Oriental Division, New York Public Library

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At the beginning of his article entitled "Orientalia" in a recently published book (Treasures of the New York Public Library (1988)), Dr. John M. Lundquist, Chief of the Oriental Division, New York Public Library, pointed out that a recent report named the New York Public Library (NYPL) one of the five "mega-libraries" of the world (along with the Library of Congress, the Harvard University Library, the British Library, and the Bibliotheque Nationale). He then said that its Oriental holdings constitute one of its mega-divisions.

Marshall B. Davidson and Bernard McTigue, authors of the book cited above, said in its introduction: "It [the New York Public Library] embraces the seventh largest research library in the world and the fourth largest in this country. Its branch system is the largest in the world. The Research Libraries contain over eight million volumes, twenty-three million manuscripts, and five hundred thousand recordings. The branches have nine million items at their disposal. The overall budget is in excess of $100 million. There is a staff of 2,951 full-time employees serving 1,063,000 visitors to the Central Research Library and nearly one million cardholders who borrow 9,800,000 items a year." The two authors then described the recently renovated New York Public Library building located at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street as follows: "Its marble facades with sculptures by Frederick William MacMonnies, George Grey Barnard, and Paul W. Bartlett - among the most distinguished American artists of their time - now appear as they were originally intended to be seen. And the amiable lions fashioned by Edward C. Potter that guard the Fifth Avenue entrance (affectionately dubbed "Lady Astor and Lord Lenox"), with unblinking eyes, keep their never-resting vigil over the passing crowds on the thoroughfare they face. Inside, we can now once again admire the walls of marble, the Philippine teak floors, and the French walnut paneling. We can see with our own eyes why this building is considered the finest example of Beaux-Art architecture in the nation."

Regarding the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library, of which the Oriental Division is part, The New York Public Library: Annual Report for 1988 says: "Its Research Libraries, with collections of more than 33,000,000 items in over 3,000 languages and dialects encompassing almost every field of recorded knowledge, compare in size and significance to the world's greatest libraries." Regarding the national role of the NYPL, the Report says: "The national significance of the collection in the Research Libraries is acknowledged by the Research Libraries Group (RLG), a national consortium whose member libraries share collection responsibilities. RLG has assigned primary collection responsibility to the New York Public Library for eighty subjects in recognition of the strength of our [NYPL's] holdings in these areas." Regarding the size of the collection in the Research Libraries, the Report says: "Three years ago, there were 29,000,000 items in the collections; now there are over 33,000,000."

A new consolidated public library system of New York City was born in 1895 when the Astor and Lenox Libraries and the Tilden Fund merged. The Oriental Division, part of the Research Libraries, was established in 1897. However, the active building of a collection of Orientalia there began in 1854 when the Astor Library published a catalog "relating to the languages and literatures of Asia, Africa and the Oceanic Islands."
In the foreword of the book, Treasures of the New York Public Library, Vartan Gregorian, then President of the NYPL, recited the list of the Library's "dazzling jewels": "the Tickhill Psalter, the Hunt Lenox Globe, the Bay Psalm Book, the first Gutenberg Bible brought to the New World, Thomas Jefferson's handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence, George Washington's draft of his Farewell Address, and the richest of all, perhaps, our beautiful and beautifully restored treasure house itself." Vartan Gregorian took over the library presidency in July 1981 and effected a transformation which brought about "the renaissance of the New York Public Library" (so called by Bruce Porter). Gregorian instituted "Literary Lions" evenings, charging $1,000 a plate to patrons who wanted to dine while talking with the likes of Tom Morrison, Henry Kissinger, and Robert Penn Warren. He raised $1.6 million to renovate the main floor gallery that promises to hold the most impressive exhibition spaces in New York City.

The Astor Library's catalog (Catalogue of Books in the Astor Library Relating to the Languages and Literatures of Asia, Africa, and the Oceanic Islands (1854)), "one of the treasures of the Oriental Division's holdings today," shows the foundations of the New York Public Library's present Oriental and Jewish divisions and their holdings, Dr. Lundquist said in his article cited above. Then he emphatically states: "It is extraordinary to see the superb quality and breadth of Oriental materials that were made available to the public in mid-nineteenth century New York. This in itself must rank as one of the most interesting and important intellectual achievements of American civilization, and one that has been overlooked."

The Orient is defined as the countries of Asia (except Siberia), Ceylon, the islands of Japan, the Malay Archipelago, the Near East, and other areas in which Oriental alphabets, characters, and syllabaries are used; (Guide to the Research Collections of the New York Public Library (1975)). Thus the collection of the Oriental Division is centered around grammars, dictionaries, and the literature of the Orient, in both original texts and translations, in more than one hundred languages. Works on Oriental archaeology and religions are also collected. The division collects history and description of the Orient when in Oriental languages; otherwise, these subjects are the responsibility of the General Research and Humanities Division. Law is not generally acquired, except for Moslem law. The languages of North Africa, Ethiopia, and those African languages which now use or once used the Arabic script, such as Fulah, Hausa, Somali, Swahili, etc., have traditionally been acquired. Oriental government documents are the responsibility of the Economic and Public Affairs Division; Oriental patents are held by the Patents Collection; and Oriental art is found in the Art and Architecture Division.

C. Filstrup, former Librarian of the Oriental Division, in his article published in the UFISLAA (vol. 8, no. 1 (1981)) said: Although the Oriental Division lacks the size of its counterparts at the Library of Congress and the British Museum, the items dating back to the Astor days are unusual and in several cases unique." Dr. Lundquist, in his article "Orientalia", states: "The Astor Library was also very strong in books on East Asia, particularly China and India. Many of the works of the first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison, are presently in the collection and figure prominently in the Cogswell catalogue. These include his View of China for Philological Purposes, published in Macao in 1817, Grammar of the Chinese Language, published in Serampore, India in 1815, a vocabulary of the Cantonese dialect published in Macao in 1828, a manuscript Chinese-English dictionary, published in Macao between 1815 and 1823, and a comparative study of two Chinese-English dictionaries, written with Antonio Montucci and published in London in 1817."

It is the Chinese books collected by Wilberforce Eames, which he sold to the Library in 1909, that form the basis for the Chinese collection in the Oriental Division today. Many of
the approximately two hundred titles of Chinese rare books housed in the Research Libraries were purchased by Eames from the library of the great nineteenth-century British sinologist, James Legge. His library was listed for sale in 1899 by the London bookseller, Luzac and Company. The Library still has Eames's signed, personal copy of the catalog of this sale, with his copious notations in the margins, noting books that were already sold and books he had ordered. There are some truly remarkable books and manuscripts in this collection, including Legge's personal proof copy of the concordance to his famous bilingual editions of the Chinese classics, annotated in his own hand in both Chinese and English. These form an invaluable research aid to the understanding of the production of one of the most famous and enduring English translations of the classic Chinese literature. Another important volume in this set of materials is a manuscript annotation of the Chinese Book of Poems, prepared by Legge's close personal friend, the Chinese scholar, Wang Tao. And yet one more item of exceptional interest is Legge's personal, signed copy of the famous and very rare (but not complete) set of the pamphlets issued by the Chinese Christian/messianist rebels in the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-1864. This collection of Chinese books and manuscripts also contains many Ming and Ch'ing dynasty items. Of these, surely the most important is the Yung Lo Ta Tien, which the Library purchased from Eames in 1913, and which today is housed in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division. This work, the last full copy of which was destroyed in the burning of the Summer Palace near Peking in 1860 at the order of Lord Elgin, constitutes several sections of a copy made before 1572 of a Chinese encyclopedia, originally written in the early fifteenth century. Recent reprints of the encyclopedia in the People's Republic of China did not include these sections, as they were unaware of the existence of this copy.

The Manuscripts and Archives Division holds more than 1,000 manuscripts, tablets, and stone inscriptions in Oriental languages. Among the four Chinese manuscripts is an eighteenth-century copy of sections no. 15,951 to no. 15,958 of the Yung Lo Ta Tien. There are other items of note. The John Redman Coxe Lewis journal and logbook of the corvette, USS Macedonian, gives a day-to-day account of the expedition of Commodore Matthew Perry to Japan in 1854, with descriptions of Japan and its people. The diary of C. Blue, kept during the author's tour of duty from 1853 to 1856 on the U.S. sloop of war, Vandahia, describes Commodore Perry's reception in Japan and incidents in Shanghai during the Taiping Rebellion. A scroll of watercolor sketches by a Japanese artist of the scene on the first day after Perry's arrival at Uraga is in the Spencer Collection. The George C. Foulk papers, consisting of about one thousand pieces, relate to Korea during the period from 1884 to 1887. The collection was supplemented in 1924 by a gift of forty-four volumes and more than three hundred separate pieces from Dr. Horace Newton Allen, former minister to Korea, including his personal and official diaries for the period 1884 to 1905, and his correspondence, commissions, account books, files of Korean newspapers, and translations. In the gift is a collection of Korean poems dating from 1665 to 1745, illustrated with drawings by a native artist. In 1965, Mrs. A. Hawkins of Daytona Beach gave three boxes of material relating to the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean business of the mercantile firm of Frazar & Company, and to Everett Frazar's activity both as Consul-General to the Kingdom of Korea and as a member of the American Asiatic Society. The period covered by these materials is 1883 to 1948; (Guide to the Research Collections of the New York Public Library (1975)).

Dr. Lundquist, in his article, also lists some of the valuable holdings of the Oriental Division: "The Division holds superb editions of the translation of the History of Japan, together with a description of the Kingdom of Siam, 1690-92 by Engelbert Kaempfer, published in London in 1727, supplied with important maps and engravings showing Japanese customs, architecture, and contemporary life. This work, in its first edition of 1727, was the first attempt by a European to describe Japan and Japanese culture in depth. Among the many early travelers' accounts of visits to China, mention should be made of An Authentic
Account of an Embassy from the King of Britain to the Emperor of China, by Sir George Staunton, in the first edition of 1797, which describes the first British embassy to China.

Dr. Lundquist describes the Japanese collection of the Oriental Division as follows: "The Division has a number of very important early grammars and dictionaries, as well as seventeenth- through nineteenth-century histories of Buddhism in the Japanese language. The Division also has some early and rare books on various aspects of the martial arts, on Japanese folk culture, Japanese erotica, and the tea ceremony. An important work of Japanese erotica is the 1907 publication of Dr. Friedrich S. Krauss's Das Geschlechtleben in Glauben, Sitte und Brauch der Japaner (Sexual life in the beliefs, customs, and habits of the Japanese). This work was published in a very small print run, of which the Division's copy is number thirty-one. The Division just recently acquired the very rare trilogy of works by Lawrence E. Gichner, published in the late 1940s and 1950s, Erotic Aspects of Japanese Culture, Erotic Aspects of Chinese Culture, and Erotic Aspects of Hindu Sculpture. The Division has also emphasized Japanese publications on science and technology, and holds over two hundred current periodicals on these subjects. Additionally, the Division's collecting interests in Japanese culture focus on the tea ceremony, archaeology, and serious literature. The Library's Music Division collects the Japanese popular music form known as kara oke, which is words and music made available to amateur singers, usually in bars, who sing along with the recorded music. The Spencer Collection holds one of the world's most important collections of Japanese prints and scrolls. These were highlighted in an exhibition organized by Dr. Miyeko Murase, called "Tales of Japan." The Research Library collections in Japanese art rank among the best in the world."

Regarding the periodicals held by the Oriental Division, Dr. Lundquist points out: "The Astor Library catalogue [the Cogswell catalogue] lists a large number of the most important Oriental periodicals of the time, many of which are exceptionally rare today. It is these titles, when combined with the hundreds that have been added since then, that give the Oriental Division its depth as a research collection, enabling readers to search the literature of a given subject back to the beginnings of that subject as a secondary discipline. And the articles contained in these early journals do not have merely antiquarian value. Many of the articles contained in such journals as those published by the Royal Asiatic Society and its branches, the Journal asiatique, the Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, the Journal of the American Oriental Society, and the Chinese Repository contain valuable contemporary observations, editions of language texts, and photographs or drawings of now destroyed architectural ruins or dramatically changed cities or social customs that are of inestimable value to the contemporary scholar." The current periodical subscriptions of the Division are described by Dr. Lundquist thus: "The Oriental Division now subscribes to almost one thousand periodicals in close to twenty languages. In addition to all of the main journals of the learned societies, and the major journals of linguistics, archaeology, history, the social sciences, and the humanities, the Division subscribes to a large number of very specialized and rather obscure but extremely important journals, which one would only rarely find in another Oriental collection. Additionally, many ongoing series of texts and translations in numerous Oriental languages are received in the Division."

The New York Public Library: Annual Report for 1988 cites some rare Japanese items purchased for the Spencer Collection, "the most comprehensive and accessible fine arts research center in New York City," during the 1987-88 fiscal year. Included in the purchase was a set of three seventeenth-century Japanese handscrolls of the Juni-rui Kassen (The War of the Duodenary Animals), containing twelve sumptuously painted scenes and the only known complete text of the tale. Also included was a single handscroll of paintings in ink and color on gold decorated paper, by an anonymous seventeenth-century artist, of three chapters of the fourteenth-century work, Taiheiki monogatari. The scroll belongs to
the sole original multiple-scroll work illustrating the Taiheiki saga, a now-dispersed set of eight. (The only other identified scroll of the set has been in the Spencer Collection since 1955.) Among the major acquisitions made by the Map Division during the 1987-88 fiscal year was a woodcut map of Nagasaki (1778).

A news release issued on June 4, 1989 by the Public Relations Office of the New York Public Library, announced the establishment of a Tiananmen Archive which documents last spring's democracy movement in China and the subsequent government massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators on June 4. "Several thousand items of historical significance have been acquired by the Library to date, including a wide variety of primary source material from democracy groups in China, such as copies of declarations, slogans, public letters, and resolutions," the news release stated. The Tiananmen Archive is housed in the Library's Oriental Division. Much of the important material in the collection was acquired by John Ma, of the Division, and Lucy Kung, of the Economic and Public Affairs Division, as a joint effort. The news release further stated: "The majority of the items in the Archive are currently available to qualified scholars. However, because of the sensitive nature of some of the primary material from China, some items will be restricted in order to protect the identities of pro-democracy supporters who might be in danger, if exposed."

The Annual Report for 1988 cites the processing of materials in the Cataloging Division of the Library. During the 1987-88 fiscal year, a total of 306,535 volumes were added to the collections; 96,964 items of monographs and 11,613 items of serials were cataloged. The Research Libraries of the NYPL, which has accumulated a cataloging backlog approaching 300,000 monographs, began a Deferred Cataloging Project which reduced the backlog by 33,000 items during the 1987-88 fiscal year. As for the Library's official catalog, the RLIN data base serves as the Library's official catalog and the library's cataloged holdings are available to the public through an online public computer catalog called CATNYP, which contains all of the NYPL's holdings in RLINs.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


