

Bulletin of the European Association of Sinological Librarians

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**Does a Chinese book select itself?
Reflections on the acquisition of books in Chinese**

by Bent L. Perdersen

As a librarian of a Chinese collection you have to take care of the acquisitions, but what methods will you use in selecting the titles you want to include in the collection? There is none that tells you how to do it, but gradually you develop a system that suits you and gives results. Even though each sinological librarian is an individual, the system he/she follows in selecting books is not that different from the methods used by other sinological librarians in the various countries. This is hardly a surprise, because the range of viable methods is rather limited. I will here present some ideas that have occurred to me when I have analysed my own methods of selection.

When you want to purchase a Chinese book on a certain subject, you have several possibilities to locate a suitable title. The classical method is to go through a pile of Chinese book catalogues and try to find a title that covers the required subject. You may also try other methods, which can if you are lucky save you from the tedious work of browsing one catalogue after another. One way is to ignore the catalogues and instead directly contact a book dealer and inquire what they can provide on the particular subject. This method, although quick, has the drawback that you have to be satisfied with the choice of your dealer. Usually this means that he will send you what he happens to have on his shelves.

You can also wait to find a review that will give you the desired title, but this is a very slow and unsure method. Finding a review in a Western journal is more or less hopeless, because the Western reviewers tend to ignore books written in Chinese. You have better chances to find reviews in Chinese journals, but these often appear long after the book has been published. By that time the book is usually already sold out or the book dealers are not able to locate it.

A further possibility to find a desired title is to ask your colleagues (your guanxi connections) or researchers at universities. This method is also rather slow and in most cases it fails to give results. After trying these alternative strategies in vain, you are once again faced with the fact that the classical method of going through the book catalogues piled on your desk promises the best results.

Chinese book catalogues come in two forms: a) the simple one containing title, author/editor, publisher, year of publication, information on collation and price - it is rather a list than a catalogue, and b) the informative one with an additional information on the contents.

There are basically two ways to 'read' a book list or a catalogue: you can either quickly scan it or actually read each entry. The scanning is practical, because many of the catalogues contain same titles and a quick scan is often sufficient to ascertain whether the catalogue in hand contains a title you have not encountered earlier. Also if you are looking for something specific, scanning allows you easily to spot the titles that containing the relevant Chinese characters. It is a much more time consuming to actually read the catalogues, and when this is necessary you tend to select the catalogues that are from reliable book dealers, with whom you have a good business relationship. This is a sound practice that will prevent you from wasting your time.

When reading the book catalogues, you look for specific information that will enable you to select the book you want to order. A well known author often sells him/herself, especially, if the listed book is a new one and not just a reprint or a slightly revised edition. A title can also sell itself, when it indicates a subject which is of interest for the library. To the category of safe choices belong the modern commentaries on classical works, because they are often of a good quality even if the names of the commentators are unfamiliar. In cases where the title of the book is interesting but the author unfamiliar, it is possible to estimate the book's merits by noting the name of the publisher. An experienced librarian knows the publishing houses that try to keep a high standard. And of course you will also check the collation, which will tell you whether the book is a large monograph, propaganda pamphlet, teaching book or merely a picture book.

If you receive catalogues that give some information on the content of the listed books, your task of finding a relevant book is made a lot easier. Sometimes the information given is rather meagre, merely stating the obvious, e.g. the entry may only state that the book contains collected works of an author of fiction include his/her works, essays, poems, prefaces etc., that is everything that proper volumes of collected works should include. What the entry does not state is the subject matter of these writings.

Both in selecting titles of fiction and non-fiction, your choice is made easier if you know the author. Of course, you may let yourself be tempted by a title and select a book by an unfamiliar author, but when doing this you must take the risk that you have spent part of your always too small budget in a totally useless and uninteresting book. Even the most informative book catalogues fail you, if you want to find information on the author, e.g. an entry on Ma Yinchu (1881-1982) collected works only refers to the content but, apart from the years of birth and death, does not give any further information on the author. To ascertain an author's

specialization and merits, you have to turn to other sources. However, the informative catalogue are more useful and therefore preferable to mere book lists. Even the short information entries are helpful, especially, when you have to select one title out of several about the same subject.

When browsing a book list or catalogue, you are constantly looking for titles that will suit the profile of your library. What will trigger your interest? Naturally, your library like any other library has an accession policy and you will try to follow it, but at the same time you bear in mind the limits of your budget. You know that you will never be able to purchase all the interesting books offered for sale. In addition, you have undoubtedly developed your individual priorities, but being a good librarian you will remember never to follow them indiscreetly and lose sight of the overall accession policy. Some individual priorities may have historical roots: the library may have a particular collection the librarian contributes to, or the state may have a special relationship to a field or area—a former colony, missionary activities etc. —and the librarian sees the need to cover it. All these factors—accession policy, budget, various priorities—are simultaneously in your mind and when you spot a title that fulfills most of them, your interest is roused.

When you come across a book on a subject that falls within the acquisition policy of the library, you will try to find out whether the title covers an area not well represented by the existing collection or whether it is a new interpretation/commentary on a well known subject. If the title looks very familiar, it is best to check the library catalogue to avoid buying the same book twice. If you do not recognize the author, the most expedient way to find out about him/her is to ask your colleagues what they know. Save your bulky reference works for those instances, when your inquiries fail to give results. It may happen that even your reference works will not give you the necessary information and that case you have to estimate on the basis of the title only, whether the book would be an asset to the collection or not. It may well be that the book by the—until now—unknown author opens up a new aspect of research or reopens a research area that has been neglected for some time.

After you have made up your mind that a certain book fulfills your requirements, you have to make the final purchase decision. You can make it independently, but you may also consult other experts, colleagues in the library system, university researchers and other active readers of Chinese books. Even if you often want to consult others, it is best to keep the contacts informal, because formal arrangements get bureaucratic and that slows the process making it unpractical. In ordering books, you have to act promptly, because the sooner you order a book listed in a new catalogue, the higher are your chances of actually getting the book. Even today, some books are difficult to acquire only half a year after they had been made available for the market.

Usually, you as the librarian take the initiative to acquire new books to the collection without any prompting by outsiders, but sometimes it happens that a reader approaches you and proposes that you purchase certain titles. These requests are easy to handle: either the books suit the acquisition policy or they do not. If the suggested title is within the scope of the collection, you have to evaluate the of the book - is it a popular book, a serious study in a subject or a document/collection of documents? Will it be of interest for a wider group of readers than just the one who suggested it. Finally you have to consider whether the budget allows the purchase. If the suggested title falls outside the present acquisition policy e.g. a book on foreign relations between Taiwan and Australia or a book on economic theory with only a few references to China you may still buy it, if you think that the book will be valuable for readers in the future.

One problem connected with the readers' requests is that the titles do not always come from book catalogues, but are instead taken from footnotes. This means that several years have usually lapsed from their publication and that makes them difficult to obtain. Until seven years ago it was an arduous task to locate older books, if they did not happen to be listed in a recent book catalogue and even if you succeeded in locating an old book, the purchase price tended to be very quite high. Today, probably owing to the liberation of the market in China, it is somewhat easier to get books that have been published during the past five or six years. But still today the purchasing of an older book is unproblematic only if the required title is a standard work. For example, the modern standard edition on The Song history (Songshi) published by China Book (Zhonghua shuju) is available in practically all shops stocking historical material in Hong Kong.

A special way to get Chinese books is to engage in exchange between institutions. You may either formalize the exchange contacts by signing an agreement or just send something in return after receiving material from another institute. A formal exchange agreement usually means that you have to select titles from a forwarded list. The exchange based acquisition can be problematic: the first problem is to find in your own collection works that are suited for exchange. The second problem you encounter when you receive the books sent in exchange: they may not be the ones you so picked out from the exchange list. The sending institution has always only a limited number of copies of the listed items, but it usually has several exchange partners and if the titles you requested, were also sought after by the others, the institution may have run out of copies by the time your request arrived.

Sometimes you even receive unrequested material that is sent to you either as an advertisement or as a gift. Depending on the quality of the books, you may want to include them in the collection or discard them. You can decide freely, because advertisements and donations do not create liabilities.

The acquisition policy of The Royal Library of Denmark has traditionally stressed the humanities but in recent years social sciences, economy, law and psychology have been included. Regarding the Chinese collection, the purchases now cover a wider area than earlier but because the budget has only been increased by roughly 10%, there are severe limits as to how many titles we can buy on each. Although the collection has become wider in scope, it lacks in depth in many areas.

As the responsible librarian, I have developed my own guidelines for purchasing. I still consider the traditional areas important and continue to purchase studies and commentaries on Chinese classics and classical literature, works on Chinese philosophy and religion, history and archaeology, linguistics and traditional Chinese culture. Of the 'new' areas I select titles that cover general studies in social sciences, economy, modern law including legal commentaries, modern culture, including studies on cinema and television, and general statistics, also statistics on literature, book printing, education and philosophy. On Chinese psychology very little is bought, the more interesting titles being monographs on philosophy and religion including psychological aspects.

I also acquire books on more specialized subjects, if I know that there is an existing demand for them or if I recognize a potential demand among the readers. I am able to estimate this, because I got to know many of the readers and become acquainted with their research interests. However, I am not willing to use my limited resources on titles with very narrow specialization. Lately, there has been a growing demand on material and studies on folk religion and I have responded to this by buying among other things, collections of new year prints, the nianhua. Also art, both old and modern, is in demand, but I have only been able to afford very few actual artbooks. Instead, I have tried to meet the need by purchasing relevant catalogues and studies.

My contacts with the students and researchers enable me to see the trends in research and sometimes I can predict that a certain area will become a focus of research in the near future. For example, a couple of years ago I started to buy modern Chinese literature and studies dealing with it, and today the interest for this subject is increasing among the advanced students of Chinese in the University of Copenhagen.

Finally, some of my latest acquisitions will serve as examples of my decision making process. I will shortly comment each item in order to point out the reasons why I ended up in choosing that particular book.

Selected from book lists:

1) Pingao de yishu - chuangzuo wenda lihua by Jia Pingao published by Shanghai renmin 1998 offered to the price of 49.00 HKD. 240 p.

Valuation: Jia Pingao is a very popular author and the library has both writings by the author and writings about him. The title of the book indicates that it presents the author's view on writing and it may even describe his own writing process. Books on writing are always in demand and in this book the readers can hope for personal information given by Jia Pingao himself. The publishing house is a good one and the price reasonable. This book will be purchased.

2) Daojiao wenhua xindian ed. by Qing Xitai published by Shanghai wenyi, 1998 for a price of 90.00 HKD. 750 p.

Taoist texts and studies are very well represented in the collection of the library. Qing Xitai is a well known and highly esteemed scholar in Taoist studies. The collection already includes some of Qing Xitai's works, e.g. the four volumed history on Taoism edited by him. Because both the editor and the publisher are known as reliable, the book is well worth acquiring. This book will be purchased.

3) Zhongguoren de maobing by Zhang Pingzhi published by Zhongguo shehui, 1998 for a price of 48.50 HKD. 390 p.

A book on the shortcomings of the Chinese (presumably in social respect) sounds interesting, especially because the author although unknown to me is himself a Chinese. The publishing house was established in 1989 and has published some good books. The price is low and I take the chance and purchase it. (Now that the book has arrived it can be noted that the book is divided into subjects reflecting human relations and conditions. There are chapters on personality, behaviour of scholars, problems in food and agriculture, manners of speech and general behaviour, marriage and other family issues. It seems to be an interesting book.)

4) Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xin xingfa shiyi yu panli fenxi quanshu ed. by Li Kangtai published by Guoji wenhua, 1998 for the price of 232.00 HKD. 510 p.

A handbook on criminal law is usually of interest, but in this case the library has already presentations of the new criminal law and also some studies in the effects of these laws in the new China. Considering the relative high price and the fact that titles on similar subjects are already in the collection, this book will not be purchased.

5) 1998 jingji zhanwang ed. by Guojia xinxi zhongxin published by Zhongguo jihua, 1998 for the price of 403.50 HKD. 3 vols.

I am usually not willing to purchase books that try to predict the future, because they consist largely of conjectures and wishful thinking. The future, particularly in economy, is unpredictable: just think about the sudden emergence of the recent economic crises in Asia. Studies on the

already visible effects of the economic decisions and development processes are preferable. This book will not be purchased.

6) The library's collection includes very few of studies on Chinese essays, so two new titles on the subject will be acquired - namely: Zhongguo jindai sanwenshi by Xie Piaoyun published by Zhongguo wenlian, 1997 (387 p.) for 45.50 HKD and Zhongguo sanwen da cidian ed. by Lin Fei published by Zhongzhou guji, 1997 (860 p.) for 126.00 HKD.

7) Xinjiang gonglu yunshushi published by Renmin jiaotong, 1998 for the price of 86.00 HKD. 360 p. In the last ten years the Renmin jiaotong has published studies on both the nationwide and provincial transport systems in China. The Library collects these monographs and this one on Xinjiang province is a must.

Selected from book catalogues:

1) Shanxi tongshi ed. by QiaoZhiqiang published by Zhonghua shuju, 1997 for the domestic price of 130.00 renminbi (export price will approximately be 300.00 HKD). The description of the book informs that it is an all around history of the province from early times to the 1911 revolution and that it discusses politics, economy, military affairs, culture and include some biographies of local notables. Exactly what you expect of a tongshi (a comprehensive history). Local history is relevant for our readers and the book will be purchased.

2) 1995 nian quanguo 1% renkou chouyang diaocha ziliao published by Zhongguo tongji. The presentation of the first volume included a general description of the material. Each volume will concentrate on one province or a major city. The Danish social scientists are generally interested of the population in China. This publication contains data that can be used also by people with only a rudimentary knowledge of the Chinese language. Although the price of each volume is relatively high, around 250.00 to 300.00 HKD, the volumes will be acquired, because of the high interest among the readers.

3) Bei Song huangling ed. by Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo published by Zhongzhou guji, 1997 (589 p.) for ca. 250.00 HKD. It is mentioned in the presentation that between 1992 and 1995 the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology made an overall survey and some test excavations of eight Sung masoleums and twentytwo tombs of empresses. In addition to the report on the survey and excavations, the book also describes the spirit roads with its guardian figures. There is a constant demand on archaeological reports from Chinese and this particular book will give more details on the culture of the Sung emperors. >The book will be acquired. (It has proved to be a well produced book with excellent line drawings and photos of good quality. The text is in the best tradition of archaeological reports: it presents the material and downplays the interpretations).

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Both in selecting titles of fiction and non-fiction, your choice is made easier if you know the author. Of course, you may let yourself be tempted by a title and select a book by an unfamiliar author, but when doing this you must take the risk that you have spent part of your always too small budget in a totally useless and uninteresting book. Even the most informative book catalogues fail you, if you want to find information on the author, e.g. an entry on Ma Yinchu (1881-1982) collected works only refers to the content but, apart from the years of birth and death, does not give any further information on the author. To ascertain an author's specialization and merits, you have to turn to other sources. However, the informative catalogue are more useful and therefore preferable to mere book lists. Even the short information entries are helpful, especially, when you have to select one title out of several about the same subject.

When browsing a book list or catalogue, you are constantly looking for titles that will suit the profile of your library. What will trigger your interest? Naturally, your library like any other library has an accession policy and you will try to follow it, but at the same time you bear in mind the limits of your budget. You know that you will never be able to purchase all the interesting books offered for sale. In addition, you have undoubtedly developed your individual priorities, but being a good librarian you will remember never to follow them indiscreetly and lose sight of the overall accession policy. Some individual priorities may have historical roots: the library may have a particular collection the librarian contributes to, or the state may have a special relationship to a field or area a former colony, missionary activities etc. -and the librarian sees the need to cover it. All these factors accession policy, budget, various priorities are simultaneously in your mind and when you spot a title that fulfills most of them, your interest is roused.

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an asset to the collection or not. It may well be that the book by the until now unknown author opens up a new aspect of research or reopens a research area that has been neglected for some time.

After you have made up your mind that a certain book fulfills your requirements, you have to make the final purchase decision. You can make it independently, but you may also consult other experts, colleagues in the library system, university researchers and other active readers of Chinese books. Even if you often want to consult others, it is best to keep the contacts informal, because formal arrangements get bureaucratic and that slows the process making it unpractical. In ordering books, you have to act promptly, because the sooner you order a book listed in a new catalogue, the higher are your chances of actually getting the book. Even today, some books are difficult to acquire only half a year after they had been made available for the market.

Usually, you as the librarian take the initiative to acquire new books to the collection without any prompting by outsiders, but sometimes it happens that a reader approaches you and proposes that you purchase certain titles. These requests are easy to handle: either the books suit the acquisition policy or they do not. If the suggested title is within the scope of the collection, you have to evaluate the book - is it a popular book, a serious study in a subject or a document/collection of documents? Will it be of interest for a wider group of readers than just the one who suggested it. Finally you have to consider whether the budget allows the purchase. If the suggested title falls outside the present acquisition policy e.g. a book on foreign relations between Taiwan and Australia or a book on economic theory with only a few references to China you may still buy it, if you think that the book will be valuable for readers in the future.

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Selected from book catalogues:

1) Shanxi tongshi ed. by QiaoZhiqiang published by Zhonghua shuju, 1997 for the domestic prize of 130.00 renminbi (export price will approximately be 300.00 HKD). The description of the book informs that it is an all around history of the province from early times to the 1911 revolution and that it discusses politics, economy, military affairs, culture and include some biographies of local notables. Exactly what you expect of a tongshi (a comprehensive history). Local history is relevant for our readers and the book will be purchased.

2) 1995 nian quanguo 1% renkou chouyang diaocha ziliao published by Zhongguo tongji. The presentation of the first volume included a general description of the material. Each volume will concentrate on one province or a major city. The Danish social scientists are generally interested of the population in China. This publication contains data that can be used also by people with only a rudimentary knowledge of the Chinese language. Although the price of each volume is relatively high, around 250.00 to 300.00 HKD, the volumes will be acquired, because of the high interest among the readers.

3) Bei Song huangling ed. by Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo published by Zhongzhou guji, 1997 (589 p.) for ca. 250.00 HKD. It is mentioned in the presentation that between 1992 and 1995 the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology made an overall survey and some test excavations of eight Sung masoleums and twentytwo tombs of empresses. In addition to the report on the survey and excavations, the book also describes the spirit roads with its guardian figures. There is a constant demand on archaeological reports from Chinese and this particular book will give more details on the culture of the Sung emperors. >The book will be acquired. (It has proved to be a well produced book with excellent line drawings and photos of good quality. The text is in the best tradition of archaeological reports: it presents the material and downplays the interpretations).

**In the world of Chinese characters
Readers of Chinese in the Royal Library of Denmark**

by Bent L. Perdersen

[Readers](#) || [Types of material lent by the three groups of readers](#) || [Researchers](#) || [Students](#) || [Ethnic Chinese](#)

The Royal Library of Denmark, situated in Copenhagen, houses the [Oriental Department](#) where, among others, books and journals in Chinese are kept. It is the largest collection of Chinese language material in Denmark. There are two universities in Denmark (Copenhagen and Aarhus Universities) teaching Chinese language and they both have a small library - the biggest of the two in Copenhagen University.

The Chinese Collection of the Oriental Department purchases books and journals covering social sciences and humanities in Chinese language. The budget is not very large but each year the collection increases with about 700 new book titles and in addition the department subscribes to approximately 300 journals and 100 yearbooks. Total holdings amount to ca. 35.000 titels in ca. 55.000 volumes.

Books and journals published in this century are generally allowed to be taken out of the Royal Library for reading (up to a maximum of six months). Older books can only be used in the reading rooms. There are some further restrictions in lending expensive books, reference books, books including loose leafs, unbound journals, etc.

In the last five years the average number of Chinese titles lent out has alternated between 1500-1800 per year. The amount of material delivered to the reading rooms fluctuated between 300 titles to over 800 per year. It is not possible to estimate how much the Chinese reference collection is used since it is kept on open shelves.

Readers

Who is the usual reader of Chinese books and journals in Denmark?

There are - as a manner of speaking - three types of readers: a) research workers, b) students and c) ethnic Chinese: people who are neither researchers nor students. Researchers are usually connected either to universities or to other research institutions

such as museums. Among the research workers there are two to three visiting Chinese researchers each year. The group of students consists mainly of university students and includes also some Chinese students studying in Denmark for a shorter or longer period. The ethnic Chinese are a mixed group, representing various professions from restaurant workers to chemists, from housewives to physicians.

In 1994 the author of this article made a statistical study of the lending of Chinese books and journals in the years 1992-1993. When this statistical material is combined with knowledge gained through long practical experience as a librarian, it is possible to describe the needs of the typical reader of Chinese material and find indications on their fields of interest.

First of all, 20% of all the material taken out consisted of journals. Material used in the reading rooms is not registered according to type, but journals are fairly popular in the reading rooms as well, and form perhaps 60-70 % of all the material used.

Ethnic Chinese take about 43 % of all lent Chinese material and form the largest group of readers. Second are researchers with about 39 % of the lent material, whereas students amount to only 17%. It is not surprising that students take relatively few books home, since their immediate needs are covered by their own institute libraries. If research workers and students are considered as one group, they take 56 % of the Chinese books and journals out of the Library. This corresponds well to the aim of the Department to serve mainly the needs of study and research.

The relatively high percentage of ethnic Chinese users derives from the circumstance that the Department, to a certain extent, acts as a stop-gap for the public libraries. Although Denmark has fairly well-stocked public libraries that cater for a variety of interests, their collections of Far Eastern literature are rather modest.

Types of material lent by the three groups of readers

1) Researchers

Researchers seem to be most interested in historical material as this theme covers one third of all of their lendings. Second in popularity are philosophy and religion (16%), whereas literature takes only about 6%. Art and architecture are also fairly popular with about 10%. Social sciences constitute 14% and economics 9% of all lendings.

History, of course, is a subject relevant to the work of any researcher in the Chinese culture, ancient or new. Researchers take 60% of all the lent historical material and 68% of all archaeological material. Archaeology does not, however, constitute more than 2,5% of their total lendings. Philosophy and religion are traditional subjects, which is reflected by the fact that researchers take 53% of all lendings in these two topics. Put together, students and researchers require a full 92% of all lendings in these fields.

Chinese philology and linguistics are much less in demand and only about 5% of all lent material deals with these subjects. Not surprisingly 87% of philological and linguistic material is lent by researchers.

Lending statistics reflect an increasing interest in recent political and social developments. Topics such as law, economics and social sciences cover 25 % of all lendings, which they did not fifteen years ago. Especially various yearbooks and statistics have proven to be extremely popular among readers in the past five years.

It is somewhat surprising that art and architecture cover as much as 10% of the material requested by researchers. One explanation is that this material can be used both as primary material and as a source of illustrations.

Historical sources and primary material in philosophy and religion are of course very important from a researcher's point of view; a clear majority of the lent books deal with these subjects. Especially texts covering periods of changes or presenting doctrinal innovations seem to rouse the interest of scholars, e.g. material from the Eastern Zhou period and the time from Sanguo to the Eastern Jin.

Five years ago Buddhist studies were quite popular in Denmark but now interest has shifted - according to the lending statistics - to Confucianism and Taoism. Texts discussing or commenting Yijing and texts from Daozang are frequently lent out. Also studies in popular religion from the Ming period up to the present have the attention of scholars. There seem to be changing fashions in research topics just as there are in fiction, cinema, or even dress.

The average researcher is mainly interested in primary sources and to a lesser degree in secondary material in Chinese. Articles in Chinese journals seem to be fairly popular when it comes to consulting Chinese research results.

2) Students

The lending activities of students correspond to those of researchers. There is a natural relationship between students and their teachers, many of whom belong to the group of researchers. Historical subjects and religio-philosophical topics cover respectively 35% and 27% of student lendings. Of all lendings these figures are 30% in history and 39% in religion/philosophy.

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Students borrow relatively few works on social sciences, law, economic and linguistics - 12%, 0%, 13% and 3% respectively. The reason is that only advanced students have gained such a level in written Chinese language that they are able to read these subjects in Chinese.

The Oriental Department has very little material that can be used in teaching Chinese, because university institutes themselves are responsible for providing such material. As to dictionaries, most of them are included in the reference collection and cannot be borrowed.

In the field of Chinese literature, students seem to take out books and journals slightly more often than researchers - 7% against 6%. Students are mainly interested in modern literature, especially literature written after the Cultural Revolution. The interest of students is focused on fiction describing life in contemporary Chinese society. Women studies have started to gain ground among students, as is shown by the increased lending in subjects such as amendments in the Marriage Act, women's position in family and society etc.

If the present lending behaviour of students is taken as an indication of a future lending profile, one can expect a growing interest in subjects dealing with modern China, whereas interest in historical studies will be waning. But maybe a new fashion will change this picture.

The average student reads both primary sources and secondary literature. At the moment students focus on present-day society. Fiction is mainly viewed as a source of modern life and is not really studied as an art form.

3) Ethnic Chinese

This group consists of eager readers of fiction. Of the total amount of lent literature, 87% is borrowed by this group. In the past 5 or 6 years, contemporary fiction has been very popular, although classic novels such as Jin Ping Mei and Fengshen yanyi still have their readers. The action novels, wuxia, are quite popular, but we have only very few of these in our collection. In the 1980's poetry, mostly classics from the Tang and Song periods, had constant readers, but today readers of poetry prefer modern poems published in current magazines or journals. Among modern authors, Wang Shuo and Jia Ping'ao presently enjoy a special standing. Their descriptions of the darker (and more exiting?) aspects of life are attractive to both ethnic Chinese and students.

Ethnic Chinese are also interested in modern Chinese society and require about 46% of all the books and journals in this area. The journal most in demand is the monthly political and cultural magazine Jiushi niandai (The Nineties), published in Hong Kong. Memoirs by 19th and 20th century Chinese also have their audience in Denmark. These books are probably liked because they describe the development of modern Chinese society. Biographies of famous personalities such as Liang Qichao, Zhang Zuolin, Sun Zhongshan are also often requested.

Traditional life still seems to be of interest to Chinese living in Denmark. Especially books on Chinese herbal medicine and Taijiquan make for popular reading, but because the Royal Library is a humanistic library, the number of works on natural and medical sciences is limited.

The average ethnic Chinese is an avid reader of fiction. He or she also reads books or journals describing modern life in China. Female readers seem to be somewhat more eager to borrow fiction than male readers.

Of course, there is no such thing as a typical reader of Chinese material and all readers have their individual spheres of interest. The Chinese collection in the Royal Library cannot satisfy all demands, but is broad enough to give a base for research and study of Chinese history and culture. The needs of specialists cannot always be met, but in occurring cases we have successfully requested the help of other European libraries.

Plans for a tour of sinological libraries in France

by [Vincent Durand-Dastès](#) (Sinodoc)

[Bibliothèque national de France](#) || [Classical Studies](#) || [Modern Studies](#) || [University Libraries](#) || [City Libraries](#)

As may be expected in such a highly centralised country, most of the sinological collections in France are kept in Paris, although a few very interesting ones do exist in *villes de province* and should not deserve to be left aside during a sinological trip to France. While in Paris, though, it would take you some time to get a general idea of the

Chinese book holdings in town: they are quite scattered, as many unrelated institutions and libraries have a Chinese book department.

1/ Bibliothèque nationale de France

Most famous are the holdings of the **Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF)**. The *Département des manuscrits, division orientale*, does not only hold Chinese manuscripts (i.e. the part of the Dunhuang manuscript collection brought back by Paul Pelliot in 1910), but also old xylographic books inherited from the *Bibliothèque du Roi de France* (with fine Qing dynasty imperial press editions) and modern studies and reprints about imperial China. The catalogue of the Dunhuang manuscripts has been completed (vol. 2 is presently not available). A catalogue of the printed books, by Maurice Courant, has also been published; it is quite old and outdated now, and a new computerised catalogue is not to be expected before the next century.

Even after the relocation of the BNF to its new building, the *Département des manuscrits* will remain in its present location (58 rue de Richelieu, 2nd *arrondissement*=arrt). The new BNF (quai de Tolbiac, 13th arrt) will also be housing Chinese books, but these will mainly comprise works on modern language and literature.

Note that access to the collection of the *Département des manuscrits, division orientale* and to the *rez-de-jardin* (researchers level of the new building; to be opened in 1998) is restricted: to get in you have to be a postgraduate student or prove that you are involved in a research project. The ordinary reader level (*haut-de-jardin*) in the new building is already open for visitors.

2/ Classical studies

A student on classical China should visit first the **Bibliothèque de l'Institut des hautes études chinoises** (IHEC) du *Collège de France*, 54 rue du Cardinal-Lemoine, 5th arrt. This building also houses the Chinese collections of the *Société asiatique*, who inherited Paul Demiéville's books. The IHEC library is one of the most comprehensive in France for studies on imperial China. Although not completed yet, its catalogue has been accessible on the Web since 1995 (check the EASL homepage). A printed catalogue of its *congshu* has also been published a few years ago by Françoise Wang.

Other Parisian libraries that are of great interest: the **École française d'Extrême-Orient**, (EFEO, 22 av. du Président-Wilson, 16th arrt) has an important collection of Chinese books and rubbings, as well as the nearby **Musée des arts asiatiques-Guimet** (6 place d'Iéna, 16th arrt), whose library is specialised in Chinese art, archaeology and religion (mainly Buddhism). The ancient book section of the **Bibliothèque interuniversitaire des langues orientales** (also nicknamed as **Langues'O**; 4 rue de Lille, 7th arrt) has a lot of 19th century editions and a few interesting local gazetteers. Its Japanese collections are quite big and it also holds rare Korean prints. In Chantilly, near Paris (30 min. by train), the Jesuits-owned **Bibliothèque des Fontaines** welcomes visitors in the nice surroundings of a small castle. It holds some part of the Jesuits holdings (about 4000 items) and of the collection brought from China by André d'Hormon (more than 3000 titles, mostly books from late Qing to the 1950s; catalogue by Lin Shujuan). Jesuit archives proper are now at the **Archives des Jésuites** (at Vanves, very near Paris, rue Raymond Marcheron) and other missionary materials are also kept at the **Bibliothèque des missions étrangères** in Paris (rue de Babylone, 7th arrt). Last, the small library of the Musée Kwok-On in Paris (57 rue du Théâtre, 15th arrt), specialised in traditional Chinese theatre and folklore, is unfortunately closed to the public for the moment, due to financial problems.

3/ Modern studies

The main library for modern studies is the **Centre de recherche et de documentation sur la Chine contemporaine** in Paris (widely known as **Centre Chine**, now in the same building as EFEO, 22 av. du Président-Wilson). It has the biggest collection of books and serials about modern and contemporary China in France. Another good collection of serials (and books, mostly about literature) is in the library of **Langues'O** (published catalogue by Eric Trombert). Recently, however, space problems in both institutions have made access to serials rather difficult.

A researcher on modern China should include a trip out of Paris to Lyon. The **Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon** (30 bd Vivier-Merle, Lyon, 3rd arrt) holds over 5000 books and documents formerly held at the *Institut franco-chinois*. Many were left there by Chinese students who stayed in Lyon from 1921 to 1946: it has a lot of rare *minguo* period books (published catalogue by Jean-Louis Bouilly). The collection has been enriched by recent purchases, as well as gifts from veteran China-watcher Général Guillermaz and others. Its catalogue should be available very soon at the library's Web server. Another centre with documentary resources about modern China in Lyon is the **Institut d'Asie orientale** (14 av. Berthelot, Lyon, 7th arrt), where it is advised to make an appointment previous to your visit.

4/ University libraries

The main university library, again, is the **Langues'O** library. But other universities in Paris (Paris VII, Paris VIII, Paris X) or outside (Bordeaux II, Aix-en-Provence, Lyon III) also hold Chinese collections, some of them of considerable size.

Besides, specialised research units make specific documentary resources available, like the **Centre de recherches sur les langues de l'Asie orientale** (on linguistics, 22 av. du Président-Wilson, Paris 16th arrt), the **Daozang project** (on taoism, same address), or the **Chinese science research group** (housed at the IHEC). Their access is sometimes restricted, but will never pose a problem with an appointment.

5/ City libraries

Besides the Lyon library, other *bibliothèques municipales* hold interesting and sometimes rare Chinese books: the **library of Lille**, for instance, inherited 500 Chinese books (mostly Ming and Qing editions, catalogue by Sun Lili and Anne-Marie Poncet) and 300 Japanese books (no catalogue yet) from Léon de Rosny, first teacher of Japanese at **Langues'O** at the end of the 19th century. Likewise the **library of Troyes** inherited books and photographs from Victor Collin de Plancy (1853-1922), a diplomat and traveller in China and Korea. On the modern side, the **Bibliothèque Jean-Pierre Melville**, a public library in the Paris Chinatown district, is currently building a collection on modern Chinese fiction.

SOAS RESOURCES ON HONG KONG

by Sue Swee Chin Small

(School of Oriental and African Studies, London)

Introduction

Hong Kong is situated on the southernmost tip of China and consists of Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula, the New Territories, and some 235 offshore islands. It is pertinent and timely to recall exactly how Britain came to have an interest in Hong Kong.

In the 19th century, British demand for Chinese silk, tea and ceramic products, etc. created a trade imbalance in China's favour. The smuggling into China of opium grown as a cash crop in India resulted in the net outflow of Chinese wealth and restored the trade balance in Britain's favour.

The Chinese authorities, concerned at the deleterious effect of opium smoking on the health of its citizens and on the economy of China, ordered the British to desist from opium trading and to surrender stocks of the drug held in their Canton stores. This dispute led to the first Opium War (1840-42); the superior military technology available to the British resulted in a settlement to the disadvantage of the Chinese. Under the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, the Chinese were forced to cede Hong Kong island to the British, who now had a secure base from which to conduct trade in opium and other commodities.

Kowloon was occupied in 1860 during the second Opium War because of its strategic importance - if Chinese guns were placed in Kowloon then shipping in Hong Kong's fine natural harbour would be in range. The Chinese were forced to cede territory under the Convention of Peking. The New Territories were leased from China for 99 years in 1898 and acted as a buffer zone between the south of China and foreign controlled Hong Kong.

When Britain took over Hong Kong in 1842, there were fewer than 8000 people living on Hong Kong Island. By 1876, the population had increased to over 139,000. Since the Second World War, the population has risen even more dramatically, from about one million in 1946 to over 6.3 million in 1996. Although Hong Kong was first developed as an entrepot port and naval base, in recent decades it has established itself as one of the most important international manufacturing and financial centres in the world.

On 1st July, 1997 Hong Kong ceased to be a British Crown colony and became known as the People's Republic of China's Special Administrative Region. This transfer of power followed the implementation of the terms and provisions of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong.

Strong interest in Hong Kong material

The 1997 transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China has stimulated considerable interest. The SOAS library has added over twenty recently published titles about Hong Kong to its stock in recent months. Good use of the Hong Kong collection is being made by journalists writing about the success of Chinese entrepreneurs in the Special Administrative Region, and by former British colonial administrators in Hong Kong preparing their memoirs. Television researchers and journalists involved in producing documentaries about Hong Kong have been frequent visitors to the Library in recent years. Journalists from a wide range of newspapers writing about the transfer of sovereignty have made heavy use of SOAS.

SOAS Centre of Chinese Studies

SOAS is an institution whose staff and post-graduate students have a considerable range of expertise relating to Hong Kong. The SOAS Centre of Chinese Studies organises a number of regular inter-disciplinary seminars, monthly Tripartite seminars, and special events each year on subjects of interest to students of Hong Kong. The expertise of the Centre's staff and students include Cantonese language, Hong Kong anthropology, politics, economics, law, literature, history, geography, art, archaeology, music, land use, transport, and environmental studies etc.

Hong Kong Collection in SOAS

SOAS occupies a key position among European institutions involved in Chinese studies. The Library has some 3,000 published books and pamphlets on all aspects of Hong Kong. In addition, the Library has a significant Hong Kong map collection, plus journals and newspapers important to students of Hong Kong affairs.

The Library's Archive Section has a strong collection of records relating to the commercial history of Hong Kong. These records include the extensive collection of business papers of Sir Charles Stewart Addis (1861-1945) and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, 1883-1945. Also available are the papers of John Swire and Sons, and the papers of the China Association, a body concerned with representing commercial organisations involved with Chinese, Hong Kong and Japan trade.

The bulk of the Hong Kong collection is housed on open access shelves. The collection includes titles on the bibliography, religion, sociology, economics, government, public health, education, commerce, geography and history of Hong Kong. In addition, there are a limited number of titles on such additional matters as the geology, flora and fauna, postal history, medicine, land use, sport and literature of Hong Kong.

The majority of books in the Hong Kong collection are written in English, with just a few titles in other Western languages. Chinese language books on Hong Kong are not shelved with the Western language material on the Territory, but are integrated with the main body of books written in Chinese.

The collection includes important Hong Kong Government serial publications. For example, there is a run of Hong Kong Annual Reports, and the Hong Kong Yearbook, as well as printed Administrative Reports from 1909 to 1939. Periodicals held by SOAS relevant to Hong Kong studies include titles such as the Asian Wall Street Journal and the Far Eastern Economic Review. The Chinese language *Jingji daobao* 經濟大報 3/4-1/4, *Jiushi niandai* 九十年代, *Zhengming* 政明, *Mingbao* 明報, *Nanbeiji* 南北紀 and *Guangjiaojing* 光華鏡 are also stocked.

SOAS has a good basic collection of documentation relating to the law of Hong Kong. However, the University of London's Institute of Advanced Legal Studies has primary responsibility in the UK at research level for Hong Kong legal material. This Institute is open to all SOAS postgraduates law students and teachers.

The Library's Map Section holds about 800 sheets of maps and standard gazetteers relating to Hong Kong. There are thematic maps covering topics such as economics, land use, navigation, population, recreation, religion and communications, etc. Included in the collection are important early maps of considerable historical interest, such as large scale maps showing property owned by certain Christian missionary organisations.

Some 200 volumes of books on the art and archaeology of Hong Kong are held by SOAS Library. However, these books are integrated with others on these subjects in the Art and Archaeology Section.

Prior to the July 1997 handover of Hong Kong to Chinese control, the Chinese Department of the British Library received Chinese language publications from Hong Kong under the British copyright and deposit laws. SOAS Library has not actively collected Chinese language books published in Hong Kong because this material is available in the British Library.

Gifts from Hong Kong Government Office Library

SOAS recently received a donation of 848 books and pamphlets from the Hong Kong Government Office Library in London. This donation has added significantly to the breadth and depth of existing SOAS resources relating to Hong Kong. Miss Ursula Price,

Librarian at the Hong Kong Government Office, from 1975 to 1996 when she retired, built up this large collection of books about Hong Kong, from a small nucleus library started in the 1950s. This collection of documentation about Hong Kong is one of the largest held outside of the Special Administrative Area itself. In addition, some 200 books from the private book collections of London based Hong Kong civil servants have been donated to the Library.

Also included in the Hong Kong Government's Office donation is a collection of newspaper clippings covering the years 1975 to 1992. These contain some 228,000 pages of well organised and indexed clippings under 566 separate subject headings. These clippings were systematically collected and organised by Miss Price. This press clippings collection has been widely used by researchers from the media, business, professional organisations and by academics. They are an important addition to SOAS' resources relating to Hong Kong.

Other London libraries and records centres with Hong Kong resources

Scholars studying Hong Kong in the future must, by necessity, use the libraries and records offices of the former colonial power. SOAS, with its valuable collection of documentation on Hong Kong, occupies a central position in a London based information "network" of importance to students the Special Administrative Area.

The Public Records Office, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Library (formerly Hong Kong Government Office Library), the British Library Official Publications and Social Sciences Service, the Oriental & India Office Collections of the British Library, and the British Library's Newspaper Library all stock documentation of interest to the Hong Kong specialist. In addition, the University of London's Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and London School of Economics both have significant collections of resources relevant to Hong Kong studies.

Hong Kong studies in the post-colonial period

The SOAS collection of documentation on Hong Kong is Eurocentric, reflecting the colonial status of the area prior to the 1st July, 1997 handover of sovereignty. Most of the available documentation about Hong Kong has been written from the perspective of the colonial administrator and the outsider.

The economic importance of Hong Kong will ensure a continuing high level of interest in this Special Administrative Area of China. Hong Kong studies will no doubt grow in the future, with both Chinese and Western authors contributing to a literature which will re-assess all aspects of the colonial era from a less Eurocentric perspective. The task of SOAS Library will be to collect this new more "Asian-centric" documentation as it is produced and to acquire a comprehensive range of the publishing output of the Special Administrative Area for use by future generations of scholars.

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The SOAS Library can be accessed by the following addresses:

TELNET: [lib soas.ac.uk](telnet://lib.soas.ac.uk). JANET LON.SOAS.LIB (user name: LIBRARY)

WWW: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/library>

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