COLLECTORS' MONUMENTS: SCHOLARS' TREASURES

> *The library will remain a kind of monument, not to my learning, for my learning does amount to a row of pins, but to my instinct as a collector.*

(G.E. Morrison, following the sale of his library to Iwasaki Hisaya in 1917, as quoted in Cyril Pearl, Morrison of Peking, Angus and Robertson, 1967, p. 344.)

In the last twenty years, I've been a frequent visitor to Sinological libraries in Kyoto and Tokyo in connection with my research on Tang Dynasty history. I've developed a great bond of affection for these libraries and their dedicated and helpful staff, from whom I've learned the histories of the library collection. The story of these libraries is of great interest and throws light on a fascinating period of East Asian history and scholarship, so I would like to share it with readers of the EALRGA Newsletter.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

First, let me remind you briefly of the history of the library in China. Formal library collections, with the apparatus of classification schemes and catalogues familiar to the modern library user, began in China in the Han Dynasty, in the first century B.C. The written word had already gained an almost sacred status in China, as the means by which to transmit the traditional cultural values to future generations. All existing books in the Chinese Empire were carefully collected and variant copies of the same work were checked and compared to arrive at an authentic text, which was then incorporated into the imperial library. such a painstaking task was rendered necessary by the destruction of practically all of China's literature about two hundred years before under the totalitarian Qin regime. The Qin Burning of the Books had been directed mainly against Confucianism. The Han emperors, although they did not altogether trust Confucian scholars to work in the best interests of a centralised empire still modelled on that of Qin, recognised that Confucianism was popular and that Confucian scholars were experts in the state rituals necessary to legitimise their regime, so they gave them their patronage to ensure continued hold on power. The Confucian establishment of an imperial library of authentic books and commentaries giving acceptable interpretations of Confucianism was at

the same time a way for emperors to be great patrons of culture and for them to manipulate that culture to their own ends.

Even without deliberate acts of destruction such as that perpetrated by the Qin regime, imperial and private collections in China continued to be vulnerable. They were usually housed in wooden buildings, which frequently went up in flames in the civil strife which marked each change of dynasty.

Each new dynastic house would laboriously build up the imperial library once again, drawing on the remnants of the old imperial collection and the resources of the empire. A well-stocked imperial library became a symbol of legitimacy and dynastic presige and rare editions gained a value beyond all price.

THE JAPANESE AS COLLECTORS OF CHINESE BOOKS

The vast majority of the old Chinese books now in Japanese libraries are in printed rather than manuscript form, although some are almost a thousand years old. Printing became a common practice in China from the early tenth century AD and led to the widening of opportunities for a classical education, and so for entry into the public service. The standard form of Chinese book dates back to the Song Dynasty and the oldest book which I have handled in a Japanese library was in fact a Song edition.

The Sinological libraries in Japan keep their Chinese books in immaculate condition, relying on old craftsmen to back the flimsy pages with heavier paper and repair and replace the old cases. Readers open the cases of the most valuable rare books with a mixture of awe, trepidation and excited anticipation and no fountain or ball point pen is allowed to cross the library threshold.

Japanese interest in Chinese books dates back almost as far as the introduction of high culture into Japan from continental Asia. The Japanese borrowed the Chinese script piecemeal and at first wrote only in Chinese, or used Chinese characters to transliterate their own spoken language. The syllabaries invented to write Japanese vernacular are modified forms of Chinese characters. Japan could not therefore escape from Chinese cultural influence transmitted by the written word. Indeed, early in their history, the Japanese were anxious to collect the Chinese books which contained the secrets of superior civilization and technology, philosophical and religious sophistication and political control. We learn from a history of the Tang Dynasty that in the mid-eighth century, when a Japanese tribute embassy visited the Chinese court: "All the imperial gifts which they received they traded for books." (Jiu Tang-shu. Beijing: Zhong-hua Shuju, 1975; 119A, p. 5341.) No doubt these precious volumes formed the nuclei of the earliest Japanese collections of Chinese books.

The shared cultural tradition encouraged Japanese scholars and nobles to continue to collect Chinese books. They appear to have kept reasonably up to date with the latest intellectual developments in China, despite fluctuations in diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries.

CHINESE BOOKS RETURNED TO CHINA

In the late nineteenth century, after the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the situation changed drastically. A new political, technological and, to some degree, social model had appeared for the Japanese, who were then aspiring to a respectable place in the modern world. Learning from the West in all aspects of science and culture became the fashion and the Japanese no longer believed that China, reduced to semi-colonial status by the Western powers, had anything to teach them. The social upheavals of the Meiji Restoration and the abolition of feudalism in Japan led to the impoverishment of many scholarly and noble Japanese families which had built up collections of Chinese books over the years. These books were no longer highly valued and consequently came on the market for remarkably low prices. In the 1880s, Yang Xingwu, a member of the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo, was able to buy a large number of old Chinese books dating back to the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties and ship them back to China. After his death, his valuable collection, known as the Guan Hai Tang, was sold to the Chinese government. Following an eventful history of moves around China to avoid the ravages of war, it is now housed with part of the old imperial collection in the National Palace Museum Library just outside Taipei.

THE SEIKADŌ BUNKO

The 1880s mark the high point of Western-mania in Meiji Japan. Thereafter, the prevailing intellectual trend led to a reappraisal and revaluing of Japanese tradition which was, of course, intimately bound up with China. Chinese books were no longer shipped back to China. On the contrary, a steady flow of Chinese books and art objects reached Japan where many collectors shared them with scholars and the public. Japanese and foreign China specialists are grateful for their public-spirited attitude, but the Chinese clearly still resent the loss. A Japanese friend of mine who once showed a delegation of scholars from Beijing around a private museum of Chinese art in Kyoto was stunned by the question, "Where were these items stolen from ?"

My favourite Chinese library in Japan is the Seikadō Bunko (Seikadō Library) in the suburbs of Tokyo. When it was first built, at the end of the nineteenth century, it must have been a country mansion far from the bustle of the growing new capital. Even today, it is a good walk from the nearest bus stop and the winding lanes which lead to it retain a rustic charm. I first visited the Seikadō Bunko one winter morning in the early New Year of 1972. After a long ride by train and

bus from central Tokyo, I enjoyed the novelty of walking past gardens full of rich red plum blossom. The library is set back from the road in a large wild garden and is reached by a gravel path which reminded me of the approach to a large country house in England. When I turned a corner and saw the house itself, the picture was complete. It was as if I was back in Cambridge, looking at one of the old houses built along the Backs by the late nineteenth century dons, after the rule requiring academic celibacy had been abolished and the university encouraged family life.

Inside, the atmosphere was a strange mixture of East and West. The physical setting was English but I was handling ancient Chinese books and I and other readers were greeted with generous Japanese hospitality in the form of endless cups of green tea, since the nearest coffee shop was so far away. Once the custodian and his wife found I was a Cambridge student, they revealed to me the secret behind the strange sensation of temporal and spacial dislocation I had experienced on first seeing the library building.

The Seikadō Bunko was established in the late nineteenth century by Iwasaki Yanosuke, one of the founders of the Mitsubishi Corporation. He cam of an old samurai family from Shikoku which had played a minor part in the political machinations leading to the Meiji Restoration. Apparently he had spent some time in Cambridge and had been so impressed by the family houses along the Backs which were so familiar to me -- I had lived in one converted into a college hostel -- that he decided to build a mansion for himself in Tokyo in the same style. In 1907, he and his son Koyata bought the library collection of an impoverished scholar of the ailing Qing Dynasty, Lu Xinyuan, which contains an impressive number of fine Song editions. Lu's collection formed the nucleus of a remarkable library on Chinese history and literature, which was later presented to the Japanese nation. Foreign students like myself visit the Seikado Bunko to research on pre-modern China, but we learn just as much about Meiji Japan and its mixture of Japanese, Chinese and Western cultural influences from our encounter with one of its enduring monuments.

THE TŌYŌ BUNKO

Japanese scholarship has the Iwasaki family to thank for another remarkable and even more comprehensive collection of library resources on China, as well as other parts of Asia. This is the Tōyō Bunko (East Asian Library) which, like the Seikadō Bunko, is now a branch of the National Diet Library.

The Tōyō Bunko was set up by a nephew of Iwasaki Yanosuke, Iwasaki Hisaya. He was a pupil of the progressive educationalist, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and went on to study in America. His youthful training not only made him an astute businessman and a highly successful head of Mitsubishi but also a philanthropist concerned to make a genuine contribution to society and scholarship in Japan.

Iwasaki Hisaya was always fond of buying books, be they Japanese, Chinese or European, and one of the fields in which he collected was Asian studies. In 1917, he gained a rare opportunity to set up a definitive collection on China; an opportunity which is likely to evoke in the minds of Australian librarians and scholars feelings of frustration similar to those of the Chinese scholar who saw Chinese art works in Kyoto in the company of my Japanese friend.

In 1917, the Australian George Earnest Morrison had been in China for twenty years as the Peking Correspondent of the London Times and latterly as political adviser to Yuan Shikai, first president of the Republic of China. He was tired of life in China and wanted to return to Australia and settle down to a quiet retirement on a private income. This income was to come from the sale of his large collection of European language books on China. Through the good offices of Odagiri Masunosuke, a director of the Yokohama Specie Bank, then living in Beijing, Iwasaki Hisaya managed to obtained Morrison's library for the then huge sum of £40,000.

In 1924, Iwasaki put together the G.E. Morrison Collection and his other holdings of books on Asia and set up the Tōyō Bunko, leaving the running to a carefully selected board of trustees. Other works collected by Iwasaki and by Japanese scholars and collectors were added over the years, creating a remarkably comprehensive collection. From the beginning, the Tōyō Bunko was conceived not simply as a library, but as a research institute, bringing together scholars from Japanese and foreign universities and publishing high quality research papers.

The Tōyō Bunko is not such an exciting place to work in as the Seikadō Bunko or the Kyōto Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho which I will mention next. It is housed in a rather stark, undistinguished building near the centre of Tokyo and is marked by the greater efficiency and more impersonal atmosphere of a larger institution, especially since it was remodelled in the early eighties. Thankfully, it lacks the mechanical, almost clinical atmosphere of the ultra-efficient, ultra-modern National Diet Library, although the recent renovations have made the reading room of the Tōyō Bunko more comfortable and have speeded up the retrieval of books and the making of copies. I have always received great kindness from its director and particularly from one of the staff, who turned out to be a cousin of a friend in Kyoto. I have found the Tōyō Bunko most responsive to my requests when I was not resident in Japan.

THE "JIMBUN"

Tokyo does not have a monopoly of fine Chinese libraries in Japan. It is fitting that one of the best collections of old Chinese materials should be in Kyoto, a city designed as a copy of the Tang Chinese metropolis and for long the capital of Japan. It was an article of

faith to students and library staff working in the Cambridge University Library that if the title of an old Chinese book could not be found in the library catalogue of the Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho (Research Institute of Humanistic Studies) of Kyoto University, that book no longer existed. It was therefore with great excitement that I first went to Japan to research in the "Jimbun" in 1971.

I had been given two warnings before I left England early that year to begin my studies in Kyoto. The Jimbun Library did not, like the libraries I was used to, have open stacks and the system for borrowing books, for use in the reading room only, was highly bureaucratic. These facts are true, not only of the Jimbun, but of all the specialist libraries which I have used in Japan. Once the initial problems of culture and language shock were over, however, I found that the librarians, while quite rightly guarding their precious collections with the utmost care, were most helpful to readers. A friend took me behind the scenes at the Jimbun, to see the stacks. Both there and in the Tōyō Bunko, librarians searching for books requested by readers have to trek along vast corridors and up and down numerous staircases, yet delays are kept to a minimum.

The other warning I was given before leaving Cambridge was that the Jimbun was icy cold in winter. I went there well provided with layers of clothes and even fingerless mittens, to keep my hands from seizing up while reading and writing. The building where the Chinese library of the Jimbun is housed was built before the war and, like the Seikadō Bunko, it is an architectual curiosity. It is built in the Moorish style with a garden surrounded by a colonade, containing researchers' offices, and a tower, which houses the book stacks. The offices off the colonade are certainly extremely cold in winter and unbearably stuffy in summer, but in 1971 the reading room was grossly overheated. Since the "oil shock" there has been some improvement, with less of a tendency for readers to fall asleep.

The Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho was founded in its present form as a centre for the study of East Asian humanities in 1939, but it had existed as a centre for Chinese studies for about a decade before that date. The nucleus of its library collection is the library of another Chinese scholar, Tao Xiang of Tianjin. Since its founding, the Jimbun has been bequeathed the libraries of a number of distinguished Japanese Sinologists, such as Naitō Torajirō. Since the war, material on contemporary China has been added to its collection, making it a comprehensive collection to rival the Tōyō Bunko.

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