

The Chinese Language Sources Bibliography Project: Preliminary Findings

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With the rising ethnic awareness among non-white ethnic groups in the United States, Chinese Americans in recent years have become increasingly interested in their own heritage and community. This interest is reflected in the establishment of Asian American Studies in a number of schools and universities, as well as in the greater number of researchers in the field.

One of the immediate tasks faced by researchers has been to determine the availability and types of source materials on Chinese Americans. Copious English-language materials describing Chinese institutions, customs, and activities, written largely during the nineteenth century, are useful for research in that they are frequently the only sources readily available. However, they also have serious limitations. Cultural and language gaps between Chinese and Westerners have often resulted in superficial observations and erroneous conclusions. Colored by the racist attitudes of the period, these English-language sources seldom reflected the attitudes and experiences of the Chinese themselves.

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In this essay, the Hanzi Pinyin system is used for transliterating Chinese words except for those spellings used officially by persons or organizations concerned, or commonly used and accepted in English-language or Chinese American publications (e.g., H. M. Lai, Kong Chow Association).

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In order to obtain more in-depth, objective studies of Chinese American culture and society, the researcher must necessarily use source materials that originate from the Chinese community. This is especially important with respect to the study of developments of the Chinese in America during the twentieth century, when the community was largely isolated from the larger society. A great deal of this source material can be found in Chinese language publications.

An annotated bibliography describing such Chinese language materials has been sorely needed. Therefore, in 1978, the Asian American Studies Center, University of California at Los Angeles, initiated a project to compile such a bibliography. Because of budgetary and time considerations, the bibliography will consist only of those materials available in collections in the San Francisco Bay Region. Until World War II, the San Francisco Bay Area was the chief political, cultural, and economic center of Chinese American activities in the United States, and is still one of the major centers. Thus, it was the logical place to begin seeking resource materials in the Chinese language. So far, the project team has not been disappointed in its expectations. With the investigative work at the midway point (projected completion 1979), about 600 items, excluding articles in newspapers and magazines, have been compiled and annotated. These items cover a wide range of subjects and types of publications.

Newspapers and Magazines

By far the most plentiful and most readily accessible published materials for researchers are newspapers. A comprehensive listing of titles in various collections can be found in Karl Lo and H. M. Lai's *Chinese Newspapers of North America, 1854-1975* (Washington D.C., 1977). Throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth century, almost all U.S. Chinese newspapers were published in San Francisco, reflecting her preeminent position as the cultural center of nineteenth century Chinese America. During this early period, Chinese journalism was in its infancy. Newspapers were usually published only weekly and coverage of current events was limited. Few copies have survived the ravages of time; however, useful information such as commodity prices as well as some significant news items can be found as in the following three

examples. After California Governor Bigler's demagogic speech against Chinese immigration, San Francisco merchants composed a reasoned rebuttal, which was carried in the *Tung Ngai San Luk* 8 February 1855. On 29 April 1876, Ou Eliang, an official with the Chinese Education Mission, suggested in the pages of the *Oriental* that the Chinese Six Companies petition Chinese diplomatic envoys to establish a consulate in San Francisco to protect Chinese against anti-Chinese action. On 9 March 1888, the *Oriental* printed an edict from the Chinese consul general in San Francisco granting permission to Chinatown leaders to raise funds for a hospital; the idea of a hospital was already alive thirty-seven years before the Chinese Hospital of San Francisco was dedicated in 1925.

Newspapers of the twentieth century were far wider in coverage, reflecting a world with better communications and demonstrating a greater maturity in the development of Chinese journalism in America. A variety of subjects are found in their pages: editorials and commentaries; local and national news with emphasis on items of concern to the Chinese; China news, especially items reporting on events in the immigrants' native areas. There are also non-news type feature articles in the "fukan" or "secondary section" which is found in most newspapers. Many articles are reprints from newspapers in China or Hong Kong, but a large number are original works by Chinese in America. For example, at various times there have been articles on reminiscences of life in Chinatown in the old days (*Chinese Times*, 13 October 1965, serial); a history of the Chinese in Mexico (*Chinese Free Press*, 19 September 1922, serial); a chronological biography of Sun Yat-sen compiled by one of his former cadres in San Francisco (*Young China*, September 1947, serial); reminiscences of the Chinese motion picture industry in the U.S. and in China (*Truth Semi-Weekly*, 8 May 1978, serial); a history of the syndicalist Unionist Guild in San Francisco, one of the first modern labor organizations (*Kung Sing*, 1 March, 1 April, 1924).

The newspapers often printed personal advertisements which are also of research significance. For example, during the 1910–1911 period, the *Chinese World* contained a number of personal advertisements announcing the withdrawal of various individuals from the pro-revolution Young China Association, reflecting the stresses and strains in the community caused by the Chinese revolution. Often, when a "tong

war" erupted, many worried individuals would run advertisements stating that they did not belong to any "tong." The newspapers also frequently included announcements by various associations informing members of such matters as assessments, or stating their side of a dispute.

There are fairly extensive collections of twentieth century newspapers in Northern California. The most complete are the *Chung Sai Yat Po* (1900–1951) in the Bancroft Library and East Asian Library of the University of California at Berkeley; the *Young China*, the party organ of the Kuomintang (1911–present), in the State Library, Sacramento; and the Constitutionalist Party organ the *Chinese World* (1909–1969) in the San Francisco Public Library. More limited runs of other newspapers are also available.

The project team found that Chinese language magazines are not nearly as numerous as newspapers, since such publications had not met with marked success among the Chinese in America. However, useful information can be found in a number of periodicals published in the home districts in China of the immigrants. These magazines often published news items covering the overseas Chinese or their families. One example of such a pre-1949 publication is the *Xinning Zazhi* (Sunning Magazine) of the Taishan district, the origin of a large percentage of the Chinese in America.

General Works and Handbooks

General works published on the overseas Chinese are numerous. These include publications of the Overseas Chinese Commission of the Taiwan government; yearbooks such as the annually published *Overseas Chinese Economy Yearbook* (Huaqiao Jingji Nianjian, Taipei) and handbooks such as *Huaqiao Zhi* (Annals of the Overseas Chinese, Taipei, 1964).

Similar publications by the Chinese of America were less numerous. As early as 1929, the Chinese in Hawaii compiled handbooks such as *Chinese of Hawaii*. We found, however, that Chinese on the mainland apparently did not produce corresponding works until the years immediately after the end of World War II, when *Handbook of Chinese in America*, by N. C. Chan (New York City, 1946); *The Chinese in North America*, by Ling Lew (Los Angeles, 1949); and *The Chinese in the Americas*, by Chen Kwong Min (New York City, 1950) were successively

published. The last book was particularly rich in historical and biographical information which ties together the history of the Chinese in various countries. The latest entry in this category is *American Chinese Who's Who and Business Directory*, published by N. C. Chan in 1978.

General histories also did not appear in book form until the 1950s, reflecting the fact that the Chinese, in their struggle to make a living, had little time or inclination to engage in such scholarly pursuits. One of the earliest such works, *One Hundred Years of Chinese in the United States and Canada* by S. Y. Wu (San Francisco, 1954) used mostly English language sources, but later works by Jun T. Sun (Taipei, 1962), Y. K. Chu (New York City, 1975), Po Chi Liu (Taipei, 1976), did make increasing use of Chinese materials.

For those who wish to explore the geographical background of the immigrants, information on the home districts of the immigrants are available in various Chinese government studies, gazeteers, geographies, and maps.

Particularly interesting, however, is a series of 1:50000 maps of Guangdong (Kwangtung) province made by the U.S. Army in 1945, which shows even small village and country roads. Another useful reference is a series of four indices of clan names by villages for the Taishan, Kaiping, Xinhui, and Zhongshan districts. Compiled originally by the Control Unit of the U.S. Consulate General at Hong Kong in the 1950s to aid in detecting fraud in processing visas, passports and federal benefit cases, it is now a convenient tool for Chinese American researchers.

Directories are another important research aid for information on businesses and individuals. One of the earliest was a single sheet published by the Pacific Union Express Co. in San Francisco, 1868. Others were issued periodically during the nineteenth century by Wells Fargo Co., and by the Pacific Telephone Co. from the 1900s to the late 1940s. Likewise, directories of Chinatown businesses are printed by Chinese newspapers, such as the *Chinese World*, on calendars distributed annually to subscribers. Our project team found that until recently Chinese directories were generally not available for smaller communities outside San Francisco. Information on these smaller Chinatowns, however, can be found in such works as A. R. Dunbar's *International Chinese Directory* (San Francisco, 1901), and Wong Kim's *International Chinese Business Directory of the World* (San Francisco, 1913).

Publications of Organizations and Institutions, Special Publications

Many Chinatown organizations have records dating back to the nineteenth century. In compiling the work *A History of the Sam Yup Benevolent Association* (San Francisco, 1975), the Sam Yup Association of San Francisco utilized some minutes of meetings dating back to 1881. Such records are normally not accessible to researchers; however, there are a number of other publications issued by the various organizations which are distributed widely to members.

The earliest and most common type was "records of contributions and disbursements" (*zhengxinlu*) which sometimes also included historical introductions. One of the earliest we found, dated 1862, was published by the Chong How Association of San Francisco in connection with the exhumation and shipping of bones of Panyu district immigrants to Hong Kong for reshipment to their native villages for permanent burial. Another *zhengxinlu* from the turn of the century is the record for building a temple for the Young Wo Association (San Francisco, 1900). This publication includes essays giving the history of the association as well as the names of the founders, among whom was Norman Assing, a name familiar to students of early San Francisco history. Other early *zhengxinlu* include one connected with relief of San Francisco Chinese earthquake victims (San Francisco, 1907), another for the community operated Chinese school of San Francisco (San Francisco, 1909), as well as a record of a fund drive for support of the 1911 Chinese Revolution (San Francisco, 1912).

By the second decade of the twentieth century, some Chinese organizations with many branches also began to hold periodic conventions and conferences, the proceedings of which were often published. The practice appeared to have begun with modern, more tightly organized groups such as the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA).

The KMT in the United States is of particular interest since this Chinese political party has been an important factor in community politics since the early years of this century. Prior to 1949, the U.S. branch had always been considered one of the more important overseas branches. Information on KMT activities in the United States can be found in a great number

of their published reports; e.g., the proceedings of the Second Conference of the General Branch of San Francisco (San Francisco, 1928) gives an insight on the intraparty struggle between the left and right wings of Chinese communities, while the report of the U.S. General Branch at the Tenth National Party Congress in Taiwan includes a charge that the San Francisco State College student strike of 1968 was caused by communist infiltrators!

Proceedings of CACA conventions in the 1920s and 1930s, on the other hand, included many details on the struggle of Chinese Americans for civil rights and more equitable immigration laws; e.g., in 1930 Walter U. Lum gave a report on the long but ultimately successful struggle to modify the section regarding the entry of citizens' wives in the 1924 Immigration Act.

Conventions of district and clan associations as well as secret societies tended to focus on issues of concern to their memberships. For example, the proceedings of the second convention of the Ning Yung Association (San Francisco, 1934), held in Chicago in 1933, discussed such issues as establishing a Ning Yung Chinese school in San Francisco, how to deal with embezzlement by a former treasurer, organizing a Ning Yung Association in Boston, and raising capital for an enterprise in the Taishan district to relieve unemployment.

In recent years, some associations such as the Lung Kong Tin Yee Association and the Fa Yuan Benevolent Association have even undertaken the publication of monthly or quarterly journals which provide information on the activities of the association.

Clubs, churches and schools are infrequent compilers of commemorative publications, but two early works discovered by the project team are a yearbook of the first co-educational Chinese school in San Francisco, the Morning Bell (San Francisco, 1922), and the seventieth Anniversary Commemorative Album of the venerable San Francisco Chinese Presbyterian Mission (San Francisco, 1923). From the World War II era also came a number of albums published by the numerous youth clubs located in Chinatown basements, describing their varied social and cultural activities. Some examples are those of the Flying Dragon Musical Club (San Francisco, 1941), the Lou Feng Dramatic Club (San Francisco, 1941), and the New Chinese Alphabetized Language Study Society (San Francisco, 1941).

Special events often led to commemorative publications. The struggle of the Chinese in Hawaii against the ban on foreign language schools resulted in a well-documented volume: *Hawaii Chinese in the Foreign Language School Case* (Honolulu, 1950). Another work containing much useful historical information was published by the Chinese Hospital in San Francisco to celebrate its fortieth anniversary (San Francisco, 1963).

Commemorative albums to celebrate birthdays or to mourn deaths are less common. Such publications, usually dedicated to prominent or wealthy people, often provide much important biographic information, although usually of the laudatory type. One example is the album issued after the funeral of Lain Chan, head of the Suey Sing Tong and supporter of the Chinese Constitutionalist Party (San Francisco, 1938). The eighty-first birthday of C. Q. Yee Hop, Honolulu businessman and financial backer of the *New China Daily* of Honolulu and the *Chinese World* of San Francisco was the occasion for another volume (Honolulu, 1947). Wong Yen Doon, important KMT leader in San Francisco and leader of the powerful Bing Kung Tong also published a commemorative booklet on his seventy-first birthday (Taipei, 1967).

Numerous publications as mentioned above have been published over the past few decades, but many were usually laid aside by their recipients to gather dust on bookshelves and only a few ended up in institutional libraries. However, these works contain much primary data reflecting the institutional activities in the Chinese community which are not easily available from other sources.

Reminiscences and Biographies

A number of works by Chinese relating their impressions while traveling in America usually include passages describing the local Chinese. One of the earliest works was *Chushi Taixi Ji* (Record of the First Diplomatic Mission to the West) by Yihou of the Burlingame Mission, 1868. In one passage the author told of being invited to a banquet in San Francisco given by the Kong Chow Company in honor of the group. Travel diaries and reminiscences of several subsequent Qing (Ching) dynasty envoys, businessmen, as well as political exiles are also available. Particularly informative is Liang Qichao's *Xindalu Youji Jieli* (Record of Travels in the New World, Shanghai, 1936),

which describes in detail the Chinese communities he visited in 1903.

Traveler's diaries were even more common during the Republican era. One interesting work is *Haiwai Yinxiang Ji* (Record of Impressions Abroad, Hong Kong, 1935) by Gen. Tsai Ting Kai who led the Nineteenth Route Army in its epic resistance against the Japanese attack on Shanghai in 1932. Subsequently in exile, he was given a hero's welcome by overseas Chinese everywhere during his world tour in 1935. This book is particularly informative because more than half of the volume was devoted to his visits to various Chinese groups in the United States.

Biographies are rarer than travel diaries. Many were written by or about people residing for a short time in the United States. Sun Yat-sen, who was in the New World several times during the years before the 1911 Revolution seeking support for revolutionary activities, is the subject of a number of biographies, most of which give some details of his sojourns in Hawaii and the U.S. mainland. Other biographies and autobiographies were those of diplomats and scholars, such as *Canghai Fusheng Ji* (Record of a Wandering Life Abroad, Taipei, 1973) by Sun Biqu (Patrick Sun), diplomat who served in San Francisco where he courted and married a Chinese American girl in the 1930s. Another is *Canghai Shengping* (On the Sea of Life, Shanghai, 1935) by Cui Tongyue, the editor of several San Francisco and Vancouver newspapers during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The autobiography describes his turbulent career in the Chinese American world of journalism. One of the few autobiographies by a longtime resident is *Wo Tonghen Meidi* (I Hate American Imperialism, Peking, 1951) by Situ Meitang, one of the founders of the On Leong Tong, the most influential Chinese secret society in the East and Midwest. This work relates his reminiscences of seventy years of living in America.

Bitter reminiscences of personal experiences under detention in U.S. immigration stations such as Angel Island in San Francisco Bay have also become the subject of several articles such as Smiley Jann's "Jinshanke de Zishu," *Renjenshi* ("Story Told by a Traveller to the Golden Mountains," March 1935) and Wang De'en's "Liu Mei Yiminju Beiqu Ji," (Record of a Detention at An Immigration Station while Staying in the U.S.) in the *Dongsansheng Liu Mei Xuesheng Nianbao* (Annual Journal of Manchuria Students in America, August 1926).

Belles Lettres and Essays

Belles lettres on Chinese American themes are not numerous; however, some powerful works were inspired by Chinese experiences with American racism, especially with regards to the harsh immigration laws.

As early as 1882, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, the Chinese consul general in San Francisco, Huang Zunxian, wrote a long, bitter poem "Zhuke Pian" in *Renjinglu Shicao Jianzhu* ("Chapter on Expulsion of the Guests," Hong Kong, 1963), rebuking America. Another work, *Fan Mei Hua-gong Jinyue Wenxue Ji* (Collection of Literature against the U.S. Treaty Excluding Chinese Labor, Shanghai, 1962), compiled by Aying (Qian Xingcun), includes a number of essays, stories, poems and songs inspired by the 1905 anti-U.S. Boycott.

The traumatic experience with American immigration laws provided the stimulus for several literary works by the Chinese in America. In 1911 a long Cantonese opera "Huaqiao Xue Lei" ("Blood and Tears of an Overseas Chinese") was serialized in the newspaper the *Young China*; songs and poems were included in works such as *Jinshan Geji* (Collection of Songs of the Golden Mountain, San Francisco, 1911), *Yuequ Jinghua* (The Best in Cantonese Opera, San Francisco, 1925) and *Yuehai Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals of the Yuehai Region, Guangzhou, 1923). A number of anonymous detainees also wrote and carved poems on the walls of the Angel Island detention quarters venting their anger and frustrations. A number of these were compiled by fellow inmates in such works as *Qui Peng Ji* (Collection of Autumn Grass) of Smiley Jann (manuscript, 1932), and Tet Yee's collection, 1932 (in *Asian American Review*, Berkeley, 1977).

Although we found that most of the Chinese in America did not express themselves in belles lettres, nonetheless, there were always a few inclined toward creative literature. They often formed literary or poetry societies and sometimes would issue collections of their works, most of which, however, have little relevance to social and community issues. Visiting diplomats, scholars and students have also left a few works, some of which used Chinese American themes; e.g., the poet Wen Yiduo wrote a number of poems during his student days in America in the 1920s, including the well-known *Xiyi Ge* (Song of the Washerman).

On occasion, collections of private individuals are published. One example is *Muyun Shici Ji* (Collected Poems of Muyun, Hong Kong 1974) by Muyun (Ben Fee). The writings of this poet, formerly active in the Chinatown left, is of interest in that many works were inspired by current issues such as the Spanish Civil War, the Cuban Revolution, and the assassinations of Lumumba, President Kennedy, and others.

Fee was also a member of a literary movement, Huaqiao Wenxue, which flowered briefly during World War II and some years afterward. The participants were mostly young intellectuals raised and educated in China during the Republican era. Many were influenced by Western liberalism and Marxism. The main thrust of the movement was to write on themes from everyday life of the Chinese in America. Such works can be seen in publications such as *Xin Miao*, (New Shoots, New York City, 1947), a collection of essays, poems and short stories published periodically.

Occasionally essays, editorials, political commentaries and speeches have also been collected and published in book form. The favorite subject matter appears to be literature, philosophy or politics.

Manuscripts

Another source of research information are manuscripts of various types. There are family letters from China in the collections of the Bancroft Library and the Wells Fargo History Room. The Chinese Historical Society also has archival materials of the Constitutional Party. However, the project team found that the most common type of manuscript materials are traditional Chinese-type ledgers and account books, which contain the raw data from which information was often taken to compile records of contributions and disbursements.

The value of these books has generally not been recognized by researchers. In one incident some years ago, the writer entered a shop in Virginia City, Nevada, and saw a Chinese account book being sold for twenty-five cents a page to souvenir hunters! Actually, much useful sociological and historical information can be extracted from these books to increase our understanding of certain aspects of Chinese social and economic activities in America. One example of this use can be seen in Wolfgang Eberhard's "Economic Activities of a Chinese

Temple in California” (In *Settlement and Social Change in Asia*, Hong Kong, 1967) which analyzed information taken from two ledgers of the Bokkai Temple of Marysville, California, covering the period 1882–1892.

Miscellaneous

The project team also discovered several other interesting documents which do not fall into the above categories. Some examples are the 1853 translation of the Chinese Miner’s Tax Law, an early instance of a racist law aimed at the Chinese; a leaflet of the Chinese Six Companies dated 1874, advising Chinese in China not to come to the United States because of the anti-Chinese movement; a 1909 stockholder’s book of the Sunning railroad in Taishan, in which it was emphasized that the company “does not accept foreign investors, does not borrow foreign funds, does not employ foreign workers;” a 1918 report of the first Chinese American steamship line, The China Mail Steamship Company; a 1904 cookbook for teaching European and American recipes to immigrants; and a 1943 instruction book explaining the secrets of the Chinese lottery. There are also synopses of operas which were published periodically by Cantonese opera troupes to advertise their programs. Interestingly, CACA advertisements asking Chinese Americans to vote were on a number of these flyers in the 1920s. Another publication authored by Dai Ming Lee, editor of the *Chinese World*, was *Zhu Gang Mei Zonglingshi Baogaoshu de Pipan* (Critique of the Report of the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong, San Francisco, 1956). This was a stinging rebuttal to the “Drumwright Report,” which had charged that fraudulent entry of Chinese immigrants facilitated the infiltration of communist agents.

From the foregoing sampling one can see that there is a rich variety of materials available to the researcher who uses Chinese language materials. Indeed, where else can one go in order to find the Chinese point of view? The use of Chinese materials has been neglected in the past. It has been as much due to the lack of familiarity with the sources as it has been due to the lack of facility with the language. Hopefully, the results

of this project will ease the first problem. Surely then, it will inspire the researcher to apply himself to a solution of the second. And, perhaps our completed project will spur librarians toward greater efforts in collecting and preserving such materials.