



10-2016

In Memoriam: Wei-ying Wan May 21, 1932-March 3, 2016

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

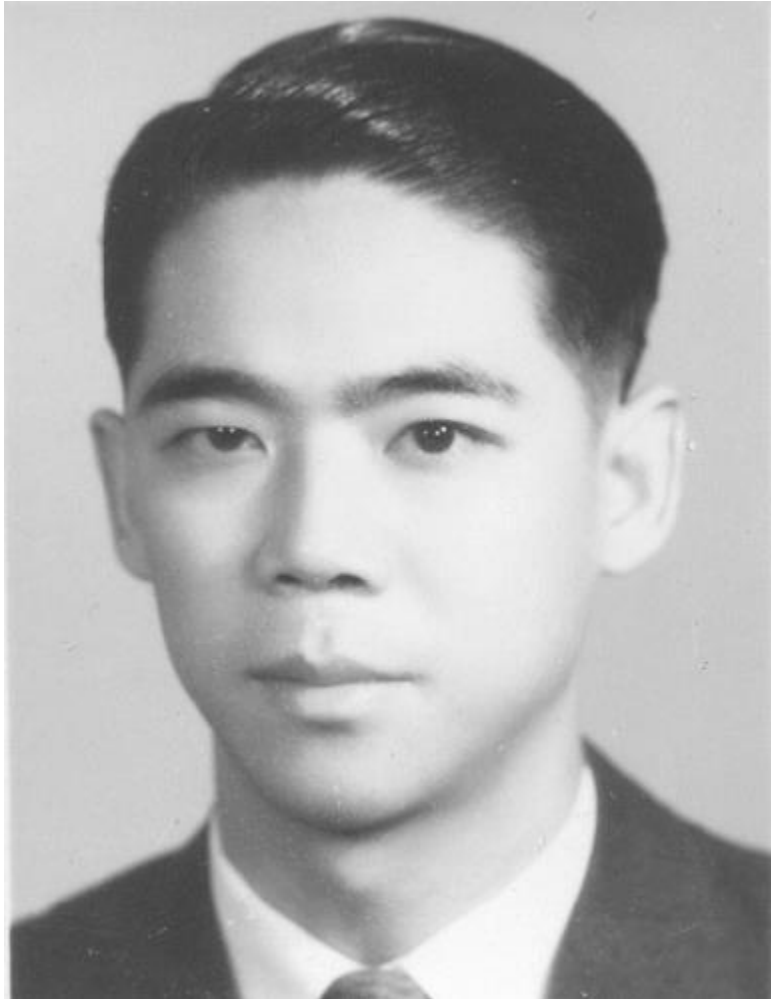
(2016) "In Memoriam: Wei-ying Wan May 21, 1932-March 3, 2016," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2016: No. 163, Article 12.
Available at: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2016/iss163/12>

This Obituary is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of East Asian Libraries by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu.

IN MEMORIAM

Wei-ying Wan

May 21, 1932-March 3, 2016



Wei-ying Wan of Ann Arbor, MI, age 83, passed away peacefully on Thursday, March 3, 2016 at Arbor Hospice in Ann Arbor. Born on May 21, 1932, in Tianjin, China, Wei-ying was the second of three sons of Hsin-Chuan Wan and Mei-Hsu (nee Hu) Wan. The Wan family was from Jiujian in Jiangxi province. For many generations they had served in the civil service, and his father was a county magistrate.

Despite the disruption of Sino-Japanese and Second World Wars, Wei-ying developed a passion for books and literature. The family moved to Taipei, Taiwan in 1949 and he graduated in 1952 from the Chinese Department of Taiwan Normal University. After completing compulsory military service, he joined Tamkang College as a lecturer in Chinese and English. In 1955, the Ministry of Education of the

Republic of China announced the first government scholarship program for graduate studies abroad. After placing first in the exam for the field of library science, he studied at the University of Minnesota and completed a Master's Degree in 1957. He then worked briefly for the Detroit Public Library system from 1957 to 1959 while studying for a second MA at Wayne State University in public policy and administration.

In 1959 he returned to Taipei to work at the National Central Library as the chief assistant librarian to Dr. Fu-Tsung Chiang, the founding director. In 1961 he moved to the newly formed Department of Library Science at the National Taiwan University as an associate professor of library science. During his tenure at National Taiwan University he taught courses on the history of books and printing, library science fundamentals, and was a faculty student advisor. In 1964 Wei-ying accepted an invitation to become the curator of the Chinese collection at the University of Michigan.

The connection of the University of Michigan with East Asia dates back to 1880, when university president James B. Angell was asked to serve as the plenipotentiary minister to China on behalf of the United States government. The University of Michigan's commitment to East Asian scholarship has existed ever since, and in 1941, the Association for Asian Studies was founded in Ann Arbor. The Asia Library was formally established until 1948. In 1961 the Center for Chinese Studies was created, and the first director, Prof. Albert Feuerwerker, wanted to enhance the Chinese studies program by systematically building up the collection of primary sources held by the library. He had met Wei-ying at conferences in Taiwan during the 1960s and offered him the position as curator of the Chinese collection in 1964. A large-scale plan of expansion of the Chinese language materials was initiated to support the ambitious research and instructional programs. This expansion drew the notice of Profs. Arthur and Mary Wright of Yale University, who convinced Wei-ying to join them in New Haven in 1966 until 1969 as head of the East Asian Collection. During this time he was elected a Fellow of Davenport College.

In 1969, the University of Michigan enticed Wei-ying Wan back to Ann Arbor to be the head of the Asia Library. The return allowed him to complete the original plan of systematic development of the collection, and soon the resources were in place to allow in depth primary research in all of the major fields of social science and the humanities. The opportunity to acquire the critical primary sources for research across such a broad scope was a bibliophile's dream. Notable additions included a microfilm copy of the Peiping Library Rare Book Collection and the National Central Library microfilm copy of over a thousand titles from its rare book collection. Two thousand reels of files from the Yu Lien Research Institute in Hong Kong, microfilm copies of 19th century British diplomatic archives from the British Public Records office, a nearly complete back file of all major Chinese newspapers both national and provincial on microfilm and rare private collections from Taiwan and Hong Kong all were acquired. This collecting effort was honored in 1978 with the first of a 25 volume series issued by GK Hall reproducing the Asia Library catalog holdings in book format. The Asia Library was now not only one of the nation's major collections but one of the few that were specifically created for primary research needs.

In addition to building up the Asia Library, Wei-ying served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Center for Chinese Studies until his retirement in 2003. In 1976 he was a member of the University of Michigan delegation to visit China, one of the first to visit after President Nixon's trip in 1972. In 1981 he again was part of the official University of Michigan delegation and provided consultation with the Chinese Ministry of Education to develop cooperative exchange programs with major Chinese institutions. Wei-ying's expertise and experience led to invitations to serve as an evaluator and consultant on East Asian collections for major libraries such as the Hoover Institute at Stanford University (1968, 1985), Columbia University (1968, 1986), Claremont Graduate School of Claremont Colleges (1990), University of Wisconsin at Madison (1995) and the Committee on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Board of Overseers (2000 to 2003). He was also active in the professional library association serving as Chair of the Association for Asian Studies Committee on East Asian Libraries (1970-1971).

During his career that saw many technological changes, Wei-ying Wan eagerly embraced innovation. The Asia Library was a founding member of the Research Library Information Network Chinese Japanese Korean database (RLIN CJK). The conversion of the card catalog into machine-readable form made the records available through the University Library online catalog. Recognizing the potential of then nascent Internet, the Asia Library was among the first to have its own web page, the first to have multi-lingual content, and first to hire as librarians staff whose primary training and expertise was in computer science and technology.

In addition to his love of books and reading, Wei-ying enjoyed cartoons, especially the work of New Yorker cartoonists Charles Addams and Peter Arno, Jingxi (Peking opera) and Chinese and American movies. He is survived by his wife Ching (nee Chao) Wan of 61 years, sons Bertram and Julian, and his younger brother Wei-Chun Wan of Taipei. A private burial was conducted through Muehlig Funeral Chapel, Ann Arbor, MI. Contributions may be made to Arbor Hospice, 2366 Oak Valley Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, or the Wei Ying Wan Book Fund care of the Asia Library, 920 N. University Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48109

(Published in *Ann Arbor News* on March 13, 2016)