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In Memoriam: Thomas Kuo

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IN MEMORIAM

Thomas Kuo (1929-2018)

Dr. Thomas C. Kuo (郭成棠), founder and first curator of the East Asian Library, University of Pittsburgh, passed away on Sunday, May 13, 2018 at the age of ninety.

Born in China, Dr. Kuo immigrated to the United States in 1955, and earned his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). In 1961, after being hired as Chinese literature specialist and Cataloging Librarian at Pitt, he started to develop and increase the Chinese collections systematically, especially in literature and language. He improved cataloging procedures, and added some basic reference materials. In 1965, Dr. Kuo started the Japanese collections without federal or institutional financial support.

In 1965, the East Asian Library (EAL) was established. Dr. Kuo was the first curator; he retired in 1995.

In the 1960s, Pitt's East Asian Studies developed significantly. In order to cooperate with East Asian research projects, the University Asian Research Council considered increasing library collections as the most important task. Dr. Kuo believed the best strategy was to purchase materials according to the needs of East Asian research projects. Many important classics and Chinese local gazetteers, yearbooks, and reference books were added to the collection. During difficult times when funds were cut or cancelled, Dr. Kuo joined gift exchanges with other libraries to keep developing the collections.

From 1968 to 1969, Dr. Kuo obtained some precious donations including rare documents of Chinese Communists. In 1982, Dr. Kuo went to East Asia and purchased 150 volumes of precious Chinese rare books published before 1795 for the EAL.

During the 1972-1973 fiscal year, the Japan International Exchange Foundation provided financial support to the EAL, so the Japanese collections underwent rapid development during that time. Compared to the EAL's Chinese collections, its Japanese collections were weak at the time due to a lack of stable support. Dr. Kuo worked tirelessly to establish a small but significant Japanese collection.

Dr. Kuo was a gifted and accomplished man in many fields, and published several articles and books. His publications include Ch'en Tu-Hsiu (1879-1942) and The Chinese Communist Movement, published by Seton Hall University Press in 1975; and Xuefu aozhanlu (學府鏖戰錄) published by Xiandai jiaoyu yanjiushe youxian gongsi in 1998.

The development and achievements of the East Asian Library of the University of Pittsburgh today are inseparable from Dr. Kuo's outstanding contributions and hard work.

Submitted by the East Asian Library, University of Pittsburgh