Materials on East Asia in the Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Some of the most evocative and vigorous writing about the link between the American South and East Asia is contained in the letters, diaries, and personal memorabilia of people who actively participated in this relationship. Testimony of this kind is found in the Southern Historical Collection of the Manuscripts Department in the Academic Affairs Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, etc., that make up the body of material on East Asia that is in the Collection are fragmentary and deal with topics that were of immediate interest to the people who wrote and collected them. As might be expected, this material emphasizes the Americans' response to the life they found in East Asia and describes that life in terms of the life they had lived in the United States.

The material concerned with East Asia takes up only a small percentage of the more than seven million manuscript items that the Manuscripts Department makes available to researchers in United States southern history. The holdings of the Department are organized into three large divisions—the University Archives, General and Literary Manuscripts, and the Southern Historical Collection. This last is the largest and best known of these manuscript groups.

The University began acquiring North Carolina manuscripts in the 1840s, broadened its policies in the 1920s to seek manuscripts from the entire South, and established the Southern Historical Collection in 1930. The Collection is a center for research on the South with important holdings from all the Southern states. The manuscripts consist of the private papers of individuals and families and the records of private organizations. The Collection preserves letters, diaries, account books, other unpublished manuscripts, photographs, tape recordings, and slight printed items.

Once established, the Southern Historical Collection became a major manuscript collection, recognized internationally as a research center for Southern history and culture. Each year readers use about 3,000 groups of papers. These researchers come not only from the local region and from other parts of the South, but also from other areas of the country, and from as far away as Japan.

The staff of the Manuscripts Department is very capable and very eager to help these patrons find what they need. Their knowledge of the contents of the material in the Collection has saved researchers much time that otherwise would have been lost in arduous searching. The card catalog of names, places, and subjects is helpful in pinpointing where in the large mass of primary documents the material on East Asian topics can be found.

Another entrance into the Collection is provided by the information given in its published guides: The Southern Historical Collection: a guide to manuscripts by Susan Sokol Blosser and Clyde Norman Wilson, Jr. which was published in 1970.
and the *Southern Historical Collection: a supplementary guide to manuscripts* by Everard H. Smith, III, published in 1976. Both guides contain indexes to subjects, persons, and places. Some of the material in the Collection is described also in Philip M. Hamer's *Guide to archives and manuscripts in the United States*, published in 1961. And, of course, the Library of Congress describes many of these manuscript groups in its *National union catalog of manuscript collections*. In the near future a group of scholars at the University of Hawaii plans to publish a list of major manuscript collections dealing with East Asia. The East Asian material in the Southern Historical Collection will be included in this publication.

The connections with South and East Asia that are recorded in these files of manuscripts and memorabilia date from the days of the early Republic when American merchants were trading with the entire world. The shipping book of the Boston firm of Marshall and Wildes carries a great deal of information about the Far Eastern commerce of Americans in the 1820s. One can find prices for all the merchandise of their trade, the kinds of items traded, and the amounts carried in the company's ships from ports in the Sandwich Islands, as Hawaii was then called, to Canton, and back (Southern Historical Collection (SHC) papers no. 2356: Marshall and Wildes).

The papers of John Young Mason, Secretary of the Navy under Presidents Tyler and Polk, contain letters from his son, a purser on the *USS Vincennes*, who visited China in 1846. He pictures to his father the dress of the Chinese, compares their religion to the Catholic religion, and comments on the portly mandarins, explaining that in Chinese culture good luck is associated with corpulence. In a letter to his mother dated April the 28th, 1846, when his ship was anchored off Macao, this naval officer describes what he believes to be one of the first times that a Chinese gave a banquet for foreigners (SHC papers no. 1546: Mason, John Young).

The presence of US Navy ships in Far Eastern waters was continuous from the beginnings of American trade with that part of the world. That they were a necessary corollary of trade is proved by the mention of American vessels near Canton being robbed by Chinese pirates in 1844. The same writer, Catesby Jones, an officer in the US Navy, gives an eyewitness report of the meeting of Caleb Cushing, US minister to China, with the Chinese imperial minister, Keying (Ch'î-yîng), on June 21st and 22nd, 1844, to discuss a treaty between the two countries—the first of the unequal treaties that were to poison our relations with China until all the treaties were revoked by the end of the Second World War (SHC papers no. 1178: Jones, Catesby A. P.).

The influence of the West on the closed society of China was shown dramatically within a decade of the signing of this first treaty. The Taiping Rebellion, which swept through eastern China from south to north in the 1850s and early 1860s, adopted a peculiar form of Christianity as its religion and attempted to overthrow the Ch'ing dynasty. The good will of the Westerners towards the rebels is shown clearly in the letter of an eyewitness to the fighting in "Shanghae" in October, 1853. The writer, George M. Harris, sees the Taipings as a wholesome force for changing old China, remarking that, although the Taipings go beyond
Christianity in many of their teachings, these impurities in Taiping doctrine will in time be worked off, "as," he says, "the lees of the wine" (SHC papers no. 465: McGavock family.) Seven years later another eyewitness, more concerned with the Anglo-French assault on the Catholic cathedral in Peking, the Pei-t'ang, than on the waning civil war, refers to the Taipings off-handedly as "the Rebels—a Christian Army as it is sometimes called" (SHC papers no. 2810: Winston, Francis Donnell).

The US naval presence in East Asia remained constant. Many of the writers whose letters are found in the groups of papers in the Southern Historical Collection were Navy men on duty on the Asiatic Station. They record with candor their visits to the cities of East Asia. For example, one describes his ride on horse-back through the crowded streets of "Yeddo", an earlier name for present-day Tokyo, to a temple where he lunches and then observes the displays of wrestlers and archers. At Shanghai he remarks on the sampans, stocked with ducks, geese, and other good inexpensive things to eat, that come out to meet his ship as it enters the harbor (SHC papers no. 1850: Buchanan-McClellan).

These are the writings of men who served on the Asiatic Station during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a relatively peaceful time in the treaty ports of China. But by 1900 and afterward that beguiling sense of peace was to change to nervous insecurity as the Chinese became more determined to throw the foreigners out of China. In 1900 the Boxers challenged the Western imperialist nations and laid siege to the foreign embassies in Peking. The US Navy sent Flag Lieutenant Victor Blue to Taku to communicate with allied forces at Tientsin and at Peking and to report on the disposition of the Boxers, on the Chinese Army troops, and on the landing forces of the foreign nations. Many interesting facts, recoverable from nowhere else, are contained in his papers. As an example, Blue reports on the need of the foreign troops in Peking and Tientsin for beer, mineral water, and wine because of the great heat in the summer of 1900 (SHC papers no. 2795: Blue, Victor). Another source mentions the relief of Peking and the carving-up of China that followed, with Japan getting "Corea"; Russia obtaining Manchuria and Chihli; Germany receiving Shantung; and England acquiring access to the rich Yangtse river valley. At the end of September one correspondent writes about the unabating hostilities of the Allies, who continued to take more Chinese forts on the northern plains long after the siege had been lifted (SHC papers no. 182: Cotton, Lyman Atkinson).

More about the fight against the Boxers is given in the papers of a Lieutenant of Engineers, US Army, in the China Relief Expedition. He describes engagements at several places as the Expedition makes its way from Taku on the coast to Peking. After the besieged Westerners in the Legation Quarter were saved, Army life in the Expedition's encampment adjacent to the Temple of Agriculture is given in great detail. The setting up of a Chinese court of justice in the American sector; the banditry of two US Army privates together with five Chinese companions at Tang Erh Li; the murder of one soldier by another in November, 1900; and the worry over several cases of smallpox in the spring of 1901 are all recounted here and provide us with a fascinating picture of the American Army in Peking at the turn of the century (SHC papers no. 2970: Ferguson, Harley Rascom).
With the end of the Boxer Rebellion foreign interests in China increased and the US Navy remained in Chinese waters to protect the merchants and the missionaries. The fleet cruised from Yokosuka in Japan to Shanghai and Hong Kong in China and then down to the Philippines. The Navy men travelled into the interior of China on gunboats, chasing Chinese bandits and delivering food to relieve the hunger caused by the famines that plagued the various regions of China (SHC papers no. 3387: Anderson, Edwin Alexander).

As Chinese nationalism grew in the teens and twenties of this century, the anti-foreign attitude of the Chinese became more and more outspoken. One correspondent, whose papers are held in the Southern Historical Collection, commanded a gunboat that patrolled the Yangtse River in the middle 1920s when Nationalist troops fired on foreign merchant river boats, commandeered them, and then pressed the merchants with claims for reparations. The close relationship between American businessmen and the United States Asiatic Fleet is revealed quite clearly in the reports of this Navy captain about the events that took place in Ningpo at the end of June and the beginning of July, 1925, in response to the shooting of Chinese demonstrators by British police in Shanghai. The British American Tobacco Company, the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company, and the entire British business community at Ningpo are highlighted in his reports (SHC papers no. 1592: Merrill, Aaron Stanton).

In most of the papers scenes of the diplomatic sphere of life in East Asia are given only in two or three letters of a correspondent or sometimes only in a few lines within a letter. There is one file of papers, however—that of the naval attaché to the American Embassy in Japan, Lyman Atkinson Cotton—that provides us with a full picture of embassy life. Cotton and his wife wrote home in detail about their activities in Japan and in China from 1912 to 1915. Many of the major personalities of Japanese history in the early years of this century come alive in these letters. We are present at the courts of the Meiji and the Taisho emperors; we attend the funerals of the Meiji Emperor and of the Empress Dowager. There is also information in this file about living conditions in Japan at that time, about the political situation in China after the 1911 Revolution and in Japan from 1912 to 1914, and about the Japanese colonization of Formosa, the Pescadores, and of Korea (SHC papers no. 182: Cotton, Lyman Atkinson).

Ulysses S. Grant’s visit to China and Japan in 1879 is described in graphic detail by a young Marine officer stationed aboard the USS Richmond. We see glimpses of Li Hung-chang and his "Europeanized" daughters, of the Japanese court at a soiree given for Grant at the Shiba Palace, and many more episodes of the former President’s trip through East Asia. Many places and much of the life of the peoples of China and Japan are described by this officer at the time when both nations were reaching out to the West for help in becoming modern states (SHC papers no. 218: Dickins, Francis Asbury).

Some of the help offered by the nations of the Western world was brought to the Far East by the Christian missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With evangelistic fervor, Baptists and other Protestants from the South brought to the old Far Eastern cultures a progressive point of view and a dynamic will
to achieve. Some of their adventures and accomplishments are recorded in the manuscript files of the Southern Historical Collection.

These missionaries were careful observers, reporting on what they saw with sharp insight. In a 1854 letter of one such missionary, there is mention made of Sir John Bowring, then governor of Hong Kong, stopping at Shanghai before going on to Japan to negotiate a treaty and of the attempt by the American consul at Shanghai, Robert M. McLane, to purchase the island of "Chusan" (i.e. Chou-shan ) at the mouth of the Yangtse River. Had he been successful, America might have had her own Hong Kong. This Southern missionary in Shanghai also mentions the attendance of Yankees at his services in the late 1860s in spite of his being a Southerner. In 1870 his writing sounds a note to be heard again and again afterward: the intolerance of the Chinese towards foreigners (SHC papers no. 1466: Pendleton, William Nelson).

Some of these missionaries, away from the treaty ports, were hard-pressed and had to fend for themselves. Among the first to settle in Huchow, in northern Chekiang Province, was a husband-and-wife team who were unable to obtain a house to live in when they first came to Huchow. They had to live for a time with another more fortunate missionary. The husband stood at street corners of the town and sold copies of the Bible to Chinese passing by, much like an itinerant peddlar, while his wife studied Chinese in order to teach Chinese women the tenets of Christianity. The husband rails against the Infanticide and dishonesty he witnesses among the Chinese (SHC papers no. 450: McCorkle, William Parsons).

For their part, many Chinese were just as implacably hostile to these foreign missionaries. One father in the United States wrote a letter to his son expressing great concern for the welfare of his son and his family during the Yangtse Valley riots in 1891, hoping they had been recalled to Shanghai where, presumably, they would be safer (SHC papers no. 105: Burke, William B.).

Despite this hostility the missionaries stayed on, building their churches, their schools, and their medical clinics. They were witnesses to the 1911 Revolution and to the disorders of the years following it.

One especially vigorous Christian movement, that began in China early in this century and continued through the war years up until 1949, was the Young Men's (and Women's) Christian Association. The Southern Historical Collection is fortunate to have acquired the writings of two of the most active workers of the YMCA and YWCA in China.

Eugene Epperson Barnett served the YMCA movement from 1910 to 1935, establishing and developing the YMCA compound at Hangchow. He met such famous historical figures as "Charlie" Soong, the founder of the Soong business dynasty in Nationalist China; James Yen, who advocated popular education in China, and many other prominent Chinese. He was in Shanghai on Saturday, May 30th, 1925, when the British police of the International Settlement fired into a crowd of Chinese labor demonstrators. This affair became known as the May 30th Incident, the
largest anti-foreign demonstration to occur in China during the first half of
the twentieth century. He records the increasingly virulent anti-Christian
attacks that accompanied the rise of the Kuomintang. He recounts the landing
of Japanese naval forces from the battleship Idzumo, their occupation of the
northern part of Shanghai, and the incendiaryism of Japanese "rowdies" in
Shanghai's Chapei section on January 27, 1932 (SHC papers no. 3669: Barnett,
Eugene Epperson).

Marlon Dudley worked for the Young Women's Christian Association in Canton and
Hong Kong from 1927 until the outbreak of the Second World War. She organized
Chinese women's vocational and cultural homes, summer camps, and a medical clinic,
institutions that attracted Chinese women from many parts of South China. She
was interned by the Japanese after the siege and surrender of Hong Kong in 1941,
and returned to America late in the summer of 1942. Her recollections of the
internment in Hong Kong are absorbing and poignant (SHC papers no. 3935:
Dudley, Marion).

Another successful sphere of missionary influence was medicine. Miss Dudley's
clinics had been created and developed earlier in the twentieth century by
brothers in faith like Wallace H. Buttrick and sisters like Mattie Buchanan.

Buttrick worked on the China Medical Board of the Rockefeller Foundation from
1914. He was involved in the planning for nine centers of medical education in
China. The only planned center actually to be built was the Peking Union Medical
School, established in 1915. He visited Yuan Shih-k'ai in his palace and the
Taisho Emperor at Nikko. He also helped develop medical missionary work in
Manchuria (SHC papers no. 3754: Buttrick, Caroline I.).

Mattie Buchanan established clinics, bible schools, and orphanages in Kowloon,
across from Hong Kong, and in Canton. Her testimony about the disruption caused
by the 1911 Revolution in Kowloon, the tragedies she witnessed during the devas­
tating flood near Canton in 1915, her anxieties in the face of what she termed
the "superstition of ignorance" of the Chinese masses from the interior of China
are all grippingly and candidly related (SHC papers no. 106: Burnett family).

Other medical missionaries serving in China in the 1930s and 1940s mention militant
communism, the Japanese attacks in 1931-32 and in 1939, and the political and
economic conditions in China after the Second World War (SHC papers no. 3457:
Bagley family and SHC papers no. 3844: Watson, Robert Briggs).

Another group of Westerners who had the opportunity to observe the East Asians
closely were the merchants who came to East Asia to trade. As early as the
founding of the Republic of the United States merchants were bartering their
country's manufactures for the tea and textiles of China and the ceramics and
art of Japan. Their visions of a growing commerce between the United States and
East Asia were sometimes premature. It was premature, for instance, to attempt
to provide a steamship route between China and the United States as early as
1849. The information about business conditions in Shanghai at this period
collected for this Southern entrepreneur, Thomas Butler King, is very full and
very minute. There is an interesting mention made in these papers of the death of the Tao-kuang Emperor, on the 26th of February in 1850 and of the following hundred days of mourning during which little business was done in Shanghai (SHC papers no. 1252: King, Thomas Butler).

Another set of papers from a merchant in China describes the social life of Westerners up to and into the Japanese invasion and occupation of Shanghai in 1939, 1940, and 1941. Ivey Goodman Riddick was employed by the British-American Tobacco Company, in Hankow in the 1920s and in Shanghai in the 1930s. Among these papers are found detailed descriptions of social activities, political events, and economic conditions, all containing those particular bits of information that bring to life the more formal reports of government officials, newspapermen, and historians, and fix the periods and events described into closer and clearer focus (SHC papers no. 4120: Riddick family).

There were also people from the South who went to the Far East as visitors only, who for a brief time intruded into the life of East Asia and then departed, returning home or continuing on a world-encircling tour. But they left behind in the holdings of the Southern Historical Collection the impressions of their adventures in East Asia. One such is Miss Mary Henderson who visited her sister, Mrs. Lyman Cotton, in Tokyo in 1913 and went on to Peking, Hong Kong, and then to India and Europe. Her impressions are interesting as a counterpoint to those of her sister (SHC papers no. 182: Cotton, Lyman Atkinson.), who was present at the same events but who viewed them through eyes accustomed to several years of residence in Japan (SHC papers no. 327: Henderson, John Steele).

One visitor to East Asia in our times was a participant in the Experiment in International Living Program who spent a month in Kanazawa, a port city in west-central Honshu, Japan, in 1956. She describes the family she lived with, the mayor and other officials of Kanazawa whom she met, and the city itself, which is a center of the arts industries of Japan. The people of Kanazawa are famous for producing an imitation of Kutani porcelain and for silk printing. She also describes the other places in Japan she visited in May and June of 1956 (SHC papers no. 3832: Mitchell, Morris Randolph).

These are only some of the people, places, and events mentioned in the holdings of the Southern Historical Collection. There are many more. Below, a complete-to-date list is provided of the papers in the Southern Historical Collection that are pertinent to East Asian topics. They are arranged first by the East Asian country most mentioned in their contents and then in chronological order. All these people left records of their adventures in East Asia that provide primary source material for many different subjects in East Asian history and culture. They also provide material that describes the contact of the people of the American South with the peoples of East Asia.

**CHINA**

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1934 or 1935
1945

No. 1516 Parker, Frank.

US military commander of the Philippines; slides of Peking and Shanghai; Chinese troops drilling.

No. 1134 Thornton, Jr., Dan McCarthy.

US Marines, Tsingtao, Peking.

EAST ASIA

1946–54

No. 3844 Watson, Robert Briggs.

Public health work in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan. Social, political, and economic conditions in East Asia after the Second World War.

GULF OF MEXICO

1891

No. 1704 Wirt family (Goldsborough-Wirt)

Chinese traveling to Havana on ship from New Orleans.

JAPAN

1860, 1912

No. 1850 Buchanan-McClellan.

US Navy; Shanghai, China, and Tokyo, Japan; Chinese agriculture and finance.

1900, 1912–15, 1920s

No. 182 Cotten Lyman Atkinson.

Boxer Rebellion; Japanese Empire; naval forces in East Asia.

1901

No. 850 Baldwin, George Johnson.

Businessman; possibilities of investment in Tokyo street railways.

1906–09

No. 3367 Blanchard, Elizabeth.

Japanese art and culture; position of women in Japanese society; foreign settlement in Kobe.

1907

No. 2455 McBee, Silas.

Discussion with William H. Taft about possibility of war with Japan.

1910–19

No. 2493 Hobbs-Mendenhall

Quaker missionary life in Japan.

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1913 No. 327 Henderson, John Steele. Mary Henderson visits her sister in Japan, travels to China, then continues to circle the world.

1913-14 No. 2605 Tucker family. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan on Japanese-American diplomatic difficulties.

1956 No. 3832 Mitchell, Morris Randolph. Experiment in International Living; life with a Japanese family in Kanazawa, Japan.

1961-62 No. 3842 Ethridge, Mark Foster. Japanese newspapers and publishing, seminary on journalism; travel in Japan; members of the Japanese press visit Louisville, Kentucky.

TAIWAN

1950s No. 3966 Raper, Arthur Franklin. Field notes as social science advisor for Far East missions throughout Taiwan and Japan.