

NOT JUST A STACK OF OLD BOOKS : RETROSPECTIVE CHINESE COLLECTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Andrew Gosling
Chief Librarian, Asian Collections
National Library of Australia

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Introduction

This paper is about recent efforts to improve awareness of and access to older Chinese collections at the National Library of Australia. It concentrates on major cataloguing projects and the production of articles, lists and guides whether published or on the Internet. It covers the general Chinese holdings and also a number of important formed collections acquired over the years from eminent scholars, book lovers and organisations. The newly published history of the National Library contains a chapter by David Walker tracing the development of the Asian Collections including the important role of these formed collections (1).

The National Library's Chinese collection is the most extensive in the country with over 248,000 volumes of Chinese language monographs, 7,500 serial titles and materials in other formats including microform and electronic resources. The Library also has strong holdings on China in English and other Western languages as well as Japanese.

While this paper is concerned mainly with published materials, the National Library also houses important resources for Chinese studies in its special collections. The Manuscripts Section includes the papers of prominent scholars, diplomats and writers as varied as C.P. Fitzgerald, Sir Douglas Copland, Myra Roper and Nicholas Jose. It also houses interesting gems such as the letters of Patrick White to the Chinese scholar of Australian studies, Professor Hu Wenzhong. The Oral History area includes the Australia-China Oral History Project, focused on the years before 1949 and recording interviews with Chinese Australians and others who lived in China. Complementing this is the Post-War Chinese Australians Project which began in 1992 (2). Important Map and Pictorial resources are also referred to later in this paper.

The Chinese collection has been developed through purchase, gifts and the exchange of publications with libraries in the region. Chinese language acquisitions have come from many parts of the world, particularly the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Southeast Asia. Chinese items produced in Australia are of the highest priority as the National Library seeks to be comprehensive in its collecting of publications from and about Australia, regardless of place of publication or language.

The current strength of the Library's Chinese collection owes much to farsighted policies in the 1950s, when the late Sir Harold White was National Librarian. It was at that time that systematic acquisition of publications from and about Asia began. Right from the early days, cooperation was important. In 1955 the National Library and the Australian National University Library formally agreed to divide responsibility for collecting Chinese and Japanese materials. Broadly the National Library was to emphasise the social sciences and modern history for both languages. Cooperation with the Australian National University on Asian collecting has remained important ever since.

In broad terms the Chinese collection is strong in the fields of archaeology, fine arts, modern history, biography, local history, politics and government, statistics, foreign relations, economics, law, sociology, religion, philosophy and Chinese medicine. In fact the collection covers a very wide range of subjects. For example Dr Benjamin Penny of The Australian National University, a 2001 Harold White Fellow at the National Library who has been carrying out research on the Falun gong movement said at his recent Fellowship lecture

" The collection here on Falun gong, the qigong movement and contemporary China in general is certainly unparalleled in Australia and on a par with any collection outside China with which I am familiar." (3)

The Library's holdings on China and other parts of Asia consist mainly of comparatively recent publications about modern Asia. This largely reflects the fact that collecting only began in the 1950s, in contrast with Europe, North America and of course East Asia, where research collections have been developed over many decades if not centuries.

However the Library does also hold a number of important older works. These include extremely rare items such as original proclamations issued by the leaders of the Taiping Rebellion in 1853 and other Taiping publications, which were acquired as part of the London Missionary Society Collection, described below. There is also a unique map of the world, hand-painted on silk by the Jesuit Father Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688) in China in 1674. This map came to the Library from the Australian architect and artist William Hardy Wilson (1882-1955), who bought it in China in 1921. The identity of the map was not discovered until 1970. The Library also holds Hardy Wilson's own unusual drawings and plans inspired by his travels in China.

Older titles continue to be acquired in line with the Library's collection development policy. These works may be originals, or in other forms such as photo reproductions and microfilm. Recent examples of important purchases include a copy in excellent condition of the 1785 edition of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville's *Nouvel atlas de la Chine* (4); *Jiaqing Daoguang liang chao shang yu dang* [Archival resources for the period 1796-1850 of the Qing Dynasty]. 55 volumes. Guilin : Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 2000; and *Si ku jin shu* [Collection of books censored by the Qing Emperor Qianlong (1736-1796) and not included in the *Si ku quan shu*]. 16 volumes. Beijing : Jing hua chu ban she, 2001. Major collections on microfilm recently purchased include instalments of the series *China Through Western Eyes*:

Manuscript Records of Traders, Travellers, Missionaries and Diplomats, 1792-1942; a large number of older works on Christianity and Christian missions in China; and Japanese language reports, statistics and census data from the period of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan between 1895 and 1945.

Backlogs of retrospective Chinese holdings

In common with other major Chinese collections in Australia particularly at the Australian National University, the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne, in past years the National Library developed substantial arrears of Chinese works with only limited access to scholars and readers. Many older books are only searchable through a brief entry in the Library's Chinese card catalogue.

The backlogs at the National Library date from a period when a high rate of acquisition was not matched by the staff resources to catalogue the collection fully, and prior to there being an automated system capable of handling East Asian scripts.

The Chinese collection grew particularly rapidly between the late 1970s and late 1980s, at a time when the amount of published Chinese material available increased greatly and publications from China remained inexpensive. In 1970 the Library held 60,000 volumes of monographs in Chinese. By 1980 this had grown to 106,135 volumes. In the next decade the collection nearly doubled in size to 200,935 volumes in June 1990. With increased costs and a more focused collection development policy the rate of growth has moderated. By June 2000 245,491 volumes were held.

The Ingleson Report of 1989 drew attention to the considerable backlogs of Chinese materials at the major Australian collections and the need for an automated cataloguing system for East Asian scripts (5). This report was important as the first major examination of Australia's Asian library resources for many years. The Ingleson inquiry was intended as a review of Asian studies in universities as the basis for advice to government on future directions.

Following Ingleson several reports and a series of meetings on Asian library issues organised by the National Library during the 1990s reiterated the need to overcome these problems.

A major result of cooperative action stemming from these meetings has been the development of the National Chinese, Japanese and Korean (CJK) Service. This national system for automated cataloguing of East Asian scripts was implemented in June 1996. Currently 23 Australian academic, research, special and public libraries are members.

The National Library's current Chinese holdings are well covered in the National CJK database and on the Library's own online catalogue accessible through the Internet (<www.nla.gov.au/>)

Chinese Card Catalogue Conversion Project

This project began in March 2000 and is making a significant impact on the number of items only accessible through the Chinese card catalogue. Prior to this project it had been roughly estimated that there were about 75,000 title cards in the card catalogue with imprint dates from the 16th century to 1996 when the Chinese staff began use of the CJK system.

The aim of the conversion project is an initial sweep of entries in the Chinese card catalogue to identify matching records on the CJK database and the US based Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) to add holdings to the CJK system and discard cards. Only categories where a good hit rate can be expected are being searched at this stage, concentrating on imprints since 1980 and Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN) produced cards.

Two additional staff have been taken on to allow the project to proceed under the supervision of an experienced staff member. By the end of May 2001 three-quarters of the drawers in the card catalogue had been checked for eligible entries for conversion and 20,000 holdings had been added to the CJK system. The project is expected to reduce the size of the card catalogue of 126 drawers by about 40% as duplicate records and items already on the online system are also being removed.

A serial conversion project is also in progress. While all current Chinese serials are already searchable in the online catalogue, staff are now gradually adding titles to the check-in system. This will mean readers are able to view online the detailed holdings of each journal. The holdings of all the Australiana serial titles in Chinese are already searchable.

Asian Accounts of Australia Project

The National Library has unique strengths in Asian language materials relating to Australia, particularly in Chinese and Japanese. These include contemporary and older Chinese and Japanese writings about Australia, translations of Australian authors from Henry Lawson to Colleen McCullough, as well as books, journals and newspapers published in Australia in these languages.

Chinese and Japanese material about Australia held by the Library is currently being examined by a team from the Australian National University and Griffith University. The Australian Research Council is funding this three year project which began in 2000. The aim is to make these holdings available to a wider audience by providing English translations, a research monograph and guides on the Internet. In conjunction with this project the National Library has issued a book catalogue of its Australiana collections in Chinese (6).

Chinese formed collections

Over the years the National Library has acquired a number of Chinese collections from scholars and bibliophiles. Early acquisitions included the library of Walter Percival Yetts on Chinese archaeology and fine arts (which

was integrated into the general Chinese collection many years ago), of Fang Zhaoying on modern Chinese history and Otto van der Sprenkel also on Chinese history. More recent donations include over 700 titles on Chinese economics from Audrey Donnithorne, who was a scholar at the Australian National University, and 300 books on Chinese literature given by Wei Tongfang, a poet and teacher who had lived in Indonesia.

The days of acquiring large formed collections would appear to have passed. Generally there is a high rate of duplication with existing holdings. However the National Library continues to receive valuable donations of Chinese publications. For example Professor Peter Rimmer of the Australian National University has recently donated a number of books on Asian geography, including titles in Chinese and Japanese. Professor Bill Newell of the University of Sydney has for some years been donating Chinese language and other works in the field of anthropology. Not all gifts are from scholars. A group of Australian and overseas Buddhists led by Vivian Fung of the Queensland-China Council has given the Library the 168 volume *Qianlong da Zang Jing*.

For the most part there is only limited access to the Chinese formed collections. Typically there are only brief title records in the Chinese card catalogue. However this is now changing. A special position has recently been established to undertake collection control projects for older and more difficult Chinese language materials. The librarian appointed has already made good progress. As outlined below he has catalogued the London Missionary Society Collection, is currently cataloguing the Chinese rare book collection and will later complete the Walter Simon and other Chinese formed collections.

He has also recently completed the cataloguing of the Chinese component of the Kegan Paul Collection, which also includes Japanese titles. This material was originally acquired from the publisher Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. through the Library's Liaison Librarian in London in 1963. The imprints date from the 17th century to the 1920s. It is a disparate collection from various scholars' libraries and with no particular theme but it does contain a few older, rare items. The 800 books have been integrated into the Chinese collection but items can be identified as coming from this collection through a note in the online catalogue.

London Missionary Society Collection (7)

The project to catalogue the rare and unusual Chinese language London Missionary Society Collection was successfully completed between February and September 2000. In all 722 titles were catalogued onto the National CJK Service, including 27 manuscripts, 7 newspapers and 2 maps. While most titles were in Chinese there were also 37 in Japanese, 3 in Korean and 2 in Manchu. The collection includes publications dating from the early 17th century up to the 1950s.

The National Library acquired the London Missionary Society collection of Chinese language sources in 1961 as part of its effort to develop strong research holdings on modern Asia. The Library's Liaison Officer in London at

that time, F.W. Torrington, first sought advice from experts at London's School of Oriental and African Studies and the British Museum. He then wrote to the National Librarian, Harold White, on 4 May 1961 :

" I have to report that the London Missionary Society has offered to sell to the National Library a collection of Chinese works of about 600 volumes. The majority of these works were published in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and they cover a wide range of subjects - religion, history, literature, politics etc. Works on theology comprise about one fifth of the total ... Some of the historical and literary material is of considerable value and rarity. The most valuable items in the collection are the pamphlets relating to the T'ai P'ing rebellion ..." (8)

Contemporary materials acquired from the London Missionary Society include pamphlets published by the Taiping rebels and original Taiping proclamations. The latter were issued at the height of the movement in 1853. The proclamations claimed success for the Taiping armies and urged the people to be peaceful and carry on with their normal lives. Taiping publications include a Taiping calendar and seven other rebel pamphlets on their religious and social program bound together and annotated "Brought from Nanking by W.H. M[ed] ... July 7 1854".

Walter Henry Medhurst was one of a number of remarkable linguists and evangelists whose Bible translations and other religious writings are well represented in the London Missionary Society collection.

After the Taiping items, the most significant materials in the collection are the Bible translations and other Christian works in Chinese. Of particular importance are the more than sixty editions of the Old and New Testaments translated into literary and colloquial Chinese and local dialects by Medhurst and other missionaries. A number of these translations are now rare.

There are numerous other religious works. While most are Protestant there are also Chinese versions of writers such as Thomas a Kempis (1389?-1471) and Father Ferdinand Verbiest, whose unique 1674 map of the world hand-painted on silk in China in 1674 has already been mentioned. There are also hymn books and catechisms and even an illustrated Old Testament in Shanghainese. Apart from Christian books there are also works from the Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist traditions.

Works on non-religious topics cover a considerable range of subjects. There are rare editions of classic Chinese historical and literary works. There are also several titles on scientific and medical matters, including early Chinese translations of Western science books.

Except for the rarest items which are held in a strong room, the London Missionary Society material is housed together in the National Library's Asian Collections. The books are generally in good condition.

As there has been considerable interest nationally and internationally in this collection, a book catalogue of the London Missionary Society Collection has also been published (9). It lists the rare and unusual Chinese language

monographs, serials and maps which make up the bulk of this collection, as well as some Japanese and Korean language monographs. In the Catalogue Chinese language monographs are arranged by title and by broad subject, with an appendix listing Taiping items. Entries include romanized title, the title in Chinese, Japanese or Korean scripts, place of publication, publisher, date, subject headings and the Library's call number. Copies are available free from the Library.

Walter Simon Collection on East Asia (10)

The Walter Simon Collection of more than two thousand books is housed in Asian Collections. While the Western language component of just over one thousand titles has already been catalogued onto the online catalogue, plans are under way to add the East Asian language books. The latter are currently searchable through the Chinese card catalogue in the Asian Collections Reading Room.

Walter Simon (1893-1981) was born in Berlin and spent the first half of his life in Germany. At university he first specialised in Romance and Classical philology, before becoming a librarian. After completing his doctorate he turned to Sinology and began a parallel career as an academic.

Walter Simon's research included ancient and archaic as well as modern Chinese, Tibetan philology and Manchu studies. The Simon Collection reflects his interest in an extraordinarily wide range of ancient and contemporary languages and cultures.

Simon's twin careers as an academic and librarian flourished during the 1920s and early 1930s but the rise to power of the Nazis soon forced him out of Germany. As a Jewish scholar he was forbidden to teach at university from 1934. Early in 1936 he left his homeland for England.

In 1947 he was appointed to a new Chair of Chinese at the University of London, where he remained until retirement in 1960.

The National Library acquired the Walter Simon Collection in stages between 1970 and 1982. Sydney Wang, who was Chief Librarian, Orientalia for more than twenty years, recalls that Simon first visited the Library in April 1970. Sydney suggested that his collection come to Canberra.

Two cases of Chinese and Manchu works from Simon were dispatched for Australia in February 1973 on board the "Discovery Bay". This Manchu acquisition was of particular significance. The 234 volumes of books and 13 manuscripts more than doubled the size of the Library's modest Manchu collection.

On 3 April 1974, Walter Simon wrote to Sydney Wang from London not long after another visit to the National Library. He referred to the dispatch of the "remaining 150 books or so of the Western books in Sinology, general linguistics, Romance and Classical philology." (11)

After Walter Simon's death, his son Harry formally offered to donate his "father's working collection on Tibetan, Manchu, Mongolian and related languages and studies to the National Library ... to serve the needs of any scholar who may be working in this field from time to time. My family and I would be very pleased if this could be done and if his name could be associated with the collection"(12). 850 books in 15 boxes were shipped from England on the "Jervis Bay" in January 1982. In addition to the books there was a small collection of Walter Simon's correspondence, research notes and journal articles, now in the Library's Manuscripts Section.

During the past fifty years the National Library of Australia has acquired a number of important Asian formed collections from scholars and book lovers. Among these collections Walter Simon's is the richest resource on the languages of East Asia, especially Chinese, Tibetan and Manchu.

Sang Ye Collection

This collection was acquired from the writer and collector Sang Ye who has lived in Australia since 1989. The collection includes monographs, pamphlets, newspapers and other materials produced in China between 1949 and the 1980s. In particular Sang Ye had acquired extensive runs of 44 newspaper titles from the 1950s and 1960s, the Cultural Revolution and post-Cultural Revolution period, which have been valuable in complementing the National Library's existing newspaper holdings.

Australian Buddhist Library Collection

In 1987 the Australian Buddhist Library which was formerly situated in central Sydney donated its entire 3000 volume collection to the National Library. At the request of the donor the books have been kept together as a formed collection and retain the name Australian Buddhist Library.

In Sydney the library had been built up through the generosity of the Liao family and other benefactors. The collection consists mainly of Chinese and English works on Buddhism as well as items in other Asian languages. Chinese language works make up about half the total collection. There are reference works, monographs, periodicals, and audio-cassettes. The Tripitaka section includes four editions in Chinese, a set in English and Pali, one in Burmese, one in Sinhalese and two in Thai.

According to its founder and director, Mr Eric Liao, the library was established in 1984 to meet a growing public need for readily available reference materials on Buddhism. Later it was decided to transfer the library to a large, established institution with the resources necessary to maintain the collection over the longer term, and with an active policy of collecting Buddhist materials. Hence the National Library was chosen.

Access to the materials is good as the Australian Buddhist Library compiled a book catalogue listing its collections by language, then for each language by subject (13). The Chinese section of the book catalogue is in Chinese script. Copies are available from the National Library.

Chinese Rare Materials

The National Library has some 500 rare East Asian language works kept in secure storage, of which 300 are in Chinese. As well as individually acquired books there are more substantial sets such as the McLaren-Human Collection, originally belonging to the Australian missionary Jessie McLaren who worked in Korea from 1911 to 1941. Her daughter Rachel Human donated the collection of 82 rare titles in Korean, Chinese and Japanese to the Library in 1984. The oldest, *Samgang haengsilto* [The Three Principles of Basic Human Relationships] is believed to date from 1490. It consists of illustrated Confucian moral tales as parallel texts in Chinese and hangul.

Chinese works in the strong room include monographs, newspapers, prints, maps, manuscripts, plates, posters, inscriptions and scrolls. They range from the rare trilingual *Yesu zhi lai li : you fu yin ze chu = Hikayat Isa : kaluar deri dalam Indjil = The History of Jesus : extracted from the gospels* published in Batavia in 1839, which is from the London Missionary Society Collection to letters from Song Qingling to Sir Douglas Copland, Australian Minister to China in the late 1940s.

A preliminary list of the Library's Chinese rare books collection was prepared in 2000 (14). The whole collection is currently being catalogued and a much revised and expanded listing will be made available to scholars and libraries.

Formed collections on Asia in Western languages

The National Library holds several major collections on Asia in Western languages such as the Coedes Collection on Indo-China and the Otley Beyer Collection on the Philippines. These are all fully catalogued and accessible through the Library's online catalogue. Some of these collections relate largely or partly to Chinese topics.

Braga Collection

The Braga Collection is mainly concerned with Portuguese activity in Asia. J.M. (Jack) Braga was a businessman, teacher and author based in Macao, who wrote numerous books and articles about this formerly Portuguese settlement. While his collection covers Portuguese influence worldwide its main concentration is on Macao, Hong Kong, China and Japan. The greater part of his extensive library of books, manuscripts, pictures, newspapers and journals was acquired by the National Library in 1966.

The books include a number of old and rare publications. While most of the manuscripts except for Braga's own writings are copies of documents held in European archives and libraries, some of the originals have since been lost. The many pictures Braga collected relate to his interests in East Asia, consisting of watercolours, prints, engravings, drawings and oil paintings. The subjects covered include buildings (especially in Macao and Hong Kong), ships, portraits of missionaries and scenes of life in China and Japan. A guide to the Braga Collection is available on the Library's website (<www.nla.gov.au/asian/form/braga.html>).

During May 2001 his eldest daughter, Dr Carol Braga of San Francisco, spent two weeks in Canberra helping to identify people and places in the photograph component of her father's collection, in order to improve access to this rich resource.

The Harold S. Williams Collection

The Harold S. Williams Collection relates mainly to the history of foreign settlement in Japan and the interaction between Japan and the West but also includes works on other parts of East Asia, including China, Hong Kong and Korea.

Harold S. Williams (1898-1987) was an Australian who spent most of his adult life in Japan. He was a businessman, writer and collector, whose extensive library of monographs, manuscripts, maps and pictorial items was donated to the National Library between 1978 and 1995. His book collection has been fully catalogued.

While mostly about Japan, his collected papers, newspaper cuttings and photographs include a few items on China, Hong Kong and Macao. The Library recently published a detailed guide to these papers and other materials, which is available free of charge (15).

Luce Collection

The Luce Collection of over 2000 books, as well as serials, manuscripts, maps and photographs deals largely with Burma but also reflects Professor Luce's wider interests in the region including China.

Gordon Hannington Luce (1889-1979) was the leading Burma scholar of his day. After his death the National Library acquired his outstanding library on the culture, languages and history of Burma and neighbouring areas of Southeast Asia, South Asia and China. The books in the Luce Collection are fully catalogued and there is also a printed list of his papers on the Library's website (<www.nla.gov.au/ms/findais/6574.html>).

Future

Ten years ago my paper to the Second Chinese Studies Association of Australia Conference concluded :

"The National Library's strong emphasis on obtaining Chinese publications is likely to continue given the importance of China to Australia's development in its broadest sense. ... While the number of Australian libraries collecting Chinese publications may increase in the 1990s it is likely that for the foreseeable future readers will still be largely dependent on the two major Chinese collections in Canberra for research materials." (16)

A decade later the National Library remains strongly committed to providing Chinese collections and services. During the 1990s a joint facility for National

Library and Australian National University Library resources on Asia was proposed but the plan did not attract funding from government. Nevertheless closer cooperation remains the goal of both libraries and during the last few years they have made a number of Chinese and other Asian collecting and access agreements, with further possibilities under discussion. Meanwhile technological changes including the growth of electronic information such as CD-ROMs and networked resources are greatly expanding the range of all libraries in their collecting and provision of services.

Despite major changes in information technology traditional library materials will remain vital for libraries and their users. The National Library will continue to improve access to its various retrospective Chinese holdings, as part of its overall plan to make all its collections readily available to researchers and readers. This is in line with the Library's goal for 2000-2002 and beyond that "All Australians, at their place of choice, have direct, seamless access to print and electronic sources of information" (17).

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