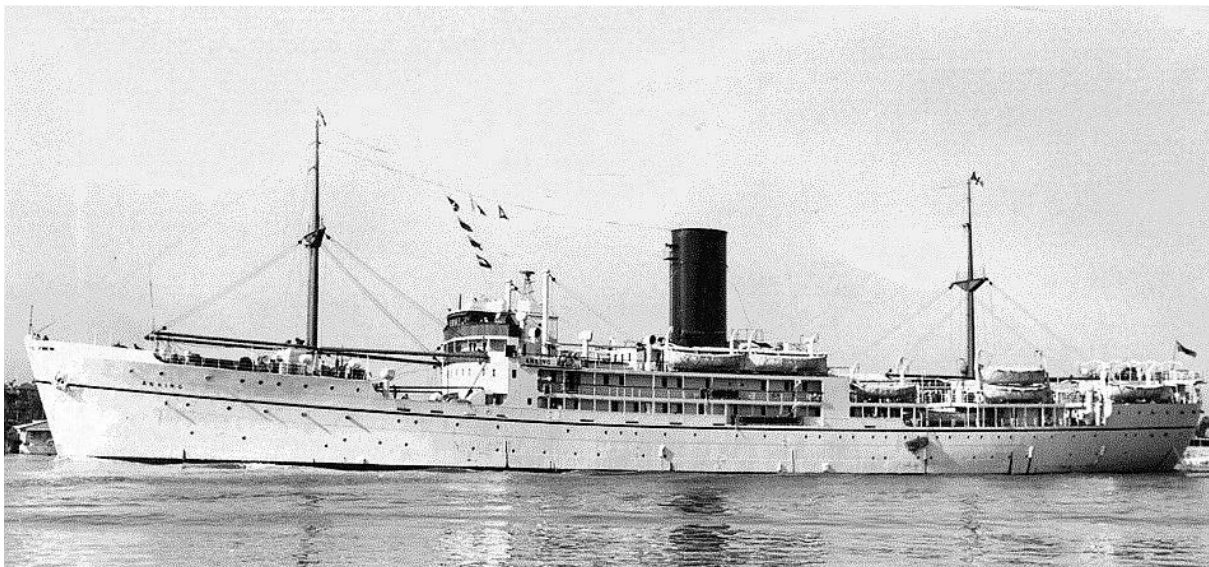
*Anshun/Safina-e-Abid* and her sister *Anking/Klias* were a unique pair of ships, sophisticated hybrids carefully designed for a postwar world that never eventuated but flexible enough to find new roles for around twenty years each with CNCo, then to enjoy new leases of life with their second owners. By the time she went to breakers in 1991, *Safina-e-Abid* was over 40 years old, now a veteran but structurally unchanged from her original layout. CNCo's subsequent ships, delivered from 1955 onwards, would be the plain but more profitable 'C'-class freighters [see separate PDF file].

## Sources

The middle section on the pilgrim trade is drawn from my unpublished manuscript 'The Pilgrimage by Sea from Southeast Asia in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century'; technical details from Lloyd's Register and Johnston Robb, 'Scotts' of Greenock, 1820-1950', Vol. 2 (Ship List), Univ. of Glasgow (1993); [www.wikiswire.com](http://www.wikiswire.com); Laurence Dunn, Passenger Liners (Adlard Coles, 1961); *Daily Commercial News & Shipping List* (at Trove); *The Log*; *Straits Times* at [eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers); Pan-Islamic Steamship Co. Ltd, Profile (2pp), 1 January 1984 (courtesy Jim Shaw); [www.shipsnostalgia.com](http://www.shipsnostalgia.com).

**ANKING** (1950-70) 6124/50 (418.4/391.0 x 56.10', M4cy/15k, 38/-/96/904 pass.)

Built by Scotts' S.B. & Eng. Co. Ltd, Greenock (#647) for and 20/12/49 del. to CNC for Straits trade. From 1953 seasonal employment as pilgrim vessel (35 cabin, 116 steerage, 900 pilgrims, from 1954 35/100/1160). 9/60 t/f to HK-Australia line (fully replacing *Changte*). c.5/65 t/f to Hong Kong-Keelung ferry service. 11/8/65 holed after striking breakwater at Keelung. 5/70 sold to Straits S.S. Co. Ltd, Singapore r. KLIAS for Singapore-East Malaysia trade. 7/9/76 fractured sternpost when 'hung up' on wharf at Singapore. 12/76 arrived at Hong Kong in tow and 1/77 demolition begun by Fuji Marden.



ANKING outbound down the Brisbane River with white pilgrim hull (W. Foote).



ANKING in later years in a painting by J.H Pottinger (Wikiswire).

**ANSHUN** (1951-71) 6168/51-1 (418.4 x 56.6', M4cy/15k, 38/-/96/904 pass)

Built by Taikoo D.Y. & Eng. Co. Ltd, Hong Kong (#333) for and 28/12/50 del. to CNC for Straits trade.

5/53 from Singapore began seasonal employment as pilgrim vessel (35 cabin, 96 steerage, 900 pilgrims, 1954 raised to 35/100/1160). 3/7/55 holed by Egyptian shore battery at entrance to Gulf of Akaba. 3-8/61 on charter to Pan-Islamic S.S. Co. Ltd for Chittagong-Jeddah pilgrim voyages. 10/61 t/f to HK-Australia line (replacing *Taiping*). 1/65 reverted to seasonal pilgrim trade Malaysia-Jeddah. 9/71 sold to Pan-Islamic S.S. Co. Ltd, Karachi for pilgrim trade r. SAFINA-E-ABID. 1974 owners taken over by Pakistan National Shg Corp., Karachi. 26/5/91 arrived at Gadani Beach for breaking up by Dewan Sons.

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ANSHUN at Hobart, 17 November 1961 (Noel Brown/R. Cox).



Pan-Islamic's SAFINA-E-ABID laid up at Karachi, 28 February 1983 (Bryan Shankland).

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