



10-1-2007

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Chang, Jae Yong (2007) "The Past, Present, and Future of the Korean Collection of the C. V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2007 : No. 143 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2007/iss143/7>

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THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE KOREAN COLLECTION OF THE
C. V. STARR EAST ASIAN LIBRARY,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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Introduction

Sixty years has passed since the East Asian Library was first established at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1947. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese collections, which were already sizable at the time of the library's establishment, the Korean collection had a "zero basis" in 1947. It has since been brought up to almost 80,000 volumes with an emphasis on Korean humanities and social sciences.

The year 2007 marks more than an anniversary; this fall, the library will move into new quarters—the first building ever constructed on an American university campus to house an East Asian collection—and it will acquire a new name, the C. V. Starr East Asian Library. It is an opportune time, as the library enters a new phase in its history, to examine the past, review the present, and consider the future of the Korean collection at Berkeley.

The Past

1940s-50s

The cornerstone of Berkeley's Korean collection is the Asami library, which came to Berkeley in 1950 as part of the Mitsui acquisition. Berkeley began negotiating with members of the Mitsui clan, founders of one of Japan's most powerful commercial and industrial groups, to purchase a portion of the clan library in 1948. The materials finally arrived in Berkeley in 1950.

Containing over 4,000 volumes of classical Korean imprints and manuscripts, and over 100 rubbings, the Asami library is now regarded as one of the major collections within the Mitsui acquisition, yet when Berkeley was negotiating the purchase, the Asami collection was almost passed over. George M. McCune, then a professor of history at Berkeley with a particular interest in the Korean peninsula, had repeatedly requested that the library purchase materials in the field of Korean studies, especially the annals of the Chosŏn dynasty, *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 조선왕조실록. The annals had been reproduced in reduced facsimile by Kyŏngsŏng Imperial University, Kyŏngsŏng Cheguk Taehak 경성제국대학, in the early 1930s, and Dr. Elizabeth Huff, founding head of the East Asiatic Library, had been seeking to purchase a set of the annals from Seoul National University. Once Dr. Huff discovered that the annals could be bundled into the Mitsui acquisition via the Asami library, however, she discontinued talks with Seoul National University.

Another source of Korean acquisitions in the wake of World War II was the Headquarters of the United States Army Military Government in Seoul. One letter in library files signed by the Headquarters' adjutant general and dated November 24, 1947, for instance, documents the gift of a total of 16 titles in 51 volumes. Many more would follow.

Annual reports prepared by the library during these years indicate that it also acquired Korean publications through exchange programs with governmental organizations. These include the National Central Library, Kungnip Chungang Tosŏgwan 국립중앙도서관; the Tŏksu Museum, now known as the National Museum of Korea, Tŏksu Misulgwan 덕수미술관; and what is now known as the National Institute of Korean History, Kuksagwan 국사관.

Among those who set up and maintained these exchange programs were Chŏng-sik Sŏl 설정식 and Chae-uk

Yi 이재욱. Söl worked for *Seoul Newspaper* 서울신문 immediately after the war, and later for the Bureau of Public Information at U.S. Army Headquarters; he was captured by North Korean forces during the Korean War. Yi served as the first director of the National Central Library, and as president of the Korean Library Association, Hanguk Tosögwän Hyöphoe 한국도서관협회; he too was captured and removed to North Korea.

Söl seems to have corresponded directly with Professor McCune. In one letter in the library's files, McCune noted that Söl had sent 233 books to Berkeley and asked for "heavy binding paper" in return.¹ Another document in the files indicates that Yi asked for 60,000 blank catalog cards in exchange for the 78 books he had sent to the East Asian Library.² Berkeley's exchange program with the Kuksagwan followed a similar pattern: the Korean organization received office supplies—mainly pencils, paper, and card stock—in exchange for books and other publications.

Annual reports also suggest that many scholars in Korea sent materials to the East Asian Library specifically because of their friendship with George McCune. (The word "donation" appears in English-language correspondence, but book prices appear as well.) The well-respected names of Pow-key Sohn 손보기 and Sang-baek Yi 이상백, both retired from Seoul National University, appear frequently on correspondence in library files.

1960s-70s

The most significant development in the Korean collection during the 1960s was the hiring of a full-time librarian to manage the collection. Yong-kyo Choo was originally hired as a Korean and Japanese cataloger; in 1968, his position was recast as librarian for the Korean collection.

Holder of a master's degree in law from Korea University, Choo had been a teacher at Chemulpo High School in Inch'ön before coming to the United States. Berkeley was his first position on completing a master's in library science at the University of Michigan in the mid-1960s. He retired from the East Asian Library in 2000, after thirty-six years of service. The current healthy state of the Korean collection is in large part due to his long effort and devotion.

After taking charge of the Korean collection, Choo set up working relationships with a number of Korean vendors, including Tongnam Tosö 동남도서, Seo-mun Korean Book Service, Kyobo Book Store 교보문고, and Pömunsa 범문사 (Panmun Academic Services). The latter remains one of the library's vendors to this day.

The library obtained its first North Korean publications at this time through Chiao Liu Publication Trading Co. 交流出版公司 in Hong Kong and Koryo Trading Co. 고려종합무역상사 in Los Angeles. It later acquired North Korean periodicals, newspapers, and miscellaneous university publications through exchange programs with institutions such as Kim Il-söng University 김일성종합대학 and Kim Ch'aek Technology University 김책공업종합대학. As of June 2007, the library held approximately 3,000 volumes with North Korean imprints.

In 1969 the University of California Press published *The Asami Library: A Descriptive Catalogue*, by Chaoying Fang. Fang had completed the bulk of the work during the previous decade, traveling to Korea in 1960 to consult with scholars and bibliophiles. While there Fang met Kyöm-no Yi 이겸로, founder of T'ongmun'gwan 통문관, one of Korea's best and oldest rare book stores, and from him learned of the easy availability of rare books at that time. Fang initially purchased through an agent who was acquaintance of Yi's and subsequently through the agency of other rare book stores such as Hagye Sörim 학예서림, Kyerim Sörim 계림서림, Pomundang 보문당, and Yöngch'ang Söjöm 영창서점, all located near T'ongmun'gwan in

¹ George McCune to Elizabeth Huff, Berkeley, May 18, 1948.

² Receipt from Yi, Seoul, July 14, 1948.

the Insa-dong district of Seoul, home to almost half of Korea's antique dealers. Choo carried on the connections Fang established with these Insa-dong bookstores. According to his annual reports, between October 1967 and January 1968 Choo purchased 2,300 rare and antiquarian books for the library, paying an average of \$5.65 each. Choo contemplated publishing a catalog of the books purchased at that time but had to abandon the idea for lack of funding.

No clear record of what titles or how many volumes the library purchased from the Insa-dong dealers has survived, but the library has recently undertaken a project to reconstruct a rough record. Over the past four years the Korean division, in collaboration with the Academy of Korean Studies, has compiled a list of Korean holdings predating 1910 and rare or unique materials in traditional side-sewn binding dating to the Japanese colonial period (1910-45). The final count includes approximately 1,400 titles in 4,500 volumes, many of them purchased with funds from the library's Carpentier endowment, an important resource for East Asian acquisitions since 1919. The Korean division hopes to publish a short list and possibly a critical catalog of these titles sometime next year.

Another important acquisition of this period is a complete set of the Korean Tripitaka, Palman Taejanggyōng 팔만대장경, printed in the 1960s from the original woodblocks carved between 1237 and 1248. A memo written by Dr. Huff to University Librarian Donald Coney in 1963 provides details of the purchase:

The price will be around seven thousand dollars. . . . In 1957 the Buddhist University in Seoul began to issue a reduced facsimile edition of the ancient Tripitaka. . . . The new printing will be on the best, traditional Korean paper, the 1200 or more volumes bound in the old Chinese style . . . but the price mentioned above about US \$6.00 per volume will be charged. . . . Thus about \$1500 a year would have to be reserved, more than can easily be afforded out of the E.A.L. and Carpentier funds.³

According to the official website of Haeinsa,⁴ the Buddhist temple where the 80,000 printing blocks of the Korean Tripitaka are stored, the temple has printed a total of twelve sets of the canon in recent times and distributed them internationally: four sets remain in Korea; four have gone to Japan; and single sets have gone to Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States.

Berkeley received its copy, in over 1400 volumes, in 1966.⁵ Scholars and graduate students, headed by Professor Lewis Lancaster, were soon recruited to prepare a finding aid, which was ultimately published by the University of California Press as *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, in 1979. The canon is now kept at the Northern Regional Library Facility, a cooperative library storage facility some seven miles north of Berkeley.

The Present **1980s-2007**

In the course of regular acquisitions trips to South Korea, Yong-kyo Choo established exchange programs with a number of institutions and universities. At one time, Berkeley was engaged in over thirty such programs. This number decreased dramatically after the Korean economic crisis of the mid-1990s.

The 1980s and 1990s also saw an increase in rare book prices and the enactment of Korean cultural properties laws, making the purchase of rare materials from South Korea unfeasible. The library therefore began to acquire microfilms of rare holdings in libraries such as the National Library of Korea, Seoul National University, and Korea University. These were obtained through purchase or through exchange of

³ Elizabeth Huff to Donald Coney, [Berkeley], January 24, 1963.

⁴ http://www.haeinsa.or.kr/tripitaka/tripitaka_4.html

⁵ Correspondence with Prof. Lancaster on April 19, 2006.

microfilm of items in the Asami collection. The East Asian Library now holds over 400 reels of Korean rare books on film, including some Asami titles.

The Korean government began providing support for acquisitions in the 1990s. Support in the past had been sporadic and occasionally in-kind. In 1994 the Korean Collection Consortium of North America was established to develop a comprehensive Korean collection that could be shared by North American scholars and institutions.⁶ The Korea Foundation supported member institutions of the Consortium with grants of \$20,000 per year for its first ten years; it has promised annual grants of \$30,000 per member per year for the next five years. This support has served as a catalyst to North American collections, Berkeley among them. After ten years of Korean Foundation support, Berkeley's Korean collection has grown from 3,014 volumes in 1966, to 37,411 in 1986, 44,999 in 1996, and nearly 80,000 in 2007.

Since 2003, the Korean division has launched two major projects that are currently ongoing: development of a Korean diaspora collection and electronic acquisitions.

About six million Koreans, close to approximately ten percent of the current population of the Korean peninsula, are now settled beyond the traditional borders of Korea: over two million currently reside in China, and one million in the former Soviet Union.⁷ Korean minorities in China in particular have maintained a strong sense of cultural and ethnic identity and, to the extent possible, geographical autonomy.⁸

The aim of the Korean diaspora project is to collect monographs and periodicals published in Korean by Korean émigrés living in China and the former Soviet Union, regions long considered "off limits to and to be forgotten by" Koreans in Korea. Exploratory acquisitions trips have unfortunately demonstrated that many publications have already been discontinued or are now virtually impossible to obtain due to low print numbers and limited distribution networks. An almost complete lack of trade bibliography, moreover, makes any reliable identification of these publications all but impossible. By the same token, the exploratory trips did allow the Korean division to establish connections with scholars and professionals in the publishing world that will prove invaluable to both the current project and future acquisitions programs.

At present, the East Asian Library owns over 500 titles issued by Chosŏnjok, ethnic Koreans in China, and 60 titles issued by the Koryŏin, ethnic Koreans living in the republics of the former USSR. Eventually the collection will extend to other regions of the diaspora, including Japan. Once more fully developed, the collection will prove an invaluable resource for research in the social sciences.

Electronic resources are another new area of collecting. Over the past three years, Korean studies librarians in North America have cooperatively purchased e-resources originating in North and South. A complete list of the East Asian Library's Korean e-resources can be found on its website.⁹ Some of the more useful include:

- Online services
 - Chosun Ilbo Archive (newspapers)
 - EncyKorea (e-reference works)
 - DBpia (e-journals)
 - Kdatabse (e-journals)
 - KISS (e-journals)
 - Kyongsong Ilbo (newspapers)
 - KoreaA2Z (e-reference works)

⁶ <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/KConsort/index.html>

and for more information, see Hyokyoung Yi, "Korean collections consortium of North America", *Journal of East Asian Libraries* no. 142 (June 2007): 25-36.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, *Segye ui Hanminjok* (2002): 23-26.

⁸ Edward Taehan Chang, "Diaspora Korean in China," *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, vol. 12; no. 1 (2001): 2-5.

⁹ <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EAL/resources/korean.html>

- Ilche sidae munhwa yujök chosa charyö (e-books)
- Ilcheha chönsi ch'ejegi chöngch'aek saryo ch'ongsö (e-books)
- Han-il heodam ch'önggugwon kwallyön munsö (e-books)
- CDs and DVDs
 - Chosön Chungang yöngam (CDs)
 - Chosön munhak yesul yöngam (CDs)
 - Chosön hyangt'o tae paekkwa (CD)
 - Chosön tae paekkwa sajön (CDs)
 - K'ajahu□su□t'an Koryo□in yo□ngsang charyojip (DVDs)
 - Lenin kich'i (CDs)

The Future

Berkeley's Korean collection has grown at an exponential rate since 1947, and while the future may see an increase in appreciation and use of the collection, it may also see a slowdown in growth.

A good portion of the 4,500 volumes acquired from Insa-dong book dealers in the 1960s and 1970s has unfortunately sat in storage unpagged and unused because of inadequate cataloging—a problem that would never have arisen had there been authoritative and commonly adopted guidelines for the cataloging of Korean rare materials.¹⁰ The rare materials cataloging project currently underway will address this problem and should result in greater awareness of the collection in the Korean studies community and correspondingly higher use.

A greater challenge facing the Korean collection today, as it has been for most of the last sixty years, is budgetary. The remarkable development the collection experienced during the 1960s and 1970s would never have been possible without the funding that was then available. But state funding in a boom-or-bust economy is necessarily variable, and one-time funding from any sort of organization cannot be depended on from year to year. A privately endowed acquisitions fund would ensure a consistent funding source that would carry acquisitions programs through hard times and make special purchases possible in good times. The Korean collection lacks such a source, although it has benefited enormously from the support of the Korea Foundation. It has also benefited from the foresight and efforts of past librarians and library directors who spent their funds so wisely.

¹⁰Such guidelines do exist for Chinese and Japanese rare materials. See, e.g., *Cataloging Guidelines for Creating Chinese Rare Book Records in Machine-readable Form* (Mountain View: Research Libraries Group, 2000); and Isamu Tsuchitani, "Descriptive Cataloging Guidelines for Pre-Meiji Japanese Books," published on the Library of Congress website in 2006, at <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/premeiji.pdf>.