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China's Wartime History

Notes on International Efforts for Preservation and Access

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Any scholar who has worked in the historical materials of China's War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945) knows how fragile they are. Whatever their form—from hand-scrawled document drafts to printed pamphlets, books, or journals—they are likely to be on the poorest of paper, often nearly transparent, always highly acidic. This alone would have given them a short shelf life as historical sources, had they remained on the shelves. But because of the nature of the war and the subsequent civil war, with armies, governments, and academic institutions all on the move, many of these materials were carted from China's coast to its interior provinces, or from the interior back to the coast, or both, and under the most difficult circumstances. When finally stored in the postwar years, adequate facilities for preservation and restoration were mostly nonexistent. Environmental conditions—high humidity, extremes of temperature, bugs—continued to assault the surviving volumes. China's wartime historical materials have fed many a worm.

Since the early 1980s, China's national, provincial, and municipal archives have made enormous investments to conserve the documents under their care, including those of this period. The same cannot be said, however, of leading library collections on the wartime period.

Although public library holdings of newspapers, journals, and rare books, including some of this period, were given priority under China's National Microfilming Project, the general book collections of this era have not been well preserved.

The first aim of the international microfilming effort that began in 1993 was to augment China's national project, specifically by preserving wartime books. A second aim was access. It was important that materials that were microfilmed be available internationally because wartime publications were less well represented in American and European research libraries than were materials of the pre- and postwar eras. A third aim—essential to the first two but also seen as a long-term contribution—was the training of library staff in Chinese partner institutions in all aspects of professional microfilming to archival standards. Led by Diane Perushek of Northwestern University and Kathlin Smith of the U.S. Council on Library and Information Resources, the project received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Luce Foundation, and other organizations; institutional support was received from the Committee on Scholarly Communication with China.

It would be nice to report that all aspects of this ambitious project proceeded smoothly, but international scholarly cooperation, like its political counterpart, has its crises and defeats. Discussions began with the Chongqing Municipal Library. Founded as the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in an earlier era of Sino-American collaboration, the library has particular strength in wartime materials. Lengthy negotiations produced an accord. From 27,000 potential items, the project's scholarly review board selected 4,000 for filming. Filming and environmental equipment was shipped in to Shanghai and made its way up the Yangzi in early autumn 1994. By November, the equipment, technician, trainer, project director, and workshop interpreter were all on site in Chongqing. Staff training had begun. At that point, the library's ambition to function as part of the socialist market economy led to complications. The equipment and training personnel had to be sent back downriver, to Shanghai, where a more hospitable academic climate was found at Fudan University.

Fudan University has one of China's premier university libraries. Although its wartime collection is not as large as Chongqing's, it is still impressive, and it is stronger in materials published in Japanese-

occupied China. Because Shanghai was China's publishing capital in both the prewar and wartime periods, the project was extended back in time to 1932 to include selected prewar publications not otherwise available outside of China.

As with Chongqing, the scholarly review board selected titles to be filmed. The panel, made up of four American scholars, three from the People's Republic, and one from Taiwan, chose titles on the basis of scholarly value for research in the humanities and social sciences, with priority to materials known not to exist in the United States. The selected titles were then searched in the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) database to ensure that no microfilm or reprint copies existed in the United States.¹ In the very few cases in which a match was found with a printed book, the title remained in the film list so that it could be preserved. Thus, the microfilmed Fudan collection not only complements but, in many areas, exceeds the collections of major research libraries in this country.

A total of 3,608 titles were filmed on 595 reels. Both the master and service copies for each title were hand carried to the United States over the past several years. Cataloguing is now complete, and all films are available for loan or purchase from the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in accordance with its standard lending procedures.

So much for preservation and access. What are the strengths of this collection? Approximately 500 books are devoted to the study of the Chinese economy on topics ranging from China's wartime economy and postwar development plans to the analysis of government control policies on banking, industry, and foodstuffs. A number of volumes offer important primary source material, including economic investigations of various areas or products and statistical handbooks for individual provinces and regions.

It is hardly surprising that a large number of works focus on the war itself, many of which should prove particularly useful to military historians. The collection includes analyses of military strategy and theories of China's national defense as well as official and unofficial studies of the performance of the Nationalist army, air force, and navy, as well as the Communist Eighth Route Army, the New Fourth Army, and guerrilla forces.

The study of Shanghai is another natural strength of this Shanghai-based collection. It includes a large number of titles on urban planning, labor movements, the education system, and legal practices.

The largest single category in this collection is that of literature and the arts. More than 1,000 titles are in these categories, including novels, short stories, poems, travel notes, works on literary and artistic theory, literary criticism, and scripts of modern and traditional operas. Among them are first and variant editions of the works of major writers, such as Ba Jin, Mao Dun, Ding Ling, Guo Moruo, Lao She, and Lu Xun, including the twenty-volume first edition of *Lu Xun Quanjī* (Complete Works of Lu Xun) published in 1938. More numerous, however, are the works of less famous, although hardly inconsequential, writers such as Qin Yi, Zhang Tianyi, and Yao Xueyin. By including publications of more than 400 authors, the collection provides a broad base for research in the Chinese literary scene of the 1930s and 1940s. Beyond this, there is a section on folk art and folk music of different regions and national minorities.

Of course, many of the works do not concern the war, or even the wartime period per se, but were simply published during these years. This is largely true of 200 history and historiography titles authored by more than 100 scholars, from the most famous (Qian Mu, Fu Sinian) to the most deservedly obscure. The microfilmed collection ranges from prehistory to the Republican era, including contemporary archeological studies, textual analyses of the Classics, and studies of Chinese religions, tax systems, marriage customs, and clothing fashions over time and space.

In making use of the microfilmed collection, scholars may search by title, author, subject, or project name (Pre-Kangzhan and Kangzhan Period Preservation Project) from the CRL's own catalog (telnet to crlchicago.uchicago.edu) or by searching the major online utilities (RLIN, OCLC, and PALNI). A basic print guide, "Chinese Wartime Monographs, 1932-1945" (location Z1033.M6.F23), has been developed for the CRL in retrieving items. However, this guide is organized by film reel rather than by title, author, or subject, and it is not available to the public. It is hoped that a more flexibly organized print guide can be made available for purchase. Meanwhile, the title list can be obtained by requesting from the CRL online catalog a full

list of titles filmed under the project. Most libraries have an option through which one may request a "brief record" (author, title, call number, and, sometimes, subject) rather than the often lengthy, complete record. The collection of the Pre-Kangzhan and Kangzhan Period Preservation Project appears in the 533 and 830 fields of the catalog record. The records of all titles should be loaded by January 1999.

Libraries affiliated with the CRL may borrow the film without charge; for nonmember institutions, there is a nominal fee. Rolls are also available for purchase. For CRL member institutions, the price is \$45 per roll in addition to a mailing fee. For non-CRL members, the price is \$78 per roll in addition to a mailing fee.

All parts of this collection have been filmed by the Fudan University staff to archival standards. They are available to international scholars today just as they will be a century from now when it is doubtful that the originals will still exist.

NOTE

1. Several libraries have not created electronic catalog records for all of their materials from this period, so some titles may exist in the United States. If so, these titles have not been microfilmed and they cannot (unlike the new Fudan microfilm) be found through online searching.

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