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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS OF A BIBLIOGRAPHER IN ASIAN STUDIES

Frank Joseph Shulman

On the Occasion of Being Honored with the
MAR/AAS "Distinguished Asianist" Award for 2001

Editor’s Note:

The Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies (MAR/AAS) honored Frank Joseph Shulman with its Distinguished Asianist Award for 2001 during its thirtieth annual meeting at Slippery Rock University in western Pennsylvania last October 26-28. The officers of the association presented him with an inscribed plaque reading: "The Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies salutes Frank Joseph Shulman, University of Maryland: In recognition of and appreciation for your life-long dedication and outstanding contributions to Asian Studies as a foremost bibliographer and librarian in the field. October 2001."

At the luncheon where he received this award, Frank delivered a series of remarks in which he reviewed some of his work as a bibliographer and editor for Western-language reference works on Asia and commented on five of the bibliographical principles that he currently advocates. A revised version of these remarks appears below.

The previous recipients of the annual MAR/AAS "Distinguished Asianist Award" have been the late Professor Marius Jansen of Princeton University, an historian of Japan (2000); Professor E-Tu Zen Sun, historian of modern China, Pennsylvania State University, recently retired, (1999); Ms. Kanta Bhatia, a retired South Asia Librarian at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries, (1998); and Professor Ainslee T. Embree, a retired historian of India at Columbia University, (1997).

Edited Version of the Remarks Presented at the
Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies
October 27, 2001

One of the defining moments in my life, as I reflect over the past thirty-five years of my graduate studies and professional activities, was my receipt of an assignment to update a short bibliography of postwar English-language dissertations on Japan that Peter Cornwall had prepared on behalf of the University of Michigan's Center for Japanese Studies. The date was one early autumn afternoon in September 1968. I had returned to Ann Arbor just a few weeks earlier from a year of intensive language study in Tokyo and had enrolled in an introductory course on Japanese bibliography. My classroom assignment was intended to be a short-term practical exercise, but over the next two years I substantially expanded, annotated and
transformed Cornwall's list and then published it as the first of my book-length reference works, *Japan and Korea: An Annotated Bibliography of Doctoral Dissertations in Western Language, 1877-1969.* During this same period, while continuing to pursue my own doctoral studies at Michigan, I collaborated with Leonard H. D. Gordon of Purdue University on a bibliography of postwar doctoral dissertations on China, and initiated a bibliographical column of doctoral research on Asia in the quarterly *Newsletter of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS).* This column ultimately evolved into the journal *Doctoral Dissertations on Asia,* which the AAS published from 1975 through 1996. Furthermore, prior to accepting an appointment at the University of Maryland, College Park Libraries in February 1976, I was also employed for some time as an Associate Editor of the AAS *Bibliography of Asian Studies* and joined with Robert E. Ward and others in producing an extensively annotated bibliography on the Allied occupation of Japan.

I recount these past developments in response to those among you who have wondered how and why I came to devote much of my professional career to the preparation of scholarly reference works on Asia (alongside my full-time library position at Maryland), especially when my studies at Michigan could have culminated instead in a traditional teaching career. I attribute the direction that I took to a number of factors. I was impressed by the pioneering work of Charles O. Hucker and Bernard S. Silberman, whose bibliographies of Western-language publications about China, Japan and Korea had helped introduce my generation of graduate students to the literature on East Asia. I received professional advice and timely encouragement from the modern Japan historian Robert M. Spaulding at Michigan and the legendary John K. Fairbank at Harvard University. I was already concerned that important historical and scholarly resources relating to East Asia in my hometown of Boston, Massachusetts and elsewhere in the United States were being underutilized for lack of adequate information about them. Furthermore, during the decade that I spent in Ann Arbor—an era when generous institutional funding from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, the availability of student fellowships under the U.S. Government's National Defense Foreign Language (NDFL) fellowship program, and the influx of former Peace Corps volunteers into graduate schools propelled the dramatic growth of area studies programs across the country—I became convinced of the critical need for more reference works in support of Asian Studies. My conversations with faculty members engaged in work on China and Japan sensitized me to their concerns about being kept informed of the many new publications that were appearing each year outside of their respective academic disciplines. This was occasioned in part by the rapid expansion of Western-language scholarship on East Asia, an unprecedented phenomenon at that time. In addition, students were clamoring for bibliographical advice and assistance, while college and university libraries expressed considerable interest in acquiring more and more subject bibliographies for use in the development of their burgeoning library collections as well as in their provision of reference service.

Despite the widespread availability of electronic databases nowadays and the convenience of searching for information on the Internet, carefully prepared, authoritative bibliographies continue to constitute an invaluable resource for the academic study of Asia. For students interested, let us say, in China, India or Thailand who have advanced beyond introductory-level courses, the country-oriented bibliographies in the World Bibliographical Series of Clio Press / ABC-Clio together with available reference works on more narrowly focused subjects can identify many of the important publications that they would do well to read. For doctoral degree
candidates and research-oriented faculty, reasonably comprehensive and frequently retrospective bibliographies can save countless hours of work in their quest for information and can reduce the likelihood of their overlooking relevant publications. Some academics, however, have tended to regard the compilation and editing of bibliographies essentially as a mechanical transcription of information from one source to another. Indeed, the recent proliferation of electronic databases has helped to engender the feeling that acceptable bibliographies can be produced simply by identifying a number of relevant citations within one or more readily available databases, cutting and pasting them into one's own computer file, and arranging them in some presentable order. As one colleague has recently stated, we now face a situation where "anybody can do a computer dump from RLIN or OCLC and call it a 'professional' bibliography". Meaningful bibliographical standards have come to be disregarded or at least compromised in the process, particularly as many individuals in Asian Studies—teachers and students alike—have never really learned how to appreciate, evaluate and critically use both published bibliographies and computerized bibliographical databases.

In a number of respects, even though I pursued advanced degrees in East and Southeast Asian history and in library science at Michigan, I did not receive adequate formal training to become a professional bibliographer in Asian Studies. Instead, it was primarily through my involvement in several different projects, my discussions with various scholars and librarians, my ongoing reading, and my personal examination of the works (both good and bad) produced by other individuals that I gradually developed the requisite skills for compiling and editing reference works that strive for authoritativeness and seek to serve the needs of their intended audiences. Some of my very earliest bibliographies reflect this fact. While they were well received when they first appeared in print and have been widely consulted over the years, those bibliographies are now in serious need of revision as well as updating. Compare, for instance, my treatment and coverage of the scholarship about Hong Kong in my 1972 reference work, Doctoral Dissertations on China: A Bibliography of Studies in Western Languages, 1945-1970, with that in my latest book, Doctoral Dissertations on Hong Kong, 1900-1997: An Annotated Bibliography. The bibliographical entries in this new volume are not only extensively annotated but also include certain types of information that were not provided in my earlier work. Among these are the dissertation author's academic major or department (for example, Ph.D. in History), his or her year of birth (when known), an indication of which theses have been published, and detailed guidance for getting hold of copies of the dissertations typescripts. The subject classification in Doctoral Dissertations on Hong Kong is also much more sophisticated, the 164-page subject index is far more detailed, and the bibliography as a whole is substantially more comprehensive in its coverage. In addition, the bibliographical work in the Hong Kong volume is based largely on a personal examination of the dissertation typescripts rather than on their printed abstracts and other secondary sources of information.

On various occasions I have been asked to enumerate some of the rewards of being a professional bibliographer in Asian Studies. One of these has been the opportunity to acquire a broad familiarity with the historical development of the field as a whole, particularly with respect to Western scholarship on East Asia. In contrast to many other academic specialists, my bibliographical work has taken me beyond the confines of one country or one discipline. Whether preparing retrospective bibliographies of doctoral dissertations, working on the AAS Bibliography of Asian Studies, compiling and editing an annotated bibliography of important English-language books about Japan, or contributing to such directories as the Scholars'
Guides to Washington, D.C. for East Asian Studies and for Southeast Asian Studies and the Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies' outreach-oriented guide to locally available resources. I have enjoyed dealing with several geographical areas of Asia—literally from Hokkaido in northern Japan to Kerala in southern India—in a truly interdisciplinary manner. A second very satisfying aspect of my work has been the pleasure derived from "discovering" and identifying tens of thousands of lesser known publications (including dissertations and chapters of edited volumes) that deal in some way with Asia and of incorporating information about many of them into the bibliographies that I help produce. This work has enabled me not only to call them to the attention of potentially interested readers but also—given my formal training as a historian—to consider how some of these publications may well have advanced our understanding of Asia. This is especially true in the case of doctoral dissertations. Not only do they constitute a voluminous body of literature—somewhere between 9,000 and 10,000 Western-language dissertations dealing in their entirety or just in part with Korea alone have been completed during the past sixty years—but many of the scholarly monographs and articles with which we all are more familiar originated in one way or another in their respective authors' thesis research. Perhaps the greatest reward of all has been the positive feedback that I have received, indicating that the reference works which I have produced have indeed been useful to many individuals in this country and abroad.

In the course of my professional career, I have come to subscribe to a number of bibliographical principles and standards that I believe are important for the people who use bibliographies as well as for those who prepare them. Let me conclude my remarks this afternoon by taking a few minutes to highlight five of them. Briefly stated, they are: (1) accuracy, (2) comprehensiveness, (3) consistency of presentation, (4) multiple access points to the bibliographical data, and (5) access to the materials that are cited within various bibliographies. The importance of these principles and standards should be self-evident. Nevertheless, they are all too often overlooked or not well appreciated.

How often have you encountered difficulty in tracking down a particular work on the basis of some secondary source of information because the author's name had been misspelled? Has it not been frustrating to search for a particular periodical article only to find that your bibliographical citation was inaccurate or imprecise? Occasional errors are well nigh inevitable within any reference work, but just as the scholarly writings of an anthropologist should be based on careful field research and those of a diplomatic historian on an informed reading of relevant documents, the bibliographies that academics produce should always contain citations that are reasonably authoritative and complete. This means that the individuals who prepare them should be meticulous and detail-oriented. Quality bibliographies, it must be understood, are generally the result of labor-intensive work. Such work frequently requires one to go back and verify, for instance, that an author's name has been properly transcribed, that the title of an article was taken from the article itself rather than from the table of contents of the journal in which it appeared, that the correct edition of a work has been specified, or that complete publication data (including the inclusive pagination of journal articles) are presented.

Comprehensiveness is a second cardinal feature of authoritative bibliographies. Whenever you turn to a printed bibliography or a bibliographical database, try to determine the nature of its coverage at the outset. While few bibliographies are ever exhaustive, you should expect that an authoritative reference work will at least strive for comprehensiveness within its specified
parameters. These parameters, of course, will usually vary from one work to another with respect to the types of materials covered (books, journal and newspaper articles, chapters in edited volumes, manuscripts, maps, general versus scholarly publications, etc.), the physical format of the materials (e.g., printed works, microforms, audiovisual materials, computer files), the language of the items that are cited, their dates of publication, the bibliography's intended audience, and the nature of the annotations (descriptive, critical, or both) if any are provided. If you are consulting a bibliography on films relating to China, for example, read the author's introduction to learn the extent to which it includes both popular and academic publications, while always bearing in mind the fact that some reference works ultimately fail to live up to their promise. Regardless of the subject covered, a selective bibliography prepared by a knowledgeable individual may be expected to offer invaluable guidance, but this normally holds true only if the author's final selection is based on a review of nearly all relevant materials. This is the methodology that I sought to employ when preparing my recently published bibliography on the Jews and the Jewish communities in China. At the same time, I should point out that I generally prefer to compile and edit very comprehensive, interdisciplinary bibliographies for a diverse, worldwide audience with the expectation that each reader will come across many previously unknown research studies and will then proceed to identify the items (both new and old) that are relevant for his or her immediate needs. My 10,000 entry bibliography Doctoral Dissertations on China and on Inner Asia, 1976-1990, for example, has sought to include all known Western-language dissertations dating from that sixteen-year period that deal either entirely or just in part with the Chinese-speaking world. The volume even includes entries for Czech, Hebrew, Romanian and Turkish-language titles that are useful in ways which most readers may not initially think of. This methodological approach is rooted in my own personal research experience over the years, for in the course of investigating such topics as the historical development of Japanese relations with the Middle East and the universe of academic newsletters concerned with the countries of East and Southeast Asia, I have normally made a concerted effort to identify and track down all related publications regardless of their provenance, authorship or potential scholarly value.

Regardless of the bibliographical style that one chooses to employ, consistency of presentation is vital for ensuring that all of the information is clearly and properly presented. Consistency particularly suffers when an individual pulls together a variety of entries from a number of different secondary sources without rigorously editing them. The needless duplication of entries—for example, one under an editor's name and another under the title of the edited volume, or two separate entries that contain variant spellings of the same author's name—as well as unnecessary confusion on the part of the reader are just two of the negative consequences.

The provision of multiple access points to the bibliographical data is essential as well. This principle has been basic to the cataloging of monographs and serial titles in the library world for decades. Nowadays, users of computerized databases that enable one to search by author, by title, by keyword, etc. and to limit one's search in a variety of ways are also increasingly familiar with this principle. Authoritative bibliographies should try to anticipate the needs of a wide range of potential users and enable them to access the information that they contain in as many ways as possible. With respect to published bibliographies, at the very least this calls not only for a comprehensive author index and a detailed subject index but also for a well-conceived, cross-referenced classification scheme within the main body of the work. Users of my latest bibliography, Doctoral Dissertations on Hong Kong, 1900-1997, will find that its nearly 2,400
entries have been extensively classified by topic—with over a thousand cross-references from
one section to another—and that in addition to the aforementioned indexes there is one by the
names of the universities to which the dissertations were submitted. The more than 9,000 entries
that will appear in my forthcoming “Doctoral Dissertations on Korea, 1904-2000”—a three-year
long bibliographical project that began this past winter—will also be indexed by the dissertation
author’s thesis adviser or the chairperson of his dissertation committee. Any good
computerized bibliography, of course, should provide for keyword searching, but one should
always be mindful of the fact that many databases suffer from their lack of a thesaurus that
"prescribe[s] the use of only one term, a ‘descriptor’, for the indication of a concept that may have
synonyms". As a result, the users of those databases may well have to conduct searches using
several different terms—including keywords in one or more languages other than English—in
order to retrieve most if not all of the bibliographical citations on a specific topic.

Finally, the principle of facilitating access to the actual items cited in various bibliographies:
The primary role of bibliographies should be not only to identify the available literature on a
particular subject but also to facilitate the efforts of scholars and students alike to get hold of the
materials that are of specific interest to them. With considerable information about the holdings
of most North American libraries now readily available in OCLC and RLIN (the two major
"bibliographic utilities" whose respective databases constitute online union catalogues) and with
efficiently operating interlibrary loan services throughout most of the United States and Canada,
this no longer poses much of a problem for twentieth century English-language books and
journals. Such is not necessarily the case, however, with the voluminous body of "gray"
literature that includes doctoral dissertations as well as government documents, company reports
and other material produced by such non-trade publishers as research organizations and pressure
groups. With respect to dissertations, we should note that many libraries refuse to lend through
interlibrary loan any of the theses that have been completed at their own institutions whenever
they can be purchased directly from UMI (formerly University Microfilms International) in Ann
Arbor. Furthermore, literally thousands of North American (and nearly all Asian, Australian and
European) dissertations on Asia have never even been filmed by UMI. Accordingly, user-
friendly bibliographies should do far more than briefly list the dissertations that have been written
on the subjects with which they are concerned. Indeed, the bibliographies that follow the style
recommended in the highly regarded Chicago Manual of Style tend to be woefully deficient in
this respect. The Chicago Manual of Style states that citations of dissertations should be limited
to the author’s name, the thesis title, the type of degree, the degree-awarding university, and the
year of the degree. By contrast, in accordance with my own practice, I strongly advocate that
these basic bibliographical details be supplemented—at a minimum—with such additional
information as the UMI order number and a citation to the published abstract in Dissertation
Abstracts International whenever applicable, by the British Library Document Supply Centre
accession number in the case of dissertations accepted by universities in the United Kingdom, by
full citations to their printed versions in the case of Dutch, German, Swiss and Scandinavian
university dissertations, and by appropriate statements (whenever possible) that specify the
availability of copies of all other dissertations, American and foreign alike.

Without a proverbial crystal ball, I can never be certain what tomorrow and the day after
tomorrow will bring. Nevertheless, as I presently look forward to the decades immediately
ahead, I foresee myself remaining active in Asian Studies as a bibliographer for both published
and unpublished materials. At the same time as I am working on the aforementioned Korea
dissertations project, I am gradually creating a master bibliographical database of worldwide doctoral dissertations and, to a much more limited extent, of master’s theses in both Asian and Jewish Studies. This will facilitate my long-term efforts to complete several other definitive bibliographies of dissertations, some of which I began as early as the late 1960s. 27 The first of these will be an annotated bibliography of doctoral dissertations and master’s theses on Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands, dedicated to the memory of the late Masato Matsui of the University of Hawaii. 28 Likewise I hope to devote some of my retirement years to producing a bibliographical database and annotated guide to my Asian Studies Newsletter Archives (a unique resource of over 2,000 serial titles that I have been developing and maintaining since the early 1970s), and to preparing or updating a number of scholarly bibliographies and accompanying databases on such topics as the Allied Occupation of Japan, the Jewish communities of nineteenth and twentieth-century China, and Western-language book reviews on China, Japan and Korea.


8. My sincere appreciation of their advice and encouragement was formally acknowledged by my decision to dedicate *Japan and Korea (op cit.)* to Robert M. Spaulding, Jr. and *Doctoral Dissertations on China (op cit.)* to John K. Fairbank.

9. The many volumes on Asia published over the past two decades in the Clio Press / ABC-Clio World Bibliographical Series include *Afghanistan* by Schuyler Jones (1992); *Bhutan* by Ramesh C. Dogra (1990); *Brunei* by Sylvia C. Engelen Krausse and Gerald H. Krausse (1988); *Burma* by Patricia M. Herbert (1991); *Cambodia* by Helen Jarvis (1997); *China* by Charles W. Hayford (1997); *Hong Kong* by Ian Scott (1990); *India* by Ian D. Derbyshire (1995); *Indonesia* by Gerald H. Krausse and Sylvia Engelen Krausse (1994); *Japan* by Frank Joseph Shulman (1989); *Korea* by J. E. Hoare with the assistance of Susan Pares (1997); *Laos* by Helen Cordell (1991); *Macau* by Richard Louis Edmonds (1989); *Malaysia* by Ooi Keat Gin (1999); *Maldives* by C.H.B. Reynolds (1993); *Mongolia* by Judith Nordby (1993); *Nepal* by John Whelpton with the assistance of Lucette Boulnois et al. (1990); *Pakistan* by David Taylor (1990); *Philippines* by Jim Richardson (1989); *Sri Lanka* by Vijaya Samaranweera (1987); *Taiwan* by Wei-chin Lee (1990); *Thailand* by David Smyth (1998); *Tibet* by John Pinfold (1991); *Timor* by Ian Rowland (1992); and *Vietnam* by David G. Marr with the assistance of Kristine Alilunas-Rodgers (1992).

10. Robert Singerman, University of Florida Libraries, in an e-mail to Frank Joseph Shulman.


13. The inclusion of this bibliographical element was recommended by the late Key K. Kobayashi, a prominent member of the Japanese Section at the Library of Congress. Not only does it specify each author's disciplinary focus within the individual entries but by facilitating the preparation of statistical tables indicating the distribution of dissertations by academic field, it has also helped individuals analyze the development of Asian Studies.

14. In Ann Arbor, it was not possible for me to examine the actual texts of most American and foreign dissertations unless they had been printed (as in the case of many German and Scandinavian theses) or had been purchased for the University of Michigan Libraries. While the offices of UMI (formerly University Microfilms International) are located nearby, UMI has never maintained any collection of reading copies of the many dissertations that the company has microfilmed over the years. Since moving to the Washington metropolitan area in 1976, however, I have regularly used the extensive holdings (over one million titles) of microfilmed American dissertations that the Library of Congress has acquired from UMI and certain other institutions through copyright deposit or on a standing order basis. In addition, I have greatly benefitted from the generous cooperation of the Center for Research Libraries (Chicago), the
National Library of Canada, and several other institutions in this country and abroad that have lent hundreds upon hundreds of foreign dissertations on Asia for my consultation and bibliographical examination. I have also made a number of trips overseas in connection with my bibliographical projects.


18. My own family name—Shulman—has all too frequently appeared in print, even in book reviews and scholarly reference works, as "Schulman".

19. There are literally thousands of scholarly and non-academic journals whose tables of contents all too frequently are inaccurate and/or incomplete in their listings of the titles of the articles contained between their covers. Regretfully, the same is also true in the case of many published conference proceedings and edited volumes.


22. See, for example, Frank Joseph Shulman. “The Nature of Japanese Activity in the Middle

23. This research was undertaken in connection with my ongoing efforts to develop and maintain my Asian Studies Newsletter Archives, an extensive collection of newsletter-type publications concerned with the countries and civilizations of Asia. For two overviews of this type of publishing, see Frank Joseph Shulman. “Academic and Cultural Newsletters and News-Disseminating Bulletins Concerned with Asia in the West.” South Asia Library Notes and Queries (Minneapolis, Minn.), no.28 (1992): 16-32; and Frank Joseph Shulman. “Academic and Cultural Newsletters and News-Disseminating Bulletins in the West Concerned with East Asia.” Association for Asian Studies, Inc. Committee on East Asian Libraries Bulletin no.93 (June 1991): 8-14.


27. The database currently contains some 50,000 entries, and an estimated 25,000 additional entries are still on typed 3x5 cards awaiting "retrospective conversion" and enhancement of their present bibliographical coverage.

28. This bibliography was initially prepared in honor of the formal dedication of the Archives of Okinawa Prefecture in August 1995. An expanded and updated version is expected to be completed this year and will be published by the University of Hawaii’s Center for Japanese Studies.